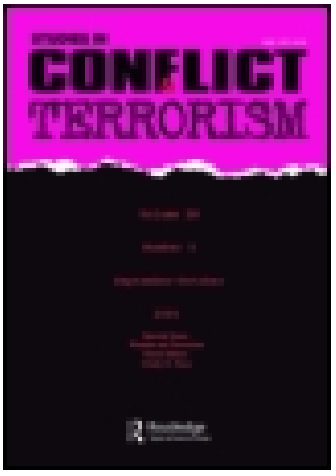

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Jihadist Strategic Debates before 9/11

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In 2004 Lia and Hegghammer observed a new genre of "jihadi strategic studies," characterized by secular-rational analyses, familiarity with Western sources, and a willingness to self-critique. Through four case studies (the strategies of takfir *groups in 1960/1970s Egypt, the far enemy–near enemy debate, the differing revolutionary modes of Al Jihad and Gamaa Islamiyya, and the decision by Al Qaeda to target the West) this article finds that many of the traits observed by Lia and Hegghammer have deep roots among jihadist thinkers. This article will interest those who study terrorism, strategy, and the history of Islamic militancy.*

After 11 September 2001 jihadists began issuing pragmatic and objective studies of the United States and the best way to counter the War on Terror.[1] Two analysts who have examined these works, in particular the alleged roadmap for the 3/11 Madrid bombing, call this emergent discourse "jihadi strategic studies." According to Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer, this phenomenon consists of "very little theological exegesis" and instead "secular-rational" and pragmatic analyses of the battlespace, often drawing heavily from Western strategic literature.[2] Instead of citing the Quran, these new thinkers cite Clausewitz. However, the antecedents of this field are under explored. Where did the impetus for this strategic thinking come from? How new are *jihadi* strategic studies?

Although jihadist strategic studies did indeed fully emerge after 9/11, it is critical to analyze them as the culmination of a process of jihadist thought rather than a fully independent development. Decades before the emergence of Al Qaeda and "*jihadi* strategic studies" there existed a number of jihadist groups with widely varied tactical and strategic imperatives, despite a general agreement on the need to overthrow existing governments and resurrect the Caliphate. These debates also contained careful, rational analyses of the situation, including attention paid to remarkably mundane logistical matters. Yet a significant difference, rightly noted by Lia and Hegghammer, is the heavy religious references that support these earlier debates.[3] In a sense, today's *jihadi* strategists can divorce strategy from theology because their predecessors had largely provided theological justification. Many of these early religio-operational debates planted the seeds that flowered into the purely strategic contests that today convulse the jihadist universe.

Analysis of these earlier debates has been scarce.[4] When they have occurred, usually they are single case studies rather than an examination of the overall strategic development of

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the jihadist movement. Studying these earlier debates is also difficult, largely because many are inaccessible. Whereas the new genre of strategic studies mainly occurs over the Internet, allowing interested parties access to the tracts, manifestoes, and even message board postings, their precedents were conducted via pamphlet and in limited-run organizational bulletins and journals. Yet these earlier debates were interlinked and these groups analyzed and interrogated previous experiences. This communication has been both explicit and implicit in the literature. Analyzed over time, these groups reveal themselves as strategically adaptive and responsive to internal and external pressures. They also demonstrate a capacity to learn from successes and failures.

This article analyzes four significant debates over jihadist strategy prior to 9/11: the differing strategies of Saleh Siriyya's Military Technical Academy Group and Shukri Mustapha's *Jamaat al Muslimeen* during 1970s, Abdelsalam Faraj's 1979 manifesto *The Neglected Duty* and its case for *jihad* against the "near enemy" (Egypt's rulers) rather than the "far enemy" (Israel), the contest during the 1980s between Al Jihad and Gamaa Islamiyya, and finally bin Laden's 1998 *World Islamic Front Against the Jews and Crusaders* and the controversial decision to reverse Faraj's strategy.

Although jihadist strategic debates have existed throughout much of the Muslim world, this article will focus on mainly Egyptian cases and include information and examples from other groups and locales where helpful. There are two reasons for this. Primarily, Egypt is arguably where the most interesting and interrelated debates occurred. Egypt has an unfortunately rich history of armed Islamic groups which has provided enough material for an exploratory study. Secondarily, and more relevant for those interested in policymaking, many persons involved in the Egyptian cases selected now dot the upper echelons of Al Qaeda. Understanding those fractious personalities and their tendencies contributes to a further understanding of the contemporary jihadist movement.

A Question of Apostasy

The departure point for many of these strategic debates was *kufr. Kufr* is derived from the root K-F-R, which literally means "to cover." Yet in the Islamic context, *kufr* comprehends something far more serious. *Kufr*, according to Charles Adams, is everything that is "unacceptable and offensive to Allah. It is, in fact, one of the pivotal ideas of the Quran. . . Kufr is, as it were, the negative pole of Quranic thought, diametrically opposed to *imam*, or faith."[5] To declare someone a *kaffir* (*takfir)* is an awesome weapon, for it sanctifies their murder. The struggle over this question arose in the 1960's as the Islamic movement engaged in a vicious confrontation with the Egyptian government. As the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to reconcile the accomodationist legacy of its founder, Hasan al Banna, with the confrontational attitudes of its dynamic thinker Sayyid Qutb the group fractured and ejected its most violent elements.[6] How these groups understood and utilized *takfir* was crucial in determining the later priorities of the jihadist movement.

Nasser's emergence as the Brotherhood's main antagonist created an immense ideological crisis for the group. The Brothers thought that the 1952 revolution (which they had supported) had wiped away all colonial accoutrements and cleared the way for a truly Islamic state to emerge. Yet Nasser and the Free Officers, many of them closely tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, not only reneged on the idea of an Islamic state but turned on the Brotherhood. After attempting to assassinate Nasser in 1954 the Brotherhood was completely repressed. Reportedly over 20,000 Brotherhood members were arrested during this time, 11,000 of which were subjected to long prison terms. Many were horribly tortured. Zaynab al Ghazali, a key figure in the post-1954 reorganization of the Brotherhood, later

wrote that "with the events of 1954 . . . the mask concealing Nasir's face dropped away. His enmity toward Islam, through the war that he waged against Islamic activists and their leaders, was now very apparent."[7]

In teeming, grimy Egyptian cells a number of Muslim Brothers began to question how their tormentors could claim to be Muslims while carrying out their vicious duties. To the more militant factions of the Muslim Brotherhood Sayyid Qutb's ideology was a godsend. Qutb's confrontational beliefs created the space to judge Muslims as apostates.[8] These ideas spread among those Brothers disgusted with their compatriot's acquiescence and passivity in the face of adversity.[9]

Qutb's ideology of violent confrontation, even with an avowedly Muslim leader, forced a broader reassessment within the Brotherhood. Some believed that the society that bred their torturers and acquiesced to Nasser's secular state was simply suffering from insufficient knowledge about Islam. The solution, therefore, was to redouble efforts at preaching (*dawa*) and education (*tarbiyya)* while lessening the emphasis on politics. This view was held by the majority of the Brotherhood, who attempted to convince other elements that this was the group's true historical mission. They found support in the statements of al Banna and began to publicize their position in the party newspaper *al Dawa*. One of Banna's arguments was that:

> *Kufr* (unbelief) means the open denial of the existence of God. Therefore, no Muslim who pronounced the *shahada* (the Muslim confession of faith—"there is no god but God and Muhammed is his Prophet") can be accused of unbelief even if he committed a grave sin.[10]

Banna's successor as General Guide, Hasan al Hudaybi, also tried to combat the *takfiri* beliefs. In addition to directly debating the extremists, Hudaybi issued *Preachers, Not Judges,* in which he disputed the use of *takfir*. He argued that "whomever judges that someone is no longer a Muslim, it is they who have deviated from Islam and transgressed God's will because they have judged another person's faith."[11]

However, some rejected Hudaybi's case. They argued that the Islamic state had failed because society had rejected Islam. This necessitated the use of *takfir*.[12] Yusuf al Qaradawi, an influential Muslim Brotherhood thinker, describes the almost comical fracturing over the question of *takfir*:

> Those who agreed . . . that such rulers are *kufr* were regarded as friends; those who did not as enemies, even *kufr*, claiming that he who holds any doubt about the *kufr* of a *kafir* (an unbeliever) is himself a *kafir*. But that was not all. Another question was raised about the people who submit to and obey such rulers. The answer was ready: they are also *kuffar* like their rulers, because—it was claimed—he who submits to a *kafir* is himself a *kafir*.[13]

The People or the Prince?

Ejected from the Brotherhood, a number of militant offshoots would begin to formulate strategies based on their particular conception of *takfir*. Two groups in particular each championed different targets of *takfir*. Was it only the ruler, whose iniquity shielded the emergence of a truly Islamic society, or had society itself rejected Islam?

The first group emerged in April 1974, when the Palestinian Saleh Siriyya and his followers attempted to overthrow the Egyptian government. Siriyya was a member of the secretive *Hizb ut Tahrir* in Jordan and Iraq and had links with other parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood and reportedly even the Jordanian Communist Party.[14] Probably because of these competing influences, Siriyya's blend of theology and strategy was eclectic and original, and drew on all his former affiliates. Siriyya planned to capture the Military Technical Academy in Heliopolis, then use the weapons there to decapitate the Egyptian government. Although the attempt ultimately failed, according to Saad Eddin Ibrahim it was "spectacular in volume, planning, and timing."[15]

Siriyya's methodology revealed his belief that gaining state power was an integral part of Islamizing society. He determined that the Brotherhood had failed because of their Fabian, accomodationist strategy. Siriyya believed that the extensive intelligence, military, and police apparatus of the modern state would render the peaceful development of a movement that would eventually claim power for itself impossible.

But Siriyya also critiqued *Hizb ut Tahrir's* vanguard approach. *Hizb ut Tahrir* believed that an "outstanding elite" would carefully and clandestinely recruit people in positions of power while openly spreading the organization's ideas.[16] When the organizational strength of *Hizb ut Tahrir* was assured, the time would be right for a coup. Although Siriyya accepted *Hizb ut Tahrir's* argument for a vanguard (reportedly he named his group the "Vanguard of the Supporters") he eschewed prostelyzation totally. Siriyya believed that the success of his coup was not dependent on active popular backing. After a comprehensive putsch and the formation of an Islamic government (*Hizb ut Tahrir* stands ready with a constitution for an Islamic state), a truly Islamic society would emerge naturally. Rather than *Hizb ut Tahrir*, this was similar to Hasan al Banna's view that a divinely ordained government would "guide the body of Muslims to the mosques and make them adopt the Islamic pattern in their lives."[17]

The second pole of the *takfir* debate was embodied in the enigmatic persona of Shukri Mustapha. In 1971 Mustapha was released from prison, where had been held since 1965 for distributing Muslim Brotherhood material.[18] The experience had radicalized him to the point that he enthusiastically embraced *takfir*. Although his prison following consisted of a single relative (many in his original cell were won over by Hudaybi's arguments), upon his release Mustapha relentlessly recruited and promulgated his vision. In 1974 Mustapha and Siriyya became aware of each other and tried to merge their groups, although the alliance was ultimately unsuccessful.[19]

Siriyya and Mustapha differed significantly over the issue of *takfir.* Whereas Siriyya argued that an Islamic society was prevented only by an impious ruler, Mustapha believed that the entire society should be considered unIslamic. So whereas Siriyya judged only the ruler worthy of *takfir*, Mustapha broadened this to the entire society.[20]

Mustapha's view was informed by his ultra-narrow reading of the Quran. In particular he believed the last portion of the Quranic verse 2:232: "Allah knows while you do not know" meant that everything after the Quranic revelation was false, all theology, history, politics. Anyone who followed a form of Islam other than his chose to be an infidel. There was no middle ground. According to Mustapha, "if one religious obligation is missed, the rest are nullified . . . every Muslim who the call reached but turned away is an infidel . . . infidels deserve death."[21]

The Prophet Muhammed's emigration to Medina only to return and conquer the pagan Meccans led Mustapha to believe in the importance of separation and immigration away from the apostate society. Accordingly, his group was nicknamed by the press *takfir wal hijra*, (excommunication and holy flight). Mustapha assumed that after he and his followers

had created a parallel, holy society (he envisioned the mountains of Upper Egypt) he would merely have to wait out the weakening of the *jahiliyya* (unIslamic) society. According to Mustapha, after his group had separated:

> Retribution will descend on them, and not fall upon us; mercy will descend upon us, and will not fall upon them, as there can be no intermingling or mixing or confusion between truth and lies, and God would not assist a society that pretends to support Islam, while its core beliefs are still *jahiliyya* beliefs, and its branches are intertwined with the branches of *jahiliyya*.[22]

Mustapha's denunciations of the state and frequent breaking of laws (which he judged to be unIslamic) brought attention. When a government religious official wrote the preface to a pamphlet that charged the group with errors of belief, Mustapha kidnapped the official and killed him when the government refused to pay the ransom. The security services mobilized against Mustapha, and he was hanged in 1978.

The experiences of Shukri Mustapha and Saleh Siriyya did not dampen the resonance of jihadist strategic thought in Egypt. A new set of strategic questions were taking shape. In particular, discussions began occurring over attacking Israel directly. Jihadists termed Israel (and its Western supporters) "the far enemy," in contrast to those who supported continuing the campaign against apostate rulers in Muslim countries, the "near enemy."

There were two reasons for the emergence of this debate. The relative Arab success in the 1973 war challenged notions of Israel's superiority, which the jihadists noticed. Mustapha and Siriyya's failure to gain state power also led some jihadist thinkers to argue against wasting effort fighting an at least nominally Islamic state and instead focus on Israel, the greater danger. In particular Fathi al Shiqaqi, the founder of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, argued that fighting the Jews was a Quranic imperative and should not be postponed in favor of attacking apostate rulers.[23]

The Near Enemy or the Far Enemy?

In 1978 Mohammed Abdelsalam Faraj joined one of the *jihad* groups sprouting all over Egypt. A year later the group was uncovered by the police, but the young electrician managed to escape. Faraj, described by former associates as "fiery and charismatic," soon started his own group.[24] Through recruitment and mergers a larger group emerged, which called itself Al Jihad.[25]

In Upper Egypt at the same time another group, loosely called *Gamaa al Islamiyya* (IG) was also agitating against the regime. According to Talat Fouad Qasim, a founding member, the group formed "in the mid-70s with nine people in Minya reading the works of Ibn Taymiyya, Abu al Ala Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, Sayyid Sabiq and others."[26]

In 1980 Al Jihad and IG decided to merge. The new group, which retained the name Al Jihad, asked Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, a blind al Azhar graduate, to become their spiritual advisor.[27] While Rahman controlled spiritual matters, Faraj oversaw political ones.[28]

Al Jihad's most significant document was a pamphlet written specifically as an internal discussion paper by Faraj. Entitled *The Neglected Duty*, it is one of the keystone statements of early jihadist strategic thought. The first part concerns the religious classification of the threats facing the *umma*, particularly from governments in the Muslim world. The second is a strategic analysis of how to prioritize the campaign against these threats. Although Faraj

does not mention Egypt by name in the document, it is clear that government is the target of his analysis.

Faraj begins by mentioning Abu Hanifa, a key Islamic jurist, who had theorized about how to determine the Islamic character of a state. Paraphrasing Abu Hanifa, Faraj argues that a state is un-Islamic if three conditions are met:

1. If it is ruled by other laws than those of Islam
2. There is no safety for the Muslim inhabitants
3. It is adjacent or close to *dar al kufr* (an Islamic term denoting a non Islamic land) . . . (because) this proximity is dangerous for the Muslims.[29]

To support the first point Faraj heavily references Ibn Taymiyya's thirteenth century campaign against the Mongols, for example in a section entitled heading "Ibn Taymiyya's Collection of *Fatwas* is Useful in the Present Age."[30] Faraj concludes that:

> The Mongols and their likes—the equivalent of our rulers today—are (even) more rebellious against the laws of Islam than those who refused the *zakat* tax, or the Kharijis, or those from the people of (the town) al Taif who refused to abandon usury.[31]

Faraj also borrows one of Ibn Taymiyya's rhetorical devices to ensure that the obligation for revolution is clear. When Ibn Taymiyya had to persuade Muslims to attack the Mongols, he portrayed them as Kharijis, an early deviant sect of Islam.[32] There was wide justification among early Muslims to fight the Kharijis. Faraj improves on the device when he explains that the leaders of Egypt are "more rebellious against the laws of Islam than . . . the Kharijis."

Proving Abu Hanifa's second point, that there is "no safety for the Muslim inhabitants" was seemingly supported by the evidence. Faraj and his compatriots had been hounded by the security services, the Muslim Brotherhood had been put in jail since the 1940s, and the last two decades had witnessed a wave of arrests and executions of Muslims who, by Faraj's definition, were merely trying to call to Islam.

The third point, the proximity to *dar al kufr*, was proved by a widespread belief that Israel's existence was a strategic as well as a religious threat. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood had always crafted their opposition to Israel in both spiritual and strategic terms, arguing that Egypt would be the next target of Jewish colonization.[33]

It is interesting to note that Sadat's assassin, Al Jihad member Khalid Islambouli, later testified "I did what I did, because the *sharia* was not applied, because of the peace treaty with the Jews and because of the arrest of Muslim *umma* without justification."[34] These three points match exactly with the three criteria of an un-Islamic state presented in *The Neglected Duty*.

After proving that the existing state was un-Islamic, Faraj turned to questions of the near enemy versus the far enemy. Faraj conceded the importance of attacking Israel, but argued that such an attack must be subjected to strategic considerations. Faraj maintained that "fighting has to be done (only) under the banner of Islam and under Islamic Leadership."[35] Getting this Islamic leadership required a confrontation first and above all with the *jahiliyya* state. Once the near enemy had fallen, the new state would become an entity that could face Israel on equal terms. In Faraj's words, "to fight an enemy who is near is more important than to fight an enemy who is far."[36] He expanded on his critique:

> The basis of the existence of Imperialism in the Lands of Islam (Israel) are (precisely) these Rulers. To begin by putting an end to imperialism (destroying

> Israel) is not a laudatory and useful act. It is only a waste of time. We must concentrate on our own Islamic situation: we have to establish the Rule of God's Religion in our own country first, and make the Word of God supreme . . .. There is no doubt that the first battlefield for jihad is the extermination of these infidel leaders and to replace them by a complete Islamic Order. From here we should start.[37]

Faraj also critiqued earlier attempts at gaining state control. He rebuffed Mustapha circuitously by saying "there are some who say that the true road to the establishment of an Islamic state is *hijrah*, emigration, to another locality and to establish the (new Islamic) State out there."[38] However, Faraj rejects Mustapha's underlying contention that one cannot be a Muslim in a non-Muslim state by again citing Ibn Taymiyya, who had argued that it was possible to live among non Muslims, even under a non-Muslim ruler.[39]

Faraj's strategies had similarities to those of Saleh Siriyya, and members of Al Jihad later testified that they saw themselves as part of an ideological line that began with Siriyya's Military Technical Academy Group.[40] Yet there were also important strategic divergences. Whereas Siriyya believed in a *coup d' etat* that would deliberately minimize any role for the population, Faraj believed that his targeted assassination would spark a popular revolution. Because he believed that the "silent majority" of Egyptians supported him, Faraj saw his task ending with the removal of the apostate ruler. The population would do the rest. As he wrote, "when the Rule of the Infidel has fallen everything will be in the hands of the Muslims, whereupon the downfall of the Islamic State will be inconceivable."[41] The 1979 Iranian revolution likely proved to Faraj that the Muslim masses were sufficiently Islamic and only needed something to waken them. The success of that event also provided Faraj with a reasonable explanation why Siriyya's strategy of ignoring the population led to failure.[42]

Gamaa Islamiyya and Operationalizing the *Hisba*

Al Jihad split following their assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in October 1981. Abbud al Zumur, an imprisoned leader of Al Jihad, questioned the legitimacy of Omar Abdel Rahman's leadership.[43] Zumur and his partisans, led by Ayman al Zawahiri, argued that because the leader had a duty to participate in *jihad* he could not be blind. Rahman and his supporters, led by Talat Fouad Qasim, countered that the leader could not be in prison. This preempted Zumur's bid to take over the group in Rahman's stead.[44] These differences eventually caused the Al Jihad–IG alliance to fracture. Zumur headed Al Jihad whereas Rahman and Qasim led the IG.[45]

To understand the IG, it is necessary to more closely consider the career and thought of its self- described "spiritual mentor," Omar Abdel Rahman.[46] Blinded by diabetes at 10 months, Rahman memorized a Braille Quran by age 11.[47] He graduated from the faculty of theology at al Azhar in 1965 and began teaching. He strictly interpreted Islamic custom, reportedly refusing to hear questions from female students unless they used male classmates as intermediaries.[48] A friend recalled that the 1967 defeat by Israel profoundly affected Rahman. "He had always been vastly intelligent and vastly ambitions," the friend recalled, "now he was vastly radicalized."[49] Rahman was first arrested in 1970 when he issued a *fatwa* forbidding Muslims to pray on the grave of Nasser. Upon his release in 1974 he had to defend his 2000-page dissertation secretly before three sympathetic members of al Azhar.[50]

Rahman's testimony at the Sadat trial was subsequently published as *Kalimat al Haqq* (A Word of Truth). The title itself challenges the regime by echoing the *hadith* (prophetic saying), "the greatest jihad is to speak a word of truth to a tyrant." Part of *Kalimat al Haqq* is distilled in Rahman's book, *The Present Rulers and Islam: Are they Muslims or Not?* which was released after the trial. He begins by outlining four types of ruler, the just Muslim, the oppressive Muslim, the heretical Muslim, and the non-Muslim. A Muslim's obligation under a heretical Muslim ruler is to only "render unto them their due and ask Allah for what is due to you".[51] For the non-Muslim ruler, the obligation is revolt and overthrow. Muslims "have a right to rebel against every unjust and despotic ruler."[52]

Strategically, Rahman stressed the primacy of attacking the near enemy. He argues that:

> Israel is a state, and a state can only be fought by a state . . . a confrontation with those who are dealing with Israel is a prerequisite to a confrontation with Israel itself . . . . If we in al Jihad are going to fight Israel from Egypt, with Egypt being in the state of capitulation in which it is in, our government would not help us. It would turn us over to the Jews in accordance with the Camp David Agreement . . .[53]

Another source of IG ideology is the group's *Charter for Islamic Action*, written by three imprisoned IG scholars. The authors, Najeh Ibrahim, Asim Abdul Majid, and Essam ud Deen Darbalah, were all given life sentences for the assassination of Sadat. The book itself, although published by these three, was "supervised and checked" by Rahman.

The authors conclude, "we are undoubtedly obliged to fight jihad today."[54] Nodding to Faraj, the authors argue "it is jihad by which Muslims try their best to avoid these days. One (Faraj) was quite right to entitle it 'The Forgotten Obligation' (another translation of *The Neglected Duty)*."[55] Also like Faraj and Rahman, the authors argue that jihad against the near enemy is more important than *jihad* against the far. "Jihad," according to the authors, "is the means by which we can establish the Caliphate after having removed the disbelieving rulers who have replaced the law of Allah by man-made laws. Besides, it is the only way to regain our lands which have been taken away from us."[56]

With strategic priorities established, the IG began to theorize how to gain control of the state. The IG modeled their strategy on the Islamic concept of the *hisba*, which loosely means the promotion of virtue and the suppression of vice, moral policing.[57] The IG believed that this approach would change, physically if necessary, the popular attitude toward religion and slowly Islamize society. A coup was rejected in favor of a strategy that cultivated a mass uprising at some later point. As Rahman explained, "We must invite people to the way of God with wisdom and good preaching."[58] He later bragged about how his group had "put a great effort to let people know better their religion."[59]

By the mid-1980's the IG had begun to operationalize their concept of the *hisba* by beating nightclub owners, sabotaging truck drivers who shipped alcohol, torching video stores, and generally intimidating those who did not keep the IG's strict mores. They also believed this strategy would have a beneficial side-effect of provoking government repression, further alienating the government from its citizens. But the group's violence backfired. The government confronted the group and arrested Omar Abdel Rahman in 1989.

The unexpectedly strong regime response and the IG's continuing failure to galvanize support among the broader Egyptian population prompted the IG to modify their approach. In a statement "Vengeance: Bullets for Bullets," Talat Fouad Qasim, the IG's chief strategist,

singled out the targeting of investment in Egypt as an intermediary step to the overthrow of the regime.[60] This would allow the IG to shift the center of gravity away from costly head-on conflicts with the security forces to soft targets, especially tourism. Qasim articulated this idea in a 1993 interview, arguing that "hitting tourism would weaken Egypt's economy and therefore facilitate its replacement with an Islamic system."[61] The IG hoped that the loss of the all-important tourism revenue (nearly $2.03 billion in 1992, around 7% of GDP) would quickly lead to financial ruin and state collapse.[62]

Rahman also played a key role in the tourist campaign. After his release Rahman traveled to the United States (reportedly with the assistance of the CIA) and in July of 1980 he settled in Brooklyn.[63] He shipped tapes back to Egypt urging confrontation. One such tape justified the attacks by saying "to those lamenting what has happened to tourism, I say it is sinful . . . the lands of Muslims will not become bordellos for sinners of every race and color."[64] Rahman later explained the point of the attacks: "tourists are not being attacked but tourism is . . . the goal of these attacks is to put pressure on the Egyptian regime."[65]

The IG's new campaign was dreadfully successful. 1990 saw a reported 51 confrontations between Islamists and security services with 115 killed.[66] In November 1992 a Western reporter based in Cairo reported that "not since the troubled months of 1981 has the defiance been so open- and so violent- in both word and deed."[67] In the 18 months between April 1992 and October 1993 over 220 terrorists, security officers, and tourists were killed in clashes.[68] During the first 10 months of 1995, human rights organizations reported that over 300 people were killed during fighting in Upper Egypt, an IG stronghold.[69]

Al Jihad and the Legacy of Siriyya

In contrast to IG's initial attempts to spur a popular revolution, Al Jihad's military background and secrecy attracted those wanting a quick, violent change at the top. A militant described his decision to join Al Jihad rather than IG as follows: "I would much rather be under the command of a military officer (al Zumur) who fought in the 1967 and 1973 wars. He *knows* how to change the political regime by force."[70] But Al Jihad's leader, the imprisoned Abbud al Zumur, was forced to operate through a deputy outside the prison. The deputy, Majdi Salem reportedly did not command the respect of members and by 1987 had lost his grip on the organization.[71] Ready to take control was Ayman al Zawahiri.

Ayman al Zawahiri was born on 1 June 1951 in Cairo and received his Master's degree in surgery from University of Cairo in 1974. A year later he was leading a militant cell.[72] That particular group was begun in 1958 by one of Sayyid Qutb's students.[73] Zawahiri held Qutb in great esteem as the first to visualize a confrontation between Islam and unbelief inside Muslim countries. About Qutb's secret group (which was a key reason for Qutb's death sentence), Zawahiri said:

> The meaning of this plan (overthrow of the government) was more important than its material strength. The meaning was that the Islamic movement had begun a war against the regime in its capacity as an enemy of Islam. Before that, the Islamic movement's ethics and principles—and in which some believe until now—affirmed that the external enemy was the only enemy of Islam.[74]

Zawahiri's experience with failed militant groups instilled a desire for secrecy and an almost obsessive approach to planning and training. For instance, when Zawahiri dissected

Siriyya's failed 1974 coup attempt, he concluded that the group did not consider the difficulty of the situation. In particular, the young men who stormed the academy had insufficient training.[75] Zawahiri also argued that Al Jihad's hastily conceived plan to assassinate sadat and Spark a popular uprising (which he, as a member of Al Jihad's leadership, objected to) was "doomed to fail" because it was:

> [A]n 'emotional' uprising that was poorly planned. The rebellion occurred two days after the assassination of Al-Sadat and was based on an unrealistic plan to seize Asyut and then advance northward toward Cairo, disregarding any figures about the enemy's strength and materiel . . . . Thus the 1401 Hegira (1981) uprising ended with a fundamental gain—the killing of Al-Sadat. The attempts that followed it were not successful because of poor planning and insufficient preparation.[76]

But Zawahiri also took something else from Faraj's strategies. As will be recalled, Faraj believed that the population would rush to support an Islamic state after the removal of an apostate ruler. But this idealistic approach had failed, likely proving to Zawahiri that it was in fact Siriyya who had been correct to try and minimize any role for larger society. Al Jihad's experience in 1981 had shown that the population could not be relied on.

This distrust of society and obsession with secrecy and planning manifested itself in Zawahiri's desire to utilize a specially trained and elite vanguard.[77] In his interrogations Zawahiri responded to the question "How would you replace the current government with an Islamic one?" by arguing that his group would take power "through a military coup."[78] As this view matured, it would become a major point of disagreement with the more broad-based, popular revolution strategy of the IG.

Yet Zawahiri demonstrated a serious, tactical mind when he rejected the IG's strategy of provocation after considering Egypt's geography. He wrote:

> The problem of finding a secure base for jihad activity in Egypt used to occupy me a lot, in view of the pursuits to which we were subjected by the security forces and because of Egypt's flat terrain which made government control easy, for the River Nile runs in its narrow valley between two deserts that have no vegetation or water. Such a terrain made guerrilla warfare in Egypt impossible.[79]

The relationship between IG and Al Jihad further deteriorated over more mundane concerns. Following his release in 1984 Zawahiri left for Peshawar, an outpost of the burgeoning Afghan *jihad*. He was soon joined there by an IG delegation headed by Mohammed al Islambouli, the brother of Sadat's assassin. Eventually the groups clashed when the IG accused Zawahiri of stealing money meant for the mujahidin. Some relief agencies decided to cut Zawahiri off and switch their funding to IG, triggering a war of *takfir* between the groups.[80]

But most serious for Zawahiri was Al Jihad's inability to produce results in Egypt. While Zawahiri and the Al Jihad leadership were in Pakistan or scattered throughout Europe, the IG was in the heat of a guerilla campaign in Egypt. Increasing IG attacks there were envied by Al Jihad cadres and created restlessness as many in the organization began pressuring Zawahiri get into the fight. A key Al Jihad lieutenant later testified that in 1991

Zawahiri gave him orders to return to Egypt and revive Al Jihad because they were being overshadowed by the resurgent IG.[81]

The IG's higher profile and the edge it provided in money, material, and ideological support forced Zawahiri to abandon his traditional concerns for full preparation and operational security. He also had to jettison grandiose schemes to decapitate the regime in one knockout blow in favor of doing something, no matter how ineffective, to make people remember that Al Jihad was still active. In the early 1990s Zawahiri formulated this new strategy, which he dubbed "the flea and the dog." According to Zawahiri, his group would cling to the regime like a flea clings to a dog and, through a series of small yet painful attacks, bring it down.[82] Interestingly this could be one of the first interactions between western strategic thought and jihadist strategic thought of the type outlined by Lia and Hegghammer in 2004. In 1965 Robert Taber analyzed the effectiveness of a guerilla campaign in his seminal work *The War of the Flea*. It is unknown if Zawahiri had read this book, but it has appeared in Arabic translations on jihadist Internet message boards, and the similarities in language are remarkable.[83] As Taber wrote:

> The guerrilla fights the war of the flea, and his military enemy suffers the dog's disadvantages: too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with. If the war continues long enough—this is the theory—the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anemia without ever having found anything on which to close its jaws or to rake with its claws.[84]

This new strategy of up-tempo confrontation with the regime caused strife in Al Jihad. Zawahiri had to this point focused on meticulously regenerating decimated Al Jihad cadres and planning a single strike that would allow him to assume control of the government. But Zawahiri's decision to launch an immediate guerilla war to wear down the regime came as a surprise to the cadres. It also implied that Al Jihad's tactics had failed and that the IG's ideal of a long-term guerilla war held more promise.

But importantly Zawahiri only made tactical concessions. He remained focused on the Egyptian government, although his method had changed from coup to popular revolution. Throughout the 1990s he continued to justify the *jihad* against Egypt. In *The Bitter Harvest: The Muslim Brotherhood after Sixty Years*, which circulated widely in Peshawar in the early 1990s, Zawahiri argued that one of the Muslim Brotherhood's many failings had been its willingness to fight in Palestine (1948) rather than Egypt.[85] In 1993 Zawahiri stated "our primary objective is to establish an Islamic State . . . the state will propagate the faith of the one God: liberate Muslim territories, notably Jerusalem."[86] In April 1995 he argued in an article in *al Mujahidun* magazine entitled "The Road to Jerusalem passes through Cairo," which argued that "Jerusalem will not be opened until the battles in Egypt and Algeria have been won and until Cairo has been opened."[87] That same year he argued that the most dangerous threat to the Muslims was "the apostate rulers who are ruling the Muslim lands."[88] In a statement circulated a year later Zawahiri justified a continuing battle against Egypt based on the Quran 9:123: *O you who believe! fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness*.[89] He retained this focus despite being pressured during this time to attack Israel. Fathi al Shaqaqi, the leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, reportedly made a strong push to try and convince Zawahiri of the necessity to focus on the far enemy.[90]

But the tactical shift only exacerbated Al Jihad's problems. The November 1993 inauguration of the "flea and the dog," an attempt to kill Egyptian Prime Minister Sidki, unintentionally killed the 12-year-old school girl Shayma Mohammed Abdel Halim. This

was a heavy blow to an Egyptian public worn down by decades of low-intensity conflict, and led to a precipitous drop in already poor levels of public support for Zawahiri's aims. As Zawahiri explained, "the government used the death of Shayma, may God bless her soul, and portrayed the incident as an attack by the al Jihad group against Shayma, not against Prime Minister Sidki."[91]

The situation for Zawahiri worsened in the mid-1990s as the IG began to contemplate a ceasefire. After the death of Shayma and the failure of their *hisba* strategy the IG concluded that they had lost the population, and with it any chance for a military victory. In 1997 the IG unveiled an initiative to end their attacks, to which the Egyptian government responded positively. The IG's decision had the support of the imprisoned leadership of the IG, including the authors of the IG's *Charter for Islamic Action*, analyzed earlier.[92] Zawahiri responded with a mixture of incredulity and fury. In a 4 October 1998 letter to the IG leadership Zawahiri wrote that "this initiative has undoubtedly shaken the image of the captive leaders in the eyes of the youth and shocked them hard. It represents a severe loss for the jihad movement as a whole."[93]

Although the deal gained widespread support among Islamists both in Egypt and abroad it did not go unchallenged. On 17 November 1997 a squad of heavily armed terrorists attacked tourists visiting one of Egypt's best known archaeological sites. They bombed, shot, and stabbed 62 tourists to death, including a 5-year-old girl. Leaflets stuffed inside the bodies claimed, in the name of IG, that the attack was in revenge for the imprisonment of Omar Abdel Rahman in the United States. However, it now appears that the massacre was orchestrated by Rifai Ahmed Taha, the dissident IG leader who used the attack to try and sabotage the cease-fire.[94] Whereas the killing of Shayma delegitimized *jihad* groups, Luxor broke them.

In the wake of the Shayma debacle and the Luxor massacre key members of Al Jihad left, the group lost money, and the bottom had dropped out of its support among Egyptians. In addition, the IG had publicly presented a cease-fire, leaving Al Jihad stranded on the field of battle. Under this pressure, Zawahiri had to take drastic measures to revitalize the organization. He had to make a strategic change.

The Near Enemy Revisited: Al Qaeda and the Debate over Attacking the West

In February 1998 bin Laden and Zawahiri unveiled the "World Islamic Front Against the Jews and Crusaders." Their explicit call to abandon the struggle against the near enemy and target the West was an unprecedented strategic innovation among jihadist groups. This public and complete break with the near enemy strategy articulated in Faraj's *The Neglected Duty* nearly two decades earlier shocked the jihadist community. But the decision to target the West was not an *ex-nihilo* development. It was a product of the convergence of powerful new ideological currents and rational calculations based on three decades of failed strategy against the near enemy.

The roots of the 1998 *fatwa* lay in the Afghan *jihad*. The Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan spurred thousands of young Muslims to travel to the region and defend their fellow Muslims. The key figure in the Afghan *jihad* was Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian professor, Muslim Brotherhood activist, and distinguished Islamist theorist.[95] Azzam created the *Maktab al Khidemat* (MAK), or Services Office, to "gather the Arabs and send them inside Afghanistan . . . to save them from the political games of the Afghans."[96] Azzam handled the administrative duties and was assisted with funding by a wealth Saudi

named Osama bin Laden.[97] Bin Laden reportedly swore loyalty to Azzam in April 1986 before the "Jawar" operation and the men fought side by side in the battles at Paktia (1987) and Jalalabad (1989).[98] Azzam's dedication and bin Laden's funding was a powerful combination. The MAK grew exponentially, eventually boasting offices all over the world, including in the United States.[99]

Strategically, Azzam did not believe conditions necessitated attacking existing Muslim states, and ridiculed those in Afghanistan promoting revolutionary violence against the "near enemy."[100] Azzam believed it was more important to reclaim once-Muslim lands, such as *al Andalus* (Spain), and it was of paramount importance to reclaim Palestine. Liberating Palestine should be the "primary issue on the mind of every Muslim."[101] Yet Azzam argued that strategy dictated *jihad* first and foremost in Afghanistan:

> It is our opinion that we should begin with Afghanistan before Palestine, not because Afghanistan is more important than Palestine, not at all, Palestine is the foremost Islamic problem. It is the heart of the Islamic world, and it is a blessed land but, there are some reasons which make Afghanistan the starting point.[102]

Afghanistan took priority for the ease with which *mujahidin* could enter, the presence of an ongoing *jihad* there, and the necessity of helping the *mujahidin*. A successful *jihad* in Afghanistan would also culminate in an Islamic state able to confront Israel and regain lost Muslim lands.

When the Soviets announced their withdrawal in April 1988 Azzam's magazine argued for the *jihad* to turn to Palestine.[103] But another current had surfaced during the Afghan *jihad* that challenged Azzam and sought to divert the *jihad* toward apostate regimes in the Muslim world. Chief among these currents were the Egyptian groups, in particular Al Jihad and IG.

In 1988 Omar Abdel Rahman visited Peshawar, staying at the house of Mohammed al Islambouli, a leading IG figure as well as the brother of Sadat's assassin.[104] Although he did not take part in the fighting, Rahman was quite active in inter-*jihad* polemics. He repeatedly clashed with Azzam over questions of attacking Muslim rulers. Specifically, while Azzam admired Pakistani President Zia ul Haq and defended Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Rahman argued that they were apostates.[105] Rahman also reportedly had the leader of the MAK's offices in Brooklyn killed for refusing to redirect the MAK's money from the campaign in Afghanistan to the fight in Egypt.[106]

Al Jihad's Ayman al Zawahiri also schemed against Azzam. From the moment Zawahiri arrived in Afghanistan (around 1986) he made it a point to avoid Azzam.[107] Zawahiri reportedly told Muslims not to pray with Azzam.[108] Reportedly a few days before Azzam's November 1989 death in Peshawar, Zawahiri began spreading rumors that Azzam was an American agent.[109]

Yet Zawahiri's reputation among the *mujahidin* seems to have been less than sterling. Azzam's son argued that "we didn't count Zawahiri as a mujahid. He was just sitting in Peshawar trying to recruit people to fight against Egypt."[110] Likewise bin Laden's personal "legal ideologue" later explained that Al Jihad "had no roots in the jihad battlefield, all along the Afghan jihad era, and up to the fall of Kabul . . . this group was not known for its participation in training camps or leadership of operations in the circles of the jihad youth."[111]

Although relations between bin Laden and Azzam were amicable, there were certain points of contention. Bin Laden at times became frustrated by the infighting and petty

corruption of the MAK.[112] A particular problem was Azzam's reported practice of staffing the MAK with his relatives.[113] Capitalizing on these disagreements was Ayman al Zawahiri, who in 1986 introduced himself to bin Laden in a Peshawar mosque.[114]

At the time of their meeting, Zawahiri was tightening his grip on Al Jihad while fighting a losing battle with the resurgent IG for notoriety, resources, and men. Yet in the wealthy Saudi, Zawahiri saw a chance to revitalize his own struggle against Egypt and rejuvenate the group. Zawahiri began surrounding bin Laden with lieutenants from Al Jihad. One of the first Saudis to visit Afghanistan recalled, "during the jihad, Bin Laden's gatherings teemed with young men from the city of Medina. This situation changed after the end of (the Afghan) Jihad (1989) because the Egyptians became prominent in his gatherings."[115] Among the Egyptians were Al Qaeda's eventual third-in-command Abu Hafs al Masri and the group's spokesman, Saif al Adel.[116] Those members sought to redirect bin Laden's resources to their struggle.[117] According to Noman Benotman, a veteran Libyan Arab Afghan, during the late 1980s and early 1990s bin Laden was under pressure from the Egyptians for being "soft" and not interested in toppling apostate rulers.[118] Arabs surrounding bin Laden repeatedly prodded him to break with Azzam, telling him "you shouldn't be staying with Abdullah Azzam. He doesn't do anything about the regimes—Saudi, Egyptian, Algerian. He's just talking about Afghanistan."[119] This approach, however, clashed with Al Qaeda's (and Azzam's) initial purpose to liberate or defend occupied Muslim lands rather than depose nominally Muslim rulers. L'Houssaine Khertchou, an early member of Al Qaeda, testified that when he joined Al Qaeda there was no mention of fighting the United States: "When I took the *bayat* (in 1991) (it) was to fight in Afghanistan and it was against communism."[120] Jamal al Fadl, another Al Qaeda member, testified that even after the Russians left Afghanistan bin Laden was still thinking about establishing a Muslim government there.[121] Three Al Qaeda sources even report that bin Laden originally established Al Qaeda to focus on Yemen and turn it into another Afghanistan.[122]

But under pressure from the Egyptians, and in concert with the continuing American military presence in Saudi Arabia (and the complicity of Saudi government) bin Laden's strategy began to shift. As the 1990s progressed bin Laden began to focus less on the Saudi regime and more on various international bodies such as the UN and NATO.[123] In August 1995 bin Laden argued that the situation in Bosnia exposed existing Muslim governments as "mere tools in the hands of the great and powerful crusaders."[124] Bin Laden offered a hint to his future plans in an interview the next summer when he told British correspondent Robert Fisk, "the Saudis now know their real enemy is America."[125]

On 23 August 1996 bin Laden released his *fatwa* "A Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Expel the Infidels from the Arabian Peninsula)." This document summarizes the criticisms of the al Saud regime and justifies defensive *jihad* against the American forces for their occupation of Saudi Arabia. Although the subtitle of this document suggests limiting attacks against U.S. targets to the Arabian Peninsula, certain sections began to lay out the explicit far enemy strategy of the 1998 *fatwa*. According to bin Laden:

> The situation can not be rectified (the shadow cannot be straighten when its' source, the rod, is not straight either) unless the root of the problem is tackled. Hence it is essential to hit the main enemy who divided the *umma* into small and little countries and pushed it, for the last few decades, into a state of confusion.[126]

In a 1996 interview bin Laden provided more clues to his goals and how he hoped to accomplish them. Bin Laden framed the possibility of a rebellion in Saudi Arabia in the context of an attack on the American presence, but noted that "its most important goal would be to change the current regime."[127] In a March 1997 interview bin Laden returned to some of the more "globalized" points he made in the 1996 *fatwa*. As he explained, "our main problem is the U.S. government while the Saudi regime is but a branch or an agent of the U.S."[128]

On 23 February 1998 bin Laden unveiled his "World Islamic Front Against the Jews and Crusaders," a combination *fatwa*/umbrella group dedicated to fighting the "far enemy" Americans and Jews instead of the "near enemy" regimes in the Muslim world. The document itself is rather short and the key point is summarized in one sentence:

> To kill the American and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty incumbent on every Muslim in all countries, in order to liberate the al Aqsa mosque (in Jerusalem) and the Holy Mosque from their grip, so that their armies leave all the territory of Islam, defeated, broken, and unable to threaten any Muslim.[129]

In addition to bin Laden, the 1998 *fatwa* was signed by Ayman al Zawahiri of Al Jihad, Rifai Ahmed Taha of IG, as well as other leaders of smaller terrorist groups from the Indian subcontinent.

Bin Laden's decision to abandon the struggle against the al Saud regime in favor of attacks on the United States was almost a purely strategic decision. Although the Saudis had weathered bin Laden's storm throughout the 1990s, he was left without citizenship and barely a state that would take him, frozen assets, and a price on his head. The head-on conflict with the Saudi regime was too costly. Instead, bin Laden decided that in a time of limited resources, it would be better to coordinate and direct strikes where they would have the most effect. That his Egyptian colleagues had been similarly unsuccessful in their *jihad* against Egypt likely buttressed bin Laden's argument. An Al Jihad lieutenant testified in a 1999 trial that:

> Osama Bin Laden said that the organization's (al Jihad) activities were too costly because militants had to change hideouts continuously. He also argued that attacks being carried out in Egypt were costing too much money and too many militant lives and called on both the country's main Islamic groups to "turn their guns" on the U.S. and Israel.[130]

Another Al Jihad member in the same trial made a similar point: "Experience has shown that action inside Egypt is extremely costly and that efforts will be directed against U.S. and Israeli interests and installations, in the Arab states and elsewhere."[131] In response to a question from one of his followers who again asked why Al Qaeda could not attack Muslim regimes bin Laden answered, somewhat exasperatedly:

> Once again, I have to stress the necessity of focusing on the Americans and the Jews for they represent the spearhead with which the members of our religion have been slaughtered. Any effort directed against America and the Jews yields positive and direct results—Allah willing. It is far better for anyone to kill a single American soldier than to squander his efforts on other activities.[132]

More concretely, others were ambivalent at best about precipitating a confrontation with such a militarily superior opponent. Upon hearing that America was now a target many were incredulous. As one remarked "America knows everything about us. It knows even the label of our underwear!"[133]

Even within Al Qaeda's leadership opinion was divided over the utility of widening the *jihad* to include the West. Some argued that the *jihad* needed to respect geographic boundaries. The battle for Palestine should, for instance, only occur within Palestine. Failure to do so could jeopardize international support and sympathy for Al Qaeda's goals. Broadening the *jihad* could even unify public support behind Western governments who wished to destroy Al Qaeda.[134]

A June 2000 letter from an Al Qaeda member reveals some of the internal dynamics of the near enemy–far enemy debate:

> Everything is subject to negotiations except (the infallible *sharia*), and consequently, the Movement came up with a strategy that identifies the original non-believing enemy (the far enemy) whereas it focused in the past on renegade non-believers (the near enemy) who they considered as more dangerous than the original non-believing enemy and thus, from the *sharia* point of view, fighting them is more obligatory than the original non- believing enemy. We support this trend in public thinking and discussing ideas in the open and in a healthy environment away from any psychological pressure practiced by some groups in their Movement.[135]

Bin Laden developed a high-pressure sales pitch to bring people around to his strategy. Although he later became bin Laden's personal bodyguard, Abu Jandal initially opposed global *jihad*. Once he arrived in bin Laden's camp he was subjected to a "hard sell" on the idea of attacking the United States. Abu Jandal recalled, "during those three days, he (Bin Laden) was waging a kind of a media campaign directed at us, in an attempt to convince us of the justification for his call for jihad against America."[136]

Even the training methods bin Laden utilized in his camps were crafted to maximize his message of *jihad* against the United States. Abu Jandal recalled the scene in the Al Qaeda camps:

> While training on hitting marks or targets, all the targets were in U.S. uniform. The names of the targets were American. The instructions were: hit the U.S. soldier or officer; blow up the U.S. vehicle. When the target was hit, it would be announced that someone hit the U.S. soldier or target. Thus, the United States and all that was American occupied our mind. It was an issue that engaged the minds of the al Qaeda youths who train in military camps. Indeed, hitting American targets became a dream of everyone in the Organization.[137]

This was the same trick that bin Laden had deployed when he targeted the Saudi regime. According to Abu Musab al Suri, a prominent jihadist theoretician, at early Al Qaeda camps "fighters were trained to shoot at (pictures of Saudi King) Fahd and senior Saudi princes' pictures."[138]

In Al Jihad the decision to shift strategies was similarly contested. Zawahiri calculated that the alliance with bin Laden and the shift to the far enemy would unify the broken strands of the *jihad* movement. As he wrote in his memoirs:

> The one slogan that has been well understood by the nation and to which it has been responding for the past 50 years is the call for the jihad against Israel. In addition to this slogan, the nation in this decade is geared against the U.S. presence. It has responded favorably to the call for the jihad against the Americans.[139]

But Zawahiri's cadres did not agree, and Zawahiri's insistence on supporting bin Laden and the strategic shift caused widespread strife in the organization. Zawahiri reportedly never consulted with the Al Jihad *shura* council before signing the *fatwa,* and much of the group learned about the merger after reading about it in newspapers or hearing about it on T.V.[140] Members were distressed that Zawahiri had suddenly and comprehensively rebuked the organization's long- standing near enemy strategy. According to an Al Jihad member:

> The (1998) *fatwa* to kill the Americans contravenes the principles of Islamic *sharia*. It also contravenes the strategy and principles of the Jihad Organization, which believes that . . . it is more appropriate to fight the ruler than to fight a faraway enemy, like Zionism and imperialism.[141]

Others in the organization were upset with Zawahiri's increasingly dictatorial control over the organization. In 1998 Al Jihad members complained to Zawahiri that "management methods . . . have led to the departure of some brothers from the company and nearly led to the temptation of others."[142]

Zawahiri also calculated that an alliance with bin Laden would provide steady funding for his cadres. Zawahiri wrote, in a clumsily coded message:

> The situation down in the 'village' (Egypt) is getting bad for merchants. Our relatives, the al Saidiyah (Upper Egyptians, meaning the IG), have left the market (signed a truce) while we are suffering from the international monopoly companies (arrests and persecution from U.S. and other international forces) . . . (the merger with bin Laden) could be a way out of the bottleneck in which we have been choking, thus enabling us to move the business activity to the stage of multinational corporations and mutual profit.[143]

But many were worried about bin Laden, and Zawahiri faced resistance from his cell leader, who argued (keeping with the code) that: "these are not profits, they are only a compound of losses."[144] A Yemeni-based Al Jihad operative warned Zawahiri to be careful with bin Laden because he had "a black history and a dark past (and) could not be trusted."[145] Zawahiri seemed to concede that Bin Laden had reneged on some promises but he countered "if the contractor (bin Laden) has promised us many things in the past and not done them, then now the man has changed. We sense this here."[146]

But it appears that the alliance did not deliver the financial support Zawahiri hoped. In early 1998 a veteran Al Jihad member defected, angry over the constant financial troubles of the group.[147] An e-mail exchange with operatives in Yemen revealed that by early 1999 the financial situation had not improved. Al Zawahiri angrily objected to superfluous expenditures and requested additional documentation and explanations. The operative shot back "the first step for me to implement in taking your advice is to resign."[148]

A closer analysis of Al Jihad's financial situation also appears to challenge some of the conventional wisdom about the relationship between Zawahiri and bin Laden. Zawahiri is usually believed to have played a key role in first turning bin Laden from a financier

to a fighter then focusing bin Laden on the far enemy.[149] Yet there is evidence that bin Laden took advantage of Ayman al Zawahiri's financial situation to exert his influence and control over the still-formidable Al Jihad cadres. When Zawahiri was captured in Russia in 1996, bin Laden was upset and, as a consequence, reduced Al Jihad's monthly allowance to $5,000. This increased the strain on Zawahiri's finances and forced him to submit to stricter controls on Al Jihad's activities.[150] Jihadists interviewed by Fawaz Gerges ascribed Zawahiri's shift in ideology to Al Jihad's increasing financial dependence on bin Laden, as well as bin Laden's overall influence.[151]

The decision to target the far enemy also encountered stiff resistance from jihadists throughout the Middle East. IG member Rifai Ahmed Taha's involvement in the 1998 Front (he signed on behalf of the IG) revealed many of the disagreements about the strategic shift to the far enemy. Like Zawahiri, Taha reportedly signed the *fatwa* without consulting the IG leadership, who later forced Taha to retract his statement.[152] In July 1998 he released that statement, which clearly enunciated the IG's stance against attacking Americans.[153] The IG's historic (prison) leadership soon issued their own statement, in which they expressed their "full support for the stance of our brothers abroad in distancing ourselves from the anti- American front."[154]

Abu Hamza al Masri, the notorious erstwhile preacher of London's Finsbury Park mosque, argued against the turn to the far enemy in a lecture series, "Liberate Makkah before Palestine."[155] Abu Muhammed al Maqdisi, who was recently found by a West Point study to be the most influential living jihadist, steadfastly advocated toppling the local Muslim regimes rather than attacking Israel or the United States.[156] Maqdisi has written at least two books on the insufficiently Islamic governments of Saudi Arabia (*Clear Evidence on the Infidel Nature of the Saudi State*) and Jordan (*Unveiling the Falsehood in the Provisions of the Constitution*). He argued, around the time of the 1998 *fatwa*, that

> Jihad against the enemies of Allah who substitute His *sharia* and are overpowering the *ummah* today, is one of the most important obligations that should take the interest of the Muslims. In fact, in my opinion, it is more important than and given preference over the Jihad against the Jews who occupy Palestine.[157]

But despite the criticism bin Laden and Zawahiri pushed on, determined to break the long- entrenched near enemy strategy and force the jihadist movement into a confrontation they hoped would unify the ranks and energize the next generation of fighters. However as the fallout from the decision to target the United States began to crush the jihadist movement it looks increasingly likely that bin Laden and Zawahiri had only succeeded in further fracturing the movement.

Conclusion

These four debates show that there were serious and sustained conflicts over strategy inside the jihadist movement in the decades before 9/11. Although the questions were rudimentary when compared with their post-9/11 successors, there was a concerted attempt to formulate strategic plans by building on theology, experience, logistical limitations, and the tactical capabilities of their groups.

Highlighting and studying these debates also illustrates the diversity of the movement and how, rather than a single, determined cadre insisting on *jihad* against the United

States there have been significant debates over the methods and direction of the jihadist movement. These debates have in many ways been the signature of the jihadist movement as it has evolved over time. Most recently, bin Laden and Zawahiri's calculation to attack the West could not overcome the strategic and ideological differences that stalked the jihadist movement since its birth. Instead of unifying the movement, bin Laden and Zawahiri's decision created new divisions and amplified existing ones.

Understanding these early debates and how they contribute to "jihadist strategic studies" is of extreme importance in formulating policy. Examining these fissures can provide clues to how best prioritize the jihadist threat and mobilize limited resources to meet it. It can also help in taking preliminary steps toward understanding the grievances of local actors and preventing them from being swept up in the global *jihad* ideology. Finally, these cases demonstrate that dissention inside broader jihadist community over the decision to attack the United States.

Notes

1. Among the better known are the 1,600-page opus of Abu Musab al Suri, *Dawat al Muqawama al Islamiyya al Alamiyya* (Global Islamic Resistance Call), (N.P., 2004) and the works by the Saudi theorist Yusuf al Ayiri, including *Mustaqbal al Iraq wa-l Jazirah al Arabiyya Ba'd Suqut Baghdad* (the Future of the Arabian Peninsula After the Fall of Baghdad), (N.P., 2003), *Amrika wal Su'ud ila al Hawiyyah* (America and the Advance Toward the Abyss), (N.P, 2003?), and *Silsilat al-Harb al-Salibiyyah 'ala al-'Iraq* (The Continuation of the Crusader War on Iraq), (N.P., 2002?). Other strategic studies have been translated into English including Abu Bakar Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, Trans. William R. McCants (with the support of the John M. Olin Institute at Harvard University), (N.P., N.D.); and Muhammad Khalil al Hakayma, *The Myth of Delusion*, (London: al Maqreze Center, N.D.). For the best analysis of the flowering of jihadist strategic thought after Iraq, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Global Jihadism after the Iraq War," *Middle East Journal* 60(1) (Winter 2006). See also the fine journalistic account of Lawrence Wright, "The Terror Web," *The New Yorker*, 2 August 2004.

2. Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged al Qaeda Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27 (2004), pp. 356–357.

3. An important exception to this observation is Abu Musab al Suri, who has consistently used a secular-rational analysis, including a reliance on Western strategic thinkers. This is convincingly demonstrated in Brynjar Lia's important book, *Architect of Global Jihad* (London: Hurst, 2007).

4. A key study of the early strategies of the jihadist groups, including the Military Technical Academy Group, the Society of Muslims, and al Jihad is Abdel Aziz Ramadan, "Fundamentalist Influence in Egypt: The Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Takfir Groups," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Of more recent vintage are the studies by David Cook (*Pragmatic Jihadi Movements*, West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), which examined the historical examples of four early jihadist movements based on their mentions in al Suri's *Dawat al Muqawama al Islamiyya al Alamiyya* (note 1). Fawwaz Gerges' *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) is also a study of jihadist strategy before 9/11, yet it is mostly concerned with the ramifications of Al Qaeda's decision to target the "far enemy," in this case the United States, on the global jihadist landscape. Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), see especially pp. 37–59, also contains important details.

5. Charles J. Adams, "Kufr," in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World Volume 2* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 439–443.

6. Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2007), pp. 108–11.

7. Zainab al Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh: Memoir in Nasir's Prison*, Trans. Mokrane Guezzou (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1994), p. 29.

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26. Hisham Mubarak, Souhail Shadoud, and Steve Tamari, "What Does the Gama'a Islamiyya Want? An Interview with Tal'at Fu'ad Qasim," *Middle East Report* (January–March 1996), p. 40

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29. Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: MacMillan, 1986), p. 166.

30. Ibid., p. 175.

31. Ibid., p. 179.

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35. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, p. 192.

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41. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, p. 203.

42. Adel Hammoudeh, "*al Aanef Saad Ila al Qouma*" ("Violence Rises to the Top,") *Ruz al Yusuf* , 8 September 1986.

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