

THE NEW GLOBAL THREAT: TRANSNATIONAL SALAFIS AND JIHAD

Quintan Wiktorowicz

Dr. Wiktorowicz is assistant professor in the Department of International Studies, Rhodes College.

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies – civilians and military – is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosques from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God, “And fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together,” and “Fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in God.”

Fatwa issued by Osama bin Laden and others in al-Qaeda, published in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, February 23, 1998.

A new global threat to U.S. national security has emerged from the ashes of the Cold War, redefining the terrain of international contention in the twenty-first century. In the 1990s, a loose, transnational network of radical Islamists launched a *jihād*¹ in an effort to drive American military forces from the Arabian Peninsula, erode American sponsorship of Israel, and undermine American patronage of “un-Islamic puppet regimes” throughout the Middle East. Supported by *fatwas* (religious jurisprudential opinions) from militant Islamic scholars from various countries, this network has initiated devastating attacks against American military and civilian targets, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, an ambush of U.S. soldiers in Somalia, bombings of

U.S. targets in Saudi Arabia, the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, and various attacks in Yemen (including an attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in 2000).

For the most part, American responses to these earlier attacks remained reserved. Law enforcement tactics combined with a series of cruise missile attacks in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998 were limited in scope and duration. Concern that a broader response would engender a backlash in Arab and Muslim countries circumscribed the range of policy alternatives, and the United States carefully managed its strategy of confrontation to avoid destabilizing its allies in the Middle East. Osama bin Laden and others in the radical Islamist movement ridiculed the ineffectiveness of responses, scoffing at America’s “false courage,” “impotence”

and “weakness” in the face of defeat.²

But the horrific terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, fundamentally changed the nature of American security doctrine and concomitant responses to terrorism. Transnational teams of Arab Islamists hijacked four planes to use as flying suicide bombs. Two were flown into the World Trade Center towers, one into the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed outside Pittsburgh after passengers attempted to regain control of the plane. Thousands of civilians were killed in the attacks, making it the largest loss of civilian life in a single terrorist attack anywhere in the world.

President Bush quickly decried the attacks and declared a war on terrorism that would qualitatively shift the rules of engagement and the range of policy responses. The magnitude of the carnage demanded new tactics, and the administration has moved to create a broad global campaign against terrorism that combines military action, law enforcement, intelligence operations and international cooperation. While the outlines of the new policy remain ambiguous, the targets are clearly specified by the administration: Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network. The president, Congress and the American public are preparing for a long confrontation with radical Islamists in the war on terrorism.

As the United States engages the new global threat of the twenty-first century, it is important to contextualize Bin Laden and his followers as a movement operating within a broader transnational community of Islamic activists. While it is tempting to dismiss Bin Laden and other radicals as outside the boundaries of Islam, such assertions underestimate the spiritual,

ideological and human relationships that connect those who espouse a violent jihad against the United States with more moderate elements within particular segments of the Muslim community. Charges that Bin Laden is not behaving as a “real Muslim” might provide a sense of psychological relief for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, but such charges fail to comprehend the roots of radical ideologies within less violent worldviews and value systems.

Rather than acting as an isolated cluster of deviant religious usurpers, the new global threat to U.S. security is dominated by a tendency within a broad transnational “Salafi movement.” Salafis believe that over centuries of religious practice, errant Muslims introduced new practices and innovations that corrupted the pure message of Islam. To rectify this condition, they advocate a strict return to the fundamentals of the religion and reject any behavior that was not specifically supported or enjoined by the Prophet Muhammed. The radicals responsible for the “jihad” against the United States are inextricably linked to this worldview and share religious understandings with a broad consortium of non-violent groups within the Salafi community, even while disagreeing about the permissibility of jihad and specific tactics in warfare, such as the use of terrorism.

This relationship makes the Salafi movement a significant, albeit largely unrecognized, actor in any war on Bin Laden and other Islamic terrorists. If the United States is to avoid radicalizing the Salafis and creating a legion of new supporters for Bin Laden, it must understand the ideology and dynamics of the movement and how Salafis might respond

to U.S. action. The ideological affinity between violent tendencies and others in the Salafi community is qualitatively different from broader Muslim sympathies toward Bin Laden's cause. This creates one of the deepest potential recruitment pools for violent activists. Security policies should therefore evaluate the impact of policies on the balance between violent and non-violent elements within the Salafi community to avoid a "jihadization" of the movement.

IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITY AND SALAFI THOUGHT

The Salafi movement represents a transnational effort for religious purification, connecting members of an "imagined community" through a common approach to Islam.³ Although an accurate estimate of numbers is impossible, the Salafis constitute one of the fastest-growing Islamic movements and enjoy a global reach in virtually all countries. Even non-Salafi Islamists readily admit the scope of the Salafi movement and its effects on Islamic practice.⁴ Salafi thought has influenced the ideological orientation of many practicing Muslims and some of the most well-known Islamic organizations in the Muslim world, including the Gamiyya Islamiyya in Egypt, various branches of Islamic Jihad, the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria, and mainstream movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The Saudi state and its religious hierarchy are major producers and exporters of Salafi publications, missionary operations and humanitarian assistance; and the transnational organization of the movement, which incorporates a myriad of nationalities, renders it an effective and influential force in the Muslim world.

The term "salafi" derives from the Arabic *salaf*, which means "to precede." In the Islamic lexicon, salaf refers to the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad and generally includes the first three generations of Muslims who learned about Islam directly from the messenger of God or those who knew him. Because of this connection to the Prophet and the divine revelations, Salafis believe that the Companions enjoyed a pure understanding of the religion. Subsequent understandings, they argue, were sullied and distorted by the introduction of innovations (*bida*) and the development of schisms in the Muslim community, which pulled the community of the faithful away from the straight path of Islam. Deviations occurred with the passage of time and were reinforced by the syncretic incorporation of local customs as Islam spread to other cultural settings outside the Arabian peninsula. Popular practices such as celebrating the Prophet's birthday, visiting the tombs of saints, and various Sufi rituals are decried as un-Islamic deviations that threaten the purity of the message as revealed by the Prophet. The goal of the Salafi movement is to eradicate these innovations by returning to the pure form of Islam practiced by the Prophet and his Companions.

To foster this purification, all decisions and actions in life must be based upon direct evidence from the sources of the religion: the Quran and the Sunnah (path or traditions of the Prophet Muhammed). Salafis have therefore developed a *manhaj* or method for determining proper religious interpretations based upon the Quran, the Sunnah, and the example of the Companions. This includes searching for evidence in authentic *hadiths* (the written record of the Prophet's Sunnah), as detailed by the

Companions; a rejection of popular practices not explicitly outlined in the Quran or Sunnah; emphasis on worshiping only God (*tawhid*); and a rejection of the four separate schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*mathhabs*) that divide Muslims, since there can only be one right religious answer and ruling – that which is according to God as outlined in the sources of the religion. In pursuing this approach, Salafis hope to construct a transnational community of true believers whose immutable adherence to the faith will be rewarded with salvation. Those who follow this *manhaj* are considered Salafis.⁵

The Salafi approach has clashed with a number of other Islamic sects, which are often decried as un-Islamic. Sufis, in particular, have incurred the wrath of Salafi purists, who argue that popular Sufi practices and rituals constitute heresy. In particular, the use of saints as intermediaries in prayer is condemned as ascribing partners to God in worship (*shirk*), an act vehemently prohibited in the Quran.⁶ Salafis argue that the Prophet did not sanction these behaviors and consequently have devoted much of their collective energy combating Sufism and other sects viewed as deviating from the straight path of Islam. Disagreements between Salafis and Sufis over such issues have led to discursive conflicts through publications, cassettes, the internet and missionary activities. At times these confrontations have led to violent Salafi attacks against Sufi mosques, leaders and followers. Salafi missionary activities, especially in Central Asia where Sufism is prevalent, have frequently met with resistance by local religious authorities, who view Salafi puritanicalism as antithetical to local understandings, often labeling it

Wahhabism to connote its foreign Saudi origins.⁷

Because of a sense of certainty in the search for religious truth, as outlined by evidence in the Quran and Sunnah, there is little attempt to bridge differences with other Islamic sects and groups. Nor is there any ecumenical tendency within the Salafi movement. Instead, Salafis believe that there is only one accurate religious truth as revealed by the Prophet Muhammad, and any differences of interpretation are considered deviations from Islam. Because Salafis believe they approximate the practices endorsed by the Prophet, they believe they are the only group that will be saved on Judgment Day. This is based on various hadiths, including: “And this Ummah [Muslim community] will divide into 73 sects all of which except one will go to Hell, and they [the saved sect] are those who are upon what I and my Companions are upon.”⁸ As a result, the Salafi movement presents a forceful front of missionary appeal without adopting ideas from other sects, groups or movements. This certainty and uncompromising stance have led others in the Muslim community to label Salafis as stubborn radicals.

This ideational orientation constitutes the foundation for the religious beliefs and understandings of Bin Laden and other Salafis who espouse violence in the name of Islam. These “jihadi” Salafis identify themselves as adherents to the Salafi *manhaj* and use well-known Salafi identity markers such as *Ahl al-Hadith* (People of Hadith), *taifat al-mansura* (the Aided Group), *al-firqa al-najiyya* (the Saved Sect), and “those who follow the creed or way of the Sunnah and Jamaa.”⁹ As a result, the arguments supporting the use of

violence conscientiously implement the Salafi manhaj and devote considerable effort to locating the religious evidence needed to legitimize particular conflicts, actions and decisions. In his 1996 "Declaration of War" against the United States, for example, Bin Laden carefully constructs his legitimation of violence through the use of the Quran and authentic hadiths, citing pieces of evidence according to the Salafi manhaj and praising publications by other well-known Salafis, such as Safar al-Hawali, a Saudi religious scholar known for his opposition to the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia. Such careful presentation of evidence is ubiquitous in jihadi Salafi publications and statements.¹⁰

Yet despite a broad base of agreement between jihadi Salafis and others in the movement, there are important points of disagreement. Most important, a vitriolic conflict over the permissibility of jihad has fractured the movement since the conclusion of the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Afghan experience radicalized Arab Salafi *mujahidin* (holy fighters) who attempted to export the religious justification for war to new contexts and enemies. Reform-oriented Salafis, on the other hand, mobilized to condemn broader military actions by Muslim fighters. Instead, reformists propose a focused effort to promote Salafi thought before launching a jihad, which would come at a much later point. How U.S. actions influence this debate could have serious consequences for the war on terrorism.

JIHADI SALAFIS AND THE AFGHAN EXPERIENCE

Prior to the war in Afghanistan, there was very little discussion in the Muslim

world about the contemporary use of violence and jihad in Islam. Certainly small radical groups, such as Islamic Jihad, produced material that justified assassination and other forms of violence, but these justifications were rejected by most Islamists and remained limited in number and reach.¹¹ The war in Afghanistan, however, led both states (e.g. Saudi Arabia) and individual Islamists to focus more extensively on religious justification for a contemporary war to facilitate Muslim support and volunteers to combat the Soviet Union.

During the initial stages of the war, the small Arab contingency that went to fight encountered difficulty soliciting volunteers from the Middle East. At least in part, this was due to a strong belief that any military efforts should first be directed toward combating the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories and Jerusalem. Other radicals wanted first to focus on fighting incumbent Arab regimes. This was compounded by the fact that because classical Muslim debates on warfare had predominantly focused on *jus in bello* (legitimate means in warfare) rather than *jus ad bellum* (grounds for warfare), there were few recent publications about the religious justification for a contemporary war such as the one in Afghanistan.

The call to "join the caravan" in Afghanistan, however, grew through the financial support of Gulf countries and the efforts of "Arab Afghans" who believed the war was a religious obligation. Organizations based in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, in particular, championed the call to arms and funded an array of *madrasas* (religious schools) and training camps in Pakistan for Arab volunteers. This included support for local organizations, such

as Ahl-i-Hadith in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which set up an array of Salafi-oriented madrasas and actively recruited Salafi fighters from Gulf countries. These local spiritual and military training centers helped sponsor the Salafi manhaj among newly recruited Arab volunteers, creating socializing institutions that heavily influenced the religious understanding of thousands of Arab volunteers from non-Gulf countries, especially Algeria and Egypt, who eventually returned to their home countries indoctrinated in Salafi thought and determined to lead Muslim uprisings against Arab regimes.¹² The spread of Salafi thought through local religious institutions was reinforced by the participation of Saudi-based Salafi mujahidin, who comprised the largest national grouping of Arab fighters in the war.¹³ Salafi organizations and groups, such as Abu Sayyaf and Jamaat al-Dawa, used their ideological affinity with Gulf contributors to raise millions of dollars for Salafi operations.¹⁴

The underlying religious justification for Arab participation in the war was constructed by Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian graduate of al-Azhar University, who resurrected the call to jihad that attracted thousands of volunteers from the Middle East. Salafi jihadis view Azzam as a cornerstone of the contemporary jihad movement; his writings have heavily influenced conceptions of jus ad bellum and the obligations of jihad among Salafis. His ideational influence was supported by his strategic location in the international networks that supported the mujahidin, a position that was augmented by his leadership at the Islamic Coordination Council in Peshawar, which provided social services for the mujahidin and served as the dis-

patcher for Arab volunteers. Azzam was eventually assassinated by a car bomb in Peshawar in 1989 and is considered a martyr in the jihad movement.

In his legitimation for a jihad in Afghanistan, Azzam outlined two kinds of jihads against the unbelievers. The first is an offensive attack in enemy territory when the enemy is not gathering to attack Muslims, with the minimum goal of establishing strong borders and occasionally sending armies to harass the unbelievers. According to Azzam, this is a collective responsibility (*fard kifaya*), meaning that if any one group performs the task, other Muslims are absolved of the responsibility. The second type of jihad against unbelievers is a defensive jihad to protect Muslim territory and populations. Under such conditions, the religious obligation is an individual obligation (*fard ayn*) incumbent upon all Muslims, equal to other religious duties, such as the five pillars of the faith. The obligation initially falls to those Muslims who are nearest the enemy. If that group cannot effectively defeat the enemy, then the obligation expands to the next closest group of Muslims. The required geographic proximity for obligatory participation expands as it becomes clear that current contingencies cannot effectively defeat the enemy. If not enough Muslims participate in the jihad to repel the enemy, then the entire Muslim community is in sin. The jihad in Afghanistan was clearly delineated as an invasion of Muslim territory by an unbeliever force and thus resonated with many Muslims in the Arab world.¹⁵

Azzam's legitimation for Muslim participation in the Afghan war enjoyed broad support in Muslim countries, where leaders and Islamic activists alike con-

done the argument for jihad. Radical Islamists, in particular, rejoiced at the opportunity to resurrect jihad as an essential component of religious duty. This sentiment is encapsulated in a statement by Omar Abdul Rahman, a Salafi spiritual leader currently serving a life sentence in the United States for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing: "When the Afghans rose and declared a jihad – and jihad had been dead for the longest time – I can't tell you how proud I was."¹⁶ Azzam's call for jihad informs current Salafi jihadi arguments and shapes thinking about the obligation of jihad.

THE NOMADIC JIHAD

This call for a defensive jihad to protect Muslim populations continued to resonate with Salafi jihadis long after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, and the Salafi Arab Afghans searched for new venues of combat. They argued that despite the liberation of Afghanistan from the Soviet Union, war in defense of Islam still remained

an individual obligation since Muslim populations remained oppressed by unbelievers throughout the globe, including in the Middle East. Jihad was thus

viewed as an ongoing process of Muslim liberation at a global level, what could be viewed as an obligatory "nomadic jihad."¹⁷

Shortly after the fall of Kabul in the war in Afghanistan, Arab Salafis considered a jihad in the Philippines or Kashmir

as part of the individual responsibility to protect Muslim countries and populations, but the sense of urgency produced by ethnic cleansing in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995 redirected efforts toward the former Yugoslav republic. Abu Abd al-Aziz (nicknamed Barbarossa because of his red beard) consulted with famous Salafi scholars, including Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Bani, Abd al-Aziz Bin Baz and Muhammad Bin Uthman, who agreed that the war in Bosnia had become an individual obligation. Al-Aziz led a new migration of Salafi fighters into Bosnia, initially comprising nomadic jihadis based in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As Arab regimes increased repression against radical Islamists, especially in Egypt and Algeria, the nomadic jihadis were joined by other radical Salafis who sought to escape domestic intelligence services. Still others joined the fight to enhance and practice their combat skills before returning to the Middle East.

The new jihad was supported by Salafi missionary work, primarily funded by Saudi

Arabia and other Gulf countries, which included assistance for local religious centers to promote Salafi publications and ideology. The Travnik Islamic Center, in

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particular, received funding and Islamic books and eventually recommended a booklet titled *Ideas We Have to Correct*, published by the Salafi-missionary Committee for Bosnia-Herzegovina of the Kuwait Organization for the Rebirth of the Islamic Tradition.¹⁸

The next battle in the nomadic jihad took place in Chechnya, embroiling the Russians in combat against Bin Laden associates and others in the Salafi global network. Although the uprising in Chechnya initially adopted an Islamic identity as a source of unification against the Russians (similar to the strategy of mobilization in the Algerian revolution against the French), Salafis soon joined the war and attempted to promote their stricter variant of Islam. Chechnya quickly became a beacon for Salafis seeking to continue the defensive jihad, and battle-hardened Arab detachments from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Pakistan and elsewhere joined the fighting in the mid-1990s.

The rapid influx of Arab fighters challenged the hegemony of local religious leaders and created friction among different Muslim groups in Chechnya, especially as the fighting diminished. In a region where Sufi practices predominate, the Salafi ideology of the Arab mujahidin directly contradicted local understandings of Islam and fomented tensions between Chechens and their Arab allies. According to Ahmad Khadzhu Kadryov, the mufti of Chechnya-Ichkeria, "Detachments of Wahhabi [Salafi] volunteers from Arab countries came to us during the war in Chechnya. These detachments were very well armed, and for this reason our Chechens also readily joined them. Many of them [Chechens] were introduced to this teaching and began to attempt to teach us, maintaining that we were distorting Islam."¹⁹ Dialogue between the Chechen religious leaders and the Salafi fighters was unsuccessful, leading to factional clashes and internal conflict.

The forced Russian withdrawal from Chechnya further emboldened Salafi

jihadis, who exported the revolution to neighboring Dagestan. Reports of a Salafi presence in Dagestan had begun to emerge as early as the beginning of perestroika, when preachers from the Arab world first came to the area. This early presence was reinforced by the influx of young Dagestanis educated in Salafi-controlled madrasas, who were given cash incentives and encouraged to return to Dagestan. Later, groups of Salafis from Dagestan who fought in Chechnya returned to their homes in 1996 and made it clear that they intend to create an Islamic state. As one young Salafi from Dagestan defiantly commented, "The Chechens defeated the Russians. It is now our turn to fight for an Islamic State."²⁰ This was supported by Mullah Bagauddin, the spiritual leader of the Salafi movement in Dagestan, who initially announced that Dagestan would remain in Russia, but only if Russia became an Islamic state. Growing nationalist sentiments prompted increased Russian intervention, and Salafis mobilized for jihad under the leadership of a Jordanian Arab Afghan named Khattab, who was instrumental in the war in Chechnya. After the war, he built blood relations with Dagestanis by marrying a woman from the mountain village of Karamacki, which subsequently became a center for Salafi activity and proclaimed itself an independent imamate in 1998.²¹ Over a series of years, Khattab and radical Salafis established a Salafi base in the central region of Dagestan that came to be widely known as "Little Chechnya."²²

The nomadic jihad was expanded to a variety of other countries and regions as well, including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Philippines, Macedonia, Western China and Kosovo. In effect, wherever Salafis

identified an oppressed Muslim population, the jihad became an individual obligation. There were certainly priorities, such as Bosnia and Chechnya, but the Salafi jihadi movement spawned myriad radical groups intent on defending the Muslim community through violence in multiple geographic locations. Azzam's original call to defend the Muslim community in Afghanistan was adopted to extend the jihad indefinitely, moving the nomadic jihad into new countries to face infidel oppression. This, in turn, created a vast international network of Salafi jihadis, many of whom joined Bin Laden and al-Qaeda.

JIHAD AT HOME

While large contingencies of Salafis joined the nomadic jihad, a substantial portion of Arab Afghans returned to their home countries in the 1990s to lead Islamic revolutions against regimes in the Middle East. But unlike the resilient support for a defensive jihad against the Soviet invasion, support for such a radical endeavor was more ambiguous since it constituted an uprising against regimes that many Muslims accepted as at least nominally Islamic. Since Islam explicitly rejects rebellions against Muslim leaders, Salafi jihadis faced a potential theological obstacle in legitimating violent actions.

Given this prohibition, Salafis had to construct a discourse demonstrating that Arab leaders and regimes were no longer Muslim, thus opening possibilities for the jihad. To do so, they drew upon the writings of the medieval scholar Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya, whose unique contribution to Salafi thought is his elaboration of the concept of jihad.²³ He lived during the Crusades and the Mongol invasions, and it was the latter experience

that shaped his interpretation of jihad. As the Mongols conquered Muslim societies, they were exposed to Islam and eventually converted. The dilemma faced by Islamic scholars was whether the war against the Mongols could still be considered a jihad or had become a war between two Muslim entities, in which case it was no longer a jihad. In his fatwa on the Mongols, Ibn Taymiyya recognized that the Mongols practiced the pillars of the faith, but questioned whether this made them true Muslims. The dominant interpretation was that the sharia (Islamic law) considered such groups Muslim, regardless of their actions, because they fulfilled the basic Muslim obligations. Ibn Taymiyya introduced a new criterion for this evaluation. He argued that regardless of whether a person follows the basics of the faith, if an individual fails to uphold any aspect of the sharia, that person is no longer considered a Muslim. Such people become *kafirs* (unbelievers) because they embraced Islam but through actions left the faith.²⁴

Declaring regimes heretical permits the defining of leaders in the Middle East as *un-Islamic* rulers who enforce their power and control over *Muslim* societies, and thus plays to defensive understandings of jihad. Jihadi discourse goes even further. It argues that Western influence over Arab governments through foreign assistance, International Monetary Fund loans, military connections and political alignments renders these governments "puppets" of the West and its Zionist allies in the Middle East. Arab regimes are thus considered the functional equivalent of foreign occupiers. In Algeria for example, Islamist rebels went to considerable effort to frame the government as a French surrogate intent on preventing society from fully realizing its

Islamic potential. The military hierarchy, in particular, was singled out as Hizb Farancia (the Party of France). Radical Salafis decry other rulers as well, including those in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as instruments of Western imperialism determined to undermine Muslim society. Saudi Arabia's decision to allow American troops in the kingdom during the Gulf War is considered evidence of such connections. Even the Yemeni government, which had for a long time distanced itself from strong relations with the West, was charged with acting as a tool of American interests when it allowed U.S. forces to operate in Yemen in the 1990s.

In issuing these serious charges, jihadi Salafis have decentralized *takfir* (declaring someone an apostate). Whereas in the past, decisions about whether someone had left Islam were predominantly centralized in religious authorities and sharia courts often tied to the state, radical Salafis have adopted *takfir* as a flexible weapon to use against an assortment of individuals, institutions and regimes deemed un-Islamic by Salafi standards. The ambiguity in such standards is that it is unclear where the threshold for jihad lies. Some radical groups argue that any single transgression can constitute apostasy and thus employ *takfir* with reckless abandon, even while Salafis themselves struggle to emulate the pristine model of the Prophet. Under such circumstances, *takfir* becomes a blanket weapon selectively wielded to legitimize attacks against those deemed obstacles to Salafi thought and activism. In addition, individual Salafi groups, some with little expertise in the study of the hadith, have adapted the defensive legitimization of jihad without the sufficient evidence demanded by the Salafi manhaj.

The decentralization of *takfir* and the attendant consequences for violence became readily apparent during the civil war that plagued Algeria in the 1990s.²⁵ The initial call to jihad was launched in response to the cancellation of election results in January 1992 as the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to control Parliament. The subsequent crackdown on the Islamic movement and repression of Islamist leaders and grass-roots activities were framed as a war against Islam by a French surrogate in Algeria; and various groups and tendencies within the movement mobilized for what was viewed as a defensive jihad directed against the incumbent regime.

The shared understanding about legitimate targets, however, quickly disintegrated with the emergence of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which quickly distinguished itself from other Islamic groups through its willingness to use extreme forms of violence. While the GIA initially included both jihadi Salafis and Algerianists (more nationalist-oriented Islamic groups) in an attempt to foster a unified front against the regime, cooperation between the two quickly disintegrated over doctrinal issues. In 1994, Salafis in the GIA moved against the Algerianists, killing 140, including prominent Islamist figures such as Muhammad al-Said and Abd al-Razzak Radjam. The carnage consolidated the dominance of the Salafi tendency within the loose organizational structure of the GIA, which, in reality, was an amalgamation of Salafi groups with varying levels of doctrinal adherence.²⁶

The decentralization of *takfir* led a number of GIA groups to frame civilian populations as legitimate targets in the jihad, leading to massacres during the mid-1990s.

In 1996, Antar Zouabri became the emir of the GIA and inaugurated his new leadership with a fatwa that condemned anyone who did not directly assist the GIA. In a distorted adoption of the “defensive” jihad argument, Zouabri claimed that ordinary villagers were tacitly supporting the regime and thus an offensive against Islam. The GIA argued that such behavior made them apostates and thus sharia-sanctioned targets of jihad. Ibn Taymiyya’s argument was thus extended to include a defense against a population viewed as un-Islamic because it did not actively rise up in support of the GIA. Often GIA factions killed entire villages with machetes and other handheld weapons; the massacres are estimated to have killed tens of thousands of innocent civilians.²⁷

Other civilian targets of the GIA jihad included the media, schools and foreign nationals. The media was framed as merely an extension of the regime and thus an offensive tool to repress Islam. In a communiqué in 1995, the GIA clearly articulated this view: “The rotten apostate regime did not stop using the mercenary media to cover its crimes and rationalize its aggression. This has turned all written, seen and heard media outlets into a tool of aggression spreading lies and rumors.”²⁸ Similar criteria were used to justify attacks against schools. Since most schools in Algeria are controlled by the state, the GIA reasoned that they were un-Islamic institutions designed to support an unbeliever regime. The GIA claimed that “according to the sharia, one is not allowed to work in establishments which belong to the government or its allies,” especially schools where the curriculum is “contrary to Islam.”²⁹ In the last two months of 1994, 30 school teachers and school

directors were killed and 538 schools suffered arson attacks. By the end of 1994, GIA factions had assassinated 142 teachers. For their part, foreign nationals were viewed as agents sent to undermine the jihad and Islam. Missionaries were killed by GIA factions, including seven French Trappist monks, who were beheaded in 1996 in a brutal display of violence. In all of these cases, GIA factions paid lip service to the defensive legitimation, as adapted from the call to arms in Afghanistan.

Despite condemnations from other Salafi jihadis who charged that factions of the GIA had transgressed and misapplied Islamic principles in massacring civilians, the decentralization of takfir led ultra-violent GIA factions to continue the reign of terror. Omar Abu Qatadeh (a former spiritual guide for the GIA living in the United Kingdom), Muhammed Mustafa al-Muqri (identified as the leading candidate to succeed Omar Abd al-Rahman as spiritual leader of the Gamiyya Islamiyya in Egypt), and other jihadi Salafi personalities withdrew their support for the group once the scope of violence became clear.³⁰ Even Osama bin Laden allegedly decried the actions, preferring instead to support a new Salafi movement founded by former GIA commander Hassan Hattab called “the Salafi Group for Call and Combat.” In May 1998, Qamar al-Din Kharban, leader of the Algerian Afghans, received support from Bin Laden for funds and networks in Europe to help consolidate Hattab’s faction in an effort to distance the mujahidin from the GIA while still continuing the jihad. At a trial in Tizi Ouzou, Muhammad Barashid, an emir close to Hattab, claimed that Bin Laden promised logistical and financial support for the new

movement since the GIA had “strayed,” and it is rumored that Bin Laden suggested the name for the new Salafi group.³¹

Differences over takfir and proper conduct in warfare among Salafi jihadis in Algeria accelerated at the end of the 1990s, leading to spin-off movements and splinter groups. Divergences over the permissibility of killing civilians, in particular, led to serious intra-Salafi clashes, with various groups charging others with heresy. Takfir was thus utilized even *within* the Salafi movement to decry groups with divergent views of jihad. In addition to Hattab’s new movement, other Salafi-based groups emerged to combat the GIA as heretics, including the “Islamic Movement for Spreading the Faith and Holy War” and the “Faithful to the Oath.” These groups promised to continue a legitimate defensive jihad against the regime while concurrently combating the GIA and its atrocities. The jihad at home, which was initially sponsored by a unified assault on the regime, was derailed by the decentralization of takfir, leading to violence against broader publics and within the Salafi jihadi community itself.

Although the Algerian civil war is a stark case of Salafi violence and the decentralization of takfir, it is certainly not the only example of a “jihad at home.” In Yemen, for example, Salafis operating in Aden launched a violent struggle against the regime and “un-Islamic behaviors” in society. This included an attempt to impose control over the city and an attack on shrines at the Hashemite mosque in 1994 as well as an assortment of other violent clashes with government troops, especially in 1998.³² In Libya, former Afghan Arab fighters announced the formation of the Militant Islamic Group,

allegedly a Salafi-based group operating in the northeastern and northwestern parts of Libya that reportedly clashed with Qaddafi’s forces during the 1990s. In Jordan, several violent Salafi groups emerged in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, including groups linked to internationally renowned jihadi Salafis such as Osama bin Laden, Abu Qatadeh and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a Palestinian living in Jordan who served as a spiritual inspiration for the November 1995 bombing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, that killed five Americans and two Indian nationals.³³ And in Egypt, the Salafi-inspired Gamiyya Islamiyya waged a low-intensity conflict against the Mubarak regime throughout the 1990s, a conflict that claimed more than 1,300 lives.

THE REFORMIST COUNTER-DISDISCOURSE

Despite the increasing popularity of rhetoric condoning a nomadic jihad or a jihad at home against un-Islamic regimes, the transnational Salafi movement is not unified in its view of violence. Within the Salafi community there are strong dissenting voices that represent a counter-discourse of jihad that is related to jihadi thought in its sources of inspiration but differs in emphasis and interpretation. These differences represent an internal battle over the discourse of jihad and legitimate warfare as each side mobilizes rhetoric, evidence and scholars on behalf of its cause.

For reformist Salafis, there is great concern that the Muslim community is not ready to engage in jihad, either against incumbent Arab regimes or the United States. It is not that jihad is rejected as a tactic of religious transformation; rather,

reformists believe that several prior phases are necessary before a jihad is permissible. In the reformist interpretation, religious transformation requires an evolutionary process of stages in which jihad builds upon platforms of the sequence.³⁴

The central component of the reformist counter-discourse on jihad is that unless Muslims follow the straight path of Islam and the Salafi manhaj, they will be unable to engage in a successful jihad, since God rewards only the true believers. A lack of effective Salafi propagation and concomitant divisions within the Muslim community creates weakness that will prevent a successful jihad against Western countries led by the United States. Any premature movement toward the use of violence is therefore doomed to fail. In fact, a few well-known reformists have recently used Afghanistan as an example of failure, not success. They argue that after the Soviets were expelled, the Muslims fell into disarray, factional clashes and rifts in a civil war that reflected divisions and a lack of unity through the Salafi manhaj. Afghanistan was therefore spiritually unprepared to engage in a jihad.³⁵

The weakness and inability to engage in an effective jihad stems from several sources. First, reformist Salafis believe that the Muslim community remains divided, weak and apart from the Salafi manhaj. As a result, they cannot prepare for jihad properly because they lack the spiritual preparation. In a debate between Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Bani (d. 1999), one of the best-known and respected reformist Salafis, and a member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, al-Bani complained, "We notice the mujahids [those who actively take part in a jihad] call for whatever of the Muslims to join the fight,

and when they go to fight, they find disagreements among themselves in matters of their faith and the basics of Islam. How do these people get ready for jihad when they are yet to understand what is obligatory on them of *aqida* [articles of faith]?"³⁶ Reformists believe that only when Muslims agree on the true faith, as understood in Salafi doctrine, will unity in jihad endure and Muslims remain united. It is only at such a point that triumph becomes an inevitable reward from God to the community of the faithful.

Given the current context of unbelief, deviant religious practices and weakness, the reformists believe that the first necessary stage is *tarbiya* (education and cultivation to encourage proper Muslim practices) and *tasfiya* (purification). Change thus begins at the level of individual and personal transformation without the use of violence. The hope is that religious change will transform society through individuals who adopt the Salafi manhaj. As Ali Hasan al-Halabi, a former student of al-Bani, argues: "[I]f the Muslims desire good, unity and establishment upon the earth, then they should make their manners and behaviors like that of the Salaf of this *ummah* and begin by changing themselves. However, he who is unable to change even himself, will not be able to change his family, not to mention changing the *ummah*."³⁷

The reformists draw analogies to the early stages of divine revelation when the focus of the Islamic mission was propagation rather than jihad. Today's society is likened to the early community of Muslims who were surrounded by remnants of *jahiliyya* (period of ignorance). During this initial period, Muhammad spent most of his time in preaching and *dawa* (calling

people to Islam), rather than fighting. As al-Bani argues, “History repeats itself. Everybody claims that the Prophet is their role model. Our Prophet spent the first half of his message making dawa, and he did not start it with jihad.”³⁸ Instead of waging war, Muslims should use the early model of the Prophet “and train the people to understand the correct Salafi doctrine, which is void of myths and heresies, and to teach them good morals, so that we can emerge with a broad base that embellishes this religion for human beings.”³⁹ Jihad is thus viewed as the final stage after the Muslim community is unified and strong, certainly not conditions that prevail today.

The second source of opposition to the use of violence among reformists derives from a belief that a premature jihad launched before the purification of the Muslim community will engender harsh responses that could make even basic propagation difficult, a condition that is considered *haram* (religiously forbidden) by many Muslims. The necessity of engaging in actions that provide more good than harm derives from a general acceptance of the medieval Salafi scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and his four levels of forbidding evil. According to al-Jawziyya, there are four possible consequences of any action: 1) the evil is replaced with something good; 2) the evil is diminished without ending completely; 3) the evil is replaced by an equivalent evil; and 4) the evil is replaced by an even greater evil. The first two are considered religiously acceptable, the third involves *ijtihad* (the exercise of independent judgment), and the fourth is forbidden.⁴⁰

Reformist Salafis believe that the use of violence will prompt a pernicious response from state authorities, who would

limit the capacity of the movement to promote its manhaj. As Salim al-Hilali, an internationally renowned reformist Salafi, argues, Muslims “should not say the state is un-Islamic and change it with force. Otherwise the mosques would be closed and scholars would be put in prison. Change in Islam must be for the better.”⁴¹ Another Salafi scholar argues that, “if you cannot achieve your objectives through jihad, then it is haram.”⁴²

It is not that the reformist Salafis reject jihad; quite the contrary. They argue that in certain contexts it is a religious obligation. However, the time is not yet right and the movement must focus first on more basic stages of religious propagation and purification. As a result, reformists have vehemently denounced the use of violence. The Saudi Salafi scholar Muhammad al-Uthaymin (d. 2001) decries the use of unrest: “Let those who riot know that they only serve the enemies of Islam; the matter cannot be handled by uprising and excitement, but rather by wisdom.”⁴³ Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Bani warns, “The way to salvation is not, as some people imagine, to rise with arms against the rulers and to conduct military coups. In addition to being among contemporary *bidahs* (innovations), such actions disregard texts of Islam, among which is the command to change ourselves. Furthermore, it is imperative to establish the basis upon which the building will stand.”⁴⁴ Ali Hasan al-Halabi adds, “Anyone who examines the past and present of Islam would clearly see that excessiveness has brought for the Ummah disasters, bloodshed, eviction and harm that cannot be known to the full extent except by Allah. It suffices in this regard to remember the turmoils of the Khawaarij and the advo-

cates of takfir from past to present”⁴⁵ The reference to the Khawaarij, a sect that fomented rebellion and assassinated important leaders during the early years of Islam, is intended to equate the jihadis with what is generally viewed by many Muslims as a heretical group that undermined the stability of the Muslim world.

The reformists are well represented within Salafi communities in a variety of country settings. In

Yemen, for example, Shaykh Muqbil Bin-Hadi al-Wadii runs an assortment of reform-oriented institutions and organizations designed to promote the Salafi manhaj. Al-Wadii

learned about Salafi thought for fifteen years while in Saudi Arabia, before he was deported to Yemen in the early 1980s for alleged links to the radical Islamists who seized the Grand Mosque in 1979. He currently supervises major Salafi missionary centers in Sanaa, including the Damaj Center, Maaber Center, Mareb Center, al-Hudeida Center and al-Khair mosque, all officially supported by the Holy Mosque Establishment, a charitable organization in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁶

While there have been some rumors about a connection with Bin Laden,⁴⁷ al-Wadii has adamantly opposed the use of violence. In particular, he actively condemns the use of violence by the Islamic Army of Aden-Abayan, which is responsible for attacks on the government and society and is rumored to have connections to attacks against U.S. forces in Yemen,

including the attack against the U.S.S. *Cole*. In 2000, al-Wadii publicly distanced himself from such actions: “We have even condemned these groups and called it the movements of corruption, not jihad. We always disapprove of any violent actions to spread Islam. Islam is a religion of peace and harmony, and such violence should never be thought of as part of Islam.”⁴⁸

Thousands of Salafi students flock to

In Kuwait, in particular, a number of Salafis from the Society for the Revival of Islamic Heritage hold seats in Parliament, and the movement has shown strong support for participating in political life.

Yemen every year to learn about Salafi thought at these institutions.⁴⁹ His reformist orientation has attracted more than 100,000 students over the past twenty years, but he has also incurred the wrath

of the jihadis, who have allegedly attempted to assassinate him several times.

Reformists are also active in other Middle Eastern countries as well. In Jordan, prominent reformists such as Muhammad Abu Shaqra, Ali Hasan al-Halabi, Salim al-Hilali and Mashhur Hasan Salman enjoy substantial followings in the Salafi community. Despite the emergence of more radical Salafi groups in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the “Reformation and Challenge Group,” the “Oath of Loyalty to the Imam,” and an informal network of radicals affiliated with Bin Laden who were tried for attempted bombings during millennium celebrations, the reformists dominate the landscape of discursive contention. These high-profile Salafis consistently condemn violence and have successfully directed most Jordanian Salafis away from the course of jihad.

Prominent reformist Salafis also operate in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, where they staff the state religious hierarchy.

In some cases reformist Salafis have even participated in democratic elections, indicating a strong inclination to work within the system. In Kuwait, in particular, a number of Salafis from the Society for the Revival of Islamic Heritage hold seats in Parliament, and the movement has shown strong support for participating in political life. In Egypt, jihadis-cum-reformists from the Gamiyya Islamiyya and Islamic Jihad formed the Sharia party and the Islah party to remold the movement for jihad around party politics. Although the regime has not issued a permit for the parties, and the Gamiyya Islamiyya leadership called for an election boycott, Sheikh Muhammad Ali Suleiman from the Gamiyya ran for Parliament in 2000.⁵⁰ And in Jordan, a few Salafis indicated an intention to run for Parliament, and one won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies in 1997. While most reformists continue to condemn democracy as antithetical to Islam, at least a few have expressed interest in working for reform through democratic institutions.

Despite the appeal of the jihadis to wage war against un-Islamic Arab regimes and those who oppress Muslim populations, the ubiquity of the reformist Salafis and their message of religious transformation do have a transnational impact. Members of the GIA in Algeria, for example, have claimed that their surrender was strongly influenced by prominent reformists who argued that the jihad in Algeria was no longer a true jihad. While much of this is due to the work of the Algerian reformist Alid Cherifi (alias Abu Abd al-Bari), who has encouraged widespread defections and

surrenders – through informal contacts, cassettes, discussions with Salafi fighters, and lectures at the University of Algiers and Fath al-Imam Mosque – internationally recognized figures outside Algeria have also had an impact. One Salafi fighter recalled the following influence: “I was sitting in the mountain and warplanes were dropping their bombs but that did not move me. At the time, I was leaning against something with my weapon beside me and I was listening to a tape by Shaykh Muhammad al-Salih Bin al-Uthaymayn. When I heard him say that this is not jihad, that did to me a great deal more than a bomb dropping from the sky.” The power of ideational influences by reputable scholars is echoed by a nineteen-year-old from the GIA who summarized his decision to surrender: “By God, I did not return because of the use of force of arms but because of the words of the clergymen and religious conviction.”⁵¹ The resonance of such messages is reflected by the agitation they produced among the GIA leadership, which decried Uthaymayn and other reformists as traitors.

In a similar effect, the more reform-oriented statements by the historic leadership of the Gamiyya Islamiyya issued from the Turah prison in Egypt on July 5, 1997, helped provide the foundations of a cease-fire initiated in the late 1990s. The turning point in the low-intensity conflict between the Gamiyya Islamiyya and the Mubarak regime occurred on November 17, 1997, when, with the approval of the external military leaders abroad and Rifai Ahmed Taha, a faction of al-Shahid Talat Hamam (the military wing of the Gamiyya Islamiyya) massacred 58 tourists and four Egyptians outside the Queen Hatshepsut temple in Luxor, raising the specter of an

Algerian-style conflict. The Egyptian public was stunned by the actions and condemnations were swift; leaders in the Gamiyya denounced the attack and attempted to distance themselves from the atrocities. The massacres hardly looked like a defensive jihad, and the Gamiyya leadership in prison accelerated its new direction toward reform by once again calling for a cease-fire and a reevaluation of the group's strategies. It took until March 1999 for the movement's military leadership abroad, which has direct ties to Bin Laden and al-Qaeda, to finally agree to support the initiative. This included the support of top al-Qaeda lieutenants from Egypt, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri and Rifai Ahmed Taha. The impact of a new, more reform-oriented argument is represented by a virtual end to Islamist-sponsored violence in Egypt after 1997.

It is not clear whether such influences are systemic, but the Algerian and Egyptian cases and interviews I have conducted with both reformist and jihadi Salafis in Jordan indicate that it can have a substantial impact on perceptions about the legitimacy of violence in a particular context. The ability of reformists to mobilize symbolic and material resources to combat jihadi arguments indicates possible influence on the course of violent Islamic contention.

CONCLUSION

The difference between the jihadi and reformist factions of the transnational Salafi movement is not a disagreement over whether jihad is needed, but rather the timing of any war. Even prominent Salafi reformists, such as the late Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Bani, have agreed that current conditions make jihad an individual

obligation. But the factions disagree as to whether that obligation must be fulfilled immediately or after a great deal of spiritual preparation. Reformists argue that Salafis must first build the base of religious understanding before the *umma* (Muslim community) is prepared to wage jihad. Where reformists sanction jihad, it is only under extreme circumstances, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or the massacre of Muslims in Bosnia, when urgent conditions and necessity may drive reformists to accept jihad. On the other hand, jihadis believe that Salafis should pursue all options at once. Propagation is important, but should temporally coincide with jihad, which must be waged wherever Muslims are oppressed. Given the proximity of these perspectives, rooted in the Salafi manhaj and perceptions of current conditions, the U.S. response to the September 11 attacks should consider the ramifications not only in the Muslim world, but more specifically within the Salafi movement as well, since it constitutes the strongest potential recruitment base for Bin Laden and other radicals.

In Salafi circles, there is a great deal of reformist appreciation for Bin Laden's arguments legitimating an attack against the United States. Even though reformists may disagree with civilian targeting, there is a shared understanding about the defensive nature of jihad, rooted in the earlier Afghan experience, that seems pertinent today to many Salafis; and in his fatwas and various public statements, Bin Laden is careful to couch the jihad as a defense of Islam in the face of American aggression. In an interview with *Nidaul Islam*, for example, Bin Laden clearly takes this position: "The evidence overwhelmingly shows America and Israel killing the

weaker men, women, and children in the Muslim world and elsewhere.” This argument is common in other Bin Laden statements as well, and the supposed unwillingness of the United States to distinguish between civilians and military targets is considered justification for a proportional response against American civilians. Bin Laden cites several pieces of “evidence” of this “state terrorism,” including atomic bombs in Japan, massacres in Lebanon by Israel (as an arm of the United States), the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis because of sanctions and military operations, the withholding of arms from Muslims in Bosnia, rendering them vulnerable to Serbian rapes and massacres, and “the occupation of the two sacred mosques in Saudi Arabia.”⁵² It is the last that has driven Bin Laden since the Gulf War, when he began agitating against the decision to allow American troops into the holy land. For Bin Laden, this affront alone constitutes the grounds for jihad. But he is careful to accumulate a list of aggressions that would justify a defensive jihad and garner broader support among Salafis and the Muslim world in general. This is combined with an argument that the American military and Defense Department are controlled by Jewish interests intent on destroying Islam.⁵³

Because Salafis are already predisposed to accept the “Afghanistan legitimization” first constructed by Abdullah Azzam, they will likely frame any debates about the permissibility of jihad against the United States within this framework. As a result, highly visible American military action may inadvertently provide empirical credibility for jihadi framings and tip the balance of power within the Salafi movement away from the reformist counter-discourse. If

this were indeed the case, it would radicalize the transnational Salafi movement and undermine the U.S. policy goal of eradicating terrorism by creating a new legion of jihadi supporters that expands the terrorist network and its base of support.

This precarious balance is further complicated by the fact that the nomadic jihad had already dramatically steered toward the United States prior to September 11. In the aftermath of the Algerian civil war and the Egyptian conflict, radical Salafis, especially those living abroad in Pakistan and Afghanistan, agreed to reorient the jihad away from incumbent Arab regimes toward the real power behind the throne – the United States. Whereas earlier discourse among many jihadis fighting “the war at home” focused on an understanding that one must fight “the enemy near” before focusing on the “enemy afar,” the failure of violence and unacceptable divergences in the conflicts led many toward a new strategy. The current argument is that only by first attacking the United States (and Israel), can Salafis eventually topple their own regimes.⁵⁴ Thus Salafis believe that if the United States withdrew its support of the Egyptian regime, Mubarak would fall, leaving a power vacuum that would usher in a new Islamic (Salafi) government. And although jihadis share concerns with the reformists that such actions will provoke serious repression, there is a belief that inaction creates a greater evil.⁵⁵

As a result, even before the massive attack against the United States on September 11, the direction and machinations of jihad were already moving toward the only remaining superpower. Radical Salafis had already declared their intent by attacking the marines in Somalia in 1993.

This was followed by a formal statement of aggression by Bin Laden and others through a fatwa in 1996. The September 11 attacks were a reminder that the Salafi jihadis had already declared war on the United States nearly a decade earlier.

While Americans are still reeling from the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the impulse to respond with military might should be tempered by reflection about how our response will affect strategic objectives. Certainly the United States seeks to punish those responsible and to provide a visible consequence for terrorism, but this must be

weighed against the possible impact of responses on the Salafi movement as a whole and on future terrorism. If the United States wishes to avoid a radicalization of groups already predisposed to Bin Laden through common religious understanding, it must fully explore how U.S. action will influence the balance between reformists and jihadis. This will determine the future direction of the transnational Salafi movement, and thus the ability of the United States to effectively combat the new global threat of the twenty-first century.

¹ Although the term “jihad” is often translated as “holy war,” it is more accurately understood as a struggle or effort on behalf of Islam. This can include a “jihad of the heart” (inner struggle), “jihad of the tongue” (propagation), or “jihad of the sword” (holy war). Because this article deals with issues of violence, the term jihad will be used to mean “jihad of the sword.” For a more nuanced understanding of the meaning of jihad, see Vincent Cornell, “Jihad: Islam’s Struggle for Truth,” *Gnosis Magazine*, Fall 1994, pp. 18-24; and Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996).

² Osama bin Laden, “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” issued from Afghanistan, August 23, 1996.

³ For the concept “imagined community,” see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁴ This was clearly indicated in a number of interviews I conducted with Jordanian and Egyptian non-Salafi Islamic activists, 1995-97.

⁵ For a more extensive explanation of Salafi thought, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), pp. 111-120.

⁶ See Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Bani, “The Origins of Shirk,” *al-Ibaanah*, No. 3, April 1996, pp. 32-33; and Muhammad al-Jibali, *Allah’s Rights upon His Servants: Tawhid vs. Shirk* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Al-Quran Was-Sunnah Society of North America, 1995).

⁷ Salafis in Central Asia consistently reject the label “Wahhabi” since it implies a certain national basis. While Wahhabis are Salafis, they are viewed as deriving from the national context of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the label does not describe the manhaj of the movement nor its transnational nature, which is intended to operate beyond national boundaries.

⁸ As quoted in Jamiat Ihyaa Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, *A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Dawah* (Suffolk, U.K.: Jamiat Ihyaa Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 1993), p. 5.

⁹ Jamaa or group in this case refers to the group that correctly follows Islam.

¹⁰ See, for example, Gamiyya Islamiyya, “Misconceptions in Fighting the Apostate Regime,” initially posted at azzam.com. Since the terrorist attacks against the United States, however, this and other jihadi related websites have been shutdown, either by those running them or state intervention.

¹¹ See Mohammad Abd al-Salam Faraj, *Al Jihad: Al-Farida al-Ghaba* [The Neglected Duty] (Jerusalem: Maktabat al-Batal Iz al-Din al-Qassam, 1982); Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and the Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985).

¹² Certainly not all Arabs who fought in the war were “converted” to Salafi thought, but most of the returnees known as “Arab Afghans” are considered part of the Salafi movement.

¹³ While not all Arab volunteers saw combat, estimates indicate that the “Arab Afghans” included 5,000 Saudis, 3,000 Yemenis, 2,000 Egyptians, 2,800 Algerians, 400 Tunisians, 370 Iraqis, 200 Libyans and a number of Jordanians. For more details see James Bruce, “The Azzam Brigades: Arab Veterans of the Afghan War,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4, April 1, 1995.

¹⁴ For more details, see Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Abdullah Azzam, *Join the Caravan*; and idem, *Defense of Muslim Lands*. Both these sources were initially available through azzam.com.

¹⁶ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 187.

¹⁷ Oliver Roy, “The Radicalization of Sunni Conservative Fundamentalism,” *ISIM Newsletter*, No. 2, March 1999.

¹⁸ *Sarajevo Dani*, June 8-22, 1998, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS)-EEU-98-198.

¹⁹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 11, 1998, p. 5, FBIS-SOV-98-229.

²⁰ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 12, 1998, p. 5, FBIS-SOV-98-054.

²¹ *Moscow Segodnya*, September 3, 1998, p. 2, FBIS-SOV-98-252.

²² “The Situation in Dagestan,” Briefing for the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, September 21, 1999, p. 6.

²³ See John O. Voll, “Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World: Egypt and the Sudan,” *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 353-354.

²⁴ For Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretation of jihad, see fn. 11.

²⁵ For details on the civil war and Islamists in Algeria, see Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Muhammad M. Hafez, “Armed Islamist Movements and Political Violence in Algeria,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 4, Fall 2000, pp. 572-91; and Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Summer 2001, pp. 65-82.

²⁶ While GIA factions viewed themselves as Salafis, there were, in practice, many groups that operated more like criminal gangs than an ideological vanguard. The entire tenor of the legitimation for violence, however, was rooted in Salafi thought, even if unevenly applied by the various component groups of the GIA.

²⁷ See, for example, Amnesty International, *Algeria: Civilians Caught between Two Fires* (New York: Amnesty International, 1997); idem, *Civilian Population Caught in a Spiral of Violence* (New York: Amnesty International, 1997); United Nations, *Algeria: Report of Eminent Panel, July-August 1998* (New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1998). While most blame the GIA for the massacres, there is some evidence that the Algerian military may have been responsible in some instances. See the confessional and observations of former officer Habib Souaida in *La Sale Guerre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001).

²⁸ Armed Islamic Group, communiqué issued January 16, 1995.

²⁹ AFP, August 6, 1994, in Joint Publication Research Service-TOT-94-034-L.

³⁰ Author interview with Qatadeh associate in Amman, Jordan, 1996.

³¹ *Al-Majallah*, June 20-26, 1999, pp. 1, 23, in FBIS-NES-1999-0627.

³² *Mideast Mirror*, Vol. 8, No. 170, September 5, 1994; and *al-Hayah*, June 1, 1998, pp. 1, 6, in FBIS-NES-98-152; *al-Watan al-Arabi*, March 20, 1998, pp. 32-34, in FBIS-TOT-98-081.

³³ *Jordan Times*, August 18, 1997. See also the interview with al-Maqdisi in *al-Hayah*, July 20, 1996, pp. 1, 6.

³⁴ Within the reformist faction there are variations on this theme. At least a few groups believe that violence is only rarely justified, but most reformists accept the need for jihad at a later date when the Muslim community is more prepared, both spiritually as well as militarily.

³⁵ See *Fatwa al-Banni*, audio cassettes, no date, transcript posted at www.allahuakbar.net/scholars/albanni/albanni_on_jihad.htm.

³⁶ *Munatharah ma Tantheem al Jjihad al-Islami*, audio cassettes, no date, transcript posted at www.allahuakbar.net/scholars/albanni/debate_on_jihad.htm.

³⁷ Ali Hasan al-Halabi, "Tarbiyah: The Key to Victory," *al-Ibaanah*, No. 2, August 1995, p. 16.

³⁸ *Munatharah ma Tantheem al Jihad al-Islami*, see fn. 36.

³⁹ Usamah Siddiq Ali Ayyub, an Egyptian Salafi who gained political asylum in Germany in 1999, as quoted in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 12, 1999, p. 3, in FBIS-NES-1999-1013. Ayyub is considered one of the most wanted Salafis in Egypt.

⁴⁰ See Ali Hasan al Halabi, *Fundamentals of Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil According to Shaykh Ul-Islam Ibn Taymiyya* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Al-Quran al-Sunnah Society of North America, 1995), pp. 18-19.

⁴¹ Interview with author, Amman, April 2, 1997.

⁴² Interview with author, Amman, 1997.

⁴³ As quoted in al-Halabi, *Fundamentals of Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁴⁶ *Yemen Times*, July 17-21, 2000.

⁴⁷ *Al-Watan al-Arabi*, March 20, 1998, pp. 32-34, in FBIS-TOT-98-081.

⁴⁸ *Yemen Times*, July 24-30, 2000.

⁴⁹ *Yemen Times*, July 17-21, 2000.

⁵⁰ *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Issue 503, October 12-18, 2000.

⁵¹ *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 13, 2000, p. 4, in FBIS-NES-2000-0214.

⁵² *Nidaul Islam*, Issue 15, October-November 1996; Interview with John Miller, ABC News, 1998; Bin Laden, "Declaration of War."

⁵³ For a more detailed analysis of Bin Laden's argument, as presented in the 1998 fatwa against American military and civilian targets, see Magnus Ranstorp, "Interpreting the Broader Context and Meaning of Bin-Laden's Fatwa," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 21, No. 4, October-December 1998, pp. 321-330.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Bin Laden, "Declaration of War."

⁵⁵ Ibid.