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Locating Al Qaeda's Center of Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers

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Locating Al Qaeda's Center of Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers

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This article claims that the ongoing debate about the structure and dynamics of Al Qaeda has failed to appreciate the importance of an organizational layer that is situated between the top leadership and the grass-roots. Rather than being "leaderless," it is the group's middle management that holds Al Qaeda together. In Clausewitzian terms, Al Qaeda's middle managers represent a center of gravity—a "hub of . . . power and movement"—that facilitates the grass-roots' integration into the organization and provides the top leadership with the global reach it needs in order to carry out its terrorist campaign, especially in Europe and North America. They are, in other words, the connective tissue that makes Al Qaeda work. The article substantiates this hypothesis by providing a number of case studies of Al Qaeda middle managers, which illustrate the critical role they have played in integrating the grass-roots with the top leadership. The policy implications are both obvious and important. If neither the top leadership nor the grass-roots alone can provide Al Qaeda with strategic momentum, it will be essential to identify and neutralize the middle managers, and—in doing so—"cause the network to collapse on itself."

> What I have come to believe is you take the middle of the network—experienced professionals—you attack them, you capture, you kill and you turn as many of them as you can, and you cause the network to collapse on itself.
> —General Stanley McChrystal, former Commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan[1]

The "War on Terror" may have been the first conflict in modern history in which scholars, politicians, and security practitioners have continued to debate the nature of the enemy even as billions of dollars were spent, a plethora of security measures enacted, and hundreds of thousands of troops deployed abroad to wage war. Nearly a decade after this war was declared, there is still no agreement on what Al Qaeda represents and how it functions as an organization. Never before, it seems, have Western forces engaged in a major conflict

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with an entity so different from themselves in shape, structure and organization—even when considering Western countries' recent history in fighting more traditional insurgent groups.[2]

In academic circles, the debate about the evolving nature of Al Qaeda reached its peak in 2008, when two widely respected scholars of terrorism, Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman, engaged in a well-publicized dispute over the question of whether Al Qaeda's leadership retains full control of the group's terrorist campaign.[3] While Sageman argued that control had shifted from the leadership to the grass-roots, Hoffman maintained that the leadership continued to exercise a significant degree of strategic and operational direction.[4] Their positions have been popularly characterized as more extreme and mutually exclusive than they were meant to be, but the dichotomy of "leaderless" (Sageman) versus "leader-led" (Hoffman) has nevertheless dominated the discourse.

This article attempts to make a constructive contribution to the debate by drawing attention to an organizational layer that– in these authors' view—has received insufficient attention. It will show that Al Qaeda's continued strength and prowess as a terrorist group rests not just with its top leadership in the tribal areas of Pakistan or the grass-roots, but—rather—with a group of middle managers who provide the connective tissue that links the top of the organization with its bottom and, thus, makes it possible for Al Qaeda to function as a coherent and operationally effective entity, especially in Europe and North America. In that sense, rather than attempting to reconcile the two scholars' positions, the article provides an additional perspective by showing that Al Qaeda's middle management represents an important "hub of . . . power and movement,"[5] which holds the top leadership and the grass-roots together. If anything, therefore, the article shows that the top leadership remains relevant, but that its continued influence is mediated by—and dependent on—a group of powerful middle managers.

The article will begin with a review of the debate between Sageman and Hoffman, framing the dispute in Clausewitzian terms as a debate about Al Qaeda's "center of gravity." Doing so will provide an appropriate framework within which to situate and explain the role of middle managers. The empirical part of the article then aims to substantiate the hypothesis by offering relevant case studies of Al Qaeda middle managers, illustrating the critical role they played in integrating the grass-roots with the leadership. The conclusion will summarize the findings and highlight important policy implications that follow from the analysis.

Relevant terms and expressions will be explained in the course of the article. At this point, it should be emphasized that the article distinguishes between "Al Qaeda" as a (more or less) coherent entity and the wider "*jihadist*" movement, consisting of Al Qaeda sympathizers that share the group's ideology and aspirations and (largely) approve of its methods but may not have any physical links or connections with the organization.[6]

Debating Al Qaeda's Center of Gravity

Although rarely defined in these terms, much of the ongoing debate about the nature of Al Qaeda revolves around the location of its center(s) of gravity. The concept originated with the Prussian general and strategic theorist Carl von Clausewitz, who postulated that each belligerent had identifiable points which, "by their movement and direction, govern the rest."[7] They represent the "the hub[s] of all power and movement, on which everything depends."[8]

In military doctrine, the concept has commonly been understood to mean heavy concentrations of an adversary's army, because Clausewitz claimed that centers of gravity can "always [be] found where the mass is concentrated most densely."[9] However, when consulting the original text, it becomes obvious that Clausewitz had intended for the concept to be

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interpreted more liberally, accommodating a wide range of different forces and situations. In his own words:

> For Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great, the center of gravity was their army. . . . In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of gravity is generally the capital. In small countries that rely on large ones, it is usually the army of their protector. Among alliances, it lies in the community of interest, and in popular uprisings it is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion.[10]

Wherever the opponent's centers of gravity are situated in a particular conflict, Clausewitz believed that the formulation of any strategy had to begin by locating them.[11] In his view, they presented "the most effective target[s] for a blow,"[12] and they were the points that "all our energies should be directed" against.[13]

Nearly 200 years later, contemporary strategic theorists were debating precisely the kinds of questions that Clausewitz had reflected on. In the mid-1990s, for example, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt claimed that non-state insurgents, terrorists, and organized criminals no longer adhered to strict military hierarchies, but had formed loose networks that revolved around personal relationships: "There is no single central leader or commander: the network as a whole . . . has little to no hierarchy," appearing "both acephalous (headless) and polycephalous (Hydra-headed) at the same time."[14]

In his 2004 book, *Understanding Terror Networks*, Marc Sageman drew on Arquilla and Ronfeldt's insights and combined them with social network analysis.[15] He argued that Al Qaeda represented a network which attained cohesion through members' personal relationships: "Participants in the global jihad are not atomized individuals but actors linked to each other through complex webs of direct or mediated exchanges."[16] He also showed that individuals' position within the Al Qaeda network was defined by the extent to which they were connected to others, concluding that "[a] few highly connected hubs dominate the architecture of the global . . . jihad."[17] In Sageman's view, Al Qaeda's center of gravity lay with those members who could facilitate the largest as well as the most significant connections within the network, such as Osama bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.[18]

By 2008, Sageman appeared to have changed his mind. Sageman's second book—titled *Leaderless Jihad*—argued that Al Qaeda had entered a phase in which formal structures and hierarchies mattered even less than they used to.[19] Authority, he claimed, had moved from the group's leadership to grass-roots networks who were acting entirely on their own initiative. The group's center of gravity, in other words, had shifted from the top to the bottom:

> Each local network carries out its attacks without coordination from above. . . . [Al Qaeda] lacks a firm overarching strategy, [yet] it still has an agenda set by general guidelines found on the Internet, which is the virtual glue maintaining a weak appearance of unity.[20]

Bruce Hoffman disagreed. In a much noted review of Sageman's book—titled "The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism"—Hoffman highlighted intelligence assessments, which demonstrated that "Al Qaeda Central" had regrouped in the tribal areas of Pakistan, reasserting some of the operational control that it had lost following the Western invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.[21] He maintained that, even where Islamist terror attacks appeared to be carried out by apparently leaderless groups—such as some plots in Europe—these activities had resulted from the "deliberate, long-standing subversion by Al Qaeda."[22] Indeed, many of

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the attempted terrorist plots in Europe, he pointed out, could be traced back to Pakistan, where members of the allegedly "leaderless" *jihad* had received guidance, direction, and training. Al Qaeda, he concluded, "is a remarkably agile and flexible organization that exercises both top-down and bottom-up planning and operational capabilities."[23]

As Hoffman's wording shows, both academics' original positions were less stringent than the dichotomy of "leaderless" (Sageman) versus "leader-led" (Hoffman) suggests, yet this is how their respective arguments came to be seen. In fact, as the debate went on, it seemed as if Sageman in particular tried to live up to the public perception of his position, which he had initially decried as a "misrepresentation."[24] In a recently published article, for instance, he claims to offer new evidence for the "leaderless jihad" hypothesis, showing that "the vast majority of [Al Qaeda inspired terrorist] plots [in the West] were perpetrated by independent homegrown groups."[25]

For the majority of their peers, it was obvious that neither position was entirely true. Karen Greenberg spoke for many of her colleagues when she told the *New York Time*s: "Here are two guys, both of them respected, saying that there is only one truth and only one occupant of the sandbox. That's ridiculous. Both of them are valuable."[26] Although none of them articulated the position in Clausewitzian terms, the feeling among many scholars and analysts was that Al Qaeda gravitated around not one but two centers: the leadership in Pakistan's tribal areas, which provides inspiration and (limited) strategic direction; and newly empowered grass-roots who have capitalized on the rise of new communication technologies such as the Internet. Accordingly, the most commonly heard response to the question "leaderless or leader-led?" has been: "a bit of both."

The purpose of this article is not to attempt to reconcile or refute the two positions. Rather, the aim is to highlight a third dimension that has been neglected in the ongoing debate. Focusing on Al Qaeda's operational capabilities (that is, the group's capacity to carry out terrorist attacks), it is argued that Al Qaeda's operational center of gravity lies with a group of so-called middle managers. In this view, it is not just the top leadership, the grass-roots, or "a bit of both," but an entirely different organizational layer—the middle management—which needs to be paid more attention to.

Conceptualizing Al Qaeda's Middle Management

The empirical part of this article will show that—in many instances—Al Qaeda's middle management has been critical in holding the group together and making its terrorist campaign work. But who are these middle managers? What do they do? And why is their role believed to be important? This section develops a conceptual framework that distinguishes the middle management from other parts of the organization and explains its contribution to how Al Qaeda works.

It is useful to begin by saying what the middle managers are not. They are not part of what experts and security practitioners have variously referred to as "core Al Qaeda," "Al Qaeda Central," or the "top leadership." According to intelligence reports cited by Peter Bergen, the (top) leadership of Al Qaeda consists of 100 to 150 individuals.[27] Based in the tribal areas of Pakistan, they are assisted by "a couple of hundred more 'free agent' foreigners" who serve as their staff.[28] Members of the leadership are experienced and ideologically committed *jihadists*, who—having sworn an oath of allegiance (*bayat*)—have a personal relationship with Osama bin Laden. They feel responsible for the group's survival in the tribal areas as well as promoting its aims and activities around the world. The top leadership, in other words, embodies the popular notion of Al Qaeda as a professional terrorist group with global ambitions and global reach.

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Equally, middle managers must not be conflated with Al Qaeda's "foot soldiers." The foot soldiers (or grass-roots) consist of individuals who are inspired by Al Qaeda and often "participate" through Internet forums (so-called jihobbyists);[29] low-level members of *jihadist* cells and their activist leaders;[30] and those who have been to a training camp and returned to their home countries without having developed lasting ties to the leadership.[31] With rare exceptions, they are lower skilled and have not participated in fighting. They may talk about wanting to join a foreign battlefront and subscribe to the idea of a global *jihad*, yet their focus is mostly local and/or national. Most importantly, they are not normally known to the leadership, nor do their real world networks extend far beyond their places of origin.

The middle management combines several of the characteristics of the top leadership and the grass-roots. Like the top leadership, middle managers are experienced and skilled, and maintain contact with members of the leadership. They may have met bin Laden, but do not necessarily have a close, personal relationship. Importantly, they are not permanently based in the tribal areas but have returned to their home countries or other non-battlefront states, sometimes travelling back and forth, building support networks and raising money for the global *jihad*. Like the grass-roots, then, their outlook and ideology is global but most of their activities are focused locally.

It is easy to see, therefore, how middle managers can provide both top leadership and grass-roots with valued resources:

- From the grass-roots' perspective, middle managers are the most senior Al Qaeda associates they will have come across and are likely to command respect because of their experience and the people they know. In practical terms, they can provide skills and expertise, and may facilitate access to finance and training camps.[32] Also, being connected to the top leadership, middle managers offer strategic direction and—critically—give grass-roots members a sense that they are part of Al Qaeda.
- For the top leadership, the middle managers' value lies in the grass-roots connections they can broker. After all, it is only by reaching out to *jihadist* foot soldiers that the leadership can turn its strategy into practice. Middle managers provide an efficient and trusted channel through which to facilitate connections, weed out "timewasters," and reduce the risks involved in reaching out to the movement's grass-roots.

The middle managers, in short, are the only members of the group who are connected to *both* grass-roots and top leadership. As a result, they become critical to forging linkages as well as facilitating the flow of information, resources, skills, and strategic direction between the top and the bottom of the organization.

It is for this reason that the middle managers represent an operational center of gravity. If the middle management is removed, the top leadership—despite their experience, expertise, and sense of strategic direction—will lack the reach and opportunities for implementing their global designs. The grass-roots, on the other hand, may have great intentions but will fail to acquire the needed resources—such as skills and access to strategic direction—to carry out an effective campaign of terrorism.

It is only through their mutual connection to middle managers that the grass-roots and the top leadership become one (more or less) coherent strategic entity. The middle managers, in other words, are the connective tissue that makes Al Qaeda work. In Clausewitz's words, they are "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."[33]

Al Qaeda's Middle Managers

This section provides a number of case studies that exemplify the role of middle managers in Al Qaeda–related plots and networks. They illustrate the wide range of activities middle

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managers have engaged in, and highlight the critical role they have played in advancing Al Qaeda–related plots.

The case studies include Abu Munthir and Mohammed Qayum Khan, who facilitated the so-called fertilizer plot in the United Kingdom; Aleem Nasir, who helped German recruits connect with Al Qaeda Central in Pakistan; and Malika El Aroud, a Belgian *jihadist* who—together with her husband Moez Garsallaoui—made it possible for a group of Belgian and French "jihobbyists" to gain access to Al Qaeda direction and training.

Each case study follows a similar structure. They all begin with a brief introduction to the middle manager and his/her background, as well as the plot and/or network they are believed to have been involved with. It will be demonstrated how the middle managers were linked to both top leadership and grass-roots, and how that position was used to establish a connection between the two. This will be followed by a description of how the middle managers facilitated the flow of information, expertise, strategic direction, and/or resources. All case studies will conclude with a summary assessment of the middle manager's significance, comparing what actually happened to the most likely outcome had the middle managers not been involved. In all cases, it will be shown that—although different in each case—the middle managers' contribution was critical to turning "wannabe terrorists" into halfway competent operators, integrating their activities into Al Qaeda's wider strategy, and making their plans more likely to succeed.

The authors are conscious of the limitations of this approach and the hypothesis itself. All the case studies included in this article are of Al Qaeda–related plots and networks in the West. The authors have not explored the role of middle managers in other parts of the world, which may well be subject to different dynamics. Some North African and Middle Eastern countries, for example, are home to so-called Al Qaeda Affiliates, that is, local "branches" of Al Qaeda that have a relationship with Al Qaeda Central but maintain their own infrastructures and chains of command and control.[34] As a result, groups like Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) or Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) can provide many of the "services" and resources for which (autonomous) Western *jihadists* need to turn to elsewhere.

Furthermore, it was impossible to make any statements about the evolution of the role of middle managers over time. All the case studies are of the post-9/11 period during which Al Qaeda is believed to have undergone a process of diffusion.[35] Furthermore, all the middle managers portrayed in this article were active in 2003 and/or thereafter, which Sageman claims to have been the watershed year that marked Al Qaeda's transformation from leader-led to leaderless *jihad*.[36] The case studies, therefore, are clearly relevant to, and valid for, the time period around which the current debate revolves. Nevertheless, based on the evidence available, the authors were unable determine whether, *within* that period of time, the role of Al Qaeda's middle management had changed. This would require further study with a much wider selection of plots and networks.

Indeed, one may argue that the number of cases presented in this article is too small to prove the significance of the middle manager hypothesis. There can be no question that three case studies would be completely inadequate if the intention was to prove that the middle management is Al Qaeda's sole and overwhelmingly dominant center of gravity. This, however, is not the ambition. The purpose of the article is to explain and introduce a new concept, which the ongoing debate has failed to account for.[37] Because the concept is new, the article opts for depth rather than breadth, using the available space to explain the activities of specific Al Qaeda middle managers in greater detail than would otherwise have been possible. As a consequence, a number of cases that strongly suggest the involvement of a middle manager—for example, the Madrid train bombings of 2004;[38] the London

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bombings on 7 July 2005;[39] the attempted bus bombings in London on 21 July 2005;[40] or the transatlantic airliners plot of 2006[41]—could not be included.

Even so, considering that—according to Sageman's own data—there have been only 39 known Al Qaeda related terrorist plots in the West since September 2001, the "sample" may not be as insignificant as the number of case studies suggests. It certainly justifies the conclusion that Al Qaeda's middle managers represent *a* center of gravity whose importance has—thus far—been overlooked.

Case Study #1: Abu Munthir and Mohammed Qayum Khan[42]

Mohammed Qayum Khan and Abu Munthir served as Al Qaeda middle managers in the United Kingdom. Their involvement in the so-called fertilizer plot—interrupted by British intelligence services and the London police in early 2004—helped a group of young Muslim men to connect to Al Qaeda and receive the training, skills, and strategic direction they needed in order to become effective.

The fertilizer plot prompted the most extensive counterterrorism operation ever to have taken place in the United Kingdom.[43] Led by Omar Khyam, a cell consisting of at least nine[44] (mostly British) Muslims of Pakistani origin were hoping to carry out attacks against several targets in the United Kingdom, including the Ministry of Sound nightclub in London, the Bluewater shopping center in Kent, and utilities across the country. After more than a year of deliberation, preparation, and several visits to training camps in Pakistan's tribal areas, the cell is believed to have come close to turning their plans into reality. In early March, Khyam went to visit a storage facility in West London, where 600 kilograms of nitrate fertilizer had been stockpiled, saying that this would the final month the storage was needed.[45] Following their arrest in late March 2004, trials in Britain and Canada resulted in convictions for seven of the nine defendants. Five members of the cell received life sentences.

Little is known about the two middle managers that helped to facilitate the plot. Khan was—and may still be—based in Luton, a town just north of London. A part-time taxi driver and chef, he first came to the attention of the British authorities in early 2003, when the British Security Service (MI5) suspected him of being the leader of an "Al Qaeda facilitation network ... providing financial and logistical support" to the terrorist organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[46] Khan's principal partner in running this network was Abu Munthir, who travelled back and forth between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, and seemed to enjoy excellent relations with senior members of Al Qaeda's top leadership. He reported to Abdul Hadi Al Iraqi, who was Al Qaeda's third in command and liaised with Al Qaeda's affiliate in Iraq on behalf of the group's top leadership.[47]

Khyam, on the other hand, was a typical product of the *jihadist* subculture that existed in London at the time. As a teenager, he began attending events run by the radical group Al Muhajiroun. Through his involvement in the group, Khyam quickly made friends in the *jihadist* scene, which revolved around radical imams such as Abu Qatada, Omar Bakri Mohammed, and Abu Hamza.[48] One of the people he encountered was Salahuddin Amin, who had moved to Britain from Pakistan at the age of 16. Six years older than Khyam, Amin had an even longer record of involvement in the *jihadist* movement than Khyam. Based in Luton, Amin worked for Khan and Abu Munthir, but soon became part of the fledgling cell of conspirators around Khyam. Khyam, in turn, joined up with the Luton facilitation network and was given responsibility for a range of tasks, including fund-raising and facilitating the transport of goods between Britain and Pakistan.[49] When MI5 discovered the "Al Qaeda facilitation network" associated with Khan, Khyam was thought to be acting as a courier.[50]

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In early 2003—just before the invasion of Iraq—Khyam and another member of the cell decided that they wanted to carry out terrorist attacks in Britain. They travelled to Pakistan and met with Amin, telling him about their wish to be trained in the use of explosives. Amin, who—among all the members of the group had the best relationship with the two middle managers—reported their request to Abu Munthir, who—in turn—consulted with Al Qaeda's top leadership. Based on Amin's account, the top leadership approved their idea of "[going] back to the UK and [doing] something there," and also agreed their request to attend a training camp.[51]

Accordingly, Khyam and Amin among others travelled to Kohat in Pakistan's North-west Frontier Province in May or June 2003, where they learned to make explosives using fertilizer, sulphur, and aluminium powder, which—their trainer told them—could be bought at any paint shop.[52] A second training camp in July or August 2003 included six of the nine members of the cell and was held in Malakand.[53] It provided basic military training and taught the recruits to handle light weaponry. More importantly, the shared experience created bonds among members of the group and strengthened their resolve. According to Mohammed Babar, one of the members of the cell who later turned against his former friends, "Prior to the camp, the guys were joking around and using slang. After the camp, [they] were talking jihad, praying and quoting the Koran. They were saying, 'Let's go kill.'"[54]

It would be mistaken to believe that Al Qaeda's top leadership or the two middle managers, which mediated the cell's relationship with Al Qaeda, provided day to day operational guidance for the plotters. However, it seems clear that strategic and even operational guidance was offered and received at several points over the course of the plot's evolution. In addition to authorizing the operation, a meeting took place in Pakistan in the summer of 2003 at which Khyam and Abu Munthir discussed how the attack(s) should be carried out. Babar recalls that Khyam "didn't have any ... specific targets, he just had general ideas. So, the plan was to ... discuss specific targets, how they would be carried out, every—like, just everything like that with Abu Munthir."[55] After the meeting, Khyam was determined for the attack to consist of multiple bombings, "simultaneous or one after the other on the same day."[56] Indeed, speaking to another member of his cell several months later, Khyam said, "you have to understand it has to be a simultaneous operation to be of effect."[57]

Another instance of how the middle managers "professionalized" the plotters' activities occurred in February 2004. Having experimented with the various ingredients of their bombs for most of the winter months, Khyam contacted Amin, who was in Pakistan, telling him that he had forgotten the correct proportions. As it turned out, Amin had forgotten as well, so he contacted Abu Munthir who gave him the information he needed.[58]

At this point, in fact, their relationship with Khan and Abu Munthir had led Khyam to believe that he and his group were part of Al Qaeda's campaign. When several members of the cell complained about the lack of progress, Khyam issued a strong warning against acting on their own initiative. He explained that their group might be part of a larger campaign, stating that, "So now in England, imagine you do something and there's brothers here, you could jeopardize them."[59] He pleaded with his co-conspirators to be patient and continue to coordinate their actions with Khan and others, stressing that it was "better to consult those who are running the jihad. There's a structure, so work within the structure."[60]

If anything, this last episode demonstrates quite how successful the two middle managers had been in integrating the cell into Al Qaeda's broader structure. Their involvement may not have been constant or particularly intensive, but they proved to be of vital importance at several key junctures in the plot's evolution: they coordinated communications with

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Al Qaeda's top leadership and secured approval for the group's idea of carrying out attacks in the United Kingdom; they facilitated access to training camps which helped members of the group to acquire bombmaking skills and strengthened their resolve; they offered operational guidance on the method of attack and assisted in the construction of the explosive device; and they provided the group with a strong sense that they had become associates of Al Qaeda and were part of a coordinated campaign. One may conclude, therefore, that it was the involvement of the two middle managers that turned the angry fantasies of a group of young Muslims into a potentially devastating conspiracy which came close to being carried out.

Case Study #2: Aleem Nasir

Aleem Nasir was at the center of a network that supplied Al Qaeda with money, equipment, and recruits between 2003 and June 2007, when he was arrested by Pakistani intelligence in Lahore. Acting as one of Al Qaeda's middle managers during that period, Nasir became one of the main interlocutors between German *jihadists* and Al Qaeda's top leadership, facilitating their training and easing their integration into Al Qaeda's global network.

Nasir was born in Pakistan and migrated to Germany in 1987, where he married a local woman and was granted citizenship in 1992. A mechanical engineer by training, he initially worked as a draftsman at a nuclear research institute. For about five years prior to his arrest in 2007, he claimed to have become a gemstone dealer. Nasir first came to the security services' attention after the 11 September attacks in 2001, when he praised the attacks in a conversation with colleagues and predicted that there would be terrorist strikes in Germany too.[61] According to intelligence reports, Nasir had been a fund-raiser for the Pakistani militant group Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) for many years. However, when the group suspended its operations in Afghanistan in 2003, he was deeply upset and confronted LeT's leader.[62] Shortly afterward, he abandoned the group and shifted his allegiance to Al Qaeda.

Nasir's activities ranged widely. As with Abu Munthir and Khan, much of his involvement with Al Qaeda revolved around fund-raising and the supply of military equipment. Indeed, Nasir's principal link into the top leadership was Al Qaeda's chief of finance, Sayeed al Masri, who—in turn—introduced him to other senior members of the group.[63] Between January 2006 and June 2007 alone, Nasir is said to have made four separate trips to Pakistan's tribal areas on behalf of the group.[64] Each time, he delivered equipment such as night vision goggles, bulletproof vests, compasses, and brought bundles of cash.

During his absence, the network in Germany was run by two of his lieutenants, Ömer Özdemir and Sermet Ilgen, who were travelling around Germany to raise funds and buy the goods that had been requested by the top leadership—similar to the roles played by Khyam and Amin in their work for Abu Munthir and Khan.[65] In the course of doing so, Nasir's aides established an extensive network of contacts within the German *jihadist* scene, which enabled many of the recruitment activities that Nasir came to be associated with.

For example, Nasir is known to have been particularly close to the *imam* of the radical *Multikulturhaus* mosque in the city of Neu-Ulm, Yehia Yousif.[66] Yousif's followers—including his son Umar—used to attend LeT training facilities, but started showing up at Al Qaeda camps when Nasir switched his allegiance. This leads analysts such as Guido Steinberg to suspect that Nassir and Yousif engaged in a division of labor, with Yousif responsible for the radicalization of gullible recruits and the more practically minded Nasir handling their introduction into *jihadist* cells.[67] Nevertheless, Nasir's direct involvement in the so-called Sauerland plot, which aimed to attack a number of American targets in Germany in 2007, remains contentious. The members of the Sauerland cell had

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been radicalized under Yousif's direction and at least one of its members is known to have interacted with Özdemir,[68] but there continues to be no proof that Nasir was responsible for introducing them to Al Qaeda.

A much better documented example of Nasir's facilitation is the case of Bekkay Harrach, a Moroccan born German from the city of Bonn.[69] According to the German domestic intelligence service, he is now a member of Al Qaeda's top leadership who lives in Waziristan with his family and has been involved in numerous military and propaganda activities on behalf of the group.[70] He shot to fame during 2009, when he appeared in several Al Qaeda video messages, speaking as "Abu Talha the German" and calling on young German Muslims to "join the jihad." In the run up to the German federal elections in September 2009, Al Qaeda's media production wing *As-Sahab* released three separate tapes with Harrach in which he made specific threats against his adopted country should the German government continue its military involvement in Afghanistan. In the tribal areas, Harrach's engineering background[71] made him an important asset for Al Qaeda and the Haqqani network of insurgents with whom Al Qaeda cooperates. The German magazine *Der Spiegel* quotes one of Haqqani's commanders, saying that "If we want to do something, we always ask the German for his opinion."[72]

Harrach's *jihadist* career had been long in the making, but he never succeeded in linking up with Al Qaeda prior to becoming involved with Nasir's network. In 2003, for example, he decided to join the second Palestinian Intifada in the West Bank by travelling to the West Bank and making himself available to local militant groups. Upon his return to Germany, blood was found on some of his belongings, convincing the German authorities that he was involved in a skirmish with Israeli troops.[73] Less than a year later, he set off for post-Saddam Iraq, where he attempted to sign up with the fledgling insurgency. According to German newspaper reports, he made two trips, but it remains unclear if, and to what extent, he succeeded in becoming a foreign fighter. Like many European Muslims who had been radicalized by the Western invasion of Iraq and wanted to join the insurgency, he was caught and arrested on his way through Syria.[74] If anything, Harrach's early experiences demonstrate the difficulties of linking up with Al Qaeda in the absence of a middle manager.

Harrach's fortunes changed when he met Özdemir in late 2006. Deeply impressed with his commitment to the "global *jihad*," he agreed to introduce Harrach to Nasir. The two men spoke at length, leaving Nasir satisfied that the former engineering student was sincere and able and that Al Qaeda would benefit from making him part of its network. Nasir decided to nominate Harrach for *jihadist* training in the tribal areas, writing a letter of introduction and providing him with detailed instructions on how to reach the camps.[75] Armed with the letter, Harrach set off in January 2007 first on a trip around Europe before getting to Turkey and then Iran, where he met smugglers who helped him get across the border into Pakistan and onto Waziristan.[76]

Upon completing the basic training, Harrach specialized in bombmaking and quickly established himself as one of the "brightest lights" among the ranks of the foreign fighters.[77] When Nasir and Harrach met for the second time in the summer of 2007—shortly before Nasir was detained by the Pakistani intelligence service—the "wannabe *jihadist*" from Bonn had become one of Al Qaeda's most trusted bombmakers, working for the group's chief explosives expert Abu Ubaidah Al Masri, and was about to embark on his "second career" as the "German face of Al Qaeda."[78]

The case of Aleem Nasir illustrates how middle managers have helped Al Qaeda reach deep into Western countries. Not only did Nasir play an important role in fund-raising and the provision of military supplies, it was through Nasir's network of contacts that Al Qaeda could activate the German *jihadist* scene in order to recruit members and associates.

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Conversely, skilled and highly motivated "wannabes" such as Bekkay Harrach were able to make the connection with Al Qaeda they were so desperately seeking. Nasir, therefore, played a pivotal role in representing Al Qaeda in Germany, helping to establish and maintain relationships between the *jihadist* grass-roots and the top leadership in Pakistan. Indeed, it is for this reason that he was convicted of Al Qaeda membership by a German court in July 2009.[79]

Case Study #3: Malika El Aroud and Moez Garsallaoui

Malika El Aroud and her husband Moez Garsallaoui acted as middle managers for Al Qaeda until December 2008, when El Around was arrested by Belgian police. In the two years prior to her arrest, the couple played an important role in linking young Muslim men from Belgium and France with Al Qaeda Central in Pakistan's tribal areas, thereby turning "wannabes" into potential terrorists whose actions were part of Al Qaeda's global campaign.

El Aroud's personal story is essential to explaining the couple's success. A Muslim woman of Moroccan origin, El Aroud had grown up in Belgium. In 1999, she married Dahmane Abdel Sattar, a Tunisian who attended the same radical mosque in Brussels. United by their passion for "global *jihad*," the couple left Belgium and went to Afghanistan, living in one of Al Qaeda's compounds where Sattar trained with the group and became one of its most trusted operatives.[80] Two days before the 11 September attacks, Sattar and another *jihadist* were deployed on a mission to kill the leader of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, Ahmed Shah Massoud. They succeeded in assassinating Massoud, but Sattar was killed while trying to escape.

Following the Western-led invasion of Afghanistan, El Aroud returned to Belgium, where she was charged with involvement in Massoud's assassination but found innocent.[81] Soon after the trial, she married again. Like Sattar, her new husband, Moez Garsallaoui, was a Tunisian born radical who had been active in the *jihadist* movement for several years. Arguably, El Aroud and—to a lesser extent—Garsallaoui were driven by the desire to avenge El Aroud's former husband's death, capitalizing on their longstanding involvement with Al Qaeda and El Aroud's newfound status as the widow of one of Al Qaeda's most famed martyrs.[82]

Many of the details of the terrorist plot that led to El Aroud's arrest in December 2008 remain unclear.[83] The Belgian authorities allege that six individuals, which had been recruited by El Aroud and introduced to Al Qaeda training camps in Pakistan by her husband, were planning suicide attacks in Europe. One of the recruits had written to his girlfriend, indicating that Al Qaeda leaders had ordered him to go ahead with the operation.[84] Another recruit reportedly boasted about being part of a new "international operations" course set up by the senior Al Qaeda leader with responsibility for cells outside Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the Belgian authorities, the same recruit mentioned the Brussels subway and a European soccer stadium as targets.[85] The defendants deny all charges, saying that they returned to Belgium because they had become frustrated by their experience in Pakistan and wanted to go home.[86] The trial is expected to begin in March 2010.

However close they came to carrying out an attack, few experts doubt that El Aroud and her husband's activities had been essential in facilitating the young Muslims' *jihadist* "careers." Their success as middle managers rested on two factors. First, it was El Aroud's background that inspired future recruits to become part of the movement. Her personal story (as well as that of her late husband) combined with her intensive online *jihadist* activism (see below) made her one of Al Qaeda's "living legends,"[87] who—despite her gender—was

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given instant recognition and respect by the young radicals she sought to attract. For Glenn Audenaert, director of the Brussels Federal Police, El Aroud "function[ed] like a magnet": exploiting her status as "an Al Qaeda martyr's wife, she effectively became a standard bearer for Al Qaeda recruiting" in Belgium and other French-speaking European countries.[88]

Second, El Aroud and Garsallaoui consciously regarded themselves as parts of Al Qaeda, whose top leadership—in turn—knew and recognized the couple as credible interlocutors that could facilitate the flow of information and people between themselves and the grass-roots. In Audenaert's words, "We knew we were in the presence of an organization that was part of Al Qaeda. [And] we knew these people were in contact with the highest level of Al Qaeda."[89]

El Aroud's principal activity was to run a French-language website called *Minbar SoS*, which targeted aspiring *jihadists* from Belgium, France, and Switzerland. *Minbar SoS* was an online forum where "jihobbyists" could meet, share ideas, and discuss the latest statements from bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and other Al Qaeda leaders. At one point, El Aroud herself posted a message in which she expressed her hope "that our fighters massacre those American pigs and their allies."[90] Despite such rhetoric, El Aroud insisted that her online activities were entirely legal. In a media interview, she said, "I write in a legal way. I know what I'm doing. I'm Belgian. I know the system."[91]

Beginning in 2007, El Aroud and Garsallaoui started exploiting *Minbar SoS* for "real world" purposes, that is, to identify potential recruits for Al Qaeda. Some of the people who had come to El Aroud's attention online were selected for "vetting." Garsallaoui engaged them in further conversation, and—in several cases—arranged face-to-face meetings. Having satisfied himself that a potential recruit was sufficiently committed and able, he then offered the opportunity to travel to Al Qaeda's training camps in Pakistan.[92]

In December 2007, Garsallaoui had arranged to meet six of their recruits—two from France and four from Belgium—in Istanbul. Their plan was to pay Turkish smugglers to get them across Iran and into Pakistan. Garsallaoui went off first and was followed by the others. In mid-January 2008, they had all made it into Pakistan's tribal areas, where they contacted members of the "Arab camp," which—according to one of the French recruits—was "for all intents and purposes run by [Al Qaeda]."[93] Initially regarded with suspicion, Garsallaoui persuaded the camp manager of his recruits' "*jihadist* bona fides," making it possible for them to meet Al Qaeda personnel and take part in one of their courses.[94]

Over the course of several weeks, the six recruits received military and religious training. They learned to make suicide vests and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and were trained in using rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) and other weapons.[95] Importantly, they also mixed and fraternized with other recruits from as far as North America, the Gulf and North Africa, forming strong bonds based on their shared ideological commitment and the training camp experience. Garsallaoui sent a photo to his wife, which showed him in fatigues holding an RPG.[96] He e-mailed his wife regularly and even talked to her over Skype.[97] In September 2008, he posted a statement on *Minbar SoS*, seemingly calling for attacks in Europe. He wrote: "The solution, my brothers and sisters, is not fatwas but boooooooms."[98]

Even so, the training camp experience failed to meet Garsalloui's recruits' expectations. They were treated poorly by their Al Qaeda handlers and constantly had to move around in order to avoid Predator drone strikes.[99] Moreover, although they were given opportunities to follow experienced fighters to the battlefield (so-called *jihad* exposure),[100] their Al Qaeda handlers denied them permission to participate. In fact, one of the principal tasks of the ongoing Belgian trial will be to determine whether they returned to Europe out of frustration about Al Qaeda's refusal to let them fight in Afghanistan, or because Al Qaeda had decided

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that—as Europeans— they could be deployed more gainfully by carrying out a terrorist spectacular on Western soil. In either case, the trip to Pakistan and their participation in the training camp had turned them into committed Al Qaeda foot soldiers who were keen to use their newly acquired skills—whether in Afghanistan or Europe.

There can be no question about the two middle managers' pivotal role in achieving the six French and Belgian Muslims' integration into Al Qaeda. The couple's proactive outreach and recruitment helped constitute the group, whose members had been inspired by El Aroud's personal story and her late husband's *jihadist* credentials. Once recruited, Garsallaoui's guidance was essential in assisting the recruits in reaching the tribal areas. He also played a decisive role in securing access to the training camps, which the recruits might have been denied had the middle manager failed to convince the camp management of their *jihadist* credentials. At several points, therefore, the middle managers' influence tipped the balance, making the hoped-for connection with Al Qaeda significantly more likely than it would have been had the recruits attempted to connect with the group individually. Indeed, the Belgian authorities are convinced that El Aroud and Garsallaoui represented "the main link between the Belgian cell and [Al Qaeda]."

Conclusion

This article has shown that the ongoing debate about the structure and dynamics of Al Qaeda has failed to appreciate an organization layer that is situated between the top leadership and the grass-roots. Rather than being "leaderless" or "leader-led," it is the group's middle management that holds Al Qaeda together. In Clausewitzian terms, Al Qaeda's middle managers represent a "hub of . . . power and movement"[101] that facilitates the grass-roots' integration into the organization and provides the leadership with the global reach it needs in order to carry out its terrorist campaign. They are, in other words, the connective tissue that makes Al Qaeda work.

The case studies demonstrated that—had it not been for the presence of middle managers—*jihadist* sympathizers in Western countries would have failed to connect to the top leadership and, thus, lacked the training, resources and strategic direction they needed in order to become effective operators. Conversely, in the absence of middle managers, Al Qaeda's top leadership in Pakistan's tribal areas would have found it difficult to reach out and activate its grass-roots, who shared the group's aspirations and approved of its methods but had no opportunities for becoming integrated into Al Qaeda's structure and strategy.

This is not to say that either leadership or grass-roots are unimportant. In fact, it is only because the two parts of the organization represent significant—albeit largely unconnected—sources of strength for Al Qaeda that the middle management becomes central. In that sense, rather than attempting to reconcile the positions of Hoffman and Sageman, this article tried to provide an additional and, in many ways, complementary perspective, which reinforces the importance of the leadership and the grass-roots—as well as providing a compelling explanation for how Al Qaeda manages to achieve strategic coherence by integrating the two poles via its middle management. The result is, it is hoped, a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Al Qaeda as an entity and strategic actor.

The policy implications are both obvious and important. Going after the group's top leadership in Pakistan's tribal areas—or, indeed, its emerging regional hubs in places like Yemen or Somalia—will remain vital, because the top leadership provides access to training and resources that have proved critical in turning "wannabes" into effective terrorists.

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Furthermore, the top leadership offers strategic direction and ideological inspiration through which Al Qaeda maintains coherence and global significance. Equally, policymakers and security practitioners will need to continue to disrupt the *jihadist* grass-roots, who are the most likely perpetrators of terrorist operations outside Afghanistan and Pakistan, and possess the opportunities and local knowledge to carry out terrorist attacks in Western countries.

However, neither the top leadership nor the grass-roots alone can provide Al Qaeda with strategic momentum: what the top leadership lacks in global reach, the grass-roots are short of in training, resources, and strategic direction. From an operational point of view, therefore, a much higher priority—both in terms of attention and resources—should be given to identifying and neutralizing the middle managers who connect the top of the organization with the bottom, and—in doing so—undermine Al Qaeda's military strength and strategic coherence.

This, of course, relates to the quotation from General Stanley McChrystal that was reproduced at the outset. It is understand that—in speaking about the importance of neutralizing, "the middle of the network"—he was referring to local and regional insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the logic inherent in McChrystal's argument is both compelling and transferrable. In his own words, "If you take [out] the middle of the network . . . you cause the network to collapse on itself."[102]

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Notes

1. Stanley McChrystal on "The Charlie Rose Show," *PBS,* 10 December 2009.
2. See, for example, Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and Their Opponents since 1750* (New York: Routledge, 2001); John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago* (London: Hurst, 2009), part 1.
3. See Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman, "Does Osama Still Call the Shots? Debating the Containment of al Qaeda's Leadership," *Foreign Affairs,* July/August 2008. See also Elaine Sciolino and Eric Schmitt, "A Not Very Private Feud Over Terrorism," *New York Times,* 8 June 2008.
4. Ibid.
5. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 595.
6. Needless to say, the concept of "*jihad*" has a variety of meanings in Islamic theology, but Islamist militants—such as Al Qaeda and its supporters—use it almost exclusively in the context of armed struggle. See, for example, Jaret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 5; John Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 26–28; David J. Kilcullen, "Subversion and Countersubversion in the Campaign against Terrorism in Europe," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30(8) (2007), p. 653.
7. Ibid., p. 486.
8. Ibid., p. 595.
9. Ibid., p. 485. For a recent debate on the meaning of Clausewitz's concept, see Adam Elkus, "Do Ideas Matter? A Clausewitzian Case Study," *Small Wars Journal,* 27 January 2010. Available at http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/354-elkus.pdf. Also Antulio Echevarria, "Clausewitz's Center of Gravity: It's Not What We Thought," *Naval War College Review,* 56(1) (2003). Available at http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/navy/art4-w03.htm
10. Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 596.
11. Ibid., p. 486.
12. Ibid., p. 486.
13. Ibid., p. 596.

14. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "The Advent of Netwar," in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, eds., *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), p. 280.

15. For some recent examples, see Stephen P. Borgatti, "Identifying Sets of Key Players in a Social Network," *Computational and Mathematical Organization Theory* 12(1) (2006), pp. 21–34; Stephen P. Borgatti, "Stopping Terrorist Networks: Can Social Network Analysis Really Contribute?" *Sunbelt International Social Networks Conference*, 13–17 February 2002, New Orleans, LA; Peter J. Carrington, John Scott, and Stanley Wasserman, eds., *Models and Methods in Social Network Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Stuart Koschade, "A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29(6) (2006), pp. 559–575.

16. Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), p. 137.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., pp. 137–138.

19. See Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2008).

20. Sageman, *Leaderless,* p. 144.

21. Bruce Hoffman, "The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism: Why Osama bin Laden Still Matters," *Foreign Affairs,* May/June 2008.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Hoffman and Sageman, "Does Obama Still."

25. Marc Sageman, "Confronting Al-Qaeda: Understanding the Threat in Afghanistan," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3(4) (2009), p. 4. Available at http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/

26. Cited in Sciolino, "A Not Very Private Feud."

27. Peter Bergen, "Afghanistan and Pakistan: Understanding a Complex Threat Environment," *Testimony before the House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,* 4 March 2009. Also John Mueller, "How Dangerous Are the Taliban? Why Afghanistan Is the Wrong War," *Foreign Affairs,* April/May 2009.

28. Ibid.

29. Brachman, *Global Jihadism*, p. 19.

30. Petter Nesser, "Structures of Jihadist Terrorist Cells in the UK and Europe," paper given at the joint FFI/King's College London conference, *The Changing Faces of Jihadism,* 28 April 2006.

31. See Peter R. Neumann, "Joining Al Qaeda: Jihadist Recruitment in Europe," *Adelphi Paper 399,* chapter 3.

32. Even Sageman concedes the importance of access to training camps in Pakistan, which he describes as "finishing school[s] of global neo-jihadi terrorism, where a few amateur wannabes are transformed into dangerous terrorists." See Sageman, "Confronting al-Qaeda," p. 11.

33. Clausewitz, *On War,* p. 595.

34. See Jonathan Schanzer and Dennis Ross, *Al-Qaeda's Armies: Middle East Affiliate Groups and The Next Generation of Terror* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004).

35. See, for example, Bruce Hoffman, "Combating Al Qaeda and the Militant Islamic Threat," Testimony before the House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, 16 February 2006; Kenneth Katzman, "Al Qaeda: Profile and Threat Assessment," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 17 August 2005; Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Foreign Affairs,* July/August 2003.

36. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad,* pp. 49, 71.

37. While some of the literature on social network analysis has emphasized the importance of eliminating nodes with a high number of ties, reachability, and/or centrality, the argument made here is novel in that it (a) builds on the most significant ongoing debate about the structure of Al Qaeda, (b) prescribes a focus on "nodes" connecting two key parts of the *jihadist* movement, and (c) offers a hypothesis about the dynamics of the movement as a whole rather than specific bounded networks.

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See Borgatti, "Identifying Sets"; Borgatti, "Stopping Terrorist Networks"; Carrington, *Models and Methods*; Stuart Koschade, "A Social Network."

38. See Javier Jordan and Nicola Horsburgh, "Mapping Jihadist Terrorism in Spain," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28(3) (2005), p. 184. Also Peter Neumann, *Old and New Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 60–62.

39. See Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC), *Could 7/7 Have Been Prevented? Review of the Intelligence on the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005* (London: HMSO, 2009).

40. See David Leppard, "Fixer for 21/7 Plot Free in London," *Sunday Times,* 15 July 2007.

41. See Gordon Corera, "Bomb Plot—The al-Qaeda Connection," *BBC News,* 9 September 2008; Zahid Hussain, "MPs Seek Answers as CIA Kills British Terror Suspect Rashid Rauf," *The Times,* 24 November 2008.

42. Two of the authors of this article contributed a chapter on the 2004 fertilizer plot—codenamed Operation Crevice—for Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares' forthcoming volume *Leader-Led Jihad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). The case study draws on the same sources.

43. See ISC, "Could 7/7," p. 9.

44. Nine individuals were charged with offenses. However, dozens more may have been associated with the plot. See Andy Hayman and Margaret Gilmore, *The Terrorist Hunters* (London: Bantam Press, 2009), p. 284.

45. HMG vs. Khyam *et al*, 21 March 2006, p. 53.

46. ISC, "Could 7/7," p. 7.

47. Ian Cobain and Jeevan Vasagar, "Free—The Man Accused of Being an al Qaida Leader, aka 'Q,"' *The Guardian,* 1 May 2007. Al Iraqi was captured in 2006 or 2007 as he tried to make his way to Iraq and is currently held in Guantanamo Bay. See "Unclassified Summary of Evidence for Administrative Review Board in the Case of Salem al Hadi," *Office for the Administrative Review of the Detention of Enemy Combatants at U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay,* 22 August 2007, p. 41.

48. See Jeevan Vasagar, "The Five who Planned to Bomb UK Targets," *The Guardian,* 20 April 2007; Nicola Woodcock, "The Schoolboy Cricketer who Converted to a Deadly New Game," *The Times,* 1 May 2007.

49. HMG vs. Khyam, pp. 60–61.

50. ISC, "Could 7/7," p. 7.

51. Extracts of police interview (Salahuddin Amin), Paddington Green Police Station, 8 February 2005.

52. HMG vs. Khyam, pp. 14–15, 37–38.

53. Interestingly, another participant of the training course in Malakand appears to have been the future ringleader of the London attacks of 7 July 2005, Mohammed Siddique Khan. See Jim Brown, "London Suicide Bomber went to Same Training Camp as Khawaja," *Canadian Press,* 30 June 2008.

54. Cited in Sarah Knapton, "Dateline London: Operation Crevice," *Canwest News Service,* 24 June 2008.

55. Cited in HM against Mohammad Momin Khawaja, Ontario Superior Court of Justice, 29 October 2008, p. 11.

56. Cited in Knapton, "Dateline London."

57. Extracts of listening devices placed at Colley House, 10 March 2004, p. 6.

58. HMG vs. Khyam, p. 40. Ironically, it was this exchange of e-mails—intercepted by the U.S. National Security Agency—which prompted the British authorities to step up their surveillance of the group and, ultimately, disrupt the evolving plot.

59. Cited in Duncan Gardham, "The Crawley Targets," *Daily Telegraph,* 1 May 2007.

60. Cited in ibid.; also ISC, "Could 7/7," pp. 21–22.

61. Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, "In Terror Detention, Glimpses of Shadowy World in Pakistan," *New York Times,* 24 September 2007.

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62. Ronald Sandee, "Al-Qaida and Europe: The Case of German-Pakistani Aleem Nasir," *NEFA Foundation*, June 2009. Available at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_AleemNasirNetwork0609.pdf

63. This, however, apparently excluded bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri. See ibid.

64. For details of the trips, see ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Apparently, the two men met twice a week on average before Yousif's flight to Saudi Arabia in 2005. See Moss, "In Terror Detention."

67. Communication with Dr. Guido Steinberg, Senior Research Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), 3 February 2010.

68. Holger Stark, "The Fourth Man: Suspect in German Bomb Plot Tells His Story," *Spiegel Online,* 15 November 2007. Available at http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,517609,00.html

69. See Raffaello Pantucci, "Bekkay Harrach: The Face of German Terror," *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor* 7(30) (2009).

70. Senior representative of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution; speech at *Hamburg Symposium on Trends in Islamist Terrorism,* Hamburg, 25 November 2009.

71. He studied laser technology and business mathematics in Koblenz, Germany, but never completed his degree. See "Terrorprediger mit Anzug und Krawatte," *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* 21 September 2009.

72. Cited in Pantucci, "Bekkay Harrach."

73. Ibid.

74. "'Abu Talha, der Deutsche' droht der Bundesrepublik," *Focus,* 19 September 2009.

75. Nick Grace, "Al Qaeda Warns Germany," 19 September 2009, *Long War Journal*. Available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/09/al_qaeda_warns_germa.php

76. Ibid.

77. Pantucci, "Bekkay Harrach."

78. "The Threat from Within: A German Islamist Rises up Al Qaida's Ranks," *Der Spiegel*, 27 January 2009.

79. "Aleem Nasir: Acht Jahre Haft für deutschen al-Qaida-Terroristen," *Die Welt,* 14 July 2009.

80. Paul Cruickshank, "Love in the Time of Terror," *Marie Claire,* 18 May 2009.

81. Elaine Sciolino and Souad Mekhennet, "Veiled Threats," *Scotland on Sunday,* 8 June 2008.

82. See ibid.

83. At the time of writing, the case has still not gone to trial.

84. Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Belgian 'Al Qaeda Cell' Linked to 2006 Airline Plot," *CNN,* 13 February 2009.

85. Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Recruits Reveal Al Qaeda's Sprawling Web," *CNN,* 19 July 2009.

86. Robertson, "Belgian 'Al Qaeda Cell.'"

87. Glenn Audenaert, cited in "One Woman's War," *CNN Untold Stories,* 10 February 2009.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Cited in Paul Cruickshank, "The 2008 Belgium Cell and FATA's Terrorist Pipeline," *CTC Sentinel,* April 2009.

91. Cited in Sciolino, "Veiled Threats."

92. See Thomas Renard, "Europol Report Describes Afghanistan-Pakistan Connection to Trends in European Terrorism," *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor,* May 2009.

93. Cited in Cruickshank, "The 2008 Belgium Cell."

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

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96. Cruickshank, "Love in the Time."
97. Cruickshank, "The 2008 Belgium."
98. Cited in ibid.
99. Robertson, "Belgian 'Al Qaeda Cell.'"
100. Renard, "Europol Report."
101. Clausewitz, *On War,* p. 595.
102. Stanley McChrystal on "The Charlie Rose Show," *PBS,* 10 December 2009.

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