

CURRENT TRENDS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY

Edited by
Hillel Fradkin
Husain Haqqani
Eric Brown

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*Center on Islam, Democracy, and
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Introduction

IN A RECENT EDITORIAL THAT APPEARED IN *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*, Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesia's former president and the former head of the Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in the world, gave a far-ranging and detailed account of what he views as the "global struggle for the soul of Islam." Wahid described what he sees as the current state of that struggle, especially the strength of extremist ideology, the sources of that strength, the great dangers to which both the Muslim and non-Muslim world are exposed, and the tasks to which these dangers oblige us. We recommend this article, which we've re-published in this issue of *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, to very serious reading and reflection.

Here, we will limit ourselves to noting only one of the tasks mentioned by Wahid: "we must identify [the] advocates of [this virulent ideology], understand their goals and strategies [and] evaluate their strengths and weaknesses." Nothing better describes the purpose of this journal. In accord with Wahid's emphasis on the truly global character of the radical Islamist movement, we have aimed to provide the broadest possible coverage in this journal. In this, the third, issue we continue that practice with four articles that have a regional or national focus, ranging from South and Southeast Asia (India, Malaysia, and Bangladesh) to Western Europe (France).

Another set of articles focuses on the greater Middle East and, in particular, what has emerged as the main axes of ideological discussion within Islamism and radical Islam. With regard to the latter, it is worthwhile observing that there are several main lines of thought as well as action that now often vie with one another for predominance within the worldwide Islamist movement. The debate among these disparate ideological trends is often fierce, and serves to provide an overall framework for understanding it.

Several articles in this issue describe and analyze that framework. Some address the current activities of al-Qaeda, especially in Iraq, including the recently intercepted communication of Zawahiri to Zarqawi and the implicit

dispute between them, and the open dispute between Zarqawi and his former mentor al-Maqdisi. Another article provides an analysis over the internal debate within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. A third axis—the Islamist debate over “Euro-Islam”—was discussed in the last issue of this journal. This debate, which will continue to be a focus of this journal, is linked to both the transnational and Middle Eastern debate by the prominent role of figures connected to the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The relationship and potential dynamic among and between these various ideological trends is still of course uncertain. However, it may be expected that they will have an important impact on the worldwide Islamist movement. For the present, some dynamics can and ought to be highlighted.

One is the ambiguity regarding authority within the Islamist movement and, indeed, within the contemporary Muslim world more generally. The assumption of Islamic “legal” authority, which had historically been the preserve of the traditional ulama class, by Islamist and jihadi leaders—Bin Laden, Zawahiri, Zarqawi, Maqdisi etc.—who lacked traditional credentials of authority continues apace. While this has obviously created problems for traditional religious authorities and institutions, it is problematic for the Islamist and jihadi movements as well. This is evident in a variety of intra-Islamist disputes, some specific to al-Qaeda others specific to the Muslim Brotherhood and other Salafist organizations. In particular, one may note that although all Islamist movements claim Salafist or ancestral authority, this has not necessarily led to privileging the position of the “elders” within the movement, as we see today in the case of Zarqawi and others. There is an ongoing struggle between older and younger generations of jihadi and Islamist leaders. Eventually, the Islamist movement may mount a debate over authority as such.

A second factor is the impact of contemporary circumstances and events on the ideological debate. This is most obvious in the case of Iraq and the engagement of al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups in the broader Sunni insurgency. For obvious reasons, the War in Iraq has come to occupy a central place in jihadi activity that is, in many respects, analogous to the role the Afghan Jihad played in an earlier era. At the operational level, this is to be seen in the degree to which terrorist recruitment in Europe and elsewhere has focused on Iraq as well as the degree to which terrorist activity elsewhere takes its bearings from this war.

But the Iraq Jihad also presents a number of ideological issues for the worldwide Islamist movement with which it has been obliged to struggle. So far, that struggle has been without any satisfactory resolution, as is evident in Zawahiri’s letter to Zarqawi, which insists on seeing events within Iraq in terms of the broader objectives of the global Islamist movement. In this issue, Shmuel Bar

provides an excellent analysis of the themes discussed in this letter, as well as the authenticity of the letter. But it is useful to highlight one aspect that is less fully treated: Zawahiri's appeal to Zarqawi that the Islamist struggle in Egypt, Syria and Palestine be seen to be as important as Iraq if not more so.

Of course, the relative restraint of Zawahiri's letter makes it difficult to say exactly the reason for this emphasis. Since Zawahiri is an Egyptian, it may be that the letter simply reflects a special attachment to the Islamist struggle in Egypt and its environs. But it is equally if not more likely the case that the letter reflects Zawahiri's considered judgment about the opportunities and liabilities of the Iraqi War. This is strongly suggested by his criticism of Zarqawi's radically anti-Shiite strategy and tactics. While affirming his own fundamental hostility to Shiism, Zawahiri points out to Zarqawi the fact that the majority of Iraqis are Shiites. This, Zawahiri states, must be taken into account in planning for the future, especially should the Iraq Jihad succeed in its immediate objective of driving the United States out of Iraq. For Zawahiri, the success of the insurgency in Iraq may well present an opportunity for setting up an Islamic state—a necessary first stage in the global Islamist struggle to lay the foundations of the new Islamic Caliphate. But such an opportunity might well be forestalled without the support of Iraq's Shiite majority.

Zawahiri is surely correct in pointing this out. But following this line of thought, one may pose some questions that Zawahiri himself may be addressing to Zarqawi: Given the Shiite majority in Iraq, how could Iraq serve as the base for the worldwide radical Sunni movement? Are there circumstances under which the Shiite majority would make common cause with Sunni radicalism? Or is it more likely that Iraq would have to fragment in such a way as to produce a smaller, radical Sunni state? Zawahiri does not address or answer these questions, but the problem with which they are concerned may explain his emphasis on the Sunni Arab heartland of Egypt, Syria, Palestine. Perhaps he is suggesting that only these territories can serve as a proper base for the Islamist movement, however much their appropriation would in fact be greatly assisted by securing a radical Sunni base in some part of Iraq. It would also explain Zawahiri's professed concern not only with Zarqawi's hostility to Shiism but his actual or potential hostility to all varieties of Sunnism other than his own. Zawahiri urges Zarqawi to at least consider the short term necessity for a "big tent" approach to various Sunni theological schools that may be, from al-Qaeda's perspective, less ideologically pure.

Though the parameters of Zawahiri's full reflections are not entirely clear, we may perhaps look to future communications for some clarification as the underlying problems are important and will not go away.

The impact of current events and circumstances and the questions they pose may present problems to the radical movement in other ways. The perennial theological and political debate within the Islamist movement about whether *dawa*, i.e. ideological preparation, or jihadist violence should take precedence is at the core of the quarrel between Maqdisi and Zarqawi and has, of course, been brought to the fore by the events in Iraq. But a kind of analog in the form of a debate about the relative importance of *dawa* and politics has also emerged within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. This is at least partially a consequence of the American democratic initiative and the pressure it has exerted on the Egyptian regime. The present and future importance of this development and internal debate within the Muslim Brotherhood is excellently described and analyzed here in this volume by Israel Elad-Altman.

*–Hillel Fradkin
Washington, D.C.
February 2006*

Right Islam vs. Wrong Islam

ABDURRAHMAN WAHID

NEWSPAPERS AND NEWS ORGANIZATIONS REPORT THAT Osama bin Laden has obtained a religious edict from a misguided Saudi cleric, justifying the use of nuclear weapons against America and the infliction of mass casualties. It requires great emotional strength to confront the potential ramifications of this fact. Yet can anyone doubt that those who joyfully incinerate the occupants of office buildings, commuter trains, hotels and nightclubs would leap at the chance to magnify their damage a thousandfold?

Imagine the impact of a single nuclear bomb detonated in New York, London, Paris, Sydney or L.A.! What about two or three? The entire edifice of modern civilization is built on economic and technological foundations that terrorists hope to collapse with nuclear attacks like so many fishing huts in the wake of a tsunami.

Just two small, well-placed bombs devastated Bali's tourist economy in 2002 and sent much of its population back to the rice fields and out to sea, to fill their empty bellies. What would be the effect of a global economic crisis in the wake of attacks far more devastating than those of Bali or 9/11?

It is time for people of goodwill from every faith and nation to recognize that a terrible danger threatens humanity. We cannot afford to continue "business as usual" in the face of this existential threat. Rather, we must set aside our international and partisan bickering, and join to confront the danger that lies before us.

An extreme and perverse ideology in the minds of fanatics is what directly threatens us (specifically, Wahhabi/Salafi ideology—a minority fundamentalist religious cult fueled by petrodollars). Yet underlying, enabling and exacerbating this threat of religious extremism is a global crisis of misunderstanding.

All too many Muslims fail to grasp Islam, which teaches one to be lenient towards others and to understand their value systems, knowing that these

are tolerated by Islam as a religion. The essence of Islam is encapsulated in the words of the Quran, “For you, your religion; for me, my religion.” That is the essence of tolerance. Religious fanatics—either purposely or out of ignorance—pervert Islam into a dogma of intolerance, hatred and bloodshed. They justify their brutality with slogans such as “Islam is above everything else.” They seek to intimidate and subdue anyone who does not share their extremist views, regardless of nationality or religion. While a few are quick to shed blood themselves, countless millions of others sympathize with their violent actions, or join in the complicity of silence.

This crisis of misunderstanding—of Islam by Muslims themselves—is compounded by the failure of governments, people of other faiths, and the majority of well-intentioned Muslims to resist, isolate and discredit this dangerous ideology. The crisis thus afflicts Muslims and non-Muslims alike, with tragic consequences. Failure to understand the true nature of Islam permits the continued radicalization of Muslims world-wide, while blinding the rest of humanity to a solution which hides in plain sight.

The most effective way to overcome Islamist extremism is to explain what Islam truly is to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Without that explanation, people will tend to accept the unrefuted extremist view—further radicalizing Muslims, and turning the rest of the world against Islam itself.

Accomplishing this task will be neither quick nor easy. In recent decades, Wahhabi/Salafi ideology has made substantial inroads throughout the Muslim world. Islamic fundamentalism has become a well-financed, multifaceted global movement that operates like a juggernaut in much of the developing world, and even among immigrant Muslim communities in the West. To neutralize the virulent ideology that underlies fundamentalist terrorism and threatens the very foundations of modern civilization, we must identify its advocates, understand their goals and strategies, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and effectively counter their every move. What we are talking about is nothing less than a global struggle for the soul of Islam.

The Sunni (as opposed to Shiite) fundamentalists’ goals generally include: claiming to restore the perfection of the early Islam practiced by Muhammad and his companions, who are known in Arabic as al-Salaf al-Salih, “the Righteous Ancestors”; establishing a utopian society based on these Salafi principles, by imposing their interpretation of Islamic law on all members of society; annihilating local variants of Islam in the name of authenticity and purity; transforming Islam from a personal faith into an authoritarian political system; establishing a pan-Islamic caliphate governed according to the

strict tenets of Salafi Islam, and often conceived as stretching from Morocco to Indonesia and the Philippines; and, ultimately, bringing the entire world under the sway of their extremist ideology.

Fundamentalist strategy is often simple as well as brilliant. Extremists are quick to drape themselves in the mantle of Islam and declare their opponents kafir, or infidels, and thus smooth the way for slaughtering nonfundamentalist Muslims. Their theology rests upon a simplistic, literal and highly selective reading of the Quran and Sunnah (prophetic traditions), through which they seek to entrap the world-wide Muslim community in the confines of their narrow ideological grasp. Expansionist by nature, most fundamentalist groups constantly probe for weakness and an opportunity to strike, at any time or place, to further their authoritarian goals.

The armed ghazis (Islamic warriors) raiding from New York to Jakarta, Istanbul, Baghdad, London and Madrid are only the tip of the iceberg, forerunners of a vast and growing population that shares their radical views and ultimate objectives. The formidable strengths of this world-wide fundamentalist movement include: 1) An aggressive program with clear ideological and political goals; 2) immense funding from oil-rich Wahhabi sponsors; 3) the ability to distribute funds in impoverished areas to buy loyalty and power; 4) a claim to and aura of religious authenticity and Arab prestige; 5) an appeal to Islamic identity, pride and history; 6) an ability to blend into the much larger traditionalist masses and blur the distinction between moderate Islam and their brand of religious extremism; 7) full-time commitment by its agents/leadership; 8) networks of Islamic schools that propagate extremism; 9) the absence of organized opposition in the Islamic world; 10) a global network of fundamentalist imams who guide their flocks to extremism; 11) a well-oiled "machine" established to translate, publish and distribute Wahhabi/Salafi propaganda and disseminate its ideology throughout the world; 12) scholarships for locals to study in Saudi Arabia and return with degrees and indoctrination, to serve as future leaders; 13) the ability to cross national and cultural borders in the name of religion; 14) Internet communication; and 15) the reluctance of many national governments to supervise or control this entire process.

We must employ effective strategies to counter each of these fundamentalist strengths. This can be accomplished only by bringing the combined weight of the vast majority of peace-loving Muslims, and the non-Muslim world, to bear in a coordinated global campaign whose goal is to resolve the crisis of misunderstanding that threatens to engulf our entire world.

An effective counterstrategy must be based upon a realistic assessment of our own strengths and weaknesses in the face of religious extremism and

terror. Disunity, of course, has proved fatal to countless human societies faced with a similar existential threat. A lack of seriousness in confronting the imminent danger is likewise often fatal. Those who seek to promote a peaceful and tolerant understanding of Islam must overcome the paralyzing effects of inertia, and harness a number of actual or potential strengths, which can play a key role in neutralizing fundamentalist ideology. These strengths not only are assets in the struggle with religious extremism, but in their mirror form they point to the weakness at the heart of fundamentalist ideology. They are:

- 1) Human dignity, which demands freedom of conscience and rejects the forced imposition of religious views;
- 2) the ability to mobilize immense resources to bring to bear on this problem, once it is identified and a global commitment is made to solve it;
- 3) the ability to leverage resources by supporting individuals and organizations that truly embrace a peaceful and tolerant Islam;
- 4) nearly 1,400 years of Islamic traditions and spirituality, which are inimical to fundamentalist ideology;
- 5) appeals to local and national—as well as Islamic—culture/traditions/pride;
- 6) the power of the feminine spirit, and the fact that half of humanity consists of women, who have an inherent stake in the outcome of this struggle;
- 7) traditional and Sufi leadership and masses, who are not yet radicalized (strong numeric advantage: 85% to 90% of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims);
- 8) the ability to harness networks of Islamic schools to propagate a peaceful and tolerant Islam;
- 9) the natural tendency of like-minded people to work together when alerted to a common danger;
- 10) the ability to form a global network of like-minded individuals, organizations and opinion leaders to promote moderate and progressive ideas throughout the Muslim world;
- 11) the existence of a counterideology, in the form of traditional, Sufi and modern Islamic teachings, and the ability to translate such works into key languages;
- 12) the benefits of modernity, for all its flaws, and the widespread appeal of popular culture;
- 13) the ability to cross national and cultural borders in the name of religion;
- 14) Internet communications, to disseminate progressive views -- linking and inspiring like-minded individuals and organizations throughout the world;
- 15) the nation-state; and
- 16) the universal human desire for freedom, justice and a better life for oneself and loved ones.

Though potentially decisive, most of these advantages remain latent or diffuse, and require mobilization to be effective in confronting fundamentalist ideology. In addition, no effort to defeat religious extremism can succeed without ultimately cutting off the flow of petrodollars used to finance that extremism, from Leeds to Jakarta.

Only by recognizing the problem, putting an end to the bickering within and between nation-states, and adopting a coherent long-term plan (executed

with international leadership and commitment) can we begin to apply the brakes to the rampant spread of extremist ideas and hope to resolve the world's crisis of misunderstanding before the global economy and modern civilization itself begin to crumble in the face of truly devastating attacks.

Muslims themselves can and must propagate an understanding of the "right" Islam, and thereby discredit extremist ideology. Yet to accomplish this task requires the understanding and support of like-minded individuals, organizations and governments throughout the world. Our goal must be to illuminate the hearts and minds of humanity, and offer a compelling alternate vision of Islam, one that banishes the fanatical ideology of hatred to the darkness from which it emerged.

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India's Islamist Groups

HUSAIN HAQQANI

CONTEMPORARY INDIA IS A HINDU-MAJORITY COUNTRY, governed under a secular democratic constitution since 1947, when it achieved independence from British rule. At first glance India's pluralism appears to protect it from falling under the spell of extremist ideologies, including Islamism. Muslim influence—cultural, political, economic, religious and linguistic—has been an integral part of the Indian ethos since the seventh century, and for the most part this influence has been benign. But India has been home to some significant thinkers of political Islam, and militant Islamist groups continue to operate in, and even target, India today.

Islam was first introduced to India's coastal regions by Arab Muslim traders soon after its advent. In 711, a young general commanding an Arab army captured the kingdom of Sindh and established Muslim political power on the Indian subcontinent. Parts of India, now in Pakistan, were ruled by governors or tributaries of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties that ruled from Damascus and Baghdad respectively.

Muslim traders, mystics, preachers and invaders have shaped and influenced India for thirteen centuries. Muslim sultanates ruling from Delhi, beginning in the eleventh century, and the great Mughal Empire (1526-1857) that followed created a substantive Islamic legacy before India fell under British colonial rule. Decolonization resulted in the partition of India along religious lines, but the birth of Pakistan in 1947 did not sever India's linkages with Islam. At least one-third of pre-partition India's Muslims stayed in India. Today almost 12 percent of modern India's population is Muslim, and with an estimated Muslim population of 170 million, India has one of the largest concentrations of Islamic believers.

Islam in India has historically been represented by both its esoteric form of Sufism as well as its various exoteric, traditional forms. Even after ruling large parts of India for eight centuries, Muslims overall remained a minority on the subcontinent. The ruling Muslim minority was generally tolerant

toward the majority. This coexistence resulted in an Indo-Muslim syncretism exemplified in art, architecture, and culture throughout the subcontinent. However, the decline in Muslim political power in India from the late eighteenth century onward changed Muslim attitudes significantly. After the demise of the Mughal Empire, Islamic fundamentalism increased. Muslim elites, seeing a decline in their power, prestige and influence, focused on ways to revive their ascendancy. This generated in India's Muslim elites a preoccupation with the "revival of Islam's lost glory," which has been an important factor in the rise and spread of Islamist ideology the world over.

One of political Islam's most significant thinkers, Syed Abul Ala Maududi, explains the concept of Islamic revivalism in the context of an eternal struggle between "Islam and un-Islam."¹ According to him,

Islamic Revival is neither striking compromises with un-Islam, nor preparing new blends of Islam and un-Islam, but it is cleansing Islam of all the un-Godly elements and presenting it and making it flourish more or less in its original pure form. Considered from this viewpoint, a *mujaddid* [Islamic revivalist] is a most uncompromising person with regard to un-Islam and one least tolerant as to the presence of even a tinge of un-Islam in the Islamic system.²

From the point of view of Islamists, the syncretism emerging under Muslim rule in India amounted to blending Islam with un-Islam. The foremost task for Islamic revival, as they saw it, was to purify Islam by purging it of outside influences. In Maududi's words, any program for Islamic revival must also include a scheme "to wrest authority from the hands of un-Islam and practically reestablish government on the pattern described as 'Caliphate after the pattern of Prophethood' by the Holy Prophet."³ Furthermore, Muslim revivalists must not "rest content with establishing the Islamic system in one or more countries already inhabited by the Muslims." They must "initiate such a strong universal movement as may spread the reformatory and revolutionary message of Islam among mankind at large." The final aim of Islamic revivalism is to "enable Islam to become a predominant cultural force in the world and capture the moral, intellectual and political leadership of mankind."⁴

Most South Asian Muslims recognize Shaykh Ahmad of Sirhind (1563-1624) as the subcontinent's first Islamic revivalist. Shaykh Ahmad questioned the Mughal emperor Akbar's efforts to create a formal Indian religion (*Deen-e-Ilahi*, or "religion of God") and insisted instead on strict adherence to *sharia* (Islamic law). Although Shaykh Ahmad's intellectual efforts did not result in

sharia-based government throughout the subcontinent, they did ensure that Islam retained its separate identity. Shaykh Ahmad did not demand an end to Sufi traditions, and he managed only to circumscribe the influence of other faiths over Muslims rather than ending that influence completely. For that reason, the scholarly Shaykh Ahmad does not serve as a model for modern-day Islamist militants. That mantle is conferred on Shah Waliullah of Delhi (1703-1753), who combined religious scholarship with an active role in political matters.

Shah Waliullah's birth coincided with the slow decline of Mughal influence and the corresponding rise of Hindu political power under the Marathas, a fighting force from India's southwestern Maharashtra region. Shah Waliullah wrote to the Afghan chieftain Ahmed Shah Abdali (1722-1772) asking him to attack the Maratha chieftains and save the Mughal empire from losing territory. In his writings Shah Waliullah emphasized the importance of Muslim political power and ascribed Muslim decline to the rise of secular monarchy at the expense of the religiously guided caliphate. Shah Waliullah's critique of Muslim history and his linking political decline with spiritual decline have significantly influenced subsequent Islamist movements throughout the subcontinent.

Muslims Under British Colonial Rule

Shah Waliullah's efforts had a profound impact on India's Muslims, but were in themselves not sufficient to revitalize the declining Mughal Empire. The Mughals, as well as other autonomous indigenous rulers that emerged during the period of Mughal decline, gradually lost power, and by 1857 all of South Asia—including contemporary India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—had fallen under British colonial rule. The British brought new ideas and technology, as well as other far-reaching changes, into the lives of South Asia's peoples.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries in India witnessed, on the one hand, the rise of the Indian national movement and, on the other, the growth of religious revivalist organizations among both Hindus and Muslims. In 1875 the Arya Samaj (Aryan Society) was established to promote Hindu reformation and to reconvert Hindus who had been "lost" to Islam. Calls for *shuddhi* (purification) and *sangathan* (organization) among the Hindus prompted Muslim organizations to call for *tanzim* (organization) and *tabligh* (evangelism). Muslims were also influenced by the Mujahidin Movement initiated by Sayyid Ahmed Bareili in northwest India (discussed in "The Ideologies of South Asian Jihadi Groups," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Volume 1) and the Faraizi Movement in Bengal.

The Mujahidin Movement's founder Sayyid Ahmed Bareili had been influenced by the teachings of Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdel Wahhab during a pilgrimage to Mecca and had returned to India with the belief that there was a need to purify Islam as it was practiced in India and to reestablish Muslim power. Sayyid Ahmed Bareili designated regions of India under British or Sikh (i.e., non-Muslim) rule as a Land of War (*Dar al-Harb*) and declared that it was the duty of every Muslim to leave these regions and migrate to the Land of Islam, or *Dar al-Islam*. He described the northwestern region of India, along the Afghan border, as *Dar al-Islam* because Muslim Afghan tribes held sway there. Sayyid Ahmed set up cells throughout India that supplied men and money to his base in the northwestern region and continued his jihad until his death in 1831.

Around the same period Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840) initiated a movement to bring the Muslims of Bengal back to the true path of Islam. Like Sayyid Ahmed he, too, had been influenced by Wahhabi teachings during his pilgrimage to Mecca. Shariatullah emphasized a return to the five pillars of Islam and called any deviation from them a *bida* (sinful innovation). As such, his followers were called the "Faraizis" which derives from the word *farz*, meaning obligation.

The influence of the Mujahidin and Faraizi movements receded as the British gradually dispersed the fruits of modernity and introduced representative institutions among Indians, while simultaneously repressing their militant opponents. The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the flowering of Indian nationalism, however. When Muslim leaders Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali launched the Committee for the Defense of the Caliphate to show support for the Ottoman Empire during World War I, the Indian nationalist leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) joined hands with them in an effort to undermine British authority in India. Hindu-Muslim cooperation against the British kept radical Islam at bay for some time and also contained the influence of Hindu religious extremism. But individuals and groups espousing the view that Hindus and Muslims could not be part of one nation persisted, challenging the supporters of secular Indian nationalism.

Fears of being swamped by the Hindu majority in an independent India and the inability of the Indian National Congress led by Gandhi to reassure the Muslim elite about its future gave impetus to the demand for a separate Muslim homeland as a precondition of independence. Indian scholars have also cited the long-term impact of Britain's "divide-and-rule" policy as a key factor leading to the partition of the subcontinent and the birth of Pakistan

in 1947. Although Pakistan itself was later divided by the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the partition of 1947 was final in terms of taking two-thirds of British India's Muslims out of postcolonial independent India.

Indian Secularism and Radical Islam

Modern India's twin founders, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) espoused a secular ideology that called on the state not to favor any religion, to extend equal rights to all religious communities, and to grant minorities special protections and privileges. Serving as India's prime minister from independence in 1947 until his death in 1964, Nehru attempted to translate these secular ideals into the state's political philosophy. But Indian secularism was frowned upon by both radical Muslims and Hindu nationalists. For radical Muslims, the ideal remained an Islamic state and universal Islamic revolution. Hindu nationalists, on the other hand, embraced the ideology of Hindutva, which insists that India's identity be defined in terms of its Hindu origins and that religions of foreign origin, such as Islam and Christianity, be reduced to a subordinate position in India's national life.

The preamble to the Indian Constitution declares India to be a secular state and guarantees religious freedom to all minorities, which includes the right to set up and manage cultural and educational institutions. India's Muslims have lived in a functioning democracy for almost sixty years while Muslim-majority states have been mostly governed by authoritarian regimes. Three of India's eleven presidents, including its current president, have been Muslim, and Muslims have regularly enjoyed representation in parliament and ministerial cabinets. The inclusion of Muslims within the democratic process has, by and large, kept radicalism among Muslims in check. But communal riots, involving Hindus and Muslims, have erupted on several occasions sparked by issues such as the slaughter of cows near a Hindu temple or the playing of music in front of mosques.

The post-partition era has also seen the steady presence of Hindu fundamentalist groups in India's polity, highlighted since the 1990s by the rise of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, or Indian People's Party). The BJP was formed in 1980 but traces its origins to the Hindu Maha Sabha (Hindu Grand Assembly), which was founded in 1915 to defend Hindus against Muslim influence. The BJP rose to prominence in the early 1990s when it started a campaign to rebuild Hindu temples on sites where India's Muslim rulers had allegedly constructed mosques after demolishing temples. This campaign provoked a violent dispute at Ayodhya in northern India on December 6, 1992, when thousands of Hindutva volunteers tore down

the sixteenth-century Babri Masjid (Babar's mosque, named after the first Mughal emperor).

Militant Islamist groups gained some ground as Muslims rioted across India to protest the destruction of the Babri Masjid. The riots were followed by bomb blasts in the Bombay Stock Exchange, an attack Indian officials attributed to collusion among organized crime groups that involved Muslims and Islamist organizations. Ten years later in 2002, large-scale communal riots in the western state of Gujarat also resulted in the death of thousands of Muslims and Hindus.

Contemporary India's encounter with radical Islam has been complicated by India's relationship with its predominantly Muslim neighbor, Pakistan. The two countries have fought three wars since partition, and their dispute over the Himalayan territories of Jammu and Kashmir has been particularly bitter. Since 1989, Islamist groups supported by Pakistan have fought Indian control over Kashmir with a guerilla insurgency and terrorism. Most of the militant Islamist groups currently believed to be operating in India are linked to the conflict in Kashmir. But radical ideological groups beholden to the global Islamist agenda also exist.

Each of India's radical Islamist groups, whether in Kashmir or elsewhere, traces its ideological origins to one or more of three principal sources. The first source is the Darul Uloom Deoband, a conservative madrassa established in 1867 to train Muslim reformers and to combat Western influences. The second is the Jamaat-e-Islami (Islamic Society), which was founded by Abul Ala Maulana in 1941 to serve as the vanguard of global Islamic revolution. And the third is the Wahhabi movement originating in Saudi Arabia.

Darul Uloom Deoband and Its Offshoots

Founded in 1867 by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi, the Darul Uloom (Center of Learning) at Deoband spearheaded a traditionalist reform movement among South Asia's Muslims. The Deobandis, as the seminary's graduates and followers of the movement it inspired are known, attribute the decline of Islamic societies in all spheres of endeavor to Muslims being seduced by an amoral and materialist Western culture, and from assorted Hindu practices believed to have crept into and corrupted the Islamic religion. The basic goal of the Deoband School is purifying Islam of such un-Islamic beliefs and practices. In the training of *ulama*, or religious scholars, the Deobandis emphasize the teachings of the Quran and the practices of Prophet Muhammad as reported in the Hadith. Within a couple of years of its establishment, the Darul Uloom spawned several branches in different parts

of India, the most prominent of which was a sister school called Mazahirul Uloom at Saharanpur. After modernist Muslims set up Aligarh University in 1875 to pursue Western learning, the madrassa at Deoband and its offshoots were increasingly defined as traditionalist centers of learning to rival Western education.

To occupy some of the ground between these antagonists, the Nadwatul Ulama (Congress of Ulama) was set up in 1893 at Kanpur. This institution, which moved to Lucknow in 1898 and still exists today, sought to create a corps of *ulama* who would be conversant with conditions and events occurring around the world. It offered both a challenge to the Aligarh movement and an updated version of Deoband. The curriculum at Nadwatul Ulama was an amalgamation of traditional Islamic curricula, as taught at Deoband, along with modern sciences, vocational training and some paramilitary training.

Deobandi religious scholars have historically been opposed to the West, and this tradition endures today. A statement titled "What Is Terrorism?" on the website of Darul Uloom Deoband argues that the label of "terrorist" has been unfairly applied to Islam and Muslims because the latter are weak and the Zionists and the West are strong:

The powerful commits the destruction and brutal massacre of innocent persons, yet claims to be a defender of freedom, mankind and torchbearer of justice and civilization. The struggle or resistance of the weak for securing their legitimate rights against suppression or aggression is branded as terrorism. The barbarous bombing of several countries by USA, Israeli aggression against Palestinians, Russian atrocities in Chechnya and Chinese brutalities against Muslims in Sinkiang (Xinjiang) are glaring examples of double standards being applied for defining terrorism. According to the definition of terrorism by intellectuals, and thinkers of the West, the conduct of the governments of USA, Israel, Russia, the Philippines and Burma may be regarded as brazen acts of state terrorism. Unfortunately, the organs of (the) United Nations and the media have been utterly unsuccessful in restraining the tyrants and aggressors... The struggle waged by Muslims of Palestine, Chechnya and Sinkiang cannot be called 'terrorism'. That is a legitimate resistance against aggressors and oppressors for securing their just rights.⁵

In an interview in May 2003, the deputy rector of the Deoband seminary, Maulana Abdul Khaliq Madrasi, blamed Zionist and Christian forces for waging a "crusade to realize their dream of greater Israel." He quoted extensively from the speeches and writings of organizations like the Southern Baptist

Convention, the Touch Ministries and Franklin Graham to state that the war in Iraq is a war “between forces that believe in one God and forces upholding Trinity.” In what can be seen as a definitive enunciation of the Deobandi worldview, Madrasi explained:

It is the sacred duty of every Muslim to defend the territory for the defence of the Faith. They must continue their efforts till all threats to Islam are dismissed. In view of the presence of the forces of US and allies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, it is obligatory for the Islamic World and every Muslim, individually and collectively, to ensure that the resistance against the enemy is continued till each and every member of anti-Islam Christian forces is expelled from Muslim countries....There are various verses at several places in the Holy Quran which state that if a Muslim country is attacked, or if Muslims are subjected to atrocities, if they are deprived of their rights, or if their religious beliefs are attacked or if Muslims are deprived of their power and suppressed; in every case it is obligatory for Muslims to fight the enemy. All that is being done by US forces in Iraq; for that reason it is mandatory for Muslims of the world, particularly of Muslims of adjoining countries that they should rise in an organized manner against the USA for defense of the nation and the country....[The] Islamic world should form a united defense instead of taking recourse to verbal rhetoric. They should mobilize all their material and martial resources with unflinching faith to defeat Zionist forces. If that is done, the time is not far off when Muslims will emerge from the life of humiliation and degradation to lead life of success and dignity.⁶

The rhetoric of jihad notwithstanding, the Darul Uloom has not been charged so far with direct involvement in violence or militant training. The only significant Deobandi groups known to be involved in acts of terrorism have operated primarily in Kashmir. These Kashmiri groups—including Harakatul Mujahidin (Movement of Holy Warriors), Harakatul Ansar (Movement of Enablers) and Harakatul Jihad al-Islami (Movement for Islamic Holy War)—are the main Deobandi militant groups. They emerged during the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad and turned their attention to Kashmir after 1989 under the influence of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Jamaat-e-Islami and Its Jihadi Offshoots

The Jamaat-e-Islami, founded in 1941 by Abu Ala Maududi, divided itself into three distinct organizations after partition, one each for India, Pakistan and Kashmir. Maududi moved to Pakistan in 1947, leaving Jamaat-e-

Islami India in the hands of his followers. Like the Arab Muslim Brotherhood founded by Hasan al-Banna, which originated in Egypt but spread to other Arab countries, the Jamaat-e-Islami considered itself the “vanguard of the Islamic Revolution” in South Asia. While the organization in Pakistan, and subsequently Bangladesh, embraced electoral politics in addition to organization and training of cadres, the Jamaat-e-Islami in India stayed away from the electoral fray. Rather, the Indian Jamaat emulated more closely the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in seeking to expand its influence through social and charitable work.

Maududi can be described as the first complete theoretician of the modern Islamic state. He argued that Western civilization was leading the world to doom and only Islam could rescue humanity. For him Islam was not just a religion but an ideology, a way of life. He put forth the concept of “theo-democracy,” which meant a theologically circumscribed democracy or, as Frederic Grare puts it, “limited people’s sovereignty under the suzerainty of God.”⁷

Maududi’s main ideas focused on the notion of a single law (i.e., *sharia*), divine sovereignty and the belief that the struggle between Islam and un-Islam would lead to an Islamic revolution that would bring about the creation of an Islamic state. But Maududi realized that the Islamic state he envisaged would not be able to uphold the rigid demands of Islamic law in democratic conditions unless the population willingly abided by such demands. For that reason, he insisted, it was necessary to Islamize society before creating the Islamic state.

Although the Jamaat-e-Islami agreed to reorder its priorities in Pakistan by demanding an Islamic state before society had been Islamized, no similar revision occurred in India. Pakistan had an overwhelming Muslim majority, and the Pakistani establishment embraced Islam as a national ideology; this encouraged Maududi to believe that he and the Jamaat-e-Islami could secure political power and carry forward the task of the Islamization of society in stages. In India, however, where Muslims remained a minority, the situation was quite different, and the Indian wing of the movement continued to adhere to a purer version of its original ideological agenda.

The Jamaat-e-Islami of India, named “Jamaat-e-Islami Hind,” was organized in 1948, soon after partition, at Allahabad with Abul Lais Nadvi as its head. In 1960 its headquarters were moved to Delhi. The Indian organization’s literature and constitution assert that Jamaat-e-Islami in India has been involved in promoting communal harmony, and emphasizes *dawa* (call to faith) and social work among Muslims. But the Indian section of the movement continues to espouse Maududi’s fundamental worldview. Jamaat-e-

Islami still expects to show Muslims where they went wrong and to make them good Muslims, as well as to convert non-Muslims whenever possible. While the movement does not eschew politics, it is waiting for “the basic tenets of the Jamaat’s ideology that the Divine Guidance should form the basis of our entire activity, expressed in political language as the Sovereignty of God, the Viceregency of Man and the Supremacy of His Law” to be appreciated by the majority of Indians.⁸ Jamaat-e-Islami Hind does not, in other words, consider the conditions in India to be ripe for it to assume an overt political role.

A radical offshoot of this movement is the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), which was banned by the Indian government in 2001 for having links with terrorism.⁹ Founded at Aligarh in 1977 by students tied to Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, SIMI is a radical Islamist organization dedicated to converting India to an Islamic land. Indian officials believe that the rationale for setting up SIMI as a separate militant organization was to insulate Jamaat-e-Islami Hind from a direct political role and to avoid a confrontation between the parent organization and India’s secular state. But SIMI’s open admiration of jihadi and radical views has led—at least on the surface—to serious differences with Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, which has now established a separate student front called the Student’s Islamic Organisation (SIO). Before 1987 all of SIMI’s presidents were senior members of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, but the organization publicly disowned SIMI in 1986 after it called for the “liberation” of India through Islam. This slogan greatly embarrassed the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind leadership, which had consistently tried not to do or say anything openly that would cause the Indian government to brand Jamaat a terrorist or jihadi organization. Covert links between SIMI and Jamaat are alleged to have continued, however, even after their public discord.

SIMI’s expressed goal is to convert India into *Dar al-Islam* by converting everyone there to Islam, and the group has declared jihad against the secular Indian state. SIMI seeks inspiration from the views of Maududi and Jamaat-e-Islami: According to SIMI, Islam is not just a religion but an ideology, the Quran is the only basis for governing human life, and it is the duty of every Muslim to propagate Islam and wage jihad to establish an Islamic state. SIMI is against not only the Western culture and modernization that Maududi critiqued at length, but also the prevalent Hindu Brahmanical culture and idol worship. In other words, the mere existence of other faiths and beliefs is unacceptable, and religious tolerance amounts to diluting Islam’s purity. Jihad, the Umma, and the caliphate are core concepts in the ideology of SIMI, which stridently asserts pan-Islamic ideals.

According to Safdar Nagori, a prominent SIMI leader, Osama bin Laden is “not a terrorist” but rather, an “outstanding example of a true Mujahid” who has undertaken jihad on behalf of the entire community of believers, the Umma. For Nagori other inspiring personalities include Shaykh Ahmed Yassin of Hamas and Masood Azhar of Jaish-e-Muhammad, the hardline Pakistani jihadi group most known for beheading the *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. SIMI held a conference in 1999 under the slogan “Allah’s Party Shall Indeed Prevail” (*Allah Ki Jamaat He Ghalib Rahne Wali Hai*). The conference logo depicted the Quran with the superimposed image of a hand holding a gun against a globe. The conference heard an address in Arabic by Shaykh Yasin, which was primarily an exhortation to jihad. Conference participants were issued certificates declaring the “Quran is our constitution; Jihad is our path; and Martyrdom is our desire.”¹⁰

SIMI targets Muslim youth between the ages of fifteen and thirty for membership, and demands that members retire after the age of thirty. Several former members of SIMI have moved to different parts of India and set up such local radical Islamist groups as the National Democratic Front and the Islamic Youth Center (IYC), based in the southern state of Kerala; Darsghah Jihad-o-Shahadat (School for Jihad and Martyrdom), based in Andhra Pradesh; and the Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam (Muslim National Movement—TMMK) in Tamil Nadu. SIMI and its associated groups publish several magazines in various Indian languages, including *Vivekam* in Malayalam, *Sedhi Madal* in Tamil, *Rupantar* in Bengali, *Iqraa* in Gujarati, *Tahreek* in Hindi, *Al Harkah* in Urdu and the *Shaheen Times* in English and Urdu. In its 2000 annual report, the year before it was banned, SIMI explained its ideological agenda:

It is the responsibility of this (Muslim) ‘last community’, the ‘best community’, the ‘middle community’, to rise up and face the challenges that surround it, to revive *Deen*, to lead and guide not only the Islamic world, but all of humanity along the ‘Straight Path’ and rescue it from the clutches of Satanic power. It is the demand of the time that Muslim youth should struggle for the superiority and establishment of *Deen* and revival of Islam in the light of Holy Quraan [sic] and Sunnah...The end of the *Khilafah* (Caliphate) led to our (Muslim) disintegration into different countries on the basis of nationalism, language and other sectarian prejudices. Naturally therefore, our main responsibility is to strive in those areas, which are directly related to the reinstating of *Khilafah*...It is essential to emphasize that no political party or organization can bring about a solid and constructive change through secularism in the light of their erratic ideologies. The only way to bring about real change [is] through ...establishing an Islamic system of life.”¹¹

The Wahhabi Movement and Its Indian Offshoots

Although the nineteenth-century Bareili and Faraizi movements, originally inspired by the Wahhabis of the Arabian peninsula, fizzled out against the might of the British Empire, some Indian Muslims adopted their puritanical doctrine. The Wahhabis of India describe themselves as “Ahle Hadith” or “Followers of Hadith.” Their numbers have generally remained small, however, due to their limited cultural appeal.

South Asian Islam has been very different from the Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia’s Nejd desert. Sufi influence has been widespread in India, affecting not only Muslims but also the lives of Hindus and Sikhs, who often participate in Sufi rituals and visit Sufi shrines. Wahhabism’s strong dislike of local practices and condemnation of Sufism has prevented its influence in India from being very strong. For years Indian Muslims used “Wahhabi” as a term of denigration for someone who does not respect saints and traditions. It is for this reason that the Deobandis and members of the Jamaat-e-Islami have always avoided the appellation of Wahhabi even when their political cause has been inspired by such ideas.

The global spread of Wahhabi Islam, backed by modern Saudi Arabia’s petro-dollars, has not spared India, however. India’s small Ahle Hadith and Wahhabi communities have expanded with the construction of new madrasas and mosques funded by Gulf Arab governments and individuals. The Afghan jihad of the 1980s and the Kashmir jihad of the 1990s served as opportunities for militant training for radical Muslims, and India’s Wahhabis have won converts from existing Muslim sects, as well as among non-Muslims.

The most prominent Ahle Hadith or Wahhabi-jihadi group operating in India is the Lashkar-e-Taiba (“Army of the Pure.”) It is the armed wing of the Pakistan-based religious organization Markaz Dawa-wal-Irshad (Center for the Call to Righteousness,) which was set up in 1989 by Hafiz Muhammad Sayeed (and subsequently renamed Jamaat-ud-Dawa (Party for the Call to Righteousness.) The group has been illegal in India and Indian-controlled parts of Kashmir since its inception, and was renamed Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Pakistan to circumvent a U.S.-inspired ban on the group as a terrorist organization. Lashkar-e-Taiba is closely linked to the Saudi religious establishment, as well as to Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence, and its ambitions lie beyond Kashmir (discussed in “The Ideologies of South Asian Jihadi Groups,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Volume 1).

A smaller and not yet well-known organization with Wahhabi roots is the Lashkar-e-Jabbar (LJ—Army of the Compelling God). LJ activists reportedly threw acid on two women in Srinagar on August 7, 2000, on the grounds that

their dress did not conform to the Islamic code. Furthermore, several other jihadi organizations with obscure ideological orientations have surfaced in other parts of India. The Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) was reportedly founded in 1996 and, along with the Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam (MULFA), is part of the All Muslim United Liberation Forum of Assam (AMULFA). These groups have engaged in random acts of violence in the northeast region of India, claiming that their ultimate aim is to set up a “greater independent Islamistan” for the Muslims of Assam.

Conclusions

India’s secular democratic constitution empowers the country’s Muslims more than their co-religionists in Muslim majority states. Indian Muslims are able to elect and replace their rulers, in addition to influencing public policy. As a minority, however, Indian Muslims cannot benefit from democracy without coalition building. This need to establish broad-based democratic coalitions has acted as a check on radical and extremist ideologies, and as such, most orthodox and conservative Muslim groups use their political power to operate within the democratic context.

But has democratic India “solved” the problem of radical Islam? Despite India’s clear successes in this regard, Islamist radicals continue to organize and operate outside the political mainstream. While an overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims have stayed away from radical Islamist groups, extremist Islamists remain a threat to India’s stability much in the same way that they threaten democratic societies in the West.

NOTES

1. S. Abul Ala Maududi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam* (translated from Urdu), (Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited, 1963), p. 5.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Maulana Abdul Khaliq Madrasi, “Unity of Islamic World indispensable to defeat anti-Islam Conspiracy,” Interview with the deputy rector Darul Uloom Deoband, available at <http://darululoom-deoband.com/english/index.htm>.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Frederic Grare, *Political Islam in the Indian Subcontinent: The Jamaat-e-Islami* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2001), p. 21.

8. About Jamaat-e-Islami Hind at <http://www.jamaateislamihind.org/about.html>.
9. Indian Ministry of Home Affairs Press Release, "Arrests Made After SIMI declared Unlawful Association," September 28, 2001, at <http://mha.nic.in/pr092001.htm>.
10. Home Ministry of India, "Report on SIMI Activities" (New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs), at <http://www.hvk.org/articles/0901/180.html>.
11. Students Islamic Movement of India, *Saga of Struggle: Annual Report 1998-2000*, (New Delhi: SIMI, 2000) pp. 3, 8, 34.

Democracy, Elections and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

ISRAEL ELAD-ALTMAN

THE AMERICAN-LED MIDDLE EAST REFORM AND DEMOCRATIZATION campaign of the last two years has helped shape a new political reality in Egypt. Opportunities have opened up for dissent. With U.S. and European support, local opposition groups have been able to take the initiative, advance their causes, and extract concessions from the state. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement (MB), which has been officially outlawed as a political organization, is now among the groups facing both new opportunities and new risks.

Western governments, including the government of the United States, are considering the MB and other “moderate Islamist” groups as potential partners in helping to advance democracy in their countries, and perhaps also in eradicating Islamist terrorism. Could the Egyptian MB fill that role? Could it follow the track of the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Indonesian Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), two Islamist parties that, according to some analysts, are successfully adapting themselves to the rules of liberal democracy and leading their countries toward greater integration with, respectively, Europe and a “pagan” Asia?

This article examines how the MB has responded to emerging realities in Egypt, and particularly how it has handled the ideological and practical challenges and dilemmas that have arisen during the past two years. To what extent has the MB movement accommodated its outlook to these new circumstances? What are its objectives and its vision of the future political order? How has it reacted to U.S. overtures and to the U.S.-led reform and democratization campaign? How did it navigate its relations with, on the one hand, the Egyptian regime, and on the other, opposition forces, as the country as a whole headed toward the two dramatic elections of Autumn 2005? And finally, to what extent can the MB be considered a force that might lead Egypt toward liberal democracy?

The Founding Vision

Five documents constantly posted on the Muslim Brotherhood's official site (www.ikhwanonline.com), and attributed to the movement's founder, Shaykh Hasan al-Banna, clearly state the movement's key tenets and goals. The documents define the MB as a community of Muslims dedicated to the rule of Allah's law who seek to revive Islam globally. The MB aims to fulfill two primary goals: liberating "the Islamic homeland" from any foreign rule, and establishing in that free homeland an Islamic state that will follow Islam's rules, implement its social order, and propagate its principles. To achieve these ultimate goals, however, the MB must first implement seven intermediary stages, prescribed by al-Banna and arranged hierarchically.

At the bottom of the hierarchy is the formation of the Muslim person; the next step up focuses on the formation of the Muslim family, which leads to a Muslim society that will select a Muslim government. Adhering fully to Allah's law, the Muslim government will establish an Islamic state—a Caliphate—that, in turn, will liberate all occupied Muslim lands and draw together all other Muslim states in a union. The goal of that union will be to spread Islam around the world. Al-Banna declares that only Islam can solve all of the problems—political, economic, social, domestic, and external—that currently afflict the Muslim Nation, and that working to establish an Islamic government is a religious duty (*faridhah*).

Brother v. Brother

On May 5, 2005, Muhammad Mahdi 'Akif, the MB's General Guide and its supreme leader, issued a missive (*risalah*) titled "The Muslim Brotherhood: Dotting the I's—Clear Positions on Specific Issues."¹ Starting with the question "Who are we and what do we want?" 'Akif reiterated verbatim the MB goals and principles set out in the al-Banna documents mentioned above. Two months later, he repeated some of the points made in that *risalah*.²

Why did 'Akif issue such a missive? Why should the Muslim Brethren be reminded of their identity and goals? At the time, the MB's unprecedented street demonstrations seemed to signal a dramatic change in the movement's strategy and raised questions, inside as well as outside the MB, about the objectives and implications of the demonstrations. But while these events may have influenced 'Akif's timing, the *risalah* must also be considered in its wider context. For almost two decades, two distinctive age groups within the MB have been waging an internal ideological struggle.

The first group—the “old guard”—was formed during the harsh experience of the MB’s repression under the former Egyptian ruler Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser. For example, ‘Akif, who had joined the MB before al-Banna’s assassination in 1949, was sentenced to death after the failed 1954 assassination attempt on ‘Abd al-Nasser and was imprisoned until 1974. He and others of his generation are generally more zealous, conservative, and committed primarily to long-term religious missionary work (*dawa*) and to preserving the movement’s unity.

By contrast, the second or middle generation is made up largely of the student leaders of the 1970s, when Anwar al-Sadat allowed the MB to take over the university campuses. Several of its representatives are more open to change. They assign greater importance to the political work of the MB, rather than its missionary activities. They also see Egypt—rather than the Muslim world—as the MB’s real frame of reference, and show interest in building alliances with other political organizations. The old guard, meanwhile, remains deeply suspicious of other political groups and unforgiving toward such former political rivals as the Nasserists, Arab-Nationalists and Marxists.

The dominance of the old guard in the MB leadership caused some second-generation members to leave the movement and form the al-Wasat Party, often described as the “Center Party,” in 1995. But others stayed, including ‘Abd al-Mun’im Abu al-Futuh, one of the most dynamic and articulate spokesmen of the second-generation reformist faction and a member of the MB’s supreme decision-making body, the Guidance Bureau (Maktab al-Irshad). He asserts that Islamic discourse is not holy; rather, it is based on human judgment (*ijtihad*) and can be revised and updated. The Islamists’ arguments are therefore the products of their human understanding, not of Islam. And unlike traditional Islamists, Abu al-Futuh sees democracy as more than just an unavoidable means of reaching power: It is a unique fruit of human experience that has intrinsic value. He rejects, moreover, the religious component of democracy. To him, democracy simply means rule by the people, not “the people ruling by Allah’s law.”³

Abu al-Futuh considers the Caliphate to be a purely political, nonreligious matter. In modern times it is akin to other types of political unity, such as the European Union. This view clearly contradicts the traditional MB understanding of itself as a Sunni source of religious authority (*marja’iyyah*) to fill the vacuum left after the abolition of the Caliphate. To mainstream MB thinkers, the relative weakness of Sunni establishments compared to Shiite ones makes this a critical issue. They still argue forcefully that the movement’s main goal is to reestablish the sovereignty of the religious source of authority.⁴

In a radical departure from this vision, Abu al-Futuh and his allies advocate true political pluralism, equal citizenship for all the country's nationals, regardless of religion, and rotation of power in accord with the people's choice. It would even be acceptable to them if a Christian were elected to power in a Muslim-majority country.⁵ Abu al-Futuh seeks, furthermore, to eliminate the MB in its present form and to terminate all its covert and external activities, including its involvement with the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. He wants it to become instead an Egyptian political party, fully open to public scrutiny. Abu al-Futuh asserts that resistance to this change comes not only from the MB's old guard, but also from the regime itself. He also claims that government repression of MB activists has been directed primarily against potential reformers, suggesting that the regime is colluding with MB hardliners to block the movement's evolution in a more democratic direction.⁶

Muhammad Mahdi 'Akif, for his part, upholds in his statements the old line that the MB's guiding purpose is to liberate the Islamic homeland and to establish a free Islamic state. The MB firmly believes, he insists, that Islam's precepts and rules provide the one true and indivisible way of organizing people's affairs in this world and the next. The total nature of Islam as an immutable principle cannot be overemphasized:

This great religion must be taken as one integrated whole, each part of which can function only with the other. The faith (*'aqidah*), the law (*sharia*) and the acts of devotion (*'ibadat*) are one integral whole, and it is absolutely impossible to separate religion from politics, or religion from the state, or the acts of devotion from (political) leadership. This is the MB's faith.⁷

Mahmud 'Izzat, the MB's Secretary General, also speaks for this approach.⁸ Freedom, according to 'Akif, entails a commitment to *sharia*, and the people's right to rule themselves must not contradict Islamic laws. Human beings cannot pass laws forbidding what is permitted or permitting what is forbidden, such as adultery or alcohol.⁹ When asked how many Egyptians he thought would want to live under *sharia*, 'Akif replied that the Egyptian people as a whole want to be ruled by Islamic religious law.¹⁰

Change or No Change

Despite their defense of the MB's founding principles, however, the old guard has not been immune to the pressures and opportunities produced by the American-led Greater Middle East Initiative. On March 3, 2004,

in a formal attempt to accommodate the MB's ideology to the new challenge of democracy, 'Akif dramatically unveiled the movement's Reform Initiative shortly after his accession to leadership.¹¹ The section on political reform confirms the MB's support for "a republican, parliamentary, constitutional and democratic political order, in the framework of the principles of Islam" and affirms that "the people are the source of all powers, so that no individual, party, community or society can claim the right to power, unless it is derived from a free and true popular will." The Reform Initiative also affirms the MB's commitment to the principle of the alternation of power through general, free and fair elections.

These formulations were designed to refute critics who contend that the MB's belief in the inseparability of politics and religion proves that its true goal is to establish a theocracy, and that its declared acceptance of political pluralism and the alternation of power is insincere. Because the MB claims to represent Islam, these critics conclude, it must view its political rivals as Islam's rivals. The MB would never allow another free election once it won power, as an electoral defeat would mean taking government away from Islam and handing it to non-Islamic forces.¹² In response to such criticisms, Abu al-Futuh made the previously mentioned assertion that Islamist discourse was not holy, but a mere product of human judgment or *ijtihad*. This position, however, has not been adopted by the movement as a whole.

The MB has stipulated that it does not seek to set up a religious state or a religious government; rather, it says that its goal is to establish a civil government and a civil state in which Islam is the source of authority. Accordingly, *sharia* has a supreme, divine form of authority, while the government derives its authority from the people it rules.¹³

These formulations obviously skirt the core problem. The Islamic state, which according to the MB's stated goals should implement *sharia* and propagate Islam, can be nothing but a religious state.¹⁴ Indeed, the MB's March 2004 Reform Initiative declares in its introductory section that the ultimate goal of reform is the implementation of *sharia*. It goes on to say:

Our only hope to achieve progress in all the aspects of life is by returning to our religion and implementing our *sharia*... We have a clear mission—working to put in place Allah's law, on the basis of our belief that it is the real, effective way out of all of our problems—domestic or external, political, economic, social or cultural. This is to be achieved by forming the Muslim individual, the Muslim home, the Muslim government, and the state which will lead the Islamic states, reunite the scattered Muslims, restore their glory, retrieve for

them their lost lands and stolen homelands, and carry the banner of the call to Allah in order to make the world happy with Islam's blessing and instructions.¹⁵

This unambiguous restatement of the MB's traditional goals within the Reform Initiative makes it clear that these goals remain a central part of the MB's current formal position. No document of similar importance to the Reform Initiative has been published since the Initiative was announced.

The MB Political Party

After years of internal debate, the Egyptian MB has more or less accepted the strategy of setting itself up as a political party. To overcome the legal prohibition against religious parties, the MB leadership has accepted the idea that it should present the MB as a civil party with an Islamic source of authority. But unlike Abu al-Futuh's vision of the MB party as a *substitute* for the present movement, 'Akif accepts its formation only as an *addition* to the movement. He insists that the MB should remain fundamentally a broader Islamic movement and that the party should serve only as the movement's political organ in Egypt. He holds that a political party can never perform all the movement's missionary, educational and social tasks. Only by maintaining its non-party structure can the Egyptian MB continue the international aspect of its missionary work and its alliance with the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood¹⁶ (It should be mentioned that 'Akif had once served as director of the MB's Islamic Center in Munich—the movement's first stronghold in Europe—from 1980 to 1986, and is very close to the MB international branches).

Despite internal disagreements, and although new reformists like Abu al-Futuh reject the international dimension of the MB as well as other key elements of its ideology, the essential unity of the movement is preserved at the end of the day. When asked, during a live dialogue on an Islamist site, about disagreements concerning political reform inside the Guidance Bureau, Abu al-Futuh responded:

There are no disagreements, in the sense some may imagine, in the Guidance Bureau concerning the nature of reform. Our vision as the Muslim Brotherhood regarding reform, on which we all agree, was presented in the Initiative announced by the General Guide, hence it defines the positions of us all, and there is no room for any disagreement over political reform.¹⁷

The Unifying Hostility to the United States

In contrast to other matters, the Muslim Brotherhood's position regarding the United States and its Middle East reform and democratization program has generated little open debate. 'Akif's statements over the last two years make it clear that the MB rejects the notion that the United States is seeking real reform or democracy in the region. Rather, the American project is seen as an attempt to rob the countries of the region, to enfeeble the faith of Arabs and Muslims, and to strip them of their identity.¹⁸ According to 'Akif, the crisis in Darfur is an American-Zionist plot designed to create internal friction in Sudan, divide it into small fragments, and steal its wealth.¹⁹ Other MB spokesmen have declared that the U.S. reform campaign is part of a religious war against Islam. Its real purpose, they say, is to achieve control over Arab and Muslim hearts and minds, which is illustrated by the pressure exerted on Middle Eastern governments to change school curricula.²⁰

'Akif viewed reports of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom that discussed the state of religious freedom in Egypt as yet another demonstration of blatant American interference in internal Egyptian affairs.²¹ He was especially offended by the commission's demand that the Egyptian constitution be changed "so that it will guarantee the right of every person to adopt any religion or principles whenever he so chooses, which means the abolition of the divinely ordained punishment for apostasy (*hadd al-riddah*)."²² (That punishment, one recalls, is death).

In another missive to his followers, 'Akif placed the new American initiative in an historical context, describing it as merely the most recent framework for managing U.S. regional interests.²³ Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States, now the only superpower, has been able—with its Western allies—to specifically target the Muslim World. Under the cover of the War on Terror, they have occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, given "the Zionist entity" a free hand to oppress the Palestinians, and increased their interference in Muslim countries in order to influence their identity and culture.

Globalization, furthermore, has enabled the West to dominate the economies of the Muslim states, 'Akif argues. The United States is promoting secularism, political liberalism and economic freedom throughout the world so as to solidify its power. Some economic growth in developing countries will foster global commercial exchange in a way that will secure U.S. superiority and "soft domination." American policy seeks not only to change governments, but also and more importantly to change the culture and identity of Middle Eastern societies. The struggle, then, is between two cultural projects: the Western one and the Islamic one.

Common Ground?

Given this attitude, is there any room for meaningful dialogue between the MB and the American government? MB meetings with representatives of foreign governments can be construed as illegal unless they are also attended by Egyptian officials. Reports of a meeting between several MB figures and representatives of European embassies in Cairo led to a wave of arrests of MB members.²⁴ Aware of the risk, MB spokesmen have systematically denied having contact with U.S. officials, even though such meetings have indeed taken place.

Beyond the MB's fundamental animosity toward the United States, then, this risk poses a major obstacle to dialogue at the present time. 'Akif has stated that, if the MB were to become the government or a part of it, it would open a dialogue with the United States were the United States willing to change its current agenda vis-à-vis Islam and the Middle East.²⁵ For his part Abu al-Futuh has argued that, in principle, conflict with the United States need not be a barrier to a dialogue; after all, the Prophet Muhammad met with infidels and apostates. He says the MB does not conduct such a dialogue for a different reason—namely, because it is futile. Egypt cannot benefit from it. Any possible dialogue in the future, moreover, must not infringe on Egypt's independence, or its major economic and political interests, or its “culture, civilization, concepts and values.”²⁶

The view that no good can be served by dialogue has been echoed by another second-generation spokesman, 'Issam al-'Aryan. He rejects the American government's overtures as entirely insincere, asking, “Will the West accept a different model of democracy in Islamic countries, a model which uses Islam as source of authority [*marja'iyyah*], where religion is a fundamental core of politics, where the people have the power to appoint, observe and dismiss [the ruler], yet sovereignty [*hakimiyyah*] belongs to the *sharia*?” And will the West accept an Islamic model that gives peoples the right to elect parliaments, state councils and local bodies to make laws “in the framework of the Islamic source of authority, so that these legislative bodies will neither permit that which is forbidden [by *sharia*] nor forbid that which is permitted [by it]?”²⁷

Practical Politics

On March 27, 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood organized a street demonstration in Cairo to call for political reforms. It was the first demonstration on domestic issues since President Mubarak came to power, and it

triggered a series of other protests in both Cairo and the countryside that led to the arrest of as many as 1500 MB members, including senior ones. This development broke a long-standing informal truce between the regime and the MB—a truce that allowed the movement to practice its missionary or *dawa* activities as long as it refrained from challenging the regime in the political arena. The demonstrations indicated to many that the MB was abandoning its traditional strategy of avoiding outright confrontation with the state.²⁸

Yet by the summer of 2005, the MB demonstrations were over. Why were they held in the first place, and why were they stopped? Right from the start, there were signs that the MB did not want a full confrontation with the regime: the demonstrations condemned Mubarak's policies rather than the president personally, and they did not involve massive numbers of demonstrators. As the first demonstrations were taking place, moreover, both 'Akif and his deputy Muhammad Habib announced—on March 29 and 30, respectively—that the MB would support the presidential candidacy of Mubarak or his son Gamal, provided that the elections were free, fair and unhindered by the Emergency Laws (which were implemented in 1967, lifted in 1980, and re-imposed in 1981, following Anwar al-Sadat's assassination. These laws grant authorities power to detain people considered a threat to national security without charge and practically indefinitely, to try people before military tribunals, and to ban public demonstrations).

According to an account attributed to a former senior MB official, the MB leadership organized the demonstrations only to mollify their lower ranks who, impressed by the impact of the Kifaya movement's demonstrations, were dismayed by the MB's absence from what was perceived as a wide popular movement. According to the MB leadership, it had notified the authorities in advance about the time, place and number of participants in all but one of the demonstrations. Nevertheless, the authorities suppressed them, making mass arrests that included Mahmud 'Izzat and 'Issam al-'Aryan. The MB then allegedly reached a deal with the regime in which MB prisoners would be gradually released (lower-ranking members first, as a cover); the MB would continue to hold small-scale protests to appease its rank and file, but would coordinate these demonstrations with the authorities and not with other opposition groups; and the MB would not support any of the opposition presidential candidates.²⁹

MB leaders have denied the existence of such a deal, but they have failed to explain why they abruptly ended the demonstrations. The MB prisoners, in any case, have been duly released, the highest-ranking ones last. With the release of 'Issam al-'Aryan on October 16, 2005, there were no MB members

in prison for the first time since 1995.³⁰ The MB's younger, more radical grassroots activists reportedly supported continuation of the demonstrations, as did others who are more closely affiliated with the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood.³¹

Election Maneuvers

The MB's muddled handling of its demonstrations is linked to its maneuvers regarding the September 2005 presidential election. It first agreed—along with such other opposition groups as Kifaya, the al-Tagammu' Party and the Nasserist Party—to boycott the election, just as it had boycotted the referendum on changing the clause of the Constitution that regulated elections (clause 76). Not surprisingly, Abu al-Futuh served as the MB coordinator with the other opposition organizations. But subsequently, on August 21, the MB issued a statement overturning this agreement and urging its members, as well as the Egyptian people at large, to take part in the election. While the statement said that MB members were free to choose their own candidates, its call on them not to support repression and corruption was clearly meant to discourage voting for Mubarak.

Because the participation rate was more important to the regime than Mubarak's margin of victory—that victory never being in doubt—this policy shift actually served the regime rather well.³² MB leaders explained their revised stance on the election in pragmatic terms. While they had opposed the way clause 76 was amended and boycotted the referendum that approved it, once it had passed, it made no sense to let the ruling party monopolize the election.³³

Their decision was widely criticized by the membership, however, particularly at the grassroots level.³⁴ Many argued that, by breaking the boycott upheld by most of Egypt's opposition political parties and groups, the MB afforded the election, and indeed the regime itself, undeserved legitimacy.³⁵ According to one report, about two-thirds of the MB membership advocated adherence to the boycott.³⁶

The MB's policy shift on the presidential election demonstrates yet again the movement's continuing oscillation between two competing orientations: its political orientation that led it, at least temporarily, to join other opposition groups in an attempt to force political change; and its *dawa* orientation that makes it unwilling to risk the long-term endeavor of Islamizing society for short-term political gains. The September election revealed that, as in other instances, the *dawa* side represented by the General Guide 'Akif was able to overrule the political side represented by Abu al-Futuh.

As the November 2005 parliamentary elections approached, the MB announced that its candidates would now identify themselves as representing the MB rather than “the Islamic Trend,” as they had for fifteen years. University campus activists were also instructed to identify themselves as belonging to the MB. These measures seemed to be an effort by the movement to gain official recognition as a legitimate political organization, posing a challenge to the Mubarak regime. Yet just as it launched that challenge, the MB declared that it would not nominate candidates in electoral districts where senior government figures would be running, as a gesture to the government.³⁷

Conclusions

So far, the MB leadership’s decisions and formal pronouncements reflect continuing adherence to the organization’s *dawa* orientation. Nervous about sliding into a fatal confrontation with the regime, the old-guard leaders have undercut repeated attempts by second-generation leaders and their impatient younger supporters to confront the regime directly. In securing the movement’s survival, the MB’s missionary endeavor and its commitment to the Islamic state and implementation of *sharia* take preference.

Although the second-generation leaders clearly offer a more pragmatic approach than the older generation, one should not assume that the MB will become a liberal-democratic movement once the old guard leaves the scene. Second-generation leaders have not abandoned key MB tenets; neither have they left the movement nor joined the reformist al-Wasat Party, which according to some, is the Egyptian ideological equivalent of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Indeed, while commenting on the AKP as a potential model for Egypt and for the MB, ‘Issam al-‘Aryan has argued that the AKP is no longer an Islamist party. While AKP may have begun as an Islamist party, al-‘Aryan says it has since shed its Islamism in favor of a so-called “believing secularism.” He says that Turkey differs fundamentally from Arab societies, which consider Islam to be a “religion, life and state” all rolled into one. In these societies, Islamic culture is so deeply entrenched that it cannot be uprooted even by the billions of dollars spent on *Radio Sawa*, *Al-Hurrah* television, or similar American-backed media operations.³⁸ The MB, in sum, is not a force for liberal-democratic change.

The ideological conservatism of the Egyptian MB has helped the movement preserve its organizational unity and secure funds from rich Islamist benefactors abroad. Yet it has also contributed to its loss of influence over MB branches outside Egypt. The Syrian MB, for example, has adopted a more practical approach. And the International Organization of the Muslim

Brotherhood has been gradually transformed, in a sense, by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and his recently established World Association of Muslim Clerics, which now claims to be the preeminent source (the *marja'iyyah*) of fundamentalist Sunni authority—a role long claimed by the Egyptian MB.³⁹

Back in Egypt, however, the MB's gains in the parliamentary elections, held during November and December 2005, vindicate its tactics in the preceding year. Its withdrawal from participation in street demonstrations, and from confrontation with the government on the presidential election, made possible the release of its activists from prison, and allowed it to concentrate on the parliamentary elections.

It is difficult to assess whether these gains reflect a real rise in the MB's popularity, its campaigning capabilities, or the declining capacities of the ruling National Democratic Party to mobilize support; or whether they are primarily the product of reduced governmental manipulation of election results in the first two rounds, compared to past elections, resulting from external, primarily American, pressures on the regime to allow free and fair elections. It is clear, however, that the regime's decision in the third round to physically prevent MB supporters from voting by the use of brute force, which led to bloodshed, reflected its frustration at the way the MB had benefited from the relative freedom prevailing in the first two rounds. At any rate, the MB is seen in Egypt and elsewhere as the clear victors, which is likely to further increase their popularity and encourage other Islamists around the world.

It remains to be seen how much longer the government will be able to deny the movement legal and political status. Once the MB is recognized as a party, and with its wins in parliament, it will be able to nominate a candidate for the next presidential election. In free elections, the MB winning the presidency can not be ruled out. Another open question is how the outcome of the parliamentary elections will influence the MB internal debate and future direction on key issues: Will it now determine what it wants to be: a political party or a religious society? Will it decide to adapt its orientation to its new position as an alternative to the present regime? And will it rethink its attitude towards the US and enter into a dialog with it both about itself and the future of Egypt?

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The Zawahiri Letter and the Strategy of Al-Qaeda

SHMUEL BAR & YAIR MINZILI

THE STRATEGY AND IDEOLOGY OF AL-QAEDA have evolved constantly since it was formed. The direction of this evolution has been determined by a number of factors: the theater in which the organization operated, the operational opportunities that presented themselves, and the ideological and practical predilections of the religious and operational leaders of both the radical Islamic camp in general and al-Qaeda in particular.

The jihad in Iraq, coming on the heels of the destruction of the Taliban and the shattering loss of al-Qaeda's Afghan safe haven, is arguably the most profound development that the "global jihad" movement has undergone since the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. It has, predictably, generated an unprecedented amount of new strategic thinking within various wings of the movement. Some have expressed single-minded enthusiasm for the goal of reestablishing an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq, the historical land of the Abbasid Caliphate, and they have focused methodically on devising a plan for achieving this victory. Others have engaged in genuine soul-searching regarding the strategic mistakes that contributed to the downfall of the Taliban's Islamic emirate, and have attempted to learn practical lessons from that defeat and implement changes.

The letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab Zarqawi, recently intercepted and published by the United States, fits into this picture of al-Qaeda's strategic planning on the one hand, and its attempt to learn lessons from the Afghan debacle on the other. Since the letter was released, many experts have analyzed its content and raised questions regarding its authenticity. The aim of this article is not to enter into that rather heated debate about whether the letter is authentic or, rather, American or Iranian "black propaganda"—though the questions raised by those who doubt its genuineness are treated. In fact, textual and contextual analysis alone cannot prove authenticity in this case, but nothing in the letter's style or content definitively show it to be a part of an influence operation. Given that the letter may well be genuine, it

deserves serious study in the context of the radical Islamic movement's ideological flux in Iraq and elsewhere, and of a tension that has arisen between the "old guard" of al-Qaeda and the operational echelon in "the field."

The Zawahiri Letter

On July 9, 2005 a 6,500-word letter from Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second in command, to Zarqawi, the "emir" of the organization in Iraq, was intercepted. It was later published on October 6. The letter has aroused much debate, not only over its authenticity, but also—for those who accepted its authenticity—over its strategic implications.

The language of the letter is a mixture of Islamic eschatological thought and political pragmatism. It opens with an "update" on Zawahiri's situation. He reassures Zarqawi that the arrest of Abu Faraj (Abu Faraj al-Libbi), the purported No. 3 in the al-Qaeda organization, has not led to additional arrests. He also expresses concern about the activities of the Pakistani army against the *mujahidin*, and discusses some financial matters. At the end of the letter, Zawahiri offers Zarqawi a "bibliography" of his works to read. Most of the letter, however, presents a sophisticated, logical analysis of the goals of the jihad in Iraq and the strategies for achieving those goals.

The short-term goal of the jihad, according to the letter, is the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq and the establishment of an emirate—an Islamic political entity commanded by an emir—that will eventually become the nucleus of a Caliphate. The long-term goal is the toppling of the secular regimes in the neighboring countries and uniting them into one Caliphate.

The letter links the struggle in Iraq to prophecies in the Quran and the Hadith. Fulfilling these prophecies is a necessary condition for Islam's final victory. It is a great honor for Zarqawi to lead this struggle, therefore, which is so significant because it is within the "heart of the Islamic world." This area includes "al-Sham [greater Syria], Egypt, and the neighboring states of the [Arabian] Peninsula and Iraq," and Zawahiri likens the area to "a bird whose wings are Egypt and Syria, and whose heart is Palestine."¹ It is where "the greatest battles in the history of Islam" have been fought. It is also the land where the "greatest battle of Islam in this era" is now being waged, and the great battles between Islam and atheism foretold in the Hadith will take place.² Iraq is, therefore, more important to the final victory of Islam than the battles taking place on the periphery of the Arab Muslim world—in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Bosnia.

In Zawahiri's assessment, the enemies of Islam in this great struggle are both the external enemy—"idolatrous infidels" (*al-kufr al-mushrikin*)—and

the enemies within Islam. The latter, he says, are “traitorous apostates” (*al-murtadin al-kha'inin*) who belong to “the community of renegade deviation” (*ahl al-zigh al-mariqin*) and embrace polytheism (*shirk*) and secularist beliefs (*aqa'id 'almaniya*). They are “corrupters” (*mokharifin*) of God’s word—usually a reference to the Jews and Christians who “corrupted” the word that God gave them—and “forgers” (*wid'ain*) of the Hadith. The letter does not specifically name the political groups or figures who correspond to these appellatives, but it seems that they are the secularists and the Shia.

Zawahiri divides the work of the *mujahidin* in Iraq into four distinct stages that represent short- and medium-range goals. The first order of business is to expel the Americans from Iraq, which may happen more quickly than expected if the United States follows the pattern it set in Vietnam. Secondly, the *mujahidin* must establish an Islamic authority or emirate over whatever Sunni territory in Iraq can be brought under its control. This stage must be prepared for during the struggle to expel the Americans, Zawahiri warns, in order to prevent other forces from taking power. Because the United States may repeat the kind of abrupt and hasty withdrawal it executed in Vietnam, Iraq may well become subject to whatever party is most effectively organized to take control. The fledgling emirate must also expect to be in a constant state of war with an enemy who is trying to prevent the stability necessary for the emirate to become a Caliphate. The third stage of the struggle is extending the jihad to the secular (*'almaniya*) countries neighboring Iraq. And the fourth stage, which could be launched simultaneously or later, is the clash with Israel.

Although Zawahiri focuses on these short- and medium-term goals, two long-term aims can be deduced from the letter as well. The first objective entails “homogenizing” Islam by “correcting mistakes of ideology” among Muslims—that is, the “re-conversion” of all Muslims not simply to Sunni Islam, but also to the Wahhabi school and the elimination of the ‘Ashari-Matriddi school and others. This goal cannot be achieved by force or in a short time; it is not the role of the *mujahidin*, but calls rather for generations of prosthetizing (*dawa*) and education. The second objective is the expansion of the Islamic Caliphate throughout the whole of Iraq, al-Sham—Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine—Egypt, and the Arabian peninsula. Even these are not final borders, however, as the Caliphate is eventually supposed to spread its domain over the entire Land of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) from North Africa to Southeastern Asia, and ultimately, over the entire world.

The letter delves into the structure of the future emirate or Caliphate and the desired form of governance in Iraq. Zawahiri stresses that the *mujahidin*

cannot rule by force or take power directly. The government should adhere to the Islamic principles of *shura* (consultation) and of “commanding good and forbidding evil” (*amr bil-ma’aruf wa-nahi ‘an al-munkar*). It should also be based on the *ahl al-al wal-aqd ahl ar-ray* (those who allow and bind) and the *ulama* who are experts in Sharia.

Criticism of Zarqawi’s Strategy

Zawahiri’s description of the objectives of the jihad in Iraq serves as a background for his critique of Zarqawi’s strategy. Zawahiri does not speak to Zarqawi as a superior officer or commander, or as the deputy of the man to whom Zarqawi has given his oath of allegiance (*bayah*). Rather, he speaks as a concerned colleague who advises from afar with a certain degree of trepidation, knowing that he is not “in the field” and does not know all the facts. Zawahiri does not attempt to exert authority over Zarqawi; rather, he tries to lead him through an argument that is calculated to bring him to certain conclusions.

Zawahiri does not in any way challenge the religious justification for Zarqawi’s actions; his arguments against certain tactics are purely pragmatic and political. While noting that “purity of faith and correct way of living” may be a necessary condition for Islamist victory in Iraq, he cautions that it is not in itself sufficient. As proof of this fact, he reminds Zarqawi of three early would-be Caliphs who fell short of achieving their goals, and of the mistakes of the Taliban and contemporary *mujahidin* organizations that disintegrated when their leaders were killed.^{3, 4} Drawing on the quotes of great scholars, that success can be achieved only if one keeps an eye on the target and does not succumb to his emotions; “courage in a man does suffice but not like the courage of one who is wise” and “circumspection precedes courage.”

According to the letter, the success of the *mujahidin* in all four stages mentioned above depends on support of two main sectors—the Muslim population and the *ulama*. Zawahiri says the jihad in Iraq cannot succeed without gaining a minimal level of popular support. The enemy—particularly the secular regimes in the region—knows this and attempts to discredit the jihad movement among the masses. It is important to recognize, furthermore, that the Muslim masses unite against an external enemy, particularly if that enemy is Jewish and/or American. This hostility, rather than true Islamic objectives, is the real motivation behind the insurgency. Zawahiri warns against repeating the mistakes of the Taliban who, because they restricted participation in government to their tribal affiliates from the Kandahar region, were then unable to rally the population against the American invasion. Equally critical

is not offending the *ulama* of any school. Zawahiri proposes downplaying the differences between the schools (*madhab*, pl. *madhahib*) on the grounds that the masses do not understand why such differences matter. To prove his point, he reminds Zarqawi of a series of eminent *ulama* of the 'Ashari or Matridi schools who have played prominent roles in jihad, including the Taliban leader Mullah Omar who was a Hanafi-Matridi.⁵

On the basis of this analysis, Zawahiri takes issue with three elements of Zarqawi's strategy toward the Iraqi jihad: The indiscriminate massacre of Shia and desecration of their mosques, the very structure of the jihadi movement as a movement led by non-Iraqis, and the public beheadings of hostages. These actions, the letter suggests, are counterproductive to the short-term goal of the jihad—that is, the expulsion of the Americans and the creation of a Caliphate in Iraq. The letter discusses the first two issues with a great deal of circumspection, but registers disapproval of the beheadings much more forcefully.

The arguments regarding the attacks on the Shia address both theological and practical matters. On the theological level, Zawahiri does not disagree with most elements of Zarqawi's *takfir* (excommunication) of the Shiite leaders. He describes the Shia pejoratively as the “twelver *Rafida* school” that is based on “excess and falsehood” (*ghulu, kadhb*), maligns the companions of the Prophet, and believes in an infallible and omnipotent hidden Mahdi. The Shia, he says, collaborated with the enemies of Islam both in the past, during the Crusades, and in the current invasion of Iraq. In the end, the conflict between an Islamic state and the Shia is inevitable.

Despite these facts, however, the letter proposes that the conflict with the Shia be delayed until the short-term goals are achieved. At the present stage, this conflict is counterproductive. It alienates the Sunni “common folk” whose support is, as noted above, a prerequisite for success; it distracts the *mujahidin* from the primary goal of expelling the Americans; and it is impractical because it is impossible to kill all the Shia in Iraq. Zawahiri distinguishes between the leaders of the Shia and the “common folk.” The former are apostates of Islam. The latter have simply been misled ideologically and, therefore, are to be forgiven due to their ignorance. They can be redeemed by *Dawa*. To this Zawahiri adds that Iran is holding over one hundred al-Qaeda prisoners and may take revenge on them if Shia in Iraq are indiscriminately murdered.

The second issue is also approached with circumspection. Zawahiri asks, in the light of his observation that the real motivation of the Iraqi insurgency is nationalist and not truly Islamic, whether it is prudent that the non-Iraqi

Zarqawi serve as leader of the insurgency. Zawahiri does not expand on this subject, but his position is clear.

The third issue is addressed with much more firmness. Zawahiri clearly states that even Zarqawi's supporters among the Muslim population will not accept the scenes of slaughter of hostages. While he allows that such actions may be religiously-justified revenge for the enemy's sins against Muslims, he assesses them according to the calculus of political pragmatism. The benefit that comes from "putting fear into the hearts of the Crusaders" does not counterbalance the damage that these actions cause the *mujahidin* in the media; the effect of these pictures in the media undermine the battle for the "hearts and minds" of the worldwide Muslim Umma.

The Letter's Context

It is important to recognize that this letter does not stand on its own, and should be scrutinized in relation to a growing corpus of documents that reflects the evolving strategic thought of al-Qaeda. The letter responds to the ideological doctrine that motivates Zarqawi, a doctrine spelled out in a series of audiotapes on the meaning of jihad and its laws.

The tone of the letter also supports what is known about the relationship between Zawahiri and Zarqawi. While it is not a relationship between equals, neither is it one between a commander and his subordinate. It is reminiscent of the relationship between al-Qaeda and its "affiliate" organizations, which cooperate with the main al-Qaeda but are not subordinate to it—organizations that are empowered for independent action but open to counsel. Zawahiri sees himself as able and even obliged to offer advice by dint of his age, scholarship, status in al-Qaeda, relations with bin Laden and experience in waging jihad—first in the Egyptian Jihad, and then in al-Qaeda. Due to the pivotal role of the Iraqi jihad, moreover, he cannot remain indifferent to the question of how to wage it. But the centrality and potential of the Iraqi jihad also increase Zawahiri's fear of alienating Zarqawi, and thus inhibit him from offering firmer advice.

Radical Islamic doctrine seems to many outside observers to lack a strategic plan for implementing either its vision of an Islamic state or a set of rules for according any one theater of jihad precedence over another. Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Pakistan are all seen as equal victims of the "crusader" attack on *Dar al-Islam* and of the Crusaders' Muslim collaborators. Each arena, therefore, is to be dealt with equally by whomever happens to be there.

On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that the *mujahidin* movement does indeed engage in strategic thinking and establish priorities among the theaters of jihad. During the struggle against the Soviets in Af-

ghanistan, the jihadist Shaykh Abdullah Azzam ruled that the arena for jihad was to be chosen on the basis of political and military considerations, rather than emotion:

It is our opinion that we should begin with Afghanistan before Palestine, not because Afghanistan is more important than Palestine ... but there are some pressing reasons that make Afghanistan the [preferable] starting point. These reasons are: (1) The battles in Afghanistan are still raging and have reached a level of intensity, the likes of which have not been witnessed ... (2) The raising of the Islamic flag in Afghanistan is clear, and (3) the aim is clear: "To make Allah's words uppermost."⁶

Bin Laden himself employed a similar logic when he explained why he chose to focus on eliminating American influence within the Arabian peninsula before trying to liberate Palestine: "the occupation of the two holy places is nearer than the occupation of al-Aqsa Mosque, and this made it more important, given its role as the direction of prayer of all Muslims."⁷

The strategy and ideology of al-Qaeda have evolved constantly since it was formed in late 1988, due largely to the region in which it was operating. Until the early 1990s, al-Qaeda was based in Afghanistan, but was then able to move closer to the Arab Middle East by taking advantage of the rise of Hasan al-Turabi's Islamic regime in Sudan. This change of its operational hub increased its emphasis on the struggle against the regimes in the Middle East. Later, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1994 allowed al-Qaeda to relocate back to that country, a move that was then reflected in its terrorist agenda in Asia. Different theaters of jihad—Bosnia, Chechnya, and others—have also influenced the organization's overall strategy. It may well be said that al-Qaeda's strategy was formed first and foremost by the serendipitous opening up of new opportunities for jihad.

Since the early 1990s al-Qaeda's terrorist strategy has been based on spectacular attacks meant to undermine the sense of security of the Arab regimes and their populations. This strategy was largely determined by opportunity, however, and did not have a center of gravity in any one theater. Operational feasibility, rather than any specific value attached to the targets, generated attacks in such places as Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Mombasa. The conflict in Iraq finally provided al-Qaeda with a geographical focus for jihad that it had lacked ever since the end of the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

The jihad in Iraq plays a much more important role in al-Qaeda's strategy than any previous jihads, including Afghanistan in the 1980s. The "pressing

reasons” that brought the spiritual forefathers bin Laden and Zawahiri to concentrate on Afghanistan are similar to those that now place Iraq at the epicenter of the jihadi effort: It is the main arena of actual fighting and the theater in which the jihad has the greatest chance of success. It is, furthermore, the first time that an opportunity has arisen to establish an Islamic state based on the jihadi ideology in “the heart of the Muslim world” and in an Arab country. And, perhaps most importantly, the jihad in Iraq provides the radical Islamist movement with an unprecedented opportunity to implement their political objectives by establishing an Islamic state that will serve either as the core for a future Caliphate or the Caliphate itself.

The importance of Iraq is amplified by its having been the seat of the Abbasid Caliphate. A victory in Iraq would be perceived as a quantum leap for the jihad movement; it would provide a base inside the Arab world and in the immediate vicinity of al-Qaeda’s traditional targets—Saudi Arabia (*balad al-haramayn*, the land of the two holy cities); the al-Aqsa Mosque; and the land of al-Sham, or the fertile crescent. Muslim armies would be on the border of the land of *ribat* (the border between *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-Harb*); control of Iraqi oil would fund the jihadi movement’s activities; and a “domino effect” in neighboring countries would lead to the eventual establishment of a Caliphate in the entire Arab world.⁸

Zawahiri’s letter is consistent with the thinking attributed to the radical Islamic leaders surrounding him, and the stages of action he lays out are consistent with their strategic game plan, which includes seven stages leading to the ultimate victory of Islam over the West in 2020. These stages are: (1) The “awakening,” which refers to the attacks of 9/11, designed to make the Islamic movement a central player on the global scene; (2) “opening the eyes,” the period from 2003 to 2006 that will transform al-Qaeda into a “mass movement”; (3) “arising and standing up,” the period from 2007 to 2010 that will focus on terrorist destabilization of existing Muslim regimes; (4) the toppling of the moderate regimes of Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and other Muslim states from 2010 to 2013; (5) the formation of a new world order between 2013 and 2016, based on an Islamic Caliphate as a world power and the weakening of the United States and Israel; (6) a total confrontation between Islam and the West in 2016-2020; and (7) a “Decisive Victory” for Islam in 2020.⁹

The centrality of the Iraqi jihad has also affected al-Qaeda’s strategic thinking regarding terrorism outside Iraq. While the Zawahiri letter does not refer to jihad theaters outside of Iraq, other documents have pointed out how jihadi missions in the West should support the goal of weakening the coalition in Iraq and speeding up the American defeat.¹⁰ This thinking differs

significantly from the classic rationale for such attacks, which is simply to “strike fear in the hearts of the enemies of Allah.”

The perception of the feasibility of victory in Iraq has led to a “proactive” jihad to establish a Caliphate replacing the “defensive jihad” to protect Muslim lands—the core principle of Abdullah Azzam, the leader of the Afghan *mujahidin*. Though the establishment of a Caliphate was an element of al-Qaeda’s ideology in the past, it remained in the background because it seemed to them less achievable than it does today. The Caliphate’s new prominence has far-reaching ramifications for intra-Muslim relations: while a Muslim regime may conceivably tolerate different Islamic sects, a Caliph is obliged to define the one true form of Islam that can be followed within the realm. The adoption of the Caliphate as a goal for al-Qaeda, therefore, imposes on the organization a fatal confrontation with other, heterodox Islamic schools.

Zawahiri’s criticism of the indiscriminate attacks on the Shia is not unique in al-Qaeda circles. More than a few *salafi ulama* have stated that the massacre of Muslims, including Shiite Muslims, is counterproductive to al-Qaeda’s strategy of gaining mass Muslim support for its struggle. The older generation of al-Qaeda-linked *salafi ulama* is clearly growing uneasy. Included in this group are Abu Basir al-Tartusi, who took a stand against the London bombings on the basis of his interpretation of Islamic law on jihad;¹¹ Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,¹² who criticized Zarqawi, his erstwhile disciple, in a public statement on the same basis; and Mohammed al-Masari, one of the fathers of the Saudi reform movement in London. These scholars hold undeniable *salafi-jihadi* credentials and are close to Zawahiri ideologically and organizationally. It is conceivable, therefore, that they influenced Zawahiri’s decision to add his weight to their arguments.

Zawahiri approaches Zarqawi’s actions from a more practical and political standpoint than his colleagues, who rely almost exclusively on Islamic jurisprudence, but all their objections are rooted in both religious conviction and their bitter experiences in Afghanistan. They are aware that the Taliban, by their Pashto particularism, had forfeited the support of the wider population, thus facilitating the American invasion and occupation. In their eyes, the likelihood of making a similar mistake in Iraq is compounded by the large proportion of Shia in the population.

The Authenticity of the Letter

The above analysis assumes, of course, that the letter is authentic—an assumption that many reject. Some claim that the very fact that the letter supports American portrayals of the jihadists in Iraq is cause enough to doubt

its authenticity.¹³ Another argument is that a website generally accepted as reflecting al-Qaeda's positions categorically denied the authenticity of the letter, describing it as work of the "Black House"—i.e., the Shia.¹⁴ Other arguments are based on some positions taken in the document that seem unrealistic. For example, Zawihiri's claim that he misses Zarqawi sounds disingenuous, as Zarqawi had not been an integral part of al-Qaeda when he was in Afghanistan and had refused to send funds back to al-Qaeda when he was developing his infrastructure in Europe.¹⁵ Moreover, the suggestion that a non-Iraqi should not be leading the Iraq insurgency also sounds incompatible with an Islamist ideology that rejects all forms of nationalist identification.¹⁶ More persuasive arguments that the letter is Shiite, or Iranian, disinformation are based on a number of linguistic usages and religious references that seem out of place in a Sunni *Salafi* document: (1) the reference to the son of the fourth Caliph and the first Shiite Imam, 'Ali, Hussein bin 'Ali, as "Imam"; (2) the blessing of the Prophet's family (*'ala alihi*) in the opening greeting of the letter;¹⁷ and (3) the use of historic allusions relating to the Shia.

These arguments do not disprove the authenticity of the document, however, and some of them are basically flawed. The *cui bono* argument that, because the document serves its interest, the U.S. administration must have forged it should not be taken seriously; the strategy outlined in the letter is played out in the field in Iraq and in terrorist attacks in neighboring countries. The disowning of the letter by al-Qaeda also should not hold much weight. It would be natural for the organization to deny the existence of disagreements between a senior figure in al-Qaeda and the leader of the organization in the most important theater of jihad. The exposure of such disagreements would be particularly unwelcome when they concern such a central operational policy as the killing of Shia. Because of the decentralized nature of the organization today, moreover, it is also quite possible that its propaganda arm of the organization is not even aware of these internal debates and reacts on its own to safeguard the image of ideological unity.

The arguments based on textual analysis carry greater weight, but still do not tip the scales in favor of a forgery verdict. While it is true that "*salla Allahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*" (the blessings and peace of God be upon him and *his family*) is a Shiite form of the blessing of the Prophet—because of the Shiite adulation of the household of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*)—the form used in the letter includes the companions of the Prophet (*al-salah wa al-salam 'ala rasuli'llahi wa a-lihi wa sahbih*), whom a Shia would never include. This form is prevalent among Sunnis and can be found abundantly both in books and preaching by al-Azhar shaykhs and even in previous letters by Zawahiri

himself, the authenticity of which was not debated.¹⁸ Mention of “Imam Hussein” can also be found in many Sunni books—it is not unusual or necessarily indicative of a Shia origin. The Sunni reference to Hussein as Imam does not correspond, of course, to the Shia concept of Imam. Finally, the gallery of historic figures suggests a Sunni, rather than Shia, origin. All three are would-be Caliphs, and Abdallah ibn al-Zubayr is considered one of the archenemies of the Shia.¹⁹ ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Ashath was a general of the Umayyads who rebelled against the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik in the year 81 H and succeeded in occupying much of Iraq. He declared himself *Amir al-Mu’minin* (Commander of the Faithful, Caliph), but was unable to consolidate his rule and was eventually defeated.

Most of the letter uses typical Wahhabi terminology and seems to refer to Zarqawi’s own arguments about the Shia (“the most evil of mankind”) that he made in a February 2004 letter to Zawihiri, the authenticity of which has not been challenged. Certainly, the strategy discussed in the letter is compatible with authentic al-Qaeda thinking regarding the short- and long-term objectives of the struggle in Iraq. And a series of statements made by Zarqawi in July, seemingly in response to Zawahiri, provide additional circumstantial evidence in favor of the letter’s authenticity. In these statements, some of which appeared on audiotape, Zarqawi elaborates on the principles and practice of jihad. He attacks the *ulama* whose *fatwas* are disconnected from the realities of the Islamic *Umma* and who distort the “legal concept” of jihad, which, he insists, relies on martyrdom operations against all the enemies of Islam. He seems to allude to Zawahiri’s critique of killing Muslims when he argues that Muslims who are affiliated with infidels or who are killed in the context of an attack on infidels are not “protected” persons according to *sharia*.

The forgery theory encounters another problem: If the goal of the forgery was to create uncertainty among the rank and file of Zarqawi’s men about targeting Shia, its interception by Western intelligence services would not achieve that goal. The letter was written and received in July, and the “forgers” made no attempt to leak it in other ways during the months before the United States finally divulged its contents. Although there is no final proof that Zawihiri did indeed write the letter, it is legitimate to say that there is no strong basis for disproving its authenticity, and to conclude that he could have written it.

Conclusion

The importance of the Iraqi jihad is not a matter for debate within the radical Islamic movement, but the best strategy for achieving victory is. Zawahiri’s letter joins other documents, some of which are mentioned above,

that are engaged in this controversy. Though its authenticity cannot be proved or disproved, it expresses views that are entirely consistent with other al-Qaeda voices whose authenticity is not in doubt. The letter confirms a development that is becoming more and more evident: al-Qaeda's current strategic thinking transcends the traditional religious and eschatological framework of the jihadi movement. Today, al-Qaeda devotes significant attention to strategic military planning, which, it believes, will achieve its aims and which plays a central role in its operational decisions.

The controversy expressed in the letter touches on one of the root causes of the contemporary jihadist movement: the crisis of religious authority within Islam. It was this crisis of authority that gave birth to the first generation of radical shaykhs who rejected the religious establishments within Muslim regimes and followed Abdullah Azzam to the jihad in Afghanistan. Though radical, the first generation of the Afghan jihad deferred to the supremacy of "objective" jurisprudence to justify their actions. The devolution of authority could not be stemmed, however, and now lesser *ulama* and even field operatives such as Zarqawi are now calling the shots and refusing to submit to the authority of the older generation of Afghan veterans. Indeed, the letter highlights the contrast between the elder, seasoned *mujahid* and the zealous, ideologically motivated but politically inexperienced younger man.

To what extent Zarqawi sees himself as duty bound to accept or at least to consider this advice is a moot question. Zarqawi has proven his mettle in Iraq and is clearly the main asset that al-Qaeda has there. His motley army of Arab volunteers is reminiscent of the original Arab *mujahidin* movement that coalesced around Abdullah Azzam in Afghanistan. It makes him a principal figure, not only in the Iraqi context, but also in the context of the countries from which the volunteers come—Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Gulf states and the nations of North Africa.²⁰

NOTES

1. A simile borrowed from the ideological tracts of the secular *Qawmiyun al-Arab* to define the Arab space.
2. A reference to parts of the Hadith that prophesy the great battles between good and evil.
3. The three are Hussein bin 'Ali (the grandson of the Prophet and the son of the fourth Caliph, 'Ali), the Amir al-Mum'inin, Abdallah bin al-Zubayr (who rebelled against the Umayyads and even took Mecca for a short time but was defeated) and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ashath (who rebelled against the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik in the year 81 H).

4. Jamil al-Rahman, the leader of the Salafi *Jama`at Ahl-al-Kitab wal-Sunna* that dominated the Kunar province after defecting from Hekmatyar's Hizb in 1985, was assassinated in 1991.
5. His choice of historic figures is of interest: Sheikhal- 'Izz bin 'Abd al-Salam, Imam al-Nawwawi, ibn Hajar (al-Asqalani) (d. 730 H), Nur al-Din bin Zanki; Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi and later *ulema* such as Saif al-Din Qats, Rukn al-Din Baybars' Al-Nasir Muhammad bin Qallawan, Mohammad al-Fatih.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
7. Henry Munson, "Islam, Nationalism and Resentment of Foreign Domination," *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 40–53.
8. See a tract by the Saudi scholar Abu Abdallah Ahmad al-'Imran from Najd that was published online by the "Indoctrination Branch" (*Qism al-I'lam al-Taw`awi*) of the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) under the title "The Military Policy of Qa`idat al-Jihad in Iraq" in *Al-Siyasah al-Qitaliyyah li-Qa`idat al-Jihad fi bilad al-rafidhayn* (29 August 2005), at <http://www.al-saf.net/vb/showthread.php?t=14567>. For an extensive analysis, see Reuven Paz, "Zarqawi's Strategy in Iraq: Is There a New Al-Qaeda?," *PRISM Occasional Papers*, vol. 3, no. 5 (August 2005).
9. Fouad Hussein, Zarqawi – *al-jil al-jadid lil-Qa'idah* (Jordan, 2005). The book is based on interviews with Islamist prisoners associated with Zarqawi.
10. A document entitled "The Jihad of Iraq—Hopes and Dangers" (*Iraq al-Jhad—Amal wa-Akhtar*) determines that military force alone will not chase the United States out of Iraq, and economic and political pressure is necessary. Political pressure can be brought to bear through reducing the number of American allies in Iraq. The document analyzes the domestic situation in three countries that have forces in Iraq—the United Kingdom, Spain and Poland—and proposes to pressure the first two through attacks in their own territory. See "Media Committee for the Victory of the Iraqi People (Mujahidin Services Centre)," pp. 25-33. The document was published before the attacks in Madrid and London.
11. Abu Basir al-Tartusi is a Syrian who lives in London. He is closely affiliated with the jihadi movement but has criticized it in the past for deviating from the true road of jihad. On 9 July 2005 he published a *fatwa* refuting the Islamic legitimacy of the London bombings. In a later statement he rejected the role of revenge in determining the legality of acts of jihad.
12. In September 2004 Al-Maqdisi solicited his advice from Jordanian jail to Zarqawi's that killing of Muslims may distort the true jihad. "*Munasarah wa-Munasahah li-Abi Mus`ab Zarqawi min Abi Muhammad al-Maqdisi fi sijnihi*" ("Support and Advise to Zarqawi by Al-Maqdisi from within his Prison"), in: <http://www.ansarnet.ws/vb/showthread.php?t=14593>. When Maqdisi was released from Jordanian prison, he gave an interview in which he criticized Zarqawi more firmly; see <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/...F5DDB7D23C2.htm>, *al-Ghad* (Jordan) 5 July 2005 <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?news=31781&searchFor=المقدسي>
13. The most scathing critique on grounds of textual analysis was presented by Juan Cole. Despite the bias in Cole's writings against U.S. policy in the war, his professional critique should be taken seriously; see <http://www.juancole.com/2005/10/zawahiri-letter-to-zarqawi-shiite.html>. Another claim that the letter is forged was made by Stephen Ulph in *Terrorism Focus*, vol. 2, no. 19, 18 October 2005.
14. See <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/F73A57D8-D113-4FF9-8A61-D384B80A2DFF.htm>.
15. See <http://www.juancole.com/2005/10/zawahiri-letter-to-zarqawi-shiite.html>.
16. See http://www.juancole.com/2005_10_01_juancole_archive.html.

17. Juan Cole claims that “Adding to the salutation ‘the peace and blessings of God be upon him [Muhammad]’ the phrase ‘and his family’ would be an insult to Zarqawi and to the hardline Sunnis in Iraq”; see <http://www.juancole.com/2005/10/zawahiri-letter-to-zarqawi-shiite.html>.

18. See Zawihiri’s letter to the prisoners in Guantanamo from 8 April 2004, at <http://www.ah-laa.net/vb/showthread.php?t=8953>; Zuwahiri , announcement by al-Qaeda activist, Suleiman Gheith 8.10.2001, at http://www.moheet.com/new/malafat.asp?new_id=494513 and <http://www.alsakifah.org/vb/archive/index.php/t-8427.html>; letter by Abu Mua’ab al-Suri’s at http://www.mettransparent.com/texts/communique_abu_massab_al_suri_response_to_us_accusations.htm.

19. Abdalla ibn al-Zubayr was instrumental in drawing Imam Hussein to Karbala and killed the Shiite leader Mokhtar who attempted to avenge Hussein’s death. Zubayr’s mother was the sister of the Prophet’s wife ‘Aisha, who is hated by the Shia.

20. Zarqawi’s army is purported to includes about forty nationalities. See AP, 22 October 2005; *New York Times*, 11 November 2005; *Al-Hayyat*, 11 November 2005, 12 November 2005.

The Preacher and the Jihadi

STEVEN BROOKE

SINCE THE INVASION OF IRAQ, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the “field commander” of al-Qaeda in Iraq, has arguably become the face of Islamist terrorism and what is often referred to as the “*salafi-jihadi*” movement. Bloody beheadings, grisly bombings and Zarqawi’s skillful use of the media including the Internet have brought him increasing notoriety. But despite this notoriety, little is known about how this once petty thug and small-time criminal became al-Qaeda’s “emir” in Mesopotamia and one of the leading lights of the global *salafi-jihadi* movement.

For insight into Zarqawi, one needs to understand his teacher, the Palestinian-Jordanian theologian Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. Maqdisi devoted much of his life to churning out religious and polemical works that condemn democracy, attack Arab regimes for their apostasy and disbelief, and provide ideological guidance to holy warriors operating throughout the greater Middle East. But unfortunately, the ubiquitous reports about Zarqawi rarely mention his mentor.

What our reporting also seldom mentions is the increasingly acrimonious dispute that has recently emerged between Zarqawi and Maqdisi (a dispute analyzed earlier in Volume 2 of *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* by Nibras Kazimi). This is indicative of a critical gap in our understanding of the contemporary *salafi-jihadi* movement, and especially our lack of appreciation for the disparate and often conflicting ideological strains within that movement. Examining Maqdisi’s life and thought will help to fill in these critical gaps and also help to explain what appears to be the growing estrangement of al-Qaeda’s field commander in Iraq from some of his fellow travelers in the *salafi-jihadi* movement.

The Preacher of Tawhid

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, also known as Isam Tahir al-Barqawi, was born in Nablus in 1959. During his childhood, his family emigrated to Kuwait. Maqdisi wanted to attend the Islamic University in Medina to study

the *sharia*, but his parents sent him instead to study engineering in northern Iraq. Although denied the opportunity to undertake religious studies formally, he embarked on a self-guided study of key Salafist texts, starting with the thirteenth century theologian Ibn Taymiyya and eventually gravitating toward Taymiyya's eighteenth century votary Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab.¹

Maqdisi's studies of these and other Salafist thinkers deeply impacted his life and thought. In his 1985 book entitled *Millat Ibrahim*, which is often translated as *The Religion of Abraham*, Maqdisi elaborates on two Islamic principles that have preoccupied him throughout much of his intellectual career.² The first principle concerns *tawhid*, or the belief in the oneness and absolute indivisibility of Allah and the connected religious obligation to worship Him alone. The second and related principle is the obligation to struggle against polytheism in all its manifestations.³ A Muslim, says Maqdisi, must demonstrate enmity and hatred toward all of polytheism's adherents until they renounce their ways and return to the true path of Islam.⁴ For Maqdisi, fulfilling these twin obligations is the paramount duty of each and every Muslim, more important than daily prayer, almsgiving, or any other religious obligation.⁵ In Maqdisi's mind, as with other salafi-jihadists, the combination of these twin religious obligations—belief in *tawhid*, and the Islamic struggle against polytheism—translated into a desire for radical political change and for jihad.

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Maqdisi traveled to the region to join the jihad, and in the early 1990s, he met the young Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Peshawar, Pakistan. The two men discovered they had much in common, but the turmoil in the region at that time soon forced them to part ways.⁶ After the Soviets withdrew, Maqdisi returned briefly to Kuwait, but then, after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, he fled to Saudi Arabia, where he amassed a small following. Ultimately, Maqdisi settled in Jordan in 1992.⁷

In Jordan, Maqdisi was visited by Zarqawi, who sought him out because of their earlier conversations during the Afghan jihad. The men formed a group they called "al-Tawhid" ("The Oneness of God"), and began spreading their religious message and calling for an Islamic revolution in the Arab heartland.⁸ The group also began stockpiling rifles and explosives in houses around the country.⁹ The circle grew and eventually caught the eye of Jordanian security and intelligence services. On March 29, 1994 Zarqawi and Maqdisi, along with a number of their followers, were arrested.¹⁰ The subsequent trial, which became known as the "Bayat al-Imam case," ended in November 1996 with guilty verdicts for ten men, including Zarqawi and Maqdisi.¹¹

The al-Tawhid group matured in prison, although by Maqdisi's own estimate it never included more than thirty men. It was decided Maqdisi would be the "emir" of the group, but after a year, he passed the leadership to Zarqawi to concentrate on his studies and writing. Maqdisi still advised Zarqawi during this time and maintained a close personal relationship with him.¹² Maqdisi later explained that Zarqawi had a "strong personality" that was well-suited "to deal with the prison management" and that he was also a better choice than himself to serve as the group's emir because he was Jordanian.¹³

In 1999, Zarqawi, Maqdisi and a handful of other Islamists were released from prison under a general amnesty. Zarqawi, zealous as ever for jihad, returned to Afghanistan.¹⁴ Maqdisi, however, chose to stay in Jordan to study and to resume his public preaching.¹⁵ Since then, Maqdisi has been unable to stay out of jail. He and his followers have been implicated in numerous plots to overthrow the Jordanian government, and his writings have been used by Islamist radicals to justify terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Since 1999, Maqdisi has had to pursue his religious calling mostly from behind bars.¹⁶

Down with Kufr Government!

Even while locked away in jail, Maqdisi has remained a stalwart advocate of Islamist revolution in the Arab heartland, and a prolific author and polemicist. Democracy has been a frequent target of his slings and arrows, and he vehemently opposed both the Kuwaiti elections in the early 1990s and the Jordanian elections in 1993 and 1997 as un-Islamic. In his book *Democracy: A Religion!*, Maqdisi elaborates on these views, singling out democracy as the preeminent threat to the *tawhid* of Allah in the world today. "Democracy is a religion," he writes, "but it is not Allah's religion." Muslims must therefore struggle against it; they must "destroy those who follow democracy, and we must take their followers as enemies—hate them and wage a great jihad against them."¹⁷

Maqdisi's justification for jihad against all of democracy's followers is deeply influenced by his reading of the thirteenth century theologian Ibn Taymiyya and especially the latter's doctrine on *takfir*. *Takfir*, which is translated loosely to mean "excommunication," is a pronouncement that designates an individual or a group as apostates from Islam or disbelievers. This charge makes it religiously permissible, even obligatory, for other Muslims to wage jihad against them. Historically, the majority of Muslims have traditionally eschewed pronouncing *takfir* on other Muslims on the grounds that such a pronouncement induces strife and discord (*fitna*) within the Muslim Nation (*Umma*), or because they believe such a pronouncement should be left

to God alone. Shaykh Taymiyya, however, broke from this mainstream when his family had been driven from their home by Mongol invaders led by King Ghazan. Because Ghazan and many in his armies were converts to Islam, Ibn Taymiyya had to develop an innovative way to justify fighting back against his fellow Muslims. He argued that Ghazan, despite being a Muslim, allowed traditional Mongol law, known as *Yasiq*, to coexist with Islamic sharia law. Ghazan had thus forsaken his duties as a Muslim ruler, allowing his armies and subjects to deviate from the true path of Islam. While the Mongols professed Islam outwardly, they were in reality not truly Muslims. On the basis of this argument, Ibn Taymiyya pronounced *takfir* on the Mongols, declaring them to be *kufir*, or disbelievers in Islam, and argued that it was obligatory for Muslims to wage jihad against them to repel the Mongol invasion.¹⁸ As the theologian explained,

Any group of people that rebels against any single prescript of the clear and reliably transmitted prescripts of Islam has to be fought... even if members of this group publicly make a formal confession of the Islamic faith by pronouncing the *shuhada* [the confession of faith: There is no god but the true God and Mohammed is His prophet].¹⁹

As Ibn Taymiyya did against the Mongols, Maqdisi attacks democracy and the current regimes of the Arab heartland as “modern *Yasiq*” governments.²⁰ That is because such regimes have created a constitution and body of legislation to govern them that supplements or replaces the divine law and judgment of Allah. They have thus made their laws and their state into a deity over and above Allah. Furthermore, since democrats and citizens of Arab constitutional monarchies pledge loyalty to these humanly-devised laws, Maqdisi finds them guilty of idolatry, as they worship a false deity or a *taaghut* rather than worshipping Allah alone.²¹ As such, they have been corrupted by polytheism, and have forsaken the *tawhid* of Allah.

Among the followers of this evil doctrine that Maqdisi attacks most harshly are those Muslims who participate in democratic activities, including even those Islamists who aim to establish an Islamic government through democratic debate and winning elections. He excoriates, for example, all those who are “cooperating and assisting and advising and sitting at the discussion tables for the benefit of the country and its security and its economy and... and...[sic]—all for the country whose *taaghut* controls it and rules it!”²²

This particular attack contains a thinly-veiled reference to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group that has traditionally sought to work inside that country’s political system and is, according to French scholar Gilles

Kepel, a “staunch defender of the [Jordanian] throne.”²³ Maqdisi’s animosity toward the Jordanian Muslim Brothers is likely the result not simply of the group’s willingness to engage in democratic politics. As a Palestinian, Maqdisi must have felt the Brethren had betrayed his people when they supported King Hussein’s crackdown on the Palestinians during the infamous “Black September” uprisings of 1970. Hussein later rewarded the Muslim Brothers’ loyalty by giving them control of the Ministry of Education. Invoking the Muslim Brotherhood’s chief theologian Said Qutb (for whom Maqdisi has nothing but deep respect), he taunts the modern-day Brotherhood for parroting “many of the words of Said [Qutb]...while at the same time ... [racing] one another to beg the *taaghut* who turn away from the legislation of Allah ... so that they might attain a seat in the councils of *shirk* [polytheism] and transgressions and disobedience.”²⁴

Maqdisi also targets the Islamic religious establishments of modern *Yasiq* governments in the Arab heartland. According to him, the establishment scholars actually practice and profess disbelief in Islam: They forsake the *tawhid* of Allah and bend and twist Islam’s message for the purpose of obtaining rich endowments and teaching positions at colleges and mosques, or for the purpose preserving the governments or false deities (*taaghut*) that they worship.²⁵ To illustrate this point, Maqdisi recalls the House of Saud’s refusal to propagate the writings of Juhayman Utaybi, the Salafist terrorist who briefly took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979. Juhayman’s writings were suppressed by Saudi scholars, Maqdisi explains, because he preached a belief in *tawhid* that would not suffer the false god of the Saudi monarchy.²⁶ Likewise, Maqdisi attacks the Saudi-established Muslim World League on the grounds that it works to distract Muslims from the main false deity or *taaghut* that is the Saudi state.²⁷ Not only have such scholars forsaken the *tawhid* of Allah, they also lead people astray from fulfilling their all-important obligation to struggle against polytheism. For example, in his article “The Caravan Is Moving and the Dogs Are Barking,” Maqdisi attacks Muslim scholars who try to reinterpret jihad as being incompatible with violence or harmful to the Muslim Nation (*Umma*).²⁸

Muslims must rebel against these “Imams of *kufir*” and “the disbelieving rulers” of the *Yasiq* governments, says Maqdisi. Each and every Muslim must fulfill his religious duties and struggle “for the purpose of replacing...every one [of the *kufir*] according to his [own] capability.”²⁹ In two separate polemics—*Clear Evidence on the Infidel Nature of the Saudi State* and *Unveiling the Falsehood in the Provisions of the Constitution*—Maqdisi railed against the constitutional monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Jordan as apostate regimes.

The struggle against these “near enemies” of Islam is even more important than the struggle against such “far enemies” of Islam as Israel and the United States, he says. This is because the threat posed to the *tawhid* of Allah by the near enemy’s “influence and all his evil and his tribulation are greater and far more serious than the farther one.”³⁰ As he explains,

I believe and continuously pronounce that carrying out jihad against the enemies of Allah who substitute [their own laws for] His *sharia* and are overpowering the Umma today, is one of the most important obligations...of the Muslims. In fact, in my opinion, it is more important than and [should be] given preference over the jihad against the Jews who occupy Palestine.³¹

Maqdisi’s revolutionary agenda for the Arab heartland and his ideological guidance for young holy fighters played a deadly role in November 1995, when a terrorist group called the “Islamic Movement for Change” car-bombed the Saudi Arabian National Guard headquarters in Riyadh. The attack killed six, including five Americans, and wounded over sixty others. One of the four men accused of the crime admitted that he and the other bombers had been inspired to undertake this mass murder by Maqdisi’s writings. The terrorist later said that he and his co-conspirators

read and exchanged books that declared the rulers of the Arab countries and the rulers of this country as unbelievers, such as the book called *Clear Evidence on the Infidel Nature of the Saudi State*, and the book called *The Religion of Abraham* written by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. When I read this book, *The Religion of Abraham*, I was eager to pay a visit to Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. And indeed, I visited him on many occasions in Jordan and was affected by his ideas, publications and books that declare that leaders of Arab states and the government and the body of senior *ulama* [theologians] of this country Saudi Arabia are unbelievers.³²

Between Dawa and Jihad

Arguments made by Maqdisi and other *salafi-jihadi* ideologues have clearly inspired much of the jihadi violence that plagues the greater Middle East today, including the insurgency in Iraq being led by Zarqawi and his followers. However, while Maqdisi supports the Iraq Jihad and seeks Islamist revolution in the Arab heartland, his approach to attaining those objectives is much more cautious and methodical than that of Zarqawi and other holy fighters involved with al-Qaeda’s current operations in Iraq and elsewhere.

The differences between these two lies in part in Maqdisi's interpretation of *takfir*. Whereas Zarqawi, the terrorist field commander, has effectively declared general *takfir* on everyone in Iraq who is actively working for democracy or participating in democratic activities as *kufr*, and thus, as legitimate targets for jihad, Maqdisi has always seemed much more cognizant of the gravity of the charge. In *Millat Ibrahim*, Maqdisi explains that his own understanding of *takfir* is based on Ibn Taymiyya's teachings. While Shaykh Taymiyya broke with the mainstream, he also argued that *takfir* was to be used cautiously and only when other methods of struggling against polytheism have failed. Maqdisi is certainly aware of the limited scope of Taymiyya's doctrine, and this accounts for his reluctance to apply *takfir* in general terms. Even while in prison, Maqdisi went out of his way to distance himself from what he perceived to be extreme pronouncements of *takfir* based on unsound understandings of Islam. On several occasions, he has reported that he and many of his followers in the al-Tawid group were in the habit of correcting Jordanian prison administrators who called them "Takfir and Jihad."³³ This was a corruption of the group's real objectives, for as Maqdisi explained, "we do not make general *takfir*."³⁴

Like Ibn Taymiyya, Maqdisi believes that there are in fact gradations of unbelief or different kinds of *kufr*, and not all of these should be confused with true apostasy.³⁵ The pronouncement of *takfir* is only appropriate if an individual or community declares their apostasy outright, or if they undertake actions that hurt the Muslim Nation. As he puts it, "we only perform *takfir* upon the one who has in his work a type of *kufr* or *shirk* [polytheism] such as participating in the *kufr* legislation, or the *taaghuti* rule, or allegiance to the *mushrikun* [polytheists] and *kufr*, or aiding them against the people of *tawhid*."³⁶ By contrast, disbelievers or those who are suspected of disbelief are first to be subjected not to physical punishment, but to rigorous criticism and religious guidance, or *dawa* aimed at forcing them to disavow (*bara'ah*) themselves of their false beliefs. They are not to be judged and punished as apostates unless they persist in their disbelief. Even then, Maqdisi recognizes the possibility that what a person says or does may differ from what he or she actually believes. He therefore emphasizes the need for caution in pronouncing *takfir*. Maqdisi cites an analogy originally used by Ibn Taymiyya to illustrate his point:

Like the two hands, one washes the other, and it is possible that the removal of dirt would, at times, require scrubbing. But its objective is to be praised, because the intent is the preservation of the wellbeing of both hands and their cleanliness. And we do not seek, at any

instance during these occasions, to allow the complete disavowal of them, because the Muslim's right of his brother is the right of allegiance, which is not cut off (completely) except due to apostasy and the leaving of the realm of Islam.³⁷

Maqdisi's limited as opposed to general application of *takfir* is reflected in his views on the Iraq Jihad. While he firmly supports the jihad against the forces of democracy and those Muslims who aid and abet them, he writes that we "do not declare as *kufir* the generality of people who participate in the elections, for not all of them seek legislating lords in their participation in it."³⁸ And whereas Zarqawi and others in the Sunni-Salafi universe advocate an all-out war on Iraq's majority Shia (both because the Shia for them are heretics well as because many Shia participated in Iraq's recent elections), Maqdisi eschews a blanket condemnation of the Shia as apostates.³⁹ While Maqdisi has nothing but enmity and hatred for "the path of the *Rawafid* [the Shia]," he believes that they must not be confused with real apostates or the enemies of Islam. Once again, he cites a *fatwa* from Ibn Taymiyya on the Shia to lend authority to his position, urging Sunni Muslims not "to equate the Shia with Jews and Christians" in the Islamic struggle against "the people of tyranny." Pronouncing general *takfir* on the Shia and permitting "the spilling of all Shia [blood] is wrong," he says. The "mujahidin must not be involved in it."⁴⁰

Maqdisi's reservations about general *takfir* reflect not only theological considerations, but also tactical ones. For example, in his earlier writings, it is clear that Maqdisi does not expect overthrow of modern *Yasiq* regimes to happen overnight. In *Millat Ibrahim*, Maqdisi summarizes his revolutionary strategy as follows: "secrecy in the [military] preparation and planning; openness in the *dawa* and the conveyance [of Islam's message]."⁴¹ Before open confrontation with the regime, Islamists must first engage in a long, arduous period of *dawa*, or preaching and religious guidance.⁴² During this period, Muslims must work both to bring people to the true faith and to make existing governments and laws appear "foolish" and weak by "mentioning their negative [attributes] to the people, while openly declaring disbelief in them and openly showing and declaring enmity toward them."⁴³ While this *dawa* is to be carried out publicly, Maqdisi says an operational military force must also be built up. But it must be meticulously planned, and ideally in secrecy. The revolt must take place on pre-selected terms and conditions, on a set schedule, and only when a critical mass of society has been prepared through *dawa* to successfully overthrow the *kufir* state.⁴⁴

While he seems mostly satisfied by the resurgence in recent years of the salafist ideology generated by Islamist *dawa* efforts, Maqdisi says he fears it

may now be jeopardized by the “hasty actions” of Muslim youth trying to incite fruitless battles with their governments.⁴⁵ Maqdisi rebukes those “unstable” persons who initiate *dawa* in order to provoke the state to armed response and thereby encourage armed revolt prematurely.⁴⁶ In short, he stresses ideological preparation, and a gradual and cautious approach to Islamizing society and the implementation of his goals rather than outright jihad. This emphasis on caution and prudence in waging jihad reflects a tactical decision derived from hard experience. He has stated that remnants of the al-Tawhid prison group were unable to achieve their objectives and eventually crushed not because of effective Jordanian counterterrorist efforts, but rather because of inadequate ideological preparation and planning, resulting in “organizational weakness and fatal security negligence on the part of the young men.”⁴⁷

Maqdisi seems increasingly worried that this same fate will come to the Iraq insurgency and the broader *salafi-jihadi* movement in the Arab heartland if their leaders, including Zarqawi, are not careful. In a July 2005 interview on Al Jazeera television, Maqdisi reiterated his strategy, emphasizing the long-term nature of the Islamist struggle:

My plan is not to blow up a bar or a movie theater. My plan is not to kill an officer who tortured me. My plan is to restore the nation to its glories and establish the Islamic state for all Muslims. This is a big plan. It is not achieved by small acts of vengeance. It calls for raising a Muslim generation, long-term preparation, and participation of the whole nation with its *ulama* and sons.⁴⁸

The Strategist and the Field Commander

In July 2004, Maqdisi issued a jail-cell missive entitled *Support and Advice, Pains and Hopes* that harshly criticizes Zarqawi’s actions in Iraq. In subsequent interviews following his July 2005 release from prison, Maqdisi elaborated on these criticisms and forwarded some of his own views on how the Iraq insurgency and the jihad elsewhere should be fought. Ever since, the *salafi* community has been buzzing about the rift between the two men.

In *Support and Advice; Pains and Hopes*, Maqdisi provides a laundry-list of mistakes that Zarqawi has made and that he considers irresponsible and damaging to the overall Islamist struggle. Maqdisi urges Zarqawi to stop issuing declarations of general *takfir*. He further says that the Islamist insurgency should not be targeting Shias because they, like the Sunnis, are equally victims of the Infidel “occupiers.” He further warns Zarqawi against “expanding the circle of conflict or fighting individuals other than the occupiers and their

allied lackeys.” Zarqawi should not undertake “actions that include involvement in unsuccessful plans in countries beyond the locations of the mujahidin and their resources.” Moreover, the “meaningless threats against countries around the world” that Zarqawi has made only serves to discredit the mujahidin as a serious force.⁴⁹ And because the Iraq insurgency risks overstepping their bounds and alienating the Iraqi people, Maqdisi insists that Iraqis, not Zarqawi or other foreigners, should be at the forefront of resistance.⁵⁰

Maqdisi sharply criticizes Zarqawi’s choice of tactics, especially the use of suicide-bombing. While he in principle approves of such attacks—reasoning that the Islamic injunction against suicide is not applicable to actions not taken out of fear or in protest of God’s will—he maintains that they should only be used on military targets. Even then, he says suicide attacks are acceptable only if there is no alternative way of inflicting damage on the enemy. “As for carrying out these operations to kill a *kufir* who can be killed by a pistol or gun, then sacrificing the self is not permitted because it is not a necessity and because it can be accomplished by other means.” Maqdisi reminds Zarqawi that “bombs from the deposed regime are readily available.”⁵¹

More pointedly, Maqdisi says the Iraq Jihad under Zarqawi’s leadership has become a “crematory” for Muslim youth. These youth would be better utilized as propagandists and preachers in their own countries rather than by dying in Iraq, he says.⁵² The “Mujahid brother is a precious jewel in this time,” he writes, “and must not be wasted for targets that can be claimed without losses of this type.”⁵³ He also urges Zarqawi not to lose sight of the overall goal of the Islamist struggle—the founding of Islamic state—and of the importance of *dawa* in attaining those objectives. Maqdisi laments wasting the talents of an intelligent mujahid on an ordinary suicide-bombing operation:

Take for an example Abu-Anas al-Shami, our brother who was killed in an incident said to be for the purpose of liberating Iraqi women from Abu-Ghraib prison. Had I been responsible for brother Abu-Anas al-Shami, I would not have sent him on such a mission. Because whoever reaches the stage of maturity and awareness as brother Abu-Anas al-Shami cannot be used in such an operation, regardless of the justifications and necessities. We have very few mature brothers with such a level of knowledge. We must sponsor them. They must be instructors.⁵⁴

Finally, Maqdisi reprimands Zarqawi for the carnage that he has unleashed on Muslims.

Maqdisi has admitted in his earlier writings that when waging a jihad, there is always the risk that a true believing Muslim might be killed accidentally if

he happens to be among the *kufir* targeted by Muslim holy fighters. Should this occur, Maqdisi relies on Allah to correct the injustice by giving the victim a place in paradise.⁵⁵ But the evil of killing a believer is not to be taken lightly; it is acceptable only when sparing the lives of a mass of unbelievers would be an even greater evil. Indeed, he often quotes a religious scholar who asserts that “the mistake in leaving one thousand *kufir* is easier than the mistake of shedding the blood of one Muslim.”⁵⁶ But Maqdisi finds none of this concern for innocent Muslim life in Zarqawi. “Six months ago,” Maqdisi writes, “we read daily in the newspapers and saw on the televisions tens of Iraqi civilians getting killed, including women and children, and barely one or two occupier Americans were wounded or killed.”⁵⁷ Such indiscriminate killing and mass carnage results from Zarqawi’s inability to discern the different levels of unbelief, says Maqdisi.⁵⁸ The Islamist struggle must not be jeopardized by hasty, thoughtless action, he warns. Those who violate this injunction will be held “accountable before God for wasting their youth and assets.”⁵⁹

On July 12, 2005, Zarqawi shot back with a letter of his own.⁶⁰ Though he still speaks well of Maqdisi as a scholar, Zarqawi attacks him for misrepresenting facts and being irresponsible in the timing of his remarks. He also denies ever being Maqdisi’s pupil and claims that today he is receiving advice from “righteous scholars who are far more knowledgeable than Maqdisi.” Above all, Zarqawi stresses his disagreement with Maqdisi on matters relating to jihad, noting that he had left Jordan in 1999 to pursue active jihad while Maqdisi continued to favor a more long-term approach based on education and preaching. “I believed that there is another way to effectively help the religion that is different from his,” states Zarqawi.

Zarqawi addresses many of Maqdisi’s specific charges against him. He defends his reliance on martyrdom operations, saying that his thinking on the subject is informed by one Shaykh Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir. He writes, “Not only did I see that [martyrdom operations] are permitted but I was convinced that they are desirable.” He also claims that his actions against the Shia are justified as well: they initiated hostilities by taking over Sunni homes and mosques and attacking Sunnis on the streets. More significantly, he argues that Maqdisi’s references to Ibn Taymiyya do not apply to the current situation in Iraq, and then names several modern scholars who agree that the Shia must be fought. But Zarqawi is clearly most enraged by Maqdisi’s declaration that the war in Iraq is a waste, a crematorium for Muslim youth who could be better utilized elsewhere:

Can anyone believe that such a fatwa comes from Abu Muhammad [Maqdisi]? What inferno are you talking about? The real inferno

awaits those who shy away from implementing the verdict of Allah and refuse to answer the call to jihad...The real inferno awaits those who do nothing to free Muslim prisoners from Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo, and other locations. The real inferno awaits those who betray our honored sisters who are being raped day and night by the cross worshippers and the *Rafidhah* [Shia].

Here Zarqawi directly challenges Maqdisi's strategy of preparing for jihad slowly and carefully through *dawa*, planning and organization. Citing several scholars, including Osama bin Laden, he argues that the "jihad in Iraq is obligatory." Zarqawi closes by telling Maqdisi that he must "beware of plots of the enemies of Allah," warning him not to "fall for their trap that is designed to use you to drive a wedge between the Mujahidin."

Indeed, it appears that such a wedge has already emerged between two opposing camps within the *salaf-jihadi* movement. That wedge derives from a major difference between theology and tactics, and strategy. Zarqawi and his followers now look with a mixture of scorn and pity on Maqdisi and others like him, whom they view as complacent, out-of-touch, and unwilling to devote their life to jihad. Maqdisi's faction blames Zarqawi for sending some of Islam's brightest minds on suicide missions in Iraq and weakening the overall Islamist struggle.

A smart counterterrorism policy must seek to understand and make use of these cracks within the *salafi-jihadi* movement, rather than treat the entire movement as a monolith. This is vital for winning the battle against Zarqawi and others who undertake "hasty actions" in the Islamist jihad in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. It is also vital to developing strategies to wage the equally important and quite likely much longer struggle against Islamists like Maqdisi who today are actively engaged in *dawa*, planning for the Islamic jihad of the future.

NOTES

1 "An Encounter Behind the Apostates' Bars in Jordan: an interview with Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," *Nida'ul Islam*, conducted in two parts, in the December 1997-January 1998 (#21) and February- March 1998 (#22) issues. Hereafter referred to as "Encounter."

2 The book's title is taken from the Quranic sura *Al-Baqarah* ("The Cow"), verse 30, which says, "And who forsaketh the religion of Abraham save him who befooled himself? Verily, We chose him in the world, and lo! in the Hereafter he is among the righteous." M.M. Pickthall Trans.

3 Abu Muhammad Asim al-Maqdisi, *Millat Ibrahim (The Religion of Abraham)* (Tibyan Publications, 1985): 38-40. Hereafter referred to as *Millat Ibrahim*.

4 Ibid., 52.

5 Ibid., 44.

6 Fu'ad Husayn, "Part VI: Al Zarqawi...The Second Generation of Al Qa'ida," *Al Quds al Arabi*, June 25, 2005

7 "Encounter."

8 Ibid.

9 "Revival of Islamic Groups," *Al-Hadath*, May 11, 1998.

10 Fu'ad Husayn, "Part I: Al Zarqawi...The Second Generation of Al-Qa'ida," *Al Quds al Arabi*, June 8, 2005.

11 Rana al-Husayni, "Ten Given Jail Terms in Bay't al-Imam Case," *Jordan Times*, November 29, 1996.

12 Fu'ad Husayn, "Part VI: Al Zarqawi...The Second Generation of Al Qa'ida," *Al Quds al Arabi*, June 25, 2005

13 "Interview with Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," *Al Jazeera TV*, July 5, 2005. Hereafter referred to as "Al Jazeera Interview."

14 Fu'ad Husayn, "Part VI: Al Zarqawi...The Second Generation of Al Qaeda," *Al Quds al Arabi*, June 25, 2005

15 Ibid.

16 "Al Jazeera Interview"; see also Samir Hamdan and Muhammad al-Da'mah, "Residents of Ma'an Mourn Their Dead; Security Authorities Arrest Shaykh Al-Barqawi," *Al Sharq al Awsat*, December 7, 2002 and Rana Husayni, "Prosecution Presents Closing Argument," *Jordan Times*, July 1, 2005.

17 *Democracy: A Religion!*, 3.

18 For a summary of Ibn Taymiyya's anti- Mongol polemics, see Thomas Raff, *Remarks on an Anti- Mongol Fatwa by Ibn Taymiyya*, (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1973).

19 Quoted in Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 37

20 *Millat Ibrahim*, 126. Maqdisi is obviously quite familiar with the Mongols. This is likely due to his intense study of Ibn Taymiyya.

21 Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, *Democracy: A Religion!*, Trans. Abu Muhammad al-Maleki and Abu Sayf Muwahhid, (At-Tibyan Publications, n.d.), 5, 16. Hereafter referred to as *Democracy: A Religion!* and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, *Believe in Allah and Disbelieve in Taaghoot*, Trans. Abu Muhammad al-Maleki, available online at <http://stateofislam.com/print.php?id=70> (accessed August 15, 2005).

22 *Millat Ibrahim*, 186.

23 Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 334.

24 *Millat Ibrahim*, 110.

25 Ibid., 42.

26 Ibid., 46f.

27 Ibid., 192- 193.

28 Abu Muhammad al-Maqqisi, “The Caravan Is Moving and the Dogs Are Barking,” *Mu’askar al Battar*, no. 7 (March 2004).

29 Abu Muhammad al-Maqqisi, *This is our Aqidah!*, 27. This is a very important document to understand Maqqisi’s ideology, as he wrote it to correct what he sees as false assumptions about his group’s ideals and methods. Hereafter referred to as *Aqidah!*.

30 *Millat Ibrahim*, 188- 189. He finds support for his position on attacking the “near enemies” before the “far enemies” in the Quranic verse 9:123, which says “O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty [unto Him].” M.M. Pickthall Trans.

31 “Encounter.”

32 SPA News Agency, Riyadh, April 22, 1996. While Maqqisi denied that he had anything to do with the attacks, he acknowledged in a 1996 interview that he knew the terrorists who had been convicted.

33 Fu’ad Husayn, “Part V: Al Zarqawi...The Second Generation of Al-Qa’ida,” *Al Quds al Arabi*, June 21, 2005.

34 *Aqidah!*, 22. See also Marwan Shihadah and Muyassir Al-Shamri, “Interview with Maqqisi,” *Al Hayat*, July 10, 2005.

35 *Millat Ibrahim*, 65.

36 *Aqidah!*, 23.

37 *Millat Ibrahim*, 50.

38 *Aqidah!*, 22.

39 Ibid., 11.

40 “*Al Jazeera* Interview.”

41 *Millat Ibrahim*, 83.

42 Ibid., 70-71, 92.

43 Ibid., 63.

44 “Encounter.”

45 “*Al Jazeera* Interview.”

46 *Millat Ibrahim*, 83.

47 Fu’ad Husayn, “Part I: Al Zarqawi...The Second Generation of Al-Qa’ida,” *Al Quds al Arabi*, June 8, 2005.

48 “*Al Jazeera* Interview.”

49 Abu Muhammad Asim al-Maqqisi *Support and Advice: Pains and Hopes*, July 2004. Hereafter referred to as *Support and Advice: Pains and Hopes*

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 "Al Jazeera Interview."

54 *Support and Advice; Pains and Hopes*.

55 *Millat Ibrahim*, 176.

56 *Aqidah!*, 26- 27; see also *Support and Advice; Pains and Hopes*.

57 *Support and Advice; Pains and Hopes*.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Abu Musab al Zarqawi, "Clarification of Issues Raised by Sheikh Maqdisis During His Interview with Al-Jazeera Television," July 12, 2005. All quotations that follow are from this letter, which is available online at http://www.jihadunspun.com/newsarchive/article_internal.php?article=103565&list=/newsarchive/index.php&

The Rising Tide of Islamism in Bangladesh

MANEEZA HOSSAIN

ON AUGUST 17, 2005, THREE HUNDRED BOMBS detonated almost simultaneously throughout Bangladesh. The massive attack sent shockwaves across Bangladesh, the third largest country in the Muslim world. Since then, Islamist-inspired violence in Bangladesh has escalated. At least five people were killed and more than 50 wounded in two December 8, 2005 bomb attacks in Netrokona, in northern Bangladesh. In the last week of November, three bombs exploded near courthouses and a law office in the cities of Gazipur and Chittagong. Two days later, a suicide attack in Gazipur was followed by the discovery of nine bombs near government buildings in the south of the country that were eventually defused by police. According to media reports that same week, the British diplomatic mission in Dhaka received a threat from someone claiming ties to al-Qaeda against its building as well as those of the United States and other European countries. In mid-November, two judges were assassinated by bombs.

The radical Islamist group believed to be behind the August attacks, the Jamatul Mujahidin (Party of Holy Warriors), is similar to other militant Islamist groups around the world. In a political pamphlet outlining its agenda, the group rejected any accommodation with non-Muslims and democratic government, calling instead for the implementation and enforcement of Islamic law:

In a Muslim country there can be no laws other than the laws of Allah... The Quran or *hadith* [examples from the Prophet's life] do not recognize any democratic or socialist system that is enacted by infidels and non-believers... [We] reject the constitution that conflicts with Allah's laws and call upon all to abandon the so-called election process and run the affairs of state according to the laws of Allah and the traditions of the Prophet.¹

These are extremely worrisome developments, especially in Bangladesh, a country long thought to be a place of traditional Islamic moderation and

tolerance. In recent years, Islamist political parties and terrorism have emerged as increasingly visible and destabilizing forces in the country. Their rise has been facilitated by the combination of several factors, including the increased infiltration of foreign-funded Salafist organizations, as well as the impact of returning of Bangladeshi migrant workers who have been imbued with Salafist ideas during their stays in the Middle East. Even more worrisome is that the Bangladeshi government has only just begun to face these grave realities.² In fact, it is not clear whether any response from the government, which continues to be plagued by political impotence and entrenched corruption, will be effective in dealing with the threats posed by Islamism and radical Islam. A recent analysis in *Jane's Intelligence Review* has described Bangladesh as "on the brink of being a failed state," and warned of its vulnerability to "al-Qaeda and its ever-expanding network of Islamic extremist organizations."³

For reasons both understandable and also regrettable, U.S. policymakers dealing with South Asia have focused their attention almost exclusively on the problems of Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan and political instability in Pakistan. But the rising tide of Islamism in long tranquil Bangladesh requires a fresh look. Should Bangladesh become a safe-haven for radical Islam, the impact upon the global war on terrorism in the region and elsewhere would be truly severe.

Undoing Traditional Bangladesh

With the 1947 partition of India, East Bengal, the province that is now Bangladesh, became East Pakistan, united in government but not in territory with West Pakistan. While post-partition India proceeded toward consolidating its democratic trajectory, the Pakistani experience was much more checkered. The initial vote of East Bengal Muslims for inclusion into Pakistan reflected the tremendous complexity of identity in South Asia, with local, national, as well as religious dimensions. But Pakistan's claim to represent Muslims in the Indian subcontinent and a new Islamic nationalism backfired. West Pakistani, and specifically, Punjabi chauvinism highlighted the underlying diversity of South Asian Muslims, eventually serving to bolster local Bengali identity. This caused increasing friction within the troubled relationships between West Pakistan and the geographically smaller, but much more populous, East Pakistan. Hence, with the first substantive experimentation with democratic elections, the East Pakistan based Awami League won an outright majority in the national parliament, setting the stage for a political crisis that was resolved only by the war that led to the declaration of East Pakistan's independence as Bangladesh in 1971.

While Islamism has long been a major factor in Pakistani politics, Bangladeshi Islam has traditionally not accepted radical Islamism's view of the faith.⁴ Due to their country's indigenous Sufi movements and the assimilation of Hindu and Buddhist attributes, most Bangladeshis have historically practiced a moderate and tolerant form of Islam. While 98 percent of Bangladesh's population are Bengalis, of which more than five percent are Bengali Hindus, the remainder is largely non-Muslim tribal groups.⁵ These religious minorities, along with the territorial imprint of Indian culture, provide Bangladesh with a background of religious diversity and pluralism anathema to radical Islamism's Manichean worldview.

After it gained independence in 1971, Bangladesh adopted in November 1972 a secular constitution that aimed to abolish religious communalism, political recognition of religion by the state, exploitation of religion for political purposes, and discrimination on religious grounds. While there have been Islam-oriented political parties in Bangladesh since independence, they have historically enjoyed only limited popular support, and have generally not advocated any program aimed at subverting the country's secular constitutional order. However, under the military regimes of General Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981) and General H.M. Ershad (1982-1990), constitutional amendments gradually began to dilute the secular constitutional order, allowing Islamist parties to move closer to center stage in Bangladeshi political life.

Today, the long stalemate between the country's two mainstream nationalist parties has enabled a small Islamist minority in parliament to amplify its voice as a coalition builder. Parties like Jamaat-e-Islami (The Islamic Party) and the Islamic Okye Jyote (Islamic Unity Front) have become indispensable for either major political party to seek or maintain a governing majority. Currently, the Islamist parties hold just 17 of the 300 parliamentary seats, but they have entered into a partnership with the ruling Bangladesh National Party (BNP) that has 180 seats. Since the BNP's ability to maintain a majority depends on the support of the Islamist parties, coalition politics have greatly benefited the Islamists.

The BNP and other large nationalist parties may say their dealings with the Islamists are tactical, but their cooperation also helps to lend legitimacy to the Islamists, enabling these fringe parties to articulate more and more radical propositions in parliament. An atmosphere of intolerance is growing dominant: Political and social topics coated with faith are sanctified by the Islamist parties, and those who stand against the new discourse are dismissed as "anti-Muslim."

Political stalemate has also led young Bangladeshis to turn to Islamism as an alternative. The feud between the country's two major political parties,

the Bangladesh National Party and the Awami League, has fueled discontent. Islamists argue that both major parties use the parliament as a battleground to further individual and party interests rather than the national interest. The Islamists say they would be different. As he departed Bangladesh at the end of his posting, U.S. ambassador Harry K. Thomas warned that if the two main parties do not cooperate, public discontent will lead to search for alternative forces.⁶ Should the Awami League boycott the January 2007 parliamentary elections, the mantle of the opposition to the Bangladesh National Party will be worn by Islamists, who would thus secure the support of anti-ruling party interests and channel it towards their ideological agenda.

The traditional political class has largely failed to counter this disturbing trend and provide pragmatic political alternatives to Islamist rhetoric. Instead, the historically nationalist parties have begun to integrate Islamist discourse into their own political platforms. Mass demonstrations and party political posters have used religious phrases to lure the devout. At recent political rallies, supporters of the Bangladesh National Party, chanted *La ilaha illallah, dhaner shishe bismillah* ("There is no God by Allah, vote for the paddy-sheaf [symbol for the Bangladesh National Party], in the Name of God). In retort, members of the mainstream opposition Awami League, chanted *La ilha illallah, nuakar malik tui Allah* ("There is no God but Allah, the boat [symbol of the Awami League] belongs to Allah").⁷

The Rise of Jamaat-e-Islami

Political Islam in Bangladesh has always had some local promoters. The Islamist political parties, the most powerful of which is Jamaat-e-Islami, have used the tension between the Bengali and Islamic dimensions of Bangladeshi identity to further their objectives. The group, which remains an important political force in Pakistan, was formed before Bangladeshi independence. Its founder, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, rejected nationalism, which he labeled *kufir* (unbelief) and had great interest in the political role of Islam. Maududi's ideas went on to influence a whole generation of modern Islamists.⁸

The Jamaat-e-Islami's current leader in Bangladesh is Motiur Rahman Nizami, a man who fought against both Bengali nationalism and the secular constitutionalism that long characterized post-independence Bangladesh. When he assumed the leadership of the group in 2000, many veterans of the war of independence protested that he had fought alongside the Pakistani army in the *Razakar* militias created to oppose Bangladeshi independence. They demanded that Nizami be put on trial for war crimes.⁹ However, in March 2001, Nizami became Minister of Industries, where he was able to wield increasing power.

The party blends their integration of Muslim values and Islamic politics into a broader right-of-center reform platform to appeal to a wide swath of voters.¹⁰ For example, part of Jamaat-e-Islami's popular support has been the result of its campaign to greatly enhance welfare programs for the poor in a country where per capita income is currently about US\$300. Another issue that Islamists have successfully campaigned on is anti-corruption. Bangladesh is ranked the most corrupt country in the world by Transparency International. The government's failure to deal with this problem has led to widespread popular frustration—even anger—with the mainstream nationalist political parties that can only serve to benefit the Islamists.¹¹

In the first decade of the 21st century, Jamaat-e-Islami seems to adhere to a political strategy similar to the one adopted by other radical Islamist groups in insecure democratic environments, such as Hizballah in Lebanon in the 1980s and the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in Algeria in the 1990s. Jamaat-e-Islami's program consists of four components, the first of which is the adherence to a self-declared immutable understanding of Islam incorporating faith, politics, social mores, and economic practice. This declaration of intent to “uphold Islam in its entirety” is the cornerstone of the Jamaat-e-Islami's strategy to lay the foundation for an authoritarian hierarchical structure with its own leadership at the helm.

The second component—a promise of compromise and accommodation with the established democratic order—appears to contradict the first. While the party is willing to enter into political alliances with non-Islamist partners to run for elections in a formal democratic framework, and to hold ministries and other official offices in a coalition government, it is naïve to interpret such pragmatism as an indication that Jamaat-e-Islami might moderate its underlying doctrinaire radical Islamist positions.

The third component is Jamaat-e-Islami's network of social, educational, informational, and economic institutions, which, in effect, create a state within a state. Not only do these services extend Jamaat-e-Islami's patronage network, but the party can also favorably juxtapose its institutions with the corruption and inefficiency of those of the Bangladeshi government. Impoverished citizens may not question how such services are financed, but the rapid growth of Jamaat-e-Islami's network suggests that it has an outside revenue source which it has not revealed.

The final component of Jamaat-e-Islami's program is the establishment of satellites and proxies. These are believed to include the terrorist group Jamatul Mujahidin, although Jamaat-e-Islami denies any connection to this militant group. In a replication of the relationship between the Arab Muslim Brotherhood and militant Islamist networks in the Middle East, Jamaat-e-

Islami serves as a recruitment channel for more radical organizations in Bangladesh: Several of the terrorists accused in August 17, 2005 bombings say they were once members of Jamaat-e-Islami.¹² While Jamaat-e-Islami might say they seek accommodation with the democratic system, these offshoots reject any compromise with the democratic system.

The relationship between Jamaat-e-Islami and its subsidiaries is at times unclear. These groups appear to constitute an important means to consolidate Jamaat-e-Islami's vision and plan, both by propagating ideas that the Jamaat-e-Islami abstains from openly voicing, and by pushing the center of gravity of the political debate toward radical Islamism, allowing Jamaat-e-Islami to position itself as a centrist party between fringe Islamism and corrupt secularism. The party can increasingly define itself through the *Daily Sangram*, one of Bangladesh's largest circulation newspapers which it now controls. It also stages mass public protests that seem to greatly enhance support for Islamist agendas in parliament.

As a result of the Jamaat-e-Islami and other influences, a popular Islamist movement has emerged in recent years that, among other things, aims at forcibly eliminating support for Bangladesh's secular and tolerant order. Their tactics include targeting secular intellectuals and journalists in addition to attacking symbols of secular authority.¹³ In one incident on February 24, 2004, assailants fatally stabbed Humayun Azad, a novelist who had spoken out against the abuse of women. Later, Omar Faruk, a leader of the Islamic Constitutional Movement, urged that the novelist not be buried in Bangladesh as he was "a self-proclaimed anti-Muslim author."¹⁴

Foreign Factors

Islamism in Bangladesh has not developed in isolation. Oil-rich Middle Eastern countries have funded both public and private Islamist initiatives, effectively exporting their brand of Salafist Islam to Bangladesh. The rising price of oil has translated into greater resources for Islamists, which have usually been channeled to Bangladesh through Islamic development organizations and banks like Al Arafah Islami Bank and Al Haramain Islamic Foundation.¹⁵ Currently, many Bangladeshi Islamists run financial institutions, schools, hospitals and industries backed by funding from abroad. Some politicians have started dressing in Arab-influenced attire, suggesting a conflation of Islamism with Arabism.

Abul Barakat, a Dhaka University economist who investigates Islamist financial networks, has concluded that the "economic basis of fundamentalism in Bangladesh is not weak."¹⁶ Moreover, as Islamist politicians gain strength and confidence, they increasingly meddle in business. This interference, com-

bined with government corruption and lack of transparency, has chased away both Western and Far Eastern investors like the European Community and Japan, thereby ceding more of the playing field to Arab Gulf investors and people involved with Islamic financial institutions.¹⁷

The Ministry of Social Welfare has oversight of the activities of non-government organizations, but Jamaat-e-Islami seized the portfolio through its participation in the ruling coalition. Its secretary-general, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, serves as minister and has the power to obstruct Western aid agencies while promoting Islamist ones.

Self-described apolitical Islamic movements like the Tablighi Jamaat, a prominent missionary group, have also encouraged the Islamization of politics in Bangladesh by seizing upon growing political, economic, and social discontent and radicalizing the disaffected.¹⁸ The movement has become particularly strong in Bangladesh. After the annual Hajj to Mecca, the world's second largest Islamic pilgrimage takes place at Tongi, a town only two miles outside the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, where up to four million Muslims travel for a three day *Biswa Ijtema* or Islamic prayer meeting.¹⁹ Preachers and their congregation travel to the prayer meeting in large groups from different areas of the region to hear speeches from members of the Tablighi Jamaat delivered in Arabic, Urdu and Bengali. The Tablighi Jamaat encourages "Wahhabi brethren to go on missions with them" and share their knowledge with one another.²⁰ This collaboration ensures a stream of support and income from wealthy Saudi Arabian sources.²¹ Tablighi Jamaat should be another serious concern for South Asian stability. In 1992, the group spawned a Bangladeshi branch of the Pakistan-based Harakat ul-Jihad Islami (Movement of Islamic Holy War), a Sunni extremist group involved in terrorism in Kashmir. Its leader, Fazlur Rahman, a powerful cleric from the port city of Chittagong, was one of the signatories of Osama Bin Laden's 1998 declaration of "Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders." Harakat ul-Jihad Islami has since claimed responsibility for the August 21, 2004 assassination attempt on Sheikh Hasina Wazed, leader of the opposition and Bangladesh's second female prime minister. Government officials, embarrassed that political violence in Bangladesh made news abroad, argued that Harakat ul-Jihad Islami did not exist and that claims of its existence were fictitious. This assertion was undercut by death threats sent two weeks later by the group to prominent Awami League activists.²² Also, the Indian government believes Harakat ul-Jihad Islami to be responsible for attacks on the American Center in Calcutta in January 2002.

The ample funding enjoyed by Jamaat-e-Islami, Tablighi Jamaat and Harakat ul-Jihad Islami also seems aimed at encouraging Islamist intolerance

toward non-Muslims, sectarian minorities, and moderate Muslims. For example, Tablighi Jamaat has actively worked to rid local Islamic practice of perceived “Hindu influence.” While the Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist and Christian Unity Council have accused the government of ethnic cleansing, Hindu Bangladeshis have reported claims of discrimination, harassment, property confiscation, torture, and gang-rape.²³ During the present administration, between the years of 2001 to 2005, there has been a ten percent decrease in government recruitment of Hindus to the Bangladeshi civil service, opening up more jobs for Islamists.²⁴ The growing radicalism in the region has contributed to the flight of minorities and dramatic demographic shifts. For example, at Bangladesh’s founding, about ten percent of its population was Hindu.²⁵ Over the years, however, as many as 25 million Hindu Bangladeshis have crossed the border into India, bringing the Hindu share of the population down to five percent of the total.²⁶ Between May and October 2002 alone, an estimated 20,000 people fled across the border.²⁷

Radical Islamists have also targeted the Ahmadiyya community, a Muslim reformist and revivalist movement founded in Qadyan, India in the nineteenth century. The Ahmadiyya’s millenarian interpretation of Islamic texts has placed them outside of the confines of Islamic orthodoxy. Since 2004, the government has sought to ban Ahmadiyya publications and prohibit Ahmadi children from attending schools. The Bangladesh Khilafat Andolen (Caliphate Movement) and Islami Shasantantra Andolen (Islamic System Movement), two extremist Islamist organizations, have joined the Jamaat-e-Islami in demanding that the government declare the Ahmadiyyas “infidels.”²⁸ Human Rights Watch has warned of “an unprecedented climate of fear [which] now pervades Bangladesh’s minority.”²⁹

In addition to minority flight, there have been other factors augmenting the relative power of the Islamists. Since 1991, perhaps as many as 300,000 Rohingya Muslims have entered Bangladesh across its southeastern border with Myanmar (Burma), a Jamaat-e-Islami stronghold.³⁰ Many reside between the port city of Cox’s Bazaar and the Myanmar border. Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, the Islami Chatra League, have worked to radicalize these refugees, who are probably more susceptible to religious indoctrination after their persecution in Myanmar. Indeed, according to reports by human rights groups on local minorities, many of Harakat ul-Jihad Islami’s newest members are recruited from the Rohingya settlements.³¹ The influx of small-arms and weapons entering Bangladesh’s main port of Chittagong underlines the danger not only to Bangladeshi security, but also to regional countries and the global war on terrorism.³² Islamist groups threaten to transform Chit-

tagong into a new Karachi, the Pakistani city which has become largely a no-go area for Westerners, especially after the February 2002 murder there of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl.

What Leverage Does Washington Have?

The rise of Islamism and radical Islam in Bangladesh are extremely worrisome trends, but this does not mean that the country need fall to radical Islam. However, it will not be able to contain the growing threat of militant Islamism on its own. Clearly, international efforts to crack down on transnational Islamist and terrorist funding networks and groups like the Tablighi Jamaat will be vital. But Bangladesh also needs encouragement and assistance in addressing the internal vulnerabilities such as corruption and economic underdevelopment that radical Islamists have begun to exploit.

In thinking about how to stem the rising tide of Islamism in Bangladesh, it is important to remember that the driving force behind Islamism's spread is not only financial support from Saudi Arabia and other oil-wealthy Arab states, but also the international flows of migrant workers, the invisible foot soldiers of globalization. For example, according to the Migration Policy Institute, Saudi Arabia has been one of the largest importers of Bangladeshi laborers, but many Bangladeshi workers have been rendered jobless by Riyadh's desire to "Saudi-ize" their workforce.³³ They return to Bangladesh imbued with Salafist intolerance; unemployed and with few future prospects, they are ready to promote intransigent interpretations of Islam at odds with traditional, moderate Bengali practices.

One relatively straightforward area where the U.S. might usefully intervene to bolster Bangladesh's economy is in international trade policy. The 1974 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade enacted the Multi-Fibers Act, a series of negotiated quota restrictions on trade in textiles and clothing between individual first-world importers and developing country exporters.³⁴ This quota regime enabled Bangladesh to gradually expand its export of apparels from US\$620 million in 1990 to US\$5.7 billion in 2004. But, unfortunately, the Multi-Fibers Act expired in January 2005. The subsequent phase-out may lead to a total collapse of an important and labor-intensive Bangladeshi industry. That could lead to more jobless Bangladeshi workers, who will either seek out work abroad—most likely in the Middle East—or perhaps become easy recruits to the increasingly potent "Islamist alternative" in Bangladesh.

Should Bangladesh fail as a state, trends on the ground indicate that it will likely become increasingly Islamized. Bangladesh cannot contain the threat

of militant Islamism alone. Its government is locked into a cycle of accommodating both Islamist political parties and illicit Islamist networks. The implications of an Islamized Bangladesh for regional security and for the global struggle against radical Islam would be truly profound. The Western world, especially the United States, must not ignore this deteriorating situation.

NOTES

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2 A 2005 editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* summed up the situation thus: “Bangladesh, which has only just admitted to the terrorists in its midst, has a long way to go to ensure its own security and avoid sowing more discord in a volatile region... According to Bangladesh’s national police chief, the latest bombings were the country’s first suicide attacks, and they used explosives more powerful than those used in most previous attacks. This suggests that militants in Bangladesh are adopting the tactics and technology of their counterparts in the Middle East—and could be interested in stronger ties with groups abroad... What makes the situation more precarious is that Bangladesh only just admitted that violent extremists were a problem. Since 2001, Western intelligence agencies have reported the presence in Bangladesh of Taliban remnants along with various other militant groups. It was not until February 2005, however, that Bangladesh addressed the issue at the behest of the international community, banning two terrorist groups and putting some of their ranks in prison. ‘Dangerous Ties,’ *Los Angeles Times* editorial, December 7, 2005

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Islam Hadhari in Malaysia

IOANNIS GATSIOUNIS

In the Muslim world Malaysia is bigger than its physical size would suggest. The Southeast Asian nation of 24 million people is known for its stability, tolerance, and steady economic gains over the last 30 years. Malaysia does not take that reputation for granted; it has strived to live up to it. The latest and most ambitious effort comes by way of “Islam Hadhari,” or “civilizational Islam,” a political and ideological campaign introduced by Abdullah Badawi shortly after he was named prime minister in 2003 that stresses technological and economic competitiveness, moderation, tolerance, and social justice.

In October, U.S. Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes praised Islam Hadhari as a “powerful example” to all Muslims, and Badawi’s deputy Najib Razak assured Mrs. Hughes that Malaysia was prepared to share Islam Hadhari with the rest of the world. At home, meanwhile, the government has started promoting 10 points of Islam Hadhari, including a just and trustworthy government and protection of the environment. Badawi says Islam Hadhari is not a new concept but an attempt to bring the Muslim community back in touch with the true essence of Islam. And like Islamic movements elsewhere, it envisions a restored and empowered Umma.

Islam Hadhari is to some extent a logical outgrowth of social, political and Islamic realities in Malaysia. The government has long stressed moderation and economic equity in order to keep peace between the Muslim Malays, who make up about 60 percent of the population, and the indigenous tribes and sizeable Chinese and Indian minorities, most of whom are not Muslim. Malay concerns, however, have always been central to government policy. The United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which has ruled the country for forty-plus years, has promoted Malay supremacy since before independence. At its founding, UMNO envisioned a Malaysia ruled by Malays and where Malays would be granted special rights and privileges.¹ UMNO continues to champion a positive discrimination program that benefits the

majority of Malays. This commitment first and foremost to the Malays has been a key to its hegemony. But it has required a conspicuous investment in Islam, for in Malaysia to be Malay is to be Muslim; Malays are born into the faith. And while pulls toward religion and ethnicity have complicated Malay identity, politically these two forces are inextricable: Islam in Malaysia is racialized. Hence, to appear “un-Islamic” is also to be “un-Malay”—a political liability.

Islam Hadhari was created with this highly politicized terrain in mind and in its short existence has served UMNO well. It was introduced months before parliamentary elections in 2004, giving Badawi’s promise to tackle Malaysia’s endemic corruption and promote reform a progressive Islamic face. Its emphasis on tolerance appealed to Malaysians of all stripes. The UMNO-led national front went on to post one of its best showings in history, winning 90.4 of Malaysia’s 219 national parliamentary seats and 64 percent of the popular vote, and roundly defeating the opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS).

But Islam Hadhari should not be viewed merely as a political instrument.² Prime Minister Badawi envisions Islam Hadhari as an antidote to the tide of extremism ravaging the larger Muslim world, at a time when many Muslim nations are struggling to reconcile piety with modern realities. “It is our duty,” Badawi said at a conference last year, “to demonstrate, by word and by action, that a Muslim country can be modern, democratic, tolerant and economically competitive.”

That fight begins at home, where an undercurrent of Islamic fundamentalism has begun to challenge Malaysia’s reputation as a “model” Islamic nation. The influence of conservative religious teachers has grown. Fewer men are shaking women’s hands.³ A growing number of minorities are opting for private education as public schools have become more Islamized. More Malay women are wearing the headscarf. The call to prayer is more ubiquitous, occasionally heard channeled into elevators and over the islands at gas stations. The Muslim moral police, known by the acronym “JAWI,” have become more brazen and officious, detaining couples for holding hands and threatening to send “deviant” Muslims to rehabilitation centers.⁴ In January, JAWI police raided a nightclub and rounded up all Muslim patrons while allowing non-Muslims to carry on. Those arrested described JAWI officers as “abusive” and “overzealous.” In July, a mob of masked persons in robes attacked a commune run by a Malay apostate. The mob reportedly threw Molotov cocktails, broke windows and slashed car tires. Malaysian police have not arrested anyone involved in the attack, but a day later the state religious department

arrested 58 members associated with the sect for practicing a deviant religion.⁵ In June, two young Muslim brothers were sentenced to a whipping for sipping Guinness stout.

These developments have been cumulative, and they pose a challenge to the realization of Islam Hadhari. But to what extent? For clues, it is necessary to consider the history of Malaysian Islam.

Islam arrived in the Malay peninsula in the 15th century. It was at first mostly comprehended and accepted only by Malay aristocrats, but became more of a general identity marker in the 19th century when large numbers of non-Malays began to migrate to Malaysia.⁶ A pronounced recent shift in Islamic identity that reverberates through to the present came with the Islamic revival in the 1970s, known as the “Dakwah Movement.” Catalysts included the Chinese-Malay racial riots of 1969 and the establishment a few months later of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM). ABIM provided young Muslims with an avenue to pursue *dakwah*, or preaching and missionary activity (in Arabic, *dawa*), through universities and in the public sphere. The major consequence of this “rebirth,” “reassertion,” or “rediscovery” of Islam was that Islam came to be seen as the pillar of Malay identity. The Dakwah sought to resist the pressures of modernization, reinvent and reconstruct tradition, express anti-imperialist sentiment and promote spiritual renewal.⁷ External forces such as the Iranian Revolution and the Dakwah movement in neighboring Indonesia breathed fresh life into Malaysia’s Dakwah, as did, around the same time, the appointment of Mahathir Mohamed to the post of prime minister in 1981. In the course of his 22-year rule he would oversee Malaysia’s dramatic transformation from an agrarian backwater into an industrialized export-driven nation (Malaysia is the U.S.’s 10th largest trading partner). The era would also be scarred by a politically charged, sanctimonious battle for the soul of Islam.

Mahathir showed dedication to Islam from the outset of his premiership. In his first year, he established several committees to address law, education, economics, science and technology, as they pertain to “The Concept of Development in Islam.” Other clear policy shifts included a declaration to restructure Malaysia’s economic system according to Islamic principles, and the establishment of Islamic economic institutions like the Islamic Bank and Islamic Economic Foundation. He also brought ABIM’s leader Anwar Ibrahim into UMNO, promised to bring the national legal system more in accord with Islamic law, and boosted Islamic content on radio and television.⁸ No less important, he made it official policy not to allow economic development to happen at the expense of spiritual progress—but his failure to achieve this

last point, and his increasingly desperate measures to compensate for the shortcoming, fomented the Islamic revival in a way that divided the country and has undermined Malaysia's "progressive" vision for itself.

By the mid-1990s it was becoming abundantly clear that capitalism was Mahathir's top priority and Islam was merely a vehicle by which to sell his vision. Ostentatious mega-projects, including the world's tallest buildings, a hub-aspiring airport and one of the world's most expensive administrative capitals, became symbols of the new Malaysia. A large Malay middle-class had developed. Unemployment and poverty had reached single digits. Mahathir waxed ebulliently of a "*Bangsa Malaysia*" (Malaysian race) and about Malaysia becoming a fully developed country by 2020. But many rural Malays felt they were not sharing in the country's success, and came to doubt how Islamic Mahathir's vision really was. The boom was seen to be disproportionately benefiting the elite. UMNO became synonymous with corruption. An intra-ethnic divide surfaced, in which a growing number of Malays saw Islam as the way to restore justice and accountability. But Mahathir and UMNO did not rise to the Islamic challenge. He dismissed allegations of rampant cronyism and nepotism. In so doing he helped pave the way for "radical" Islamic elements to vie for the heart and soul of Malaysian Islam.⁹

This process was compounded by Mahathir's tendency, particularly during political rough spots, to lambaste the West. He blamed the Asian economic crisis on a "cabal of Jews." He warned Malaysians that given a chance the West would re-colonize Malaysia. Whether it was through championing "Asian values" or his "Look East" policy, which sought to hold Asian countries like Japan up as models of how to progress, Mahathir repeatedly drew distinctions between people and societies during his rule. To confuse matters, his vision for Malaysia, with its skyscrapers, sky trams, hi-tech "cyber" cities and superhighways, had begun to look and feel eerily Western—so that Malaysians were being told to reject Westernization while their prime minister invested heavily in it.

These dual realities shaped the whole of Malaysia but left the deepest mark on the Malay community, for through Islam Malays professed to a system of values that the Islamic revival had taught them was often irreconcilable with Western notions of progress.

In the 1999 elections, a web of social, political and economic factors saw PAS win control of two northern states (or 34 percent of the popular vote, a 14 percent increase from its showing in the 1995 election.)¹⁰ The election results reemphasized the pivotal role Islam often plays in Malaysian politics, and UMNO subsequently worked more aggressively to prove its Islamic

credentials. Hence in 2001, shortly after the September 11th attacks, Mahathir declared Malaysia “an Islamic State,” intensifying a long-running battle between UMNO and PAS to out-Islamize each other (at least rhetorically). Meanwhile, Mahathir began to close madrasahs and jail “dissidents” suspected of preaching hate. Not a few in Washington deemed him an exemplary ally in its war against Islamic extremism. In response to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, however, Mahathir’s anti-Western rhetoric returned to the fore, and has continued with him into retirement.

Badawi and his brand of Islam are widely considered a welcome change from Mahathir’s divisive and ostensibly contradictory style of rule. And yet Badawi’s more tolerant approach may inadvertently be emboldening conservative government arms, like JAWI and the State Religious Councils. Badawi is not the micromanager that Mahathir was. Mahathir artfully centralized power during his rule. He had the clout to question these conservative authorities and often did, checking their power in the process.¹¹ Since the nightclub raid mentioned above, Badawi’s government has issued new regulations to stem the power of JAWI. It has also pressed Malaysia’s 14 states to adopt a uniform Islamic code. (Islam, according to the Malaysian Constitution, is a state as opposed to a federal matter.) But Badawi and his party have been reluctant to condemn the expanding reach of conservative Islam, lest they give PAS an opportunity to denounce UMNO as un-Islamic. UMNO’s religious affairs specialists have avoided condemning the idea of an Islamic criminal code, instead maintaining that the time is not right.¹²

Islam Hadhari, it is hoped, will temper these developments. But is it sufficient to stem Malaysia’s conservative tide? Most Islam Hadhari promotion efforts thus far have come through seminars, state run press and speeches by the prime minister.¹³ The principles have not been put into law or formal practice. And Islam Hadhari may ultimately suffer because of its top-down approach. Grassroots movements, such as the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, each with memberships in the tens of millions, have proven more effective in promoting moderation in the Muslim world.¹⁴ Indeed, most Malaysians would be hard-pressed to name but a couple of Islam Hadhari’s 10 points. To the average Malaysian, Islam Hadhari remains a nebulous concept.

Some observers count Islam Hadhari’s vagueness among its strengths—to be vague is to be inclusive. As a general concept Islam Hadhari makes for a legitimating canopy against crude efforts to Islamize Malaysia. It provides an accessible terminology to counter Muslims who claim that the only way to be a good Muslim is to support the full implementation of *sharia* law.¹⁵ Islam

Hadhari does not seek to be a doctrinal equivalent to the prescriptive, ritualistic nature of fundamentalism. Rather, says Badawi, it is a practical approach consistent with the tenets of Islam.¹⁶ According to Boston University's Robert Hefner, "Badawi is coming out and showing people in long gowns that you can welcome Americans and investment and still be a good Muslim."¹⁷

However, it could be argued that UMNO and Badawi's approach to governing has often been in conflict with the principles of Islam Hadhari. Among its 10 aims are a just and trustworthy government, a free and independent people and mastery of knowledge. Badawi ran on a platform to stamp out corruption and under his leadership a few high-profile cases have been brought to court. But he has failed to curb the culture that breeds corruption. A veteran UMNO official called the party's 2004 elections the worst case of money politics in the party's history. Certainly undoing a practice that became endemic during the Mahathir era may take years to correct, but so far Badawi's campaign has been less aggressive than many had hoped. The Anti-Corruption Agency remains under the watch of the central government, while cases against several long serving UMNO officials widely suspected of corruption have stalled or been dropped. Press freedoms continue to suffer under Badawi, even on the Internet, which Mahathir said the government would not interfere with. Last year Badawi's government threatened to take action against a blogger after a contributor posted a statement to the blog equating Islam Hadhari and money politics with feces and urine.

Whether these developments embolden PAS and the opposition remains to be seen. They have raised questions about Badawi's commitment to reform and whether Islam Hadhari is the genuine article, and in that sense can't hurt PAS.

Islamist Radicals

By most accounts the number of Islamic radicals residing in Malaysia is minimal. Indeed, Malaysia has not experienced a large-scale terrorist incident. But several of the September 11 hijackers met in Malaysia. The radical cleric Abu Bakar Bashir moved to Malaysia and lived there for 13 years beginning in 1985 to avoid more jail time in Indonesia. Hambali, believed to be the leader of the regional militant group Jemaah Islamiah, moved to Malaysia around the same time. He was believed to have lived there for 10 years and toured the country, frequently recruiting young Muslims to join his struggle to establish a pan-Asian Islamic state, before being arrested two years ago in Thailand. Earlier this year, the suspected mastermind of separatist violence in southern Thailand, Abdul Rahman Ahmad, was arrested in Malaysia. Azahari bin Husin, a bomb expert who allegedly helped orchestrate a number

of bombings in Indonesia before being killed in a shootout with Indonesian security forces in East Java in November, was Malaysian.

The Malaysian government often advertises that it has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward extremists. But this does not answer how much influence these covert individuals and their ideologies appreciated before the government took notice of them—what has been their reach? Scant research has been done in this area. What is evident is that foreign Islamic entities have aggressively targeted Malaysia over the last several decades, using tapes, DVDs, pamphlets, the Internet, and formal and informal channels of education to promote forms of Islam that feed extremism. And most jihadi websites are stationed in the West or in Malaysia.¹⁸ Malaysia's Islamic Affairs Division has successfully vetted some of this material, but it remains a daunting task. In 1996 the division "identified the existence of forty-seven deviationist groups, 15 of which were described as active and involving some 1,000 followers."¹⁹

Some government officials have acknowledged that Malaysian Muslims are vulnerable to outside influence because they lack "authentic" knowledge of Islam, and have urged them to follow government guidelines to avoid falling astray. Posing a challenge to this recommended path is the powerful and revered *ulama*, who have shown strong cultural and political affiliation with schools of Islamic thought from the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia.²⁰ Another challenge comes from the covert regional cooperation between militants and their sympathizers. Assistance to the Free Aceh Movement in Indonesia, for instance, has been known to come from conservative Muslim groups in Malaysia.²¹

With the September 11 attacks, Muslim governments were left to contemplate the substance of their own societies and the havoc their conservative elements might inspire. Malaysia was no exception. But outwardly it clung to its clean image, steadfastly reminding skeptics of its reputation as a "model Islamic democracy." "We are a very moderate Islamic country," Badawi frequently tells reporters. This ignores the fact that Islamic identity is not static, and has arguably been less so *since* September 11, as many Muslims view America's "war on terror" as anti-Muslim. Outrage over America's foreign policy has not spilled into Malaysia's streets as it has elsewhere, but the restraint cannot be equated with a lack of sympathy. A public diplomacy official with the U.S. government said anti-Americanism is more entrenched in Malaysia than in Indonesia. And whereas the U.S.'s post-tsunami relief efforts improved America's public approval rating in Indonesia and other Muslim nations, no such change occurred in Malaysia.

Islam Hadhari is, indirectly at least, a concession that Islam in Malaysia needs fixing. As a senior UMNO official noted, “The growing conservatism that we are seeing is the thin end of the wedge. If left unchallenged, it will germinate into a radical and reactionary force that rejects modernity, generates intolerance and imprisons the minds of Muslims behind the bars of dogma and blind imitation.”²²

Beneath the tip of the iceberg he speaks of is the recent news that 60,000 Malaysian graduates, most of them Malay, are unemployed, due largely to a lack of pertinent experience and poor English and communication skills. This makes Islam Hadhari, with its emphasis on technology, knowledge, skills acquisition and achievement, seem apt indeed. But if it doesn’t deliver it is likely to be seen as yet another government program designed to co-opt Islam for political gain—a charge PAS is already making.

Where, however, Islam Hadhari may ultimately alienate Muslim voters looking for a greater commitment to Islam, such “shortcomings” may in fact prove to be a strong selling point with non-Muslims. This could, assuming a large chunk of Muslims aren’t abandoned in the process, significantly strengthen UMNO and in turn neutralize the political power of radical elements. In a word, Islam Hadhari will need strong Muslim support to be realized. But realization is not necessary for Islam Hadhari to be effective.

Regarding the prospect of substantial numbers of Malays abandoning UMNO, moderation has long been a hallmark of Malaysian Islam. Local traditions such as animism and Hindu and Buddhist influences have helped prevent a literalist interpretation from taking root, thus minimizing the appeal of Islamist parties like PAS. But likewise, Malaysia is a racially charged society where politicians have used race and religion for political gain. Moreover, the tug of the borderless brotherhood that Islam calls for is strong here, evinced during the *dakwah* revival and more recently in reaction to developments in Palestine and Iraq. State-run media, Internet sites and Arab media pandering to indignation and victim-consciousness have fueled these concerns. (In June the foreign news editor of a top Malaysian TV station said she tended to select footage of the Iraq war that paints Muslims as victims and Western powers as brutal perpetrators, in part to compensate for perceived bias of Western news giants like CNN.) These forces have not consumed Malaysia as they have other Muslim countries. Malaysia has in fact sufficiently resisted them. Malaysian officials want not only to preserve that tendency but to extend it, and see Islam Hadhari as a vehicle by which to do so. As the UMNO-controlled *New Straits Times* reported in July, “[Islam Hadhari] aims to...enable Muslims to excel and be a distinctive and glorious group.”

Malaysia's Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar has said Islam Hadhari will help Muslim and non-Muslim countries communicate better and avert a "clash of civilizations." He said Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) countries have acknowledged the role that Islam Hadhari could play to correct the image of Islam around the world.²³ One assumes here that Albar expects Islam's image to improve through the spread of moderate forms of Islam like Islam Hadhari and not just through greater promotion of their mere existence. It is the prospect of the former that draws Western officials like Mrs. Hughes and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick to Islam Hadhari. As the latter said in May 2005, "I had a chance to talk a little about [Islam Hadhari] with the Prime Minister because we think the Malaysian experience is one that is very important—the tolerance, the moderate Muslim majority country, the development of democracy, the rule of law here...we talked about ways in which, perhaps, the government here could share some of its experience with the Iraqis as well as helping the new Palestinian Authority." The U.S. sees Islam Hadhari as a useful resource in combating Islamic extremism and, correspondingly, may prove willing to help promote it, though no formal arrangements have yet been announced.

How great an impact is Islam Hadhari likely to have on other Muslim countries? Popular websites like Islamonline.net have covered it, and Malaysian officials claim that Islam Hadhari continually receives a warm response from Muslims around the world.²⁴ There is, though, little evidence to suggest that it is actually attracting support in other Muslim countries—even in neighboring Indonesia and the Philippines, where it seems Islam Hadhari would be most attractive, given the religious traditions of non-literalist interpretations of the faith. Malaysia is recognized in the Muslim world for its economic growth and social stability. But the *influence* of Malaysian *Islam* has been minimal. It is highly political and polarized, and is seen to lack the depth and "authenticity" of strains found elsewhere. If there is a country in the region that could be described as having clout in the larger Muslim world it would be Indonesia, where Islamic schools of thought are more abundant and diverse and there is a rich intellectual tradition. Malaysian Muslims tend to seek inspiration from Indonesia, not vice versa, and Islam Hadhari does not appear to have changed the fact: it has received scant attention in the Indonesian media, chat rooms and mailing lists, and among Indonesian Muslim groups.²⁵ To take off in Indonesia it will probably need key political support. This is unlikely to come from the ruling government, as the national ideology in Indonesia is secular; Islam does play a political role in Indonesia, and Islamic groups have criticized the government for seemingly non-Islamic

behavior, but presidents do their best to appear above sectarian differences.²⁶ Moving beyond Indonesia, Islam Hadhari's influence may be hindered by the simple fact that different countries have different sets of challenges. Then again, few Muslim governments have formulated let alone articulated a plan to reconcile modernity with the Islamic faith, and fewer still have shown the determination to lead by example, as Malaysia has.

NOTES

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The Jihadist Threat in France

CLARA BEYLER

SINCE THE MADRID AND LONDON BOMBINGS, Europeans elsewhere—fearful that they may become the next targets of Islamist terrorism—are finally beginning to face the consequences of the long, unchecked growth of radical Islam on their continent. The July bombings in London, while having the distinction of being the first suicide attacks in Western Europe, were not the first time terrorists targeted a major European subway system. Ten years ago, a group linked to the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armé—GIA) unleashed a series of bombings on the Paris metro system. Since 1996, however, France has successfully avoided any major attack on its soil by an extremist Muslim group. This is due not to any lack of terrorist attempts—(only last September, France arrested nine members of a radical Islamist cell planning to attack the metro system)—but rather to the efficiency of the French counterterrorist services.¹

France is now home to between five to six million Muslims—the second largest religious group in France, and the largest Muslim population in any Western European country.² The majority of this very diverse population practices and believes in an apolitical, nonviolent Islam.³ A minority of them, however, are extremists. Islamist groups are actively operating in France today, spreading radical ideology and recruiting for future terrorist attacks on French soil and abroad.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of France's Islamist groups, the evolving threats they have posed and continue to pose to French society, and the response of the French authorities to these threats. While the French Republic may boast an impressive counterterrorist record, it also pursues flawed and sometimes contradictory policies toward its Muslim communities that fail to address many of the underlying vulnerabilities in French society that radical Islamists seek to exploit. The October-November 2005 riots in the low-income, predominantly immigrant suburbs or *cités* on the

outskirts of Paris and other French cities illustrate just how explosive the situation in these areas has become.

The Origins of Discontent

To understand the evolution of radical Islam in France, it is important to understand the country's history of Muslim immigration. Most of the immigrant workers that went to France in the 1950s and 1960s came from the former French colonies of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. They provided inexpensive labor, with the added benefit of being French-speaking due to France's long colonial involvement in North Africa. These workers were not deeply religious—their religious practices reflected primarily received socio-cultural traditions—and they had no long-term plans to stay in France. Nevertheless, many of the Maghreb countries sent preachers unfamiliar with France and its values to serve the religious needs of the Muslim workers in their adopted country.⁴

In 1973, in response to economic difficulties, France dramatically reduced immigration, but a year later allowed legally settled immigrants to reunite with their families. This sudden change of policy led many migrant workers to abruptly decide to bring over their relatives and stay in France. This precipitated decision proved to be as traumatic for France's migrants as for the French, who were equally ill-prepared. French society considered these immigrants to be inferior and treated them as second-class citizens. Sensitive French memories of a recently lost Algerian war, a defeat that deeply marks France to this day, only heightened their prejudice.

"With the Algerian war," writes Benjamin Stora, a French authority on Algeria, "colonial racism starts its crossing of the Mediterranean."⁵ The rampant racism in French society today manifests itself in various ways, such as the unofficial identity checks conducted by the police, often on the sole basis of *délict de sale gueule*, or "suspicion on the basis of a shady look." A 2005 official report concluded that racial discrimination is widely practiced in the job market and goes largely unpunished.⁶ A man from the Maghreb, for example, whether he is a French citizen or not, is five times less likely to get a job than a white Frenchman. With very few exceptions, migrants and their offspring have not been economically or socially integrated into mainstream French culture.⁷ A more worrisome poll, released in late December 2005, revealed an increase in racist ideas and their acceptability to the French.⁸ (This latest opinion poll, however, might be tied to the violent urban riots of the previous month.) Meanwhile, a more positive aftermath of the unrest was a renewed debate on affirmative action (labeled "positive discrimination"), as well as the

questioning of a law passed by the National Assembly earlier last year compelling public schools to present French colonization in positive light.

In addition to racial bias, the immigrants faced a multitude of cultural shocks in their adopted country. The traditional model of the North African family was severely tested, and family dynamics changed radically. In numerous cases the father lost his “hegemonic position in the patriarchal edifice,” often because he was unemployed.⁹ New family structures, such as single-parent families, began to emerge and women assumed more active roles in family life.¹⁰ This gender division in adapting to life in France prompted many men to reassert their status by becoming “religious models” and adopting a more radicalized version of Islam than they had previously practiced.

In the 1980s, Arab youth organized a number of demonstrations to protest racism, most famously the “Marche des Beurs” (the “March of the Arabs”). These demonstrations produced few significant results, however, and their sponsoring organizations soon expired. More long-lived have been radical groups that followed the path of the Tablighi Jamaat, a neo-fundamentalist Islamic missionary group from India that established itself in France in the 1970s. This organization and others like it, many of them backed by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, advocate different versions of *salafi* Islam and have found an audience among France’s immigrant community.¹¹

The Quest for Identity

The second and third generation of immigrants—those most profoundly affected by an identity crisis and most bereft of a sense of belonging to the Republic—are most directly involved in the growth of Islamism and radical Islam in France.¹² While the first generation retains many of its past North African cultural references, the younger generations occupy the more challenging territory that lies between their parents’ and grandparents’ traditional culture and French modernity. These younger generations, raised for the most part in a secular France replete with prejudice, no longer see themselves as Algerians or Moroccans or Tunisians. Rather, they seek a more satisfying source of identity, often by embracing a universal Islamic identity that supersedes any specific ethnic or national identity. For many, the term “Arab,” which evokes their parents’ immigrant past, is rejected and replaced by “Muslim” or “Islamist.”

The fear such terminology invokes in mainstream French society, moreover, only serves to enhance its appeal among Arab youth.¹³ Many Arab youths in France openly admire Osama bin Laden, whom they consider a modern Muslim Robin Hood challenging the master of all oppressors, the Unit-

ed States.¹⁴ Radical, fundamentalist preachers are successful among young French Muslims because they directly address their questions and anxieties.¹⁵ Rejecting French institutions, the *salafi* movement attracts a growing crowd of followers by playing on their feelings of exclusion, sending clear and simple messages, and making extensive use of conspiracy theories.¹⁶

An insightful study by the scholar Samir Amghar points out that becoming a “born-again Muslim” offers a more positive and gratifying self-image to the young Arab than the other two possibilities available to him in French society: being stigmatized as a delinquent by the mainstream society and the media, or being branded a “traitor” for attempting to adapt to French norms.¹⁷ Being a born-again Muslim allows a young man to be seen with respect by everyone in the *cités*.¹⁸ This phenomenon, however, is not limited to those born into Muslim families: The number of conversions to radical Islam in the suburbs is increasing among non-Muslims as well. Conversions often happen as a copycat phenomenon, especially among groups of youths. For instance, when one member of a group converts, the rest with whom he might share a background in petty crime or delinquency may sometimes convert out of solidarity or peer pressure, even though they may themselves have little predilection for religion to begin with. “Neighborhood solidarity” mutates into a “fraternity of old combatants.”¹⁹

Converts reveal a greater tendency to adopt an extreme version of their new religion; they often desire to prove more dedication to the faith and to make more sacrifices. A significant number of French Muslim converts, moreover, have had various social and judicial problems before their conversion. A June 2005 report of the French intelligence services found that one-third of converts had previous problems with the police. The report also showed that almost one-half of converts were uneducated, as well as five times more likely to be unemployed than the rest of French society.²⁰ In some cases, converts seem to be especially attracted to the jihad lifestyle: The so-called “Kelkal Group” and the “Roubaix Gang,” two terrorist cells from the 1990s, and the more recent Safé Bourada cell, all counted converts among its members. For born-again Muslims and converts alike, radical Islam offers a way out of poverty and the limited options of the *cités*, and it opens up a new romanticized world in which they assume the “idealized image of the international combatant.”²¹

Jihadist movements aim to nurture a strong identification between young, dispossessed French Muslims and the worldwide mujahidin movement, their “global band of brothers.” Dr. Anne Speckhard, who studied the “Chechen cell” arrested in a Parisian suburb in 2002, has noted that cell members “strongly identified with the traumas of their...‘fictive kin’ living outside of Europe and

acted as terrorists within Europe on behalf of them.”²² The growth of this identity has been facilitated in recent years by the explosion of Islamist media outlets on the Internet and satellite TV. These resources have helped jihadists to use major international issues—for example, the War in Iraq—to radicalize and recruit young French and European Muslims. In December 2004, to help curb this phenomenon, the French government banned al-Manar, a television propaganda instrument for the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah that is fiercely anti-Semitic.

The Recruiting Grounds

France’s *cités* or *banlieue*—the low-income suburbs around major cities like Paris, Lille and Lyon—have become home to the majority of non-French ethnic populations as the previous native inhabitants have gradually moved out.²³ Through the 1980s and 1990s, Arab youth increased the rate of petty crime, drug abuse and urban violence in these neighborhoods to such an extent that some became known as “lawless zones” (*zones de non droit*) where policemen were advised not to go.²⁴

Faced with the major social and security problems created by this situation—and in the absence of any traditional organization providing Arab youth with boundaries or purpose—municipal authorities began to rely on various local Islamist associations to help stop delinquency and drugs. In exchange, these groups were given official recognition. Many authorities later described such recognition as a “fundamental mistake” and emphasized “the perverse effects of that delegation of social control.”²⁵ According to the Christian preacher Christian Delorme, who had been an early supporter of Lyon’s Muslim Youth Association, that group triggered a “hardening of religious identities”—even though it and others like it, especially the neo-fundamentalist *tablighi* movement, had been instrumental in decreasing delinquency.²⁶ ²⁷ Other associations held to be nonprofit organizations according to a 1901 French law were nothing more than terrorist fronts.

Various French commissions have issued official reports about the volatile situation in the *cités*. These areas concern authorities both because of their lack of security and, more recently, because of their being a welcoming environment for the propagation of radical Islam, especially among the youth.²⁸ A number of jihadists were indeed born in these neighborhoods, especially those around Lille, Paris and Lyon.²⁹ Authorities tend to neglect, however, the economic challenges that the *cités* present. Olivier Roy, a French specialist on radical Islam, has described the willful blindness of the French government: “If the suburb is first of all a problem of Islam, then there is no social problem.

It is an old tradition of French social-democracy to use secularism to conceal the economic debate.”³⁰ It is important to look at the *cités* not only from a security perspective, as the media and French officials do, but also from an economic perspective as Roy does.

The October-November 2005 riots around Paris and in other cities highlighted all the existing problems in the *cités*: unemployment, hatred for all French authorities (police, medical personnel and firefighters were all attacked during the riots), overpopulated subsidized housing, poor public services, and an unsafe environment. The recent rampage provided stark evidence of the explosive situation that has built up in the *cités* over the years. The riots caught the world by surprise and woke up the French government from its apathy, as various changes were proclaimed to come in a near future. Despite the fact that the riots did not in general bear a religious character, Pierre de Bousquet de Florian, the director of France’s domestic intelligence service (Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire—DST), commented that Islamists are in a position to draw upon and exploit the discontentment of those living in the suburbs.³¹

A Multitude of Radical Islams

Radical Islam is not monolithic in France; significant political and cultural divisions are emerging between various radical movements. The well-established Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF), founded in 1983 and headquartered in a Parisian suburb, is beginning to lose some of its appeal among the youth. An Islamist movement linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, the UOIF recognizes the authority of the Qatari-based Egyptian Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who has justified suicide bombings or “martyrdom operations” against Israeli civilians and American forces in Iraq. Moreover, it has also lent support to Tariq Ramadan, a so-called “Muslim moderate” who is another apologist for attacks on American armed forces in Iraq. Among other setbacks, the UOIF did not do well in recent elections for the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM), the official Muslim representative body in France, losing a number of the seats it had held since 2003. The French scholar Farhad Khoroshkavar attributes part of UOIF’s declining popularity, in fact, to its very willingness to participate in the French democratic system.³² The UOIF’s political setbacks, however, did not diminish its longing for greater official recognition: it was the only Muslim organization that tried to take advantage of the riots by giving them a religious base in emitting a *fatwa* (religious edict) against the suburbs’ surge of violence. Importantly, their *fatwa* was neither acknowledged nor implemented by the rioters, confirming that the events were not religious in the first place.

While the UOIF continues to attract a more “elitist” audience drawn from the Muslim middle class and university students—and is seen as representing a “more bourgeois” Islam—it is largely absent from the *cités*.³³ In these areas two radical groups, the *salafis* and the Tablighi Jamaat, vie for control of an “Islam of the poor.”³⁴ The *tabligh*, which excludes politics from its doctrine, has waged a successful proselytizing campaign that appeals to a mostly older crowd (aged 30 and above).³⁵ As Roy notes, even those who join neo-fundamentalist movements like the *tabligh* may not remain in them for long, because their practice is so rigorous and time-consuming. Furthermore, many ardent youth are deterred by the apolitical nature of the *tabligh*. This demographic tends to be drawn to the even more radical and political approach of the *salafi*, who reportedly often prey on *tabligh* members.³⁶

The competition between these groups makes the exact role of the *tabligh* in recruiting or nurturing jihadists very unclear, especially when former *tabligh* members become more radical.³⁷ The latest counterterrorist operation in France points out the ambiguous role of *tabligh* in participating and waging jihad.³⁸ While some *tabligh* centers may be used by anonymous terrorist operatives simply to take advantage of the group’s well-recognized apolitical line, selected *tabligh* believers are indeed sent to attend Pakistani madrassas—known by the intelligence community to be safe havens for terrorists—in order to deepen their religious knowledge. Police sources also indicate that at these madrassas a different kind of selection takes place, between those who will pursue “intellectual” and “operational” vocations.³⁹ Those in the latter category may be sent to training camps, following the paths of French convert Hervé Djamel Loiseau, who was found frozen to death in Afghanistan, or American convert John Walker Lindh, arrested in 2001 while fighting American and the Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the *salafi* presence in the *cités* is mostly influential among the 15-to-30-year-olds who are unemployed or university dropouts, and who respond to the *salafi* claim that Islam represents a rebuke to the exclusionary nature of French society. The *salafi* success is also dependent on the charisma of its leaders, who are often trained in Saudi Arabia and are able to provide answers to young men’s search for identity.⁴⁰ The *salafi* preachers, who operate at every hour of the day, conduct a very efficient and targeted recruiting—for example, by offering combat sports classes to an impetuous youth. According to a French intelligence report, the number of *salafi* conversions in five years has equaled the number obtained by the *tabligh* in twenty five years.⁴¹ The *salafi* rely primarily on the influence of the environment—of friends and family ties—to win converts, while the *tabligh* win converts mainly through proselytizing.

Yet another fertile field for the growth of radical Islam is found in the French prison system, with its harsh living conditions and large Muslim population. The already-alienated inmates are easily drawn to an ideology that rejects mainstream society and blames it for their woes. Few imams are allowed into the prisons, moreover, because French officials screen them carefully to prevent an influx of potential militants.⁴² But this strategy can backfire. According to Pierre Raffin, director of *La Santé* detention center, self-proclaimed “authorities” in Islam among the prisoners fill the spiritual vacuum created by the absence of state-approved imams.⁴³ And while authorities supposedly control the attempts of radical Islamists to recruit in jail, they acknowledge the influence of these individuals and sometimes broker deals with them to ease tensions within the prisons.⁴⁴ Their “control” has clearly been inadequate; the arrest of the terrorist Safé Bourada revealed that he had indeed recruited other members of his cell while he was in jail. The dismantling of another terrorist cell late last year further confirmed that jails provide an ideal ground for jihadists, as three men among the arrested worked in the same prison.⁴⁵ This is a problem facing other Western countries as well, as shown by a similar case in a California prison in the summer of 2005.⁴⁶

At the very heart of the struggle for Muslim souls is not the jail, but the mosque. Here moderate and radical imams vie for control—whether to use mosque funds for traditional religious purposes or to allow the mosque to become a recruiting and proselytizing center for radical Islam. Because the *zakat*—the obligation to give alms which compose one of Islam’s five pillars—is not officially controlled, the misappropriation of financial resources is always a possibility. In the late 1990s, for instance, five million French francs collected from the *zakat* were found at the home of an imam active in a *tabligh* Parisian mosque. More recently, significant money transfers were discovered on the bank account of one of the arrested men who worked in a detention center, and who also preached at a local *tabligh* mosque.⁴⁷

An undercover journalist reporting on the activities of the radical Karim Bourti has shed light on some extensive financial abuses occurring in and near mosques.⁴⁸ Bourti—a charismatic recruiter who claimed to have converted several jihadists, including Loiseau and Brahim Yadel, a man previously held at Guantanamo—collected money in and outside mosques. He then used these funds to support his colleagues Boualem Bensaid and Smain Ait Ali Belkacem, who are both serving life sentences for their involvement in the 1995 Paris metro bombings. Thanks in part to this money, Belkacem is still able to maintain and control a group of followers in jail.⁴⁹

Radicals make regular attempts to take over control of mosques. They

usually fail, however, because of the prompt intervention of police, who are tipped off by incumbent imams or other Muslim informants. When imams openly preach radical ideas to community members, the police move expeditiously: they warn the mosque rector and, if the warning goes unheeded, they expel the radical imam from the mosque. Then, in accordance with the government's "zero tolerance" policy, they deport him from France. Several imams from Algeria, Turkey, and Iraq have already been deported, including the Algerian-born imam Abdelkader Bouziane of Lyon, who was expelled in 2004 for advocating, among other things, stoning and wife-beating.

Targeting France and Beyond

In a videotape released after his arrest last November in Pakistan, the Syrian Abu Musab al-Suri, aka Mustafa Setmariyan Nasar, proclaimed that it "is our legitimate right to strike at France because we are at war with that country."⁵⁰ Al-Suri, sometimes called the "red head," is suspected of involvement in the London and Madrid bombings, and is connected to the Algerian GIA. Today, France breeds two kinds of terrorists: those who plan to perpetrate attacks in France, and French nationals who target foreign countries. With the internationalization of jihad, the nature and targets of terrorism have evolved from the Iranian-sponsored attacks of the 1980s to a more recent Sunni radical transnational threat.

In 1985 and 1986, bombs rocked such famous Parisian tourist sites as the Champs Elysées and large department stores at the Galeries Lafayette and Marks & Spencer. French counterterrorist services eventually tracked down the perpetrators of the attacks to the Fouad Ali Saleh group, a cell of Middle Easterners and North Africans residing in France. While much about this group remains unknown, it is clear that the patron of the attacks was Iran.⁵¹

The next terror wave in France took place in the early 1990s and was closely intertwined with the legislative elections in Algeria. The Islamist Salvation Front (FIS), which was favored to win those elections, was prevented from attaining power by a government-organized coup that declared martial law and outlawed the Islamist party. France supported the coup. In its wake, the GIA, comprised of Arab veterans of the 1980s Afghan jihad, swiftly gathered various Algerian dissident groups under its umbrella. It soon called for the departure of foreigners from Algeria, and started kidnapping and killing foreign hostages, as well as countless Algerian civilians.⁵²

Following the kidnapping of French diplomats in 1993, French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua launched "Operation Chrysanthemum" which aimed to round up Algerian Islamist sympathizers who had come to France

and Europe after the 1991 coup and gathered in the Algerian Brotherhood in France (FAF), a hotbed of the FIS. The subsequent arrests included important radicals involved with the network of Mohammed and Brahim Chalabi, which supplied the radical vigilantes in Algeria with weapons, intelligence and fake identification papers. These 1994 arrests enabled French authorities to uncover various links between Algerian organizations, NGOs active in France—such as the Association Educative des Musulmans de France, set up by the Chalabi brothers—and their criminal and terrorist activities.⁵³

The GIA responded quickly in December 1994 by hijacking an Air France airplane departing from Algiers for Paris via Marseille. The French police raided the plane on the ground in Marseille, thereby thwarting the hijackers' plan to crash the plane into the Eiffel Tower.⁵⁴ They also arrested more Algerian terrorists, but still failed to disrupt some of their networks, notably in Lyon, home of the terrorist cell primarily responsible for the attacks in the French capital in the following summer. In early July 1995, the assassination of FIS founder Imam Abdelbaki Sahraoui (who worked at a Parisian mosque) provoked a series of bombings targeting French civilians that began a fortnight later. These attacks included the famous 1995 bombings of the Parisian metro stations at Saint Michel and Blanche, and were carried out in the name of the GIA by the French-Algerian Khaled Kelkal, a man who had been recruited by Safé Bourada.

International jihadists made their first appearance in France in 1996 when a violent group of thugs known as the "Roubaix gang," which was famous for committing armed robberies with heavy artillery, booby-trapped a car before a summit of the G7.⁵⁵ The police defused the bomb and, during a gun battle, killed most of the gang members—members who had grown up in a suburb of Lille and included converts and the sons of immigrants. Their cell leader, the former medical student Christophe Caze, had gained experience in jihadist paramilitary activities during the war in Bosnia, where he also established contacts with various radicals. One of them was Fateh Kamel, who was discovered because of information collected on Caze. The Canadian-based Kamel recruited Ahmed Ressam, who was later arrested in 1999 at the U.S.-Canada border, and was convicted in the United States of possession of fifty kilograms of explosives intended for an attack on the Los Angeles International Airport.

It is now clear that the nature of the terror threat in France has changed since the mid-1990s. Groups acting on behalf of countries and/or nationalist claims have been replaced by ones promoting global jihad. Their weapons have also evolved, from the homemade bombs of 1986 to more unconventional tools of destruction. During arrests made in 2002 in Vénissieux, a

suburb of Lyon, for example, traces of ricin were found. That same year, two groups of men were arrested in the Parisian suburbs of La Courneuve and Romainville as they planned an attack, most likely a chemical strike against Russian interests in Paris.

Over the past decade, numerous arrests have confirmed the international thrust of the new generation of terrorists. In 1998, Algerian radicals were discovered to be planning an attack on the eve of the World Cup. In 2000, another Algerian cell calling itself the “Non-Aligned Mujahidin” and close to al-Qaeda was dismantled in Frankfurt as it intended to strike a famous Christmas market in the area.⁵⁶ A year later, six men linked to al-Qaeda, including their French-Algerian leader Djamel Beghal, were arrested while planning a suicide car-bombing against the American embassy in Paris ordered by the senior al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubayda.

The dismantling of the terrorist cell led by Safé Bourada illustrates the threat that France still faces. In September 2005, after two and a half years of surveillance, Bourada and other members were arrested near Paris as they were planning to bomb three targets: the Parisian metro, the headquarters of the French security services, and an airport (recovered evidence did not specify Charles de Gaulle or Orly airport). Three of the members of Bourada’s cell frequented the same mosque, and one of them, Mohammed Benyamina, had worked as a local *halal* butcher. Benyamina had previously been arrested in Algiers, and Algerian authorities had informed the French, as they believed Benyamina had visited Algeria to establish relations with the Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), a Salafist offshoot of the GIA created in the late 1990s with close ties to al-Qaeda.⁵⁷ Algerian officials also thought that Benyamina may have tried to contact Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s operatives in Iraq during a prior stop in Syria. Ultimately, many consider the GSPC to be the most likely perpetrator of the next attacks in France.

Ansar al-Fath (Partisans of Victory) was created by the charismatic Bourada. In 1995, he had been arrested and imprisoned for his involvement in the metro bombings. Bourada had recruited the main perpetrator of the attacks, Khaled Kelkal, and helped fellow planners Ali Touchent (later killed in Algeria in 1997), Boualem Bensaïd and Smain Ait Ali Belkacem, as well as the group’s financier, London-based Rachid Ramda, who was only recently extradited by Britain. While in jail, Bourada also recruited some of his fellow inmates, and then in 2003, after his release, went to Cairo for one year to learn Arabic and deepen his knowledge of the Quran. On his way back to France, he stopped in Turkey, where he, too, is suspected to have sought to establish contacts with Zarqawi’s men. Other members of Bourada’s cell,

including Kaci Ouarab, were in Lebanon earlier this year. Ouarab is thought to have undergone training in Lebanon in weapons and explosives—knowledge that he seems to have later shared with two other cell members, both of whom were Muslim converts from Orleans who met Bourada in jail.⁵⁸

Ansar al-Fath has pledged its allegiance to Abdelmalek Droukdal, the new emir of the GSPC who embraces Zarqawi and the jihad in Iraq (Droukdal applauded the slaying of two Algerian diplomats in Iraq.) Last September, a GSPC communiqué on the Internet denounced France as its “No. 1 enemy.”⁵⁹ A recent French counterterrorist report expressed concern over the latest efforts by North African radical groups to work closely with one another.⁶⁰ In the past months, several men suspected of being sent by Zarqawi to establish contacts with the GSPC were arrested in Algeria. French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy also recently mentioned indirect links between the GSPC and Zarqawi’s organization.⁶¹

French Jihadists Abroad

Many French jihadists have acquired their training and experience in foreign countries. Though not all of these militants return to France, those who do come back pose a greater danger after passing through terror camps and establishing connections abroad. French jihadists have fought in conflicts in Bosnia, Kashmir, Chechnya and, from the Soviet departure in 1992 to as late as 2001, in Afghanistan. In fact, dozens of French jihadists went through training in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan—far more than the seven French citizens arrested there by America and held at Guantanamo Bay.⁶²

Before the bombings of July 2005, London provided another favorite gateway to jihad. French-Algerian reporter Mohammed Sifaoui infiltrated a cell of radicals in France in 2000, and testified to their many links to Islamist radicals in “Londonistan.” French Algerian Omar Saiki, convicted in France in the 1998 plot to attack the World Cup, went to Abu Hamza’s Finsbury Park Mosque in London after serving his prison sentence and being stripped of his French nationality. From there, he stayed in contact with radicals on the other side of the Channel, and was caught on tape claiming to represent the GSPC in France.

Other potential French jihadists did not even need to travel as far as London. They benefited from a crash course in jihad at terror camps operating throughout France from the mid-1990s until 2002. When the French terror suspect Ibrahim Keita was arrested, he revealed that he and others had set up camps in the forests of Fontainebleau, Normandy, the Alps and elsewhere. Keita and others—most of them veterans of the Afghan jihad—are accused of involvement in the killing of the Afghan rebel leader Ahmed Shah Massoud in Afghanistan on

September 9, 2001.⁶³ One of the alleged organizers of the French camps, Brahim Yadel, was detained at Guantanamo before being extradited to France.⁶⁴

The 2001 arrest of the English-born “shoe bomber” Richard Reid on a plane taking off from Paris led to another recent series of arrests in France—arrests that again revealed the international character of terrorist networks. Last May, Ghulam Mustapha Rama, leader of the Pakistani association *Chemin Droit*, was charged with setting up a cell to send recruits to terrorist training camps in Pakistan. Rama preached at a mosque in Saint-Denis that was financed by the Saudi-based *Al Haramain* charity, and was thought to be the local contact for the Pakistani terrorist group *Lashkar e-Toyba*.⁶⁵ Authorities linked Rama and two of his recruits to Richard Reid, even though no direct relation could be established in court.⁶⁶

In January 2005, a French cell that recruited for the Iraqi insurgency was dismantled. The leader of the cell was 23-year-old Farid Benyettou, who benefited from the reputation of his brother-in-law, a GSPC member who was arrested in the World Cup plot and expelled to Algeria in 2004. Benyettou is suspected of having recruited at least seven people at a Parisian mosque for the Iraqi jihad.⁶⁷

France’s success in thwarting terrorists on its own territory has not always extended to French terrorists abroad. A Lyon-area resident, Nizar Nouar, perpetrated the 2002 Djerba synagogue bombing attack claimed by al-Qaeda. So far, seven Frenchmen have died in Iraq, two of them in suicide attacks. The most famous French terrorist abroad remains Zacharias Moussaoui, the so-called “twentieth 9/11 hijacker,” who was arrested on a French tip and convicted in the United States in 2001. In addition to Moussaoui, other French terrorists have also been captured abroad. In Morocco, French convert Robert Richard Antoine Pierre, nicknamed “the Emir with Blue Eyes,” was arrested in 2003 on charges of organizing and training cells to attack key sites in Morocco. Meanwhile, Australian authorities apprehended the French Caribbean convert Willie Brigitte, accusing him of planning to attack Australian power plants either for al-Qaeda or *Lashkar-e-Toyba*.

The Changing Face of Terror

French police generally believe that those who are planning terrorist attacks against France are unlikely to recruit delinquents with police records. Rather, French authorities believe Islamist radicals will aim to recruit operatives with a clean past in order minimize their contact with the rest of the cell. Indeed, the arrests of Bourada and his group demonstrate the increasing care terrorists are taking to assign each cell member discrete tasks.

In the founding document of *Ansar al-Fath*, Bourada stipulated not only the group's goals, but also the responsibilities of each member, which included helping their imprisoned comrades, tactics for derailing police surveillance, and supporting their "brothers" waging the jihad abroad.⁶⁸ In addition, individual members were assigned very specific tasks in which they operated alone. For example, to fulfill his "public relations" operation in Algeria (and perhaps Syria), Benyamina stopped attending the group's meetings for some time so as to attract as little police attention as possible.

Many French jihadists would be quite difficult to profile. Ranging in age from their teens to late thirties, they do not all fit the stereotype of poor, illiterate men marginalized from society. While some chose jihad after failing in their professions or becoming disenchanted with their options for the future, many are quite well educated.⁶⁹ Bourada was once a university student; Daoudi of the Beghal cell, a computer scientist; Caze, a medical student; and Ali Touchent, the Algerian organizer of the 1995 attacks, an architecture student. Moreover, while the French jihadist often does belong to the second or third generation of North African immigrants, that is not always the case. Since their earliest days, the jihadist ranks in France have included a number of European converts. And as the counterterrorist French judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere has said, authorities are increasingly concerned that "light-skinned converts" and women may become recruiting targets for al-Qaeda.⁷⁰ This concern has since been proven real with the first female European convert-turned-human bomb in Iraq last December. A man was later arrested in France in connection with the woman's deadly mission.⁷¹

Most jihadists undergo profound personal changes before disappearing into the movement. Cutting family ties is often one step along the path of radicalization, as the cases of both Khaled Kelkal and Zacharias Moussaoui demonstrate.⁷² Lionel Dumont, recently convicted for his involvement in the so-called "Roubaix Gang," was described by a family member as having "deeply changed...becoming weirder, more secretive."⁷³ For others, the process is even more precipitous and leads very quickly to jihad abroad—especially in Iraq. For example, Mohammed A., a suspected French citizen fighting in Iraq, was a young delinquent in France who sought out Benyettou as a mentor. Within two weeks he became a radical and then convinced his father to let him go to Syria to study. Mohammed's whereabouts are currently unknown. Other recruits from his neighborhood have reportedly died in Iraq.⁷⁴

According to head of the *Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire* (DST), Mr. de Bousquet de Florian, jihad "first-timers"—such as the Afghan and the Bosnian alumni—still constitute a danger and continue dominating the ranks

of the French jihadists.⁷⁵ He added, however, that the new generation of jihadists tends to be “younger, more frustrated but more engaged and radicalized.” He cited as evidence the participation of French citizens in insurgent attacks against Americans and Iraqis in Iraq.⁷⁶ Currently, the exact whereabouts of at least a dozen French citizens in Iraq are unknown.

Counterterrorism Made in France

France currently holds one of the best counterterrorism records in the world. Based on its early experience in combating both national and international terrorism, it has adopted policies that effectively address both imminent and long-term threats. The country’s success can be attributed to the cooperation between its judiciary and police in making preventative arrests, its ability to gather qualitative human intelligence, its efficient international cooperation, and the increasing enforcement of its “zero-tolerance” policy.

France began to shape its legal arsenal following the 1986 Champs Elysées and department store attacks. After the attacks, an antiterrorism law directed at the “association of criminals in relation with a terrorist enterprise” was enacted and, a decade later, strengthened by an additional piece of legislation establishing that “conspiracy to commit to terrorism was itself a crime.”⁷⁷ In 2004, another law, known as the “Perben Law II,” was passed to address problems arising from the evolution of criminal behavior. These laws grant significant power to a small group of magistrates who specialize in terrorism. Cases involving terrorist activities are centralized in the Court of Paris, and the examining magistrate manages the investigation through a variety of means, including indictments, house searches and phone taps. As Jean-Louis Bruguière has noted, the magistrate “plays a leading role in France in the fight against terrorism.”⁷⁸

The collaboration and trust between various French agencies also contribute to the success of the counterterrorist system. Though their work sometimes overlaps or operates on parallel tracks, the Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure, the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST) and the Renseignements Généraux (RG), along with police and judicial bodies, have produced positive results. The two main services involved in counterterrorism—the DST and the Direction Centrale des Renseignements Généraux (DCRG)—could potentially become even more efficient if they were merged.

To empower French police and judicial authorities, the French Parliament passed an anti-terrorism bill in late December 2005. This additional law, first introduced by Minister Sarkozy last September, constitutes the

eighth legal counterterrorist enactment of the last decade.⁷⁹ The bill mainly applies to three main fields: interrogation, counterterrorist surveillance, and jail sentencing.⁸⁰

Other parts of the bill facilitate police access to personal data, such as license plates, credit cards and identity cards. Phone companies and Internet cafés will have to keep computer data information for one year, an initiative to be applied among all European Union members.⁸¹ Police will keep tab on citizens traveling to certain countries known for their links to radical Islam, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan and Iraq. Finally, a provision inspired by the British after the London bombings greatly increases video-surveillance in public spaces, such as airports and train stations, as well as radical mosques and bookstores. While all these proposals are criticized by human rights organizations as damaging to civil liberties, a substantial majority of the French public supports giving up some of their liberties in exchange for greater security.⁸²

The French police already have access to a formidable amount of intelligence gathered by a small network of informants in the *cités* and the radical mosques. What France lacks in the funds and technology available in the United States, it makes up for it through this human intelligence. A month before the 9/11 attacks, for example, the French alerted American authorities to the suspicious activities of one of its citizens, Zacharias Moussaoui, who was subsequently arrested. French intelligence also tipped off other countries about two suspicious individuals in Spain and England—men who eventually became involved in, respectively, the Madrid and the London bombings. Even when France's foreign policy puts it at odds with the United States, its counterterrorism operations fully cooperate with the Americans. Last summer the *Washington Post* revealed the existence of "Alliance Base," a secret counterterrorism center based in Paris where exchanges between the two countries take place.⁸³ The issuing of international warrants, such as the one leading to the recent arrest of Djamel Beghal in Dubai, is another example of France's commitment to international cooperation.

Foreign Money and Foreign Teachers

The French republican notion of the modern nation-state places secularism at the heart of the public sphere and draws distinct lines between the public and private, secular and religious domains. A 1905 law separating church and state prohibits the government from getting "involved in the internal organization of churches."⁸⁴ However, numerous loopholes allowed the French state to provide some funding for religious places, which it did for the Mosque of Paris, established in the mid-1920s.⁸⁵

Today, most of the financial support for French mosques comes from foreign countries. Both Algeria and Morocco have used their sponsorship of Islamic institutions in France to influence and keep an eye on their overseas citizens, and have battled each other for power over the communities settled in France.⁸⁶ Other countries, such as the Gulf States, have gained influence even though very few of their citizens have settled in France. Through its missionary activities, Saudi Arabia has been responsible for spreading its radical vision of Islam, Wahhabism, among the Muslim Arabs of France.⁸⁷ The rapid spread of the *salafi* movement has also been made possible by generous Saudi donations and has been propagated by Saudi-trained preachers.⁸⁸ Those who have studied in Saudi Arabia confirm the influence of that country's radical teachings.⁸⁹ France accepted Saudi religious and financial sponsorship both because of the law of 1905 and also because of the strong financial and economic relationships between the two countries. Before 9/11, moreover, Wahhabism was seen as a defense against the "radicalisms of the era, like Iranian Islamism, Arab nationalism or communism."⁹⁰

That thinking changed on September 11, 2001. Several Saudi charities throughout the world have been closed for financing terrorist activities or preaching jihad. These include the Al Haramain Foundation, the International Islamic Relief Foundation (IIRO), and the Benevolence International Foundation.⁹¹ In 2002, France also shut down the Saudi Global Relief Foundation (Fondation Secours Mondial), which was supervised by the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs.⁹² However, another charity blacklisted by numerous Western countries, the Hamas-affiliated fund called the Comité de Bienfaisance et de Soutien aux Palestiniens (Committee of Benevolence and Support for Palestinians) continues to function in France despite its direct involvement with terrorist activities in the territories controlled by the Palestinian Authority.⁹³

Foreign countries have also managed to circumvent the 1905 law when the French public primary school system introduced programs to promote immigrant cultures and to teach immigrant children their native languages. Bilateral agreements enabled countries like Algeria to send teachers to France who reportedly, in several cases, preached politics and religion in the classroom in defiance of French law.⁹⁴ Over the last few years, official French commissions have recommended reforming and even revoking these arrangements. The commissions concluded that continuing these programs posed a threat to integration and also raised security concerns.⁹⁵

France has also begun to focus on improving the transparency of Islamic financial networks. In March 2005, then Interior Minister Dominique de Villepin announced the creation of the Fondation Pour les Oeuvres de l'Islam

de France, a public foundation whose purpose will be to openly channel and monitor all financial transactions for mosques.⁹⁶ Authorities are also studying the two-fold financing of radical Islam in France: the “macro” financing that comes mainly from French ex-colonies and Middle Eastern states, and the “micro” financing of radical jihadists that relies on such illegal activities as counterfeiting designer clothes and accessories (a Moroccan specialty), falsifying official documents, and trafficking in drugs and arms. The well-known connection between criminal activity and terrorism was on display in 2005, when two members of the Bourada cell were arrested as they attempted to steal money from a prostitute. French police revealed that some of the men arrested in December 2005 had committed armed robberies. These men, accused by Minister Sarkozy of indirect links with Zarqawi, also had connections to Bourada’s cell, as well as with the so-called “Frankfurt group.”⁹⁷

A financial system used to support jailed terrorists was also brought to light recently. The radical recruiter Bourti sent money to his convicted friend Belkacem that helped him win a group of admirers in prison. According to police sources, a great part of the money sent to his jail is collected during the *zakat* in mosques; the donors are frequently unaware of the final destination of the money.⁹⁸ One must keep in mind that terrorism is relatively inexpensive; the approximate cost of the 1995 metro attacks was less than 100,000 French francs.

Deportation is another tool the French employ in their battle against terrorism. Over the last few years, in accordance with its “zero tolerance” policy, France has expelled more than two dozen imams who fueled anti-Western feeling with inflammatory rhetoric. Shortly after the London bombings, Interior Minister Sarkozy promised an even greater effort on “tracking radical elements” and taking action against radical preachers—expelling them to their birth country and stripping them of the French nationality in some cases.⁹⁹ Recently, the British, Dutch, and Italians have taken similar actions.

French officials have focused on radical imams, monitoring their sermons on a weekly basis. In recent years, officials have also closed down a number of radical and salafist mosques.¹⁰⁰ More informal methods of spreading radical Islam, such as underground meetings and the use of the Internet and cassettes, now pose a new problem, and one less easy to monitor than preachers.¹⁰¹ But the French government can—and indeed has—taken steps to reduce the threat from radical foreign imams. In 2005, it instituted a program both to boost the number of French-trained imams and to instruct them on the values of the French Republic.¹⁰² As of 2004, however, the majority of imams in France were foreigners, many of whom did not even speak French.¹⁰³

France has tried to promote moderate Islam in other ways as well. To make up for Sunni Islam's lack of official representation in France, the government helped set up the first representative body of Muslims in France, the aforementioned CFCM, which held its first elections in 2003. However, the French government demonstrated little confidence in France's moderate Muslims when it passed legislation in 2004 banning the headscarf inside public schools. Instead of appealing to those moderate French Muslims who had supported the state's decision, a French delegation sought the blessing of a rather dubious foreign authority: Shaykh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi of Cairo's al-Azhar University, famous for his fatwas condoning suicide bombing in Israel and Iraq.

The Next Step

Despite the success of French counterterrorism efforts in preventing attacks on French soil, the country still faces a serious threat today emanating from radical jihadist Islam, which adds recruits to its ranks every day by exploiting, among other things, the identity crisis characteristic of Arab youth born in France. These younger generations have replaced the national identification of their parents' homelands with a boundless Islamic identity, free of physical frontiers. The radical *salafi* version of Islam is seen as giving this youth a sense of purpose, especially in the *cités* where socio-economic problems have hindered the development of any alternatives.

To counteract this alienation from mainstream society, authorities need to launch a campaign in the Arab immigrant community to assist families who see radical changes in their offspring and would like to take action against it. France also needs to address problems generated by its own laws—laws that affect how it handles the challenges posed by a large expatriate Muslim community with foreign attachments. As discussed earlier, foreign actors in the religious and cultural life of the French Muslim community have played a large role in the development of radical, particularly *salafi* Islam. By keeping its hands out of the religious sphere, the French government inadvertently has created a vacuum for foreign actors to step in. Its contradictory decisions regarding radical groups active in France produce other difficulties as well. While the government has tried to promote a “French Islam” through the creation of, for example, the CFCM, they have also undercut such efforts by turning to well-known radicals such as Shaykh Tantawi for support. And while the government has banned some charities such as the Fondation Secours Mondial for their links to terrorist activities, it has failed to take any action against the Hamas-affiliated Comité de Bienfaisance et de Soutien aux Palestiniens.

Moreover, the French government has expelled radical preachers, while it has continued school programs that allow foreign teachers to undermine French Republican principles in the classroom. These actions send mixed messages to France's Muslims that carry a strong odor of unfairness, and that encourage rather than deter those who seek to radicalize France's Muslims.

It is essential that French authorities recognize and assess the complex psychological, social and economic factors contributing to the growth of radical Islam in its various forms. The attraction radical Islam holds for "up-rooted" young Arabs has combined with France's failure to improve the lives of its poor Muslim populations to create a lethal mix. Only by addressing the various ingredients of this mix will the state be able to act effectively. It must augment its successful counterterrorism measures with actions that help to promote the participation of France's majority moderate Muslims in the life of their adopted country.

NOTES

1 *Le Figaro*, September 27, 2005.

2 One should keep in mind how difficult it is to determine the exact number of Muslims in France (and the exact number of extremists); one can deal only with approximate figures, as French law forbids any census based on religion. The French Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (HCI) agrees that there are approximately (more than) four million Muslims. See Rapport du Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, *Islam in the Republic*, November 2000, p. 26.

3 French Muslims have diverse origins—from North Africa stretching to Asia—and practice their religion in very different ways. It is, therefore, difficult to speak of a French Muslim community as if it were united; it is more accurate to speak of a mosaic of Muslim identities in the French religious landscape.

4 Xavier Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées* (Editions Albin Michel, 2004), p. 236.

5 Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie, 1954-1962* (Editions La Découverte, 2002), p. 72.

6 Roger Fauroux, *Rapport sur la Lutte Contre les Discriminations Ethniques dans le Domaine de l'Emploi*. La Documentation Française, September 2005.

7 For interesting comparisons between France and the United States, see Robert A. Levine, *Assimilating Immigrants: Why America Can and France Cannot* (Rand Corporation, 2004), p. 14.

8 *Le Monde*, July 13, 2005.

9 Higher rates of unemployment among Muslims, compared to other religious groups, make this segment of the French population more subject to the difficulties of unemployment and its consequences.

10 Farhad Khoroshkavar, *L'Islam Dans les Prisons* (Editions Balland, Collection Voix et Regards, 2004), p. 274.

11 It should be noted that Salafism is composed of several branches, some which are non-violent and are only concerned with the purity of its members. On the other end of the *salafi* spectrum, groups such as Egyptian Takfir, Algerian GIA and GSPC represent its most violent form.

12 This explanation is advanced by Olivier Roy, who adds that the identity crisis is common to modern westernized societies and not specific to the Muslim communities, in both *L'Islam Mondialisé* (Editions du Seuil, 2004) and *La Laïcité dans l'Islam* (Editions Stock, 2005).

13 Samir Amghar, "Islam de France," in the Institute Choiseul's *Maghreb Machrek* 183 (Spring 2005): 11. See also *Agence France Press*, February 22, 2005.

14 Farhad Khoroshkavar, "Terrorist Networks in Europe," paper for the conference "Muslims in Europe, Post 9/11: Understanding and Responding to the Islamic World," St Antony's College/Princeton University, April 25-6, 2003.

15 Alain Boyer, *L'Islam en France* (Editions Presse Universitaires de France, Collection Politique d'Aujourd'hui, 1998), p. 322

16 Roy, *Islam Mondialisé*, pp. 218-9

17 The term was coined by Olivier Roy.

18 See Amghar, "Islam de France."

19 Olivier Roy, "Jihad Hexagonal," *L'Expansion*, September 1, 2004.

20 *Le Monde*, July 13, 2005.

21 Ibid.

22 Gilles Kepel, *Les Banlieues de l'Islam* (Editions Gallimard, 1987), p. 160

23 Nicolas Sarkozy, "La Sécurité des Français," *Défense Nationale, Etudes politiques-stratégiques-militaires-économiques-scientifiques*, no. 11 (November 2003): 19.

24 Secretary of State to Durable Development Mrs. Tokia Saifi commented on the "fundamental mistake made by the officials" by handing "the keys of the neighborhood to Islamists" in exchange for a return to quiet, such the cessation of setting cars in fire. Christophe Deloire and Christophe Dubois, *Les Islamistes Sont Déjà Là, Enquête sur une Guerre Secrète* (Albin Michel, 2004), p.97. See also *L'Express*, November 21, 2002.

25 *Le Monde*, February 12, 2003.

26 Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, p. 187.

27 Stasi Commission, *Commission de Réflexion sur l'application du Principe de laïcité dans la République, Rapport au Président de la République*, (December 11, 2003), pp. 52, 67.

28 The Roubaix gang was headquartered in a suburb of Lille, and was composed of young delinquents who were also part of an Islamic movement (Roy, *Islam Mondialisé*, p. 211). Young French jihadists from la Courneuve, a suburb of Paris, committed attacks in Marrakech, Morocco in 1994 (Ibid., p. 210). In the Lyon suburbs several counterterrorist actions took place, notably against the Algerian imam Benchellali and his entourage for their connections to the Chechen rebels, while his son Mourad was arrested in Afghanistan and held by the Americans at Guantanamo Bay.

29 Olivier Roy, *La Laïcité Face à l'Islam* (Editions Stock, 2005), pp. 61, 134.

30 *Valeurs Actuelles*, November 18, 2005.

31 *Agence France Presse*, February 22, 2005.

32 Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, p. 292.

33 Ibid.

34 *Le Monde*, July 13, 2005. See also Amghar, "Islam de France," pp. 18-19.

35 Khoroskhavar, *L'Islam dans les Prisons*, p. 164.

36 For instance, Hervé Terrel in *Exils et Royaumes* noted that two *tabligh* attendees were involved in the 1986 bombings committed in Paris by the Fuad Ali Saleh group. In 1994 two other *ex-tablighis* conducted a terror attack in Marrakech, Morocco (*Le Monde*, September 26, 2001).

37 *Le Monde*, November 29, 2005.

38 Personal interview, 36.

39 Amghar, "Islam de France," pp. 18-26

40 Piotr Smolar, "Les conversions à l'islam radical inquiètent la police française," *Le Monde*, July 13, 2005.

41 Ibid., p. 234. The screening of imams by French authorities is the result of the cautionary tale of the Kelkal case. Khaled Kelkal, who was chiefly responsible for the Paris bombings in the mid-1990s, was re-Islamized in jail. See also Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, p. 102.

42 Stasi Commission, pp. 42, 61.

43 Khoroskhavar, *L'Islam Dans les Prisons*, pp. 232-3.

44 *Le Monde*, November 29, 2005

45 In August 2005 a synagogue and a military center based in Los Angeles were to be the targets of a thwarted terror attack. The terrorists met in jail and converted to their new religion, jihadism

46 *Le Monde*, December 12, 2005.

47 Mohamed Sifaoui, *Mes "Frères" Assassins, Comment j'ai Infiltré une Cellule d'Al-Qaïda*. (Paris : Le Cherche Midi, 2003).

48 Personal interview.

49 *Le Figaro*, December 8, 2005; see also *Le Monde*, December 5, 2005.

50 Bigo, "Les attentats de 1986 en France : un cas de violence transnationale et ses implications (Partie 1)," Cultures & Conflits website at <http://www.conflits.org/document.php?id=129#ftn4>.

51 Shaul Shay and Yoram Schweitzer, "The 'Afghan Alumni' Terrorism," ICT Website, November 6, 2000; Roy, *Islam Mondialisé*, p. 204.

52 Jean-Louis Bruguiere, "Terrorism: Threat and Responses," Occasional Paper Series no. 31, Geneva Center for Security Policy *Workshop on The European Union and its Neighborhood: Towards a Strategy?* (May 2001).

53 *Libération*, February 20, 2001.

54 Radio France Internationale, October 2, 2001.

55 Other locations seem to have been potential targets for the Frankfurt group, including a synagogue or a church.

56 The French researcher Ali Laïdi added that the GSPC was "created at the demand of al-Qaïda associates," who were distrustful of the GIA because of its reputation of being infiltrated by

Algerian authorities. See Ali Laïdi, "10 ans après les attentats de Saint-Michel, quelles menaces pour la France?" Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques website, July 2005, at <http://www.iris-france.org/pagefr.php3?fichier=fr/Archives/expert/2005-07-25>.

57 Associated Press, October 10, 2005.

58 *Libération*, September 29, 2005.

59 *Le Monde*, December 22, 2005.

60 *Libération*, December 14, 2005.

61 Out of the seven, four were handed to French authorities in August 2004 (*BBC News*, August 4, 2004).

62 Deloivre and Dubois, *Les Islamistes*, p. 48.

63 *L'Express*, November 27, 2003.

64 Associated Press, May 12, 2005; see also *Valeurs Actuelles*, December 13, 2002.

65 The man, Ghulam Rama, and two Frenchmen of North African descent were charged with terrorism for their alleged roles in a network to recruit jihad fighters (Associated Press, June 16, 2005, and *Valeurs Actuelles*, December 13, 2002).

66 Agence France Presse, January 30, 2005.

67 *Le Monde*, October 3, 2005; see also *Le Figaro*, September 27, 2005.

68 Roy, *Islam Mondialisé*, pp. 218-9.

69 Robert S. Leiken, *Bearers of Global Jihad? Immigration and National Security after 9/11* (The Nixon Center, 2004), pp.26, 106.

70 *The Guardian*, December 1, 2005 ; see also *L'Express*, December 15, 2005.

71 Kelkal, the alleged GIA mastermind of the Parisian subway attacks in 1995, was re-Islamized in jail under the influence of a cellmate. He was killed while being chased by the French police (see Leiken, *Bearers of Global Jihad? Immigration and National Security after 9/11*, p.61). Moussaoui was arrested in the United States in 2001 and later charged for his connections to al-Qaeda and his possible participation in attacks on U.S. soil. Moussaoui was re-Islamized after his passage through the Finsbury Park Mosque.

72 *Le Figaro*, December 7, 2005; for more information on Dumont's sentencing, see *Le Monde*, December 17, 2005.

73 *Libération*, February 22, 2005.

74 *The Observer*, July 31, 2005.

75 Anne Speckhard, "Understanding Suicide Terrorism: Countering Human Bombs and Their Senders," paper presented at "Topics in Terrorism: Toward a Transatlantic Consensus on the Nature of the Threat," The Atlantic Council of the United States, November 29-30, 2004.

76 *Le Monde*, May 24, 2005.

77 Jeremy Shapiro and Benedicte Suzan, *The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2003), p. 85.

78 See Jean-Louis Brugiere, "Terrorism: Threat and Responses."

79 Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, p. 43.

80 *Le Monde*, December 12, 2005.

81 *Le Monde*, December 3, 2005.

82 See, for example, a poll conducted by the French newspaper *Ouest France* that found 76% of the French surveyed were satisfied by the government's actions in the face of the terror threat (*Ouest France*, September 11, 2005).

83 *Washington Post*, July 3, 2005.

84 Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (HCI), *Islam in the Republic*, November 2000, p. 14.

85 Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, p. 43.

86 Ibid. p. 282. The Mosque of Paris illustrates well this battle for influence waged between Morocco and Algeria to the benefit of the latter. Today, the mosque is headed by Boubakeur, who is often criticized for his alignment with Algiers. Ternisien has noted that these countries have lost influence with the younger generations, unfamiliar with their parents' homeland.

87 It should be acknowledged that there are differences between conservative Saudi Islam and radical *salafi*.

88 See "The Report on the Salafi movement in France, handed by the Central Direction of French Intelligence (DCRG) to the Ministry of Interior Dominique de Villepin, on February 4, 2005," quoted in Piotr Smolar, "Mouvance éclatée, le salafisme s'est étendu aux villes moyennes," *Le Monde*, February 22, 2005. See also Amghar, "Islam de France," p. 15.

89 Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, p. 198.

90 Roy, *Islam Mondialisé*, pp. 148-50.

91 The IIRO in France was implicated in a cell recruiting for jihadists to Iraq through the Iqra Mosque in the Parisian suburb of Levallois in June 2004. For more information, see Jean-Charles Brissard and Damien Martinez, *Zarkaoui, Le Nouveau Visage d'Al-Qaida* (Paris: Editions Fayard, 2005), pp. 266-7.

92 See <http://epls.arnet.gov/TerList127.html>. For more information, see UN Security Council Committee Press release SC/7543, October 22, 2002, at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/sc7543.doc.htm>.

93 See "Comité de Bienfaisance et de Secours aux Palestiniens (CBSP): a French Hamas-affiliated fund," *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)*, March 2005, at http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/sib/4_05/cbsp_e.htm.

94 Boyer, *L'Islam en France*, p. 95. For the ex-mayor of Dreux, Françoise Gaspard, "many of the ELCO preach religion and were at the heart of the creation of radical fundamentalist structures" (Dubois and Deloire, *Les Islamists*, p. 88).

95 The Stasi Commission and the HCI recommended ending the ELCO, including the suppression of these teachers; the HCI added a 'denunciation' of bilateral agreements (HCI Report, p. 80).

96 *Les Echos*, March 22, 2005.

97 *Libération*, December 14 and 16, 2005.

98 See Sifaoui, *Mes "Frères" Assassins*, p. 71

99 *Le Monde* with Agence France Presse, July 22, 2005.

100 *Le Figaro*, April 17, 2004, and Michael Taarnby, *Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe*,

Trends and Perspectives, Research Report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice (January 14, 2005), p. 44.

101 Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, p. 128. See also *The Economist*, February 7, 2004, and *Le Monde*, February 12, 2003.

102 Frank Peter, "Training Imams and the Future of Islam in France," *ISIM Newsletter* 13, December 2003. The solution of the French government to implement a new school for the training of imams is too recent to have a real impact yet.

103 In France today only 9% of imams are French, a number that includes many recently nationalized Moroccans; in 1992 there were 6% (Ternisien, *La France des Mosquées*, pp. 31, 103, and Boyer, *L'Islam en France*, p.15, ftnt. 2).

Significant New Books on Islam and Radical Islam in 2005

COMPILED BY APARNA PANDE

Abou El Fadl, Khaled M. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam From The Extremists* (Harper San Francisco 2005)

The book argues that extremist sects like the Wahhabis should be treated as unpopular fringe movements and not as legitimate representatives of Islam or its teachings.

Aslan, Reza. *No God but God: the Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (Random House Inc. 2005)

According to Aslan, the Muslim world is in the throes of an 'Islamic Reformation.'

Barton, Greg. *Indonesia's Struggle: Jemaah Islamiyah and the Soul of Islam* (University of New South Wales Press. 2005)

The book traces the religious, cultural, and political development of Jemaah Islamiyah, the group responsible for the Bali bombings and other acts of terror in Southeast Asia.

Bin Hallaq, Wael. *Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge University Press. 2005)

The book covers over three centuries of Islamic legal history and shows how Islamic law developed from ancient Near Eastern legal cultures, Arabian customary law and the Quran.

Bin Laden, Osama. *What Does Al-Qaeda Want?: Unedited Communiqués* (North Atlantic Books. 2005)

A sampling of some key al-Qaeda texts, with introductions and commentaries for context.

Blankley, Tony. *The West's Last Chance: Will We Win the Clash of Civilizations* (Regnery Publishers.2005)

The book discusses the threats that radical Islam poses to the future of Europe, and also tries to offer a solution.

Bostom, Andrew G. (ed) *Legacy Of Jihad: Islamic Holy War And The Fate Of Non-Muslims* (Prometheus Books. 2005)

The book traces the history of jihad and argues that jihad, as a permanent and uniquely Islamic institution, regulates the relations of Muslims with non-Muslims to this day.

Bradley, John. *Saudi Arabia Exposed: Inside a Kingdom in Crisis* (Palgrave Macmillan. 2005)

The book looks at social and cultural dynamics within Saudi Arabia that might, in the near future, result in stunning changes.

Chehab, Zaki. *Inside the Resistance: The Iraqi Insurgency And the Future of the Middle East* (Thunder's Mouth Press. 2005)

The book describes the methods of the Iraqi resistance movement and the extent of the involvement of al-Qaeda and other foreign fighters.

Cook, David. *Understanding Jihad* (University of California Press. 2005)

A scholarly book that unravels the tangled historical, intellectual, and political meanings of jihad by looking closely at a range of sources, from sacred Islamic texts to modern interpretations.

Dahlby, Tracy. *Allah's Torch: A Report from Behind the Scenes in Asia's War on Terror* (Harper Collins. 2005)

The former *Newsweek* and *Washington Post* bureau chief talks about his experiences in Indonesia and his encounters with jihadis and statesmen.

Devji, Faisal. *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (Cornell University Press. 2005)

The book seeks to explain the driving purpose behind al-Qaeda's jihad against the West, the meaning of its strategies and tactics, and its moral and aesthetic dimensions.

Diamond, Larry J. *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (Times Books. 2005)

The book is an insider's account of the early phases of the U.S. military presence in Iraq and a critical assessment of America's effort to implant democracy.

Dreyfuss, Robert. *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (Metropolitan Books. 2005)

This is an account of American foreign policy towards the Middle East, stretching across a period of six decades. According to Dreyfuss, American alignment with the Islamic right during those years led to the rise of Islamic terrorism in the 1990s.

Ehrenfeld, Rachel. *Funding Evil, Expanded Edition: How Terrorism Is Financed—And How to Stop It* (Bonus Books Inc. 2005)

A discussion of the clandestine ways Islamic terror groups finance their global network.

Emerson, Steve and Vidino, Lorenzo. *Al-Qaeda in Europe: The New Battleground of International Jihad* (Prometheus Books. 2005)

The book provides a historical overview of Islamic terrorist groups and their activities in Europe.

Fisk, Robert. *Great War For Civilisation: The Conquest Of The Middle East* (Alfred A. Knopf Inc. 2005)

An account of recent Middle Eastern history from the Armenian genocide to the war in Iraq. It also contains two interviews with Osama bin Laden.

Furnish, Timothy, R. *Holiest Wars: Islamic Mahdis, Their Jihads, And Osama Bin Laden* (Praeger Publishers. 2005)

The book highlights the relationship between Mahdism and the jihad being waged today by radical Islamists like Osama Bin Laden.

Gerges, Fawaz A. *Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge University Press. 2005)

An account of jihadist movements around the Middle East. The author shows that these movements, far from monolithic, are rife with ideological and strategic debates.

Harari, Haim. *View From the Eye of the Storm: Terror and Reason in the Middle East* (Regan Books. 2005)

In this book, the renowned physicist Harari surveys war and peace in the Middle East and discusses what he terms the "undeclared World War III" that rages from Bali to Madrid, from Nairobi to New York, from Buenos Aires to Istanbul, and from Tunis to Moscow.

Haqqani, Husain. *Pakistan: Between Mosque And Military* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for Intl Peace. 2005)

This book analyzes the origins of the relationships between Islamist groups and Pakistan's military, and explores Pakistan's quest for identity and security.

Khalidi, Rashid. *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints And America's Perilous Path In The Middle East* (Beacon Press. 2005)

The book examines the record of Western involvement in the Middle East and analyzes the likely outcome of our most recent incursions into the area.

Lawrence, Bruce and Cooke, Miriam. (eds.) *Muslim Networks From Hajj To Hip Hop* (University of North Carolina Press. 2005)

The book explains why Muslim networks whether for purposes of trade, education or pilgrimage - is crucial to understanding Islam.

Lawrence, Bruce. (ed.) *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (Verso Books. 2005)

The book includes a collection of English translations of pronouncements made by Osama bin Laden since 1994, along with the author's commentary.

Lincoln, Bruce. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion After September 11* (University of Chicago Press. 2005)

The book examines our understanding of religion and its interrelationships with politics and culture after September 11.

Lippman, Thomas W. *Inside The Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Westview Press. 2005)

The book looks at the 'a marriage of convenience' between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and shows that behind the cheerful picture of friendship and alliance, there is a darker tale.

Manji, Irshad. *Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim's Call For Reform In Her Faith* (St. Martin's Griffin. 2005)

The book talks about the author's life experiences growing up in a Western Muslim household and asks some compelling questions from the perspective of a feminist Muslim.

McDermott, Terry. *Perfect Soldiers: The Hijackers Who They Were, Why They Did It* (Harpercollins. 2005)

The book discusses the 19 hijackers behind the September 11 terrorist attacks, including their biographies and their motives.

Meyer, Gabriel. *War And Faith In Sudan* (Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2005)

The book chronicles the violence in central Sudan at the close of the country's second civil war in 2005.

Miles, Hugh. *Al-Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenges America* (Grove Press. 2005)

The book speculates on the potentially dramatic effects of Al-Jazeera's new station on the Western world while uncovering the true story behind one of the most influential media outlets.

Musallam, Adnan A. *From Secularism to Jihad : Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Praeger Publishers. 2005)

The book traces and analyzes Sayyid Qutb's emergence as an independent Islamist within the context of his society and the problems that it faced.

Napoleoni, Loretta. *Insurgent Iraq: Al-Zarqawi And the New Generation* (Seven Stories Press. 2005)

The book argues that the American adventure in Iraq resuscitated a network rife with conflict and birthed a new generation of post-Cold War mujahedeen.

Peters, Rudolph. *Jihad In Classical And Modern Islam: A Reader* (Markus Wiener Publishers. 2005)

Through a detailed analysis the book tries to show that there is more to jihad than just war and there can also be a jihad against other issues like social evils like poverty and crime.

Phares, Walid. *Future Jihad : Terrorist Strategies Against America* (Palgrave Macmillan. 2005)

The book discusses America's mistaken understanding of al-Qaeda, and offers a plan for how America might win the ideological war against Islamic jihad.

Shadid, Anthony. *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War* (Henry Holt & Co. 2005)

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Shadid explains how Saddam's downfall may have paved the way not only for democracy but also for an Islamic reawakening and jihad in Iraq.

Selbourne, David. *Losing The Battle With Islam* (Prometheus Books. 2005)

This is a study of the Islamic revival from 1947 to the present and traces in detail the causes motivating the rise of Muslim fundamentalism in many countries.

Spencer, Robert. *Myth of Islamic Tolerance: How Islamic Law Treats Non-Muslims* (Prometheus Books.2005)

The book attempts to disprove the view that Muslims are tolerant of non-Muslims by showing that Muslim attitudes are rooted in laws and cultural habits that are connected organically to the concept of jihad and its corollary institution, *dhimmitude*.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan. *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism In The West* (Rowman & Littlefield Pub Inc. 2005)

The book seeks to explain why thousands of Westerners have joined radical Islamic groups and provides a case study of the al-Muhajiroun group based in England.

Ye'Or, Bat. *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. 2005)

Among other things, this book looks at the relations between Europe and the Arab world over the past 30-plus years and their geopolitical implications.

Aparna Pande is a doctoral student in political science at Boston University.

Contributors and Editors

Hillel Fradkin is director of the Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World and senior fellow, Hudson Institute.

Husain Haqqani is an associate professor at Boston University, and co-chair of the Islam and Democracy Project, Hudson Institute.

Eric Brown is a research associate of the Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World and the Center for Future Security Strategies, Hudson Institute.

Shmuel Bar is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel.

Clara Beyler is a terrorism analyst based in Paris, France.

Steven Brooke is a research associate at the Nixon Center.

Israel Elad-Altman is director of studies at the Institute for Policy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel.

Ioannis Gatsiounis is a journalist and writer based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Maneeza Hossain is the manager of democracy programs at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

Yair Minzili is an independent scholar based in Israel.

Abdurrahman Wahid was Indonesia's first democratically-elected president and former head of the Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in the world. He is currently senior advisor to the LibForAll Foundation.

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