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# **Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Jihad Concept**

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## Introduction

Sunni Islamist extremism is a relatively recent phenomenon. The term Islamism has come to mean the politicization of Islam, and its instrumentalization, as a religious political ideology. The theological doctrine of Islamism is Salafism, i.e. the principle that correct Islamic practice is based on following the example of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (*al-salaf al-salih*). Similarly to Protestant literalism, Salafism takes the interpretation of religious texts out of the hands of the clergy and puts it into the hands of the individual. Thus, it bypasses, even defies the authority of the traditional scholars. Islamists do not seek to restore the classical Islamic legal system guided by scholars who traditionally shaped and controlled an Islamic system. Instead they propose a "novel set of Islamized constitutional arrangements", a paradox which Feldman calls the "shari'a [Islamic law] without scholars".<sup>1</sup>

Islamist extremism draws Islamists that seek to achieve political goals by means of a violent jihad, i.e. Salafi jihadis. This interpretation of Islam started in the 1960s in Arab countries. Repressed and frustrated in their political aspirations, radical groups broke away from the broader Islamist opposition and started fighting their local governments, paraphrasing Marxist-Leninist revolutionary slogans and ideas in Islamist parlance.<sup>2</sup> The most infamous proponent of radical Islamism was Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966). Qutb, who was executed under Nasir in 1966, is often seen as the "godfather of revolutionary Sunni Islam."<sup>3</sup>

Qutb's ideological formula, which developed in Nasser's prison camps, may be summarized as follows: Firstly, the contemporary Islamic and non-Islamic worlds are at the *jahiliyah* phase, which refers

1. Noah Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, Princeton University Press, April 2008.
2. Their struggle was aggregated by a popular religious revival in the Arab world after the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War. Popular belief ascribed the defeat to abandoning Muslim belief in favor of secular ideologies.
3. Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 28 (2005), pp. 75–97.

to the pre-Islamic age of "ignorance."<sup>4</sup> This means a condition of sinfulness, injustice, suffering and ignorance of Islam's divine guidance. Secondly, the duty of every Muslim is to revive Islam and transform the *jahili* society into an Islamic society by proselytizing (*da'wah*) and militant jihad. Thirdly, the transformation calls for a Muslim vanguard (*tali'ah*). And finally, the ultimate aim should be the establishment of *al-hakimiyah*, the reign of Allah's sovereignty on earth and the obedience to Allah's Oneness (*tawhid*), together *tawhid hakimiyah*.<sup>5</sup> This Qutbian neologism, which did not exist in classical Islam, ignited Islamist revolutionary thought in the 1960s.

Qutb drew on the ideas of the Indian Islamist thinker Mawlana Abdul 'Ala Mawdudi, who developed the concept of "*new jahiliyah*" (circa 1939) and claimed that Western influence had corrupted Muslim society. He argued that secular law transgresses the injunction of the unity of Allah (*tawhid*) and his governance (*al-hakimiyah*). In 1941, he founded the *Jamaat-i-Islami*, a non-violent proselytizing mass movement, to serve as a vanguard community formed in the image of the community of believers around the Prophet. While Mawdudi sought to work within the system, Qutb worked against it. The Salafi Hanbali scholars Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) and Ibn Qayyim (1292–1350), and their treatment of *al-uluhiyah* (divinity), *al-rububiyah* and *al-rabbaniyah* (divine lordship) provided Qutb with the inspiration for the term *hakimiyah*.<sup>6</sup> Like Mawdudi, Qutb contrasted

4. The transliteration was done according to a simplified system. The only micronized letters are Hamza (') and 'Ayn ('). Frequently used proper nouns and names such as Abdallah Azzam, shari'a and Qur'an appear without microns for 'Ayn and Hamza. In certain cases I have used one Latin letter for two Arabic letters, like "d" for the emphatic *ḍ* and the dental *ḍ*. Also the Arabic letters *zay* and *ḥay* are both written as "z". I have expressed interdental sounds like *ḏ* or *ṭ* as "dh" or "th" respectively. Moreover, I have rendered the voiceless velar spirant *kh* as "kh" and the prepalatal sibilant *sh* as "sh." The ta' marbutah is always rendered "ah", unless it is first part of an *idafah*, where it becomes "at". The definite article "al" is not assimilated with the so-called "sun-letters."

5. See R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* (New York: Syracuse Press, 1995), p. 85.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

*jahiliyah* with *hakimiyah*, the perfect order against total chaos, and thus provided a simplified terminology for modern Muslims who were not educated in classical Islamic law.<sup>7</sup>

The inauguration of *hakimiyah* (divine sovereignty) was the ultimate goal of militant struggle. The term does not exist in the Qur'an, but has nevertheless become an integral part of the Islamist discourse. Another element that Qutb contributed to extremist Islamist thinking was the motive of dynamism (*harakiyah*).<sup>8</sup> Thus, jihadis often speak about "dynamic" strategies, or about "dynamic" exegesis of religious texts, as opposed to passivism and traditionalism. In order to reinvigorate Muslim identity, Islam had to be interpreted practically and in a revolutionary sense. The concept of *fiqh haraki* or *fiqh al-waqi'* (the term *fiqh* means jurisprudence) provided the right tools and terminology by which to judge modern problems according to Islamic law.

The interpretation of Qutb among jihad groups has always been difficult. Most importantly, a modern doctrine of *takfir* developed out of the reading of Qutb's term *mufasalah* (separation).<sup>9</sup> *Takfir* is the act of declaring another Muslim an infidel and can be traced back to the earliest Islamic sect, the Kharijites in the late seventh century AD. Following the big wave of arrests of Islamists in the mid-1960s, different jihad groups in Egyptian jails developed different views on how to separate themselves from the *jahiliyah* society and how to identify an infidel.<sup>10</sup> The question was whether the entire society ought to be considered heretic, or only the government. Salafis from the radical end of the spectrum therefore distinguished themselves as

7. Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," pp. 75–97.

8. Umej Bhatia, "Autobiography, Politics and Ideology in Sayyid Qutb's Reading of the Qur'an," Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies Singapore (IDSS), Working Paper 86 (2005); <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/rsis/publications/WorkingPaper/WP86.pdf>.

9. The modern term *mufasalah* leans on the classical Islamic doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (friendship and enmity), which commands Muslims to sever ties with unbelievers and give their trust only to coreligionists.

10. Hayder Mili, "Jihad without rules," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 4.13 (2006); <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/article.php?articleid=2370047> (4-6).

*Salafi jihadis* and *Salafi takfiris*.<sup>11</sup> This distinction can be traced back to the 1970s, when two very different jihad groups operated in the Egyptian jihad scene.

Firstly, the exclusivist and uncompromising leader of the *al-Takfir wa-l-Hijrah* group (Excommunication and Flight), Shukri Mustapha, leveled the charge of *takfir* against the whole of society. Unless Muslims joined his group, there would be no salvation for them, he argued (Mustapha was executed in 1977 for his involvement in the abduction and murder of ex-government minister Muhammad al-Dhahabi). Secondly, the chief ideologue of the Egyptian *Tanzim al-Jihad* (*al-Jihad* Group), 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, argued that only the government and its collaborators were apostate infidels, but not society as a whole (Faraj was executed for his involvement in the assassination of Sadat in 1981). Since the 1970s, the majority of doctrinaire jihad groups have followed Faraj's example and identified as *Salafi jihadis*. However, ultra-radical *Salafi takfir* groups, such as the Algerian *Groupe Islamique armé* (GIA; *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah al-Musallahah*), and more recently Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's (1966–2006) *al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers* [Iraq] (*Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*), have been active since the early 1990s.

The internationalization of Islamist extremism started in response to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Between 1979 and 1989, approximately 20,000 international jihad volunteers went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. The difference between the Afghan jihad and previous jihad struggles was striking. Previously, local revolutionary jihad groups had fought against their respective local regimes and pursued strictly regional objectives. Now, jihadis lived, trained and met each other and developed international bonds that were much wider than the regional setting. Also, al-Qaeda evolved from the Afghan jihad — more specifically, from the *Maktab al-Khidmat* (Office of Services MAK), which was founded and led by the Palestinian jihad ideologue Abdallah Azzam. The core members of al-Qaeda enjoyed the help of Azzam's MAK in Peshawar, which provided housing, transportation and financing. An early aide to Azzam was the young Saudi Osama Bin Laden.

Bin Laden's connection to Azzam weakened in 1988 when the former created his own organization. Bin Laden wanted to extend jihad to international and non-military targets, whereas Azzam favored military campaigns supporting anti-imperial struggles. When Azzam was assassinated in November 1989, Bin Laden's camp gained followers, many of whom were members of the Egyptian "Jihad Organization."

The retreat of Soviet forces in 1989 ended the Afghan jihad. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. At this time, Bin Laden was ready to revive the concept of Azzam. He proposed to the Saudi royal family a military campaign using Afghan-Arabs, i.e. Afghanistan jihad veterans. He argued that his fighters were able to defeat Saddam Hussein's army. Bin Laden was deeply frustrated by Saudi Arabia's preference for the stationing of U.S. troops, and returned to his original vision, namely the internationalization of jihad against non-military targets, i.e. civilian terrorism.

During the 1990s, a core group numbering several hundred militants around Bin Laden moved through two successive stages: first, the financial consolidation of the al-Qaeda network during the Sudanese exile (1991–1996); and second, the military and strategic consolidation during the second Afghan exile (1996–2001). Following the destruction of the Afghanistan shelter in 2001, al-Qaeda rapidly developed into a decentralized network with many collaborative cells united by a common cause. al-Qaeda is nowadays more of an ideology than an organization.

This change has been accurately described by the al-Qaeda reformer Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. Al-Suri has been known in jihad circles for more than ten years. Yet, little is known about him in Western literature on radical Islamism. Al-Suri's 1600-page work "Global Islamic Resistance Call" (*Da'wat al-muqawamah al-'alamiyyah al-islamiyyah*, GIRC) represents a new form of al-Qaeda-related literature, which has arisen over the past five to six years. Meticulous analyses of targets, and development of better strategies have added to al-Qaeda's early ideological literature. But al-Suri's magnum opus is still driven by a strong ideology and pan-Islamic revolutionary vision, in the tradition of Abdallah Azzam.

11. Philipp Holtmann, several interviews with Jordanian Salafi source, Amman, Jordan (February–March 2006).

In his monumental work "Global Islamic Resistance Call" (GIRC) al-Suri essentially describes the transformation of al-Qaeda from an organization into an ideology for the mobilization of global terrorism. People who are familiar with Ayman al-Zawahiri's publication "Knights under the Prophet's Banner" (2001) will find ideas similar to those of al-Suri. The deputy of Bin Laden called for a worldwide jihad, to be led by "small groups" and decentralized networks, whose only common characteristic would be the conviction to fight the U.S. on international and regional levels.<sup>12</sup> Al-Suri greatly elaborates these ideas and offers better, yet more radical, proposals on how to close the gap between regional and international agendas. The question as to who influenced whom is now obsolete. Al-Zawahiri is certainly<sup>13</sup> better known than al-Suri. But al-Suri is surely the better strategist and may have inspired the former, rather than vice versa.

The present book is less concerned with the strategic or operative aspects of al-Suri's GIRC. Instead, it treats the jihad concept of al-Suri, namely the Islamic legal and ideological underpinnings of his theory. Let us first illustrate three different categories of jihad and elaborate on specific doctrines that are connected to them. Then, we will present our thesis on al-Suri's jihad concept.

Al-Suri is a doctrinaire jihadi. Such a categorization may sound odd, but it is useful to draw a distinction between doctrinaire jihadis and jihadis who fight against actual foreign rule or occupation. The latter have developed flexible strategies and often use nationalist slogans. Doctrinaire jihad, however, "arises out of a radical doctrine expressing a preference for violence over nonviolent strategies despite the possibility of engaging in the latter."<sup>14</sup> Doctrinaire jihadis want to establish an Islamic order, and have used violence against both their own governments (the near enemy) and Western targets (the far enemy). One can also distinguish them as internal and global jihadis, who either fight at home or abroad. The strategy of internal jihadis is to

overthrow their respective home governments with the aim of forming an Islamic state. Global jihadis like al-Suri have internationalized their own home struggles, and see the U.S. as the main enemy; an Islamic state will follow after its defeat, they argue. As a result, they join ranks against foreign occupation, such as Afghanistan in the 1980s or presently Iraq, or they commit terrorist attacks at any given place against Western targets. Their radical Islamist discourse is mixed with anti-imperialist and radical Marxist slogans.

A long and passionate debate about strategy and aims has been going on for years between internal and global doctrinaire jihadis on the one hand, and within global jihad circles on the other hand. This conceptual quarrel has overshadowed their relations. Internal jihad groups want to abide by their traditional strategy, while global jihad groups, epitomized by al-Qaeda, advocate an international orientation. Yet, also al-Qaeda is divided into different factions, most notably the Egyptian and Saudi Arabian factions that favor as a regional doctrine the fight against their respective regimes. Following the U.S.-British occupation of Iraq in 2003, al-Qaeda gained popularity and developed its strategy into a "two targets, one enemy" approach. Henceforth, "fighting the far enemy" and "fighting the near enemy" must occur simultaneously. The Egyptian scholar Rashwan argues that "an intellectual reconciliation has taken place between the original visions of Bin Laden and his deputy Al-Zawahiri. al-Qaeda, as an organization and network of allies and sympathizers is now directing its operations at ruling regimes in Arab and Muslim states at the same time that it is attacking U.S. and Western interests. The two targets have become a single enemy."<sup>15</sup>

Yet, al-Qaeda still represents a minority within the jihad movement and its paradigm has been vehemently criticized by internal jihadis. The "tension between local anchorage and global orientation" has been a major obstacle to integrate the internal jihad movement into a global strategy.<sup>16</sup> The discussion of this tension also informs al-Suri's work.

12. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Fursan taht rayat al-nabiy* ("Knights under the Prophet's Banner"), published in 11 parts in the London-based Arabic newspaper *As-Sharq Al-Awsat* (No. 8405–8415), part 11 (12 December 2001).

13. Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 2.

14. Dina Rashwan, "Two targets, one enemy," *Al-Ahram Weekly* (9–15 June 2005), <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/746/focus.htm>.

15. Guido Steinberg, *Der nahe und der ferne Feind: Netzwerke des islamistischen Terrorismus* (München: C.H. Beck, 2005), p. 10.

Al-Suri's jihad concept is a doctrinal hybrid, the single elements of which were originally based on very different agendas. The external doctrine refers to the jihad struggle against the "remote," international enemy. In global jihad terms this is also the "original enemy," the "greater enemy," or the "original infidel." The internal doctrine concerns the jihad struggle against the "near enemy," namely infidel apostates in Muslim countries who collaborate with the international enemy. The overarching jihad concept is Azzam's defensive jihad viewed as an individual religious obligation. In order to bolster the local doctrine, al-Suri appropriates ideological outgrowths of Qutbism, the internal-jihad ideology that originated in the 1960s. In particular he uses the Qutbist-Salafist interpretation of the Egyptian ideologue Abd al-Salam Faraj, which became the paradigm of internal-jihad agendas since the 1980s. Both internal and external doctrines are propped up with the most radical legalist concepts that became popular among Salafi jihadis in the 1990s, such as terrorism, suicide bombings — an extremely violent form of *takfir* (declaring other Muslims infidels) — segregation from the West, and the justification for the murder of civilians.

Azzam (1941-1989), a co-founder of al-Qaeda, exercised a strong ideological influence on al-Suri. Azzam's revival of the doctrine of defensive jihad in his struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1989) is the vantage point from which al-Suri developed his global jihad ideology. In the 1980s, this concept found broad support in Islamic circles. Yet, Azzam never made a secret of his belief in offensive jihad. The idea of defensive strategy, on the other hand, simply facilitated the buildup of a jihad movement able to strike both in the West and in the Muslim world.

Indeed, Al-Suri merely pays lip service to the classical concept of defensive jihad, and goes further by putting disproportional focus on terrorist tactics. His jihad concept should therefore not be understood in terms of classical jihad, but rather as a concept of terrorism based on analogies to classical jihad.

Al-Suri claims that a war of civilizations is being waged between the West and Islam. To be precise, Islam is under attack by the West, and the Muslim world is under a new form of foreign occupation, namely "indirect occupation." Apostate local regimes and individual

Muslims cooperate with the U.S. and its allies to oppress Muslims. Therefore, "defensive jihad" as individual religious obligation is the overarching legal doctrine of his jihad concept.

He synthesizes this with the doctrine of local struggle that was proposed by Faraj. According to the Hanbali legalist Ibn Taymiyyah, a Muslim becomes infidel if he violates any aspect of the shari'a. Since martial laws prevail under foreign "occupation", a Muslim becomes an apostate infidel (*kafir murtad*) if he collaborates with the occupiers, argues al-Suri.

Yet, al-Suri vehemently opposes local strategies with the aim of overthrowing the regime and establishing an Islamic state. He upholds the strategic principle of Azzam that Muslim lands have to be "defended". But when al-Suri speaks of "defense" and "resistance", he means terrorism the world over; he thus implements Abdallah Azzam's theory of the 1980s, in line with his own strategic analysis of the twenty-first century. Due to the striking power imbalance between Muslim fighters and state militaries and security apparatuses, "individualized terror" is the only possible solution. Al-Suri calls for the worldwide implementation of this strategy, basing it on the doctrine of "individualized terrorism" (*irhab fardi*), which entails suicide bombings, and extensive legalist justifications for the murder of civilians. One example is his doctrine of "terrorism as a strategy of deterrence." As retribution for the pro-U.S. policies of the West, civilian populations too should be targeted.

From the foregoing premises the following thesis can be deduced:

Al-Suri's revives the jihad concept of Abdallah Azzam in a fundamentally different geopolitical situation. He uses Azzam's defensive jihad concept to formulate a global strategy of terrorist attacks, and synthesizes this concept with the most violent tenets of the internal jihad paradigm.

The result is a virulent doctrinal hybrid that poses a threat to the established order in the Arab and Muslim world and propagates an ideology of global terrorism. Al-Suri's proposed strategy of targeting only specific sectors in Muslim and Western societies contains major contradictions and can easily be misinterpreted. He thus offers a doctrine of terrorism that most certainly will spin out of control. His call

for moderation and unity among Muslims stands in total contradiction with his doctrine. Al-Suri does not advocate "moderation" in the relationships between Muslims. He offers guidelines for a totalitarian interpretation of faith. If applied literally, these legal precepts can open the gates of civil strife (*fitnah*) in the Muslim world, igniting blood feuds between extremist and moderate Muslims.

Finally, al-Suri does not offer any political concepts as he claims. On the contrary, he anticipates an Islamic world that sinks into total anarchy. In his millenarian vision, chaos will create the fertile ground for the restructuring of the Middle East. The implementation of a political program is postponed until the resistance phase of jihad has been completed. This means that only when the Arab Middle East has been cleansed of all traces of Western influence, and the West has been utterly defeated, can a political restructuring of the region based on the Islamic shari'a follow.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part summarizes the paradigms of Faraj and Azzam. The second part will be of interest to Western policymakers and analysts because it is a descriptive summary of al-Suri's work and offers a substantial insight into his thinking, and researchers who are not conversant with Arabic will thus also have access to al-Suri's work. The third part is an analysis of al-Suri's revival of the Azzam doctrine in a fundamentally changed geopolitical situation. This analysis will consider both the strategic and the ideological aspects of the revival of Azzam. In the conclusion I will outline my findings and qualify my thesis.

The definition of terrorism is borrowed from the German scholars Peter Waldmann and Guido Steinberg.<sup>16</sup> It may be summarized as follows: Terrorism is the indiscriminate use of arms against civilian non-combatants for political purposes. Waldmann argues that terrorism is "planned, shocking and violent attacks against a political order perpetrated from the underground. These attacks aim at general insecurity and horror, and yet also hope to elicit sympathy and support [among possible followers]."<sup>17</sup> Since terrorism is a term that has traditionally served governments to delegitimize the ambitions of their

non-state opponents in situations of asymmetric warfare (like guerilla warfare), argues Steinberg, one should use the term "terrorism" with restraint.<sup>18</sup> This book does not deal with state terrorism. The present work treats a second category of terrorism, so called substate terrorism. Substate terrorism is the terrorist method applied by substate groups in situations of high military asymmetry. Generally, terrorism is just a subset of the methods of militant organizations or individuals, which can be chosen, but will not always be chosen, and does not per se reflect on the legitimacy of their goals. Only if the terrorist method prevails may we speak about terrorist groups or individuals. Al Suri belongs to this category together with the al-Qaeda Organization, and the chief planner of the 9/11 attack, Khalid Shaikh Muhammad, for example.

16. Steinberg, *Der nahe und der ferne Feind*, pp. 15–17, 22–30.

17. Peter Waldmann, *Terrorismus: Provokation der Macht* (Hamburg: Murmann Verlag 2005), p. 14.

18. Until today, a conflict between Israel and the U.S. on the one side and predominantly Arab and Muslim states on the other side has prevented a definition of terrorism in the U.N. General Assembly.



## **PART I**

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### **INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL JIHAD PARADIGMS**

## Chapter 1

# 'Abd al-Salam Faraj and the Internal Jihad Paradigm

### The Revival of Ibn Taymiyyah

Ibn Taymiyyah, a thirteenth-century Hanbali theologian from Damascus, is the prototypical "Salafi" inasmuch as his Islamic outlook harks back to Islam's seventh-century antecedents (*al-Salaf al-Salih*). In Salafism an ideal interpretation of scripture involves the independent application of reasoning (*ijtihad*) rather than a mere replica of other masters (*taqlid*). Oftentimes, *ijtihad* remains the slogan of "purifiers" and "reformers" in militant circles. The famous "Mongol" fatwa of Ibn Taymiyyah and the Qur'an commentary of his pupil Ibn Kathir became cornerstones of militant Islamist ideology in the early 1980s.

### Faraj: "Murder of the Pharaoh"

'Abd al-Salam Faraj (1954–1982) was an electrical engineer from an Egyptian middle-class family, and ideologue of the al-Jihad Organisation, which assassinated the Egyptian president Sadat in 1981. Faraj was executed in April 1982 for his involvement in the Sadat assassination. He was a typical example of the "new Islamist intellectual," who articulated his political discontent with current Islamist concepts, but was not traditionally educated in Islamic sciences.<sup>19</sup> Faraj's ideology was in large parts based on a selective reading of the texts of the medieval Hanbali theologian Ibn Taymiyyah.

19. Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 14.

In his booklet *The Neglected Duty (Al-faridah al-gha'ibah)*, Faraj claimed that since holy war (or jihad) aims to found an Islamic state, it is a religious commandment, just like the five pillars of Islam — the profession of faith, ritual prayer, giving alms, fasting in the month of Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>20</sup> Faraj's booklet became the manifesto of numerous Egyptian and non-Egyptian jihad groups alike, so-called internal jihadis who concentrated their jihad struggle on the "near enemy" (*al-'adu al-qarib*) in their home countries during the 1980s and 1990s.

Faraj's interpretation of the ideologue Sayyid Qutb posited a paradigm shift with respect to previous Egyptian jihad groups.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to the Takfir wa-Hijra, a group led by Shukri Mustapha (executed in 1977 for the murder of the ex-government minister Muhammad al-Dhahabi), Faraj regarded the government rather than the whole of Egyptian society as pagan. Accordingly, he practiced a selective takfir against the ruling regime. Unlike Shukri Mustapha, he did not aim at a physical separation from society in order to create an Islamic nucleus, but favored the strategy of toppling the Egyptian regime, and then initiating a popular revolution from above.<sup>22</sup> With this Islamist interpretation of Leninism, he expected that a revolutionary vanguard would lead the Muslim masses to the realization of an Islamic system.

The outcome of this revolution would be an Islamic state acting as the territorial nucleus of the caliphate. Moreover, Faraj rejected all non-violent solutions and claimed that jihad was the only way to achieve an Islamic state.<sup>23</sup> At the same time he distanced himself

20. Abd al-Salam Faraj, *Al-Jihad: Al-Faridah al-gha'ibah* (Jihad: The neglected duty) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=8/>) (2–4). Faraj refers to Ibn Taymiyyah's 5 volume fatwa collection *Majmu'at al-fatawa al-kubra*, and here especially the fourth part *Al-Jaz' al-rabi'*. Moreover, he quotes from Ibn Kathir's Qur'an commentary *Tafsir ibn Kathir*, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> part (*Al-Jaz' al-thani*).

21. Steinberg, *Der nahe und der ferne Feind*, p. 188.

22. Faraj, *Jihad*, p. 13; Rudolph Peters, "The Relevance of the Jihad Doctrine in Sadat's Egypt," in Rudolph Peters (ed.), *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener, 1996), p. 156.

23. Faraj, *Jihad*, pp. 2–4.

from the liberation of Palestine and clearly stated that the homefront was the more important battlefield. Starting with this interpretation of Qutb, he developed his overall strategy in the struggle against the "near enemy".

## The Worldview of Faraj

Faraj was influenced by political and interconfessional tensions in Egypt in the 1970s and early 1980s. In his view, Egypt's Christians were plotting to establish a separate state in southern Egypt, and Christian evangelism was perceived as a threat to Islam. He labeled any Muslim who did not agree with his vision a hypocrite (*munafiq*).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, he was an extremist millenarian. He thought that the day of deliverance was near and that his endeavors could usher in the messianic era, since he had been ordained by Allah to establish an Islamic state and reintroduce the Islamic caliphate as soon as possible.<sup>25</sup> The last messianic era would come true in three stages:

- The formation of an Islamic state as a territorial nucleus
- The announcement of the caliphate.
- The arrival of the Mahdi

According to this sequence, the establishment of an Islamic territorial nucleus is incumbent upon all Muslims. Therefore, the toppling of what was, in Faraj's view, an apostate Egyptian regime became the primary goal. Faraj stated that "the construction of the Islamic state is an individual religious duty (*fard*) for the Muslims, because as long as the necessary only happens through it, then it is necessary. And if the state will not be formed except by fighting, then also the fight is necessary for us... The announcement of the caliphate depends on the presence of the nucleus (*nawa*), which is the Islamic state."<sup>26</sup>

24. Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, "Islamic Militant Cells and Sadat's Assassination," *Military Review* 84 (2004); <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/JulAug04/JulAug04/bob.pdf>; pp. 91–95.

25. Sonia L. Aljanak, "Religion, Politics and Assassination in the Middle East," *World Affairs* (Winter 1998), pp. 163–179.

26. Faraj, *Jihad*, p. 2.

## The Jihad Concept of Faraj

Qur'an 9:5 is the central Surah of Faraj's uncompromising jihad concept, "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)."<sup>27</sup> In Faraj's view, this verse supersedes all other Qur'anic injunctions regarding a foe. As it is easy to learn the basic rules for jihad, he calls for immediate action and rejects the idea of long periods of training.<sup>28</sup>

The assault against the apostate ruler (*khuruj 'ala al-hakim*) and his deposition is an individual religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for every Muslim. Faraj refers to one of the classical Hanbali-school conditions for jihad as *fard 'ayn*, the situation where infidels invade Muslim land both physically and, nowadays, also ideologically.<sup>29</sup> All the same, he does not speak about a defensive jihad and writes a long refutation against those who argue that jihad should only be defensive.<sup>30</sup> In sharp contrast to thinkers who support this latter point of view, Faraj supports an offensive approach. The enemies already reside within the Islamic world, he argues, where they hold the reins of power. These enemies are the present rulers, who are merely nominal Muslims.<sup>31</sup>

The near enemy (*al-'adu al-qarib*) is hence a greater obstacle to the formation of the Islamic state than the far enemy (*al-'adu al-ba'id*) because "the bases of colonialism in the lands of Islam are those

27. Surat al-Tauba 9:5 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00901.htm/>). All quotations from the Qur'an are taken from the A. Yusuf Ali translation based on the 1938 book *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*, which is available on the Internet at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/index.htm/>. Sometimes explanations are added in brackets for reasons of clarity.

28. Faraj, *Jihad*, p. 14. "*Al-amr la yahtaj ila kathir min al-dirasah... la khir al-jihad bi hujja talab al-'ilm fa tilka al-hujja min la hujja lahu.*"

29. Faraj, *Jihad*, p. 19. He quotes three classical conditions for jihad as *fard 'ayn*, namely if the rows meet in battle, infidels invade a Muslim land or the Imam calls for battle.

30. Faraj, *Jihad*, p. 16.

31. "*Fa hum la yahmalun min al-islam illa-l-isma.*" Faraj, *Jihad*, pp. 6, 19.

rulers... We have to concentrate on our Islamic problem, which is setting up the law of Allah in our countries first. There is no doubt that the purpose of jihad is to pluck out those infidel leaderships and to exchange them with a total Islamic system; and from here will be the starting point."

Two famous fatwas by the Damascene Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) and the Qur'an commentary of his pupil Ibn Kathir (1301–1373) are the cornerstones of Faraj's Islamic legal argument. The fatwas concern the Mongols, who raided Syria and converted to Islam in the late thirteenth century. Yet, they remained unbelievers (*kuffar*), claimed Ibn Taymiyyah, because they kept on using the traditional Yasa law (*yasiq*), imported from Central Asia. He ordered that they, and any Muslim who joined their army, must be challenged and resisted. If a Muslim joined the enemy army voluntarily, he became an apostate. If a Muslim fighter was forcefully recruited and killed in battle, he would nevertheless still go to heaven. The charge of disbelief was also brought against those among the "People of Mardin" who lived under Mongol rule and supported it.<sup>32</sup> The Mardin province, and its capital Mardin, are now part of southeastern Turkey.

In his Qur'an commentary on the strength of Surat al-Ma'idah, Ibn Kathir elaborated on his view that the Mongols had remained unbelievers. The Yasa law, he argued, was a mix of Christian, Jewish and Islamic law and everyone who adopted it was an infidel. Moreover, "Allah the Exalted denies everybody [the right to be a Muslim] who departs from his jurisdiction [...]"<sup>33</sup> He related Qur'an

32. Faraj, *Jihad*, subsections *Al-Muqararah bayn al-tatar wa-l-hukkam al-yaum* ("The comparison between the Tatars and the contemporary rulers," *Ma huwa hukm 'anathim wa musa'adatim* ("What is the judgment of those who help them"), and *Shubuhah fihiyyah wa-l-radd 'alayha* ("Jurisprudential doubts and the answer to them"), pp. 7-9, 23. Most quotes of Ibn Taymiyyah refer to his "Greater Fatwas," part 4, chapter "Al-Jihad."

33. Faraj, *Jihad*, subsection *Al-Hakim bi ghayr ma anzal Allah* ("The ruler who does not rule according to Allah's revelations"), p. 5. This section of Faraj's pamphlet refers to part two of Ibn Kathir's Qur'an commentary, 67 (no publisher mentioned). Ibn Kathir argues that Qur'an 5:50 illustrates

5:50 to the Mongols "Do they then seek after a judgment of (the days of) ignorance?" Faraj compared the Mongols directly to the modern rulers and their affiliates who didn't follow the Islamic law as formulated in Qur'an 5:49: "And this (He commands): Judge thou between them by what Allah hath revealed [...]"<sup>34</sup> Yet, Faraj adopted this offensive view only against internal enemies, not against external invaders.

All the same, Ibn Taymiyyah's "Tatar" and "Mardin" fatwas were directed against external enemies and probably had a political background. The Mamluks, who ruled Syria in the thirteenth century, were under attack by Mongol invaders and needed a religious edict to gain recruits for jihad against the Muslim Mongols.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Faraj did not heed the different circumstances. In the time of Ibn Taymiyyah there was no modern state, nor did the fatwa concern the overthrow of the then ruler. Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kathir nevertheless became important reference points in the doctrines of internal jihad groups.

After Faraj's death, the fight against infidel governments at home became the epitome of internal jihad strategies. It was mainly the strategic imperative to fight the "near enemy," justified by Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwa, which made the pamphlet so prominent among jihadis. As Gerges illustrates:

The importance of Faraj's operational dictum does not lie in defining jihad as an individual and permanent obligation and refuting the classical view regarding the collective and defensive nature of jihad. Qutb and others had already made that argument very eloquently and powerfully. Rather, Faraj posited a new paradigm, assigning a much higher priority to jihad against the near enemy than against the far enemy.<sup>36</sup>

the difference between infidel Mongols and Muslim rulers: "Do they then seek after a judgment of (the days of) ignorance? But who, for a people whose faith is assured, can give better judgment than God?"

34. Qur'an Surat al Ma'idah 5:49 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00507.htm/>).

35. Steinberg, p. 45.

36. Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 10.

Faraj permitted the killing of civilians. He argued, on the basis of another Ibn Taymiyyah fatwa, that civilian casualties were justifiable if they were used as "human-shields" by the enemy (the *tatarrus*-doctrine).<sup>37</sup> This interpretation too was taken out of context because Ibn Taymiyyah was concerned with Muslim prisoners in an enemy army. Faraj, however, planned the attack against Sadat to be visible and public, and therefore had to take into consideration the possibility of civilian casualties. Moreover, in Faraj's view, apostate Muslims were the main enemy. Hence, killing them should not be the exception, but the rule. The Dutch scholar Jansen argues that this is the first systematic Islamist extremist defense of killing innocent bystanders and therefore a milestone in the progression of Islamist terrorism against civilians.<sup>38</sup>

In summary, Faraj's Islamic legal argument epitomizes the internal jihad doctrine of the 1980s with an offensive strike against the local regime ("near enemy"). Moreover, he influenced the formation of Salafi jihad thought when he revived the writings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Hanbali scholars Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kathir on the Mongol Tartars. Faraj's interpretation of collateral damage also laid the cornerstone for Islamist terrorism against civilians. He argued for immediate action rather than protracted preparation or education. We should note that not all internal groups shared Faraj's millenarian worldview.

37. On the *tatarrus*-doctrine see Faraj, *Jihad*, subsection *Shubuhāt fīḡhiyyah wa-l-radd 'alayha*, 23.

38. "Faraj and the Neglected Duty" — *Religioscope* — Interview with Professor Johannes J.G.Jansen (2002). [http://www.religioscope.com/info/dossiers/textislamism/faraj\\_jansen.htm/](http://www.religioscope.com/info/dossiers/textislamism/faraj_jansen.htm/).

## **Chapter 2**

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# **Abdallah Azzam and the International Jihad Paradigm: the Revival of al-Ribat**

### **Azzam: The Pioneer Architect of Global Jihad**

Abdallah Azzam (1941–1989) was one of the most influential jihad ideologues of the twentieth century. He is most famous for his defensive jihad concept. Yet, an in-depth analysis of his literature shows that he was an outright supporter of offensive jihad, propagating it under the garb of defensive strategy. Similarly to Faraj, another follower of Qutb, Azzam only accepted the validity of the “verses of the sword” in the Koran, which command unconditional fighting and supersede any other injunction.

Azzam was born in a village near Jenin in British Mandatory Palestine and joined the Muslim Brotherhood at the age of 18. After working as a teacher in southern Jordan, he studied Islamic jurisprudence at the Faculty of Shari’a at the University of Damascus, where he obtained a B.A. degree in 1966. When Israel conquered the West Bank in 1967, Azzam became politically active and organized militant resistance groups from Palestinian refugee camps around the Jordanian cities Irbid and Zarqa. His relationship to Palestinian secular groups was tense because he advocated an Islamic struggle. He obtained a master’s degree in methodology of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) from Cairo’s al-Azhar university in 1969 and then worked for a year at the Faculty of Shari’a at the Jordanian University in Amman. In 1973, he obtained a doctoral degree in *usul al-fiqh* from al-Azhar in Cairo. At the age of 32, Azzam was an Islamic jurist

with experience in armed and political struggle. This would enable him, a few years later, to fuse elements of religious tradition with secular revolutionary theory in a vision of global jihad.

Until 1980, Azzam taught at the Faculty of Shari'a at Amman University; he then went to Saudi Arabia to teach at the King 'Abd al-'Aziz University in Jeddah. Meeting a group of mujahideen who were looking for sponsors in the Gulf, he became interested in the Afghan jihad.<sup>39</sup> In 1981 he accepted the offer to lecture at the Saudi-funded International Islamic University in Islamabad in Pakistan. Approximately three years later, he moved to Peshawar at the Afghan border and founded the *Maktab al-Khidmat* (MAK, Office of Services) for jihad volunteers. In November 1989, Azzam and two of his sons were killed by a car bomb in Peshawar. Due to the chaotic multitude of rivaling factions, the list of suspects ranges from different jihad groups to numerous intelligence services, so that it is hard to pinpoint those responsible for the deaths.

Azzam is commonly known as the father of the "Arab-Afghan" (*al-afghan al-'arab*) jihad movement, which laid the foundations for the globalization of jihad ideology. He was one of the founders and main ideologues of al-Qaeda. His contribution to the global Salafi jihad movement was immense, and being a prolific writer and excellent speaker, "it was Azzam's epic, mythic, fantastical language that was to become the standard mode of expression for 'jihadi' radicals over the next decade."<sup>40</sup> In radical Islamist discourse, the "victory" over the Soviet Union in Afghanistan became associated with the person of Azzam. His myth is indeed formidable, since he mobilized, indoctrinated and organized many Islamic fighters for a common goal before he died a "martyr" himself. Azzam's concept of defensive jihad against the enemy at the distant borders of the Islamic *ummah* (*al-ribat*) was widely accepted in Islamic circles — unlike Faraj's struggle against infidel Muslim rulers (doctrinaire internal-jihad paradigm).

Following the logic of the Cold War, Azzam found (unofficial) allies in Pakistan, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to initiate a sophisticated Islamist propaganda campaign, propagate his doctrines and build up

a substantial network of contacts for jihad volunteers in Pakistan. The "Arab-Afghans", a group of international jihad volunteers, profited from the geopolitical situation, especially the Carter Doctrine, initiated in 1980 as a response to the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and according to which any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region would be "regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States."<sup>41</sup> The U.S. channeled millions of dollars through the Pakistani secret service into the hands of the Islamic resistance. Saudi Arabia did the same because it had to quell domestic unrest after the Islamic revolution in Iran. In the 1980s Saudi Airlines offered mujahideen tickets to Pakistan that were reduced by 75%. Generally, Azzam's efforts were timely from an Islamist perspective because events in the late 1970s and early 1980s facilitated the internationalization of Islamic militancy.<sup>42</sup>

Azzam had a strong influence on Usama bin Laden and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. His position was that of mentor and teacher in ideological and Islamic legal matters, and his concept of international jihad with volunteers from different countries clearly inspired al-Suri. Yet, Azzam lost Bin Laden to the Egyptian jihadis, who were locally orientated and came to Pakistan in the mid-1980s — among them his future deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.<sup>43</sup>

39. Jason Burke, *al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 73.

40. Burke, *al-Qaeda*, p. 75.

41. Jimmy Carter, *State of the Union Address 1980*, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/su80jec.html>.

42. This refers to the dramatic increase of Saudi Arabia's political, economic and strategic role with the increase of oil prizes and accumulation of unprecedented wealth in the 1970s. In addition, other political factors especially in the year 1979 played a role. These were the Iranian revolution, the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In 1981, the assassination of Sadat became a landmark-event of Islamist militancy.

43. Steinberg, *Der nahe und der ferne Feind*, pp. 42–47.

## The Worldview of Azzam

In Azzam's worldview, which is well illustrated by his work *Al-Saratan al-ahmar* (The red cancer),<sup>44</sup> the world at large and the Muslim world especially were infested by the cancerous tumor of communism. An aggregation of paranoia, anti-Semitism and anti-Soviet sentiments accumulated in an Islamist interpretation of the Cold War discourse. Azzam painted a vision of evil, with the Jews as manipulators of Marxism (a "Jewish interpretation of history"), Bolshevism (Lenin was elected by World-Jewry) and communism (all communist revolutions were Jewish).<sup>45</sup> Thus, communism was an outgrowth of a Jewish conspiracy to control the world. Infidel communist governments supported by the Soviet Union occupied Muslim countries to plunder their riches and undermine their Islamic heritage. These regions had to be retrieved and reintegrated into the *ummah* in order to regain the original strength of the Islamic caliphate. But Azzam's critique against the capitalist West, especially the U.S., was strong as well. His defamation of the hegemonic aspirations of the U.S. predated the anti-unipolarism discourse of the contemporary jihad movement, which became dominant after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A main theme of Azzam's critique was the ideological invasion (*al-ghazu al-fikri*) of the Muslim world by the crusading West and the U.S., which was a part of the Western conspiracy to take over the *ummah*.<sup>46</sup>

As to Muslims, Azzam deplored their lamentable attitude and lack in religious doctrine (*'aqidah*), which he believed resulted from exposure to Western practices and a poor Islamic education. Hypocrisy and inconstancy of faith were marring their societies, as when Muslims would go to prayer and at the same time indulge in unlawful practices. This is apostasy (*riddah*), which makes a Muslim an unbeliever (*kafir*) and is punishable by death according to Islamic law.<sup>47</sup> Although the

44. Azzam, *Al-Saratan al-Ahmar* (The red cancer). (Peshawar: Maktab al-Khidmat, 1990).

45. Azzam, *The red cancer*, pp. 27, 38, 51.

46. Azzam, *Jihad la irhab* (Jihad, not terrorism) ([www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77)).

47. Azzam, *Al-'aqidah wa atharuha fi bina' al-jil* (Religious doctrine and its influence on building the generation) (Beirut: Dar ibn Hazm, 1996).

Afghan people bravely resisted the Russian communist invaders and should not be engaged in doctrinal disputes, they were in dire need of propagators of Islamic faith and practice, a problem that concerned the entire Islamic *ummah*.

## The Conflict Constellation and Relationship with non-Muslims

Even though it was known to Azzam that the U.S. channeled money and weapons through the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to the mujahideen, he was not willing to compromise his radical beliefs and admit or accept the assistance of unbelievers. On the contrary, he denied the fact that Stinger missiles were of utmost strategic importance to the mujahideen, because they kept the Soviet airforce 20,000 feet high in the air and allowed their safe passage on the ground. Moreover, he refuted that Afghan warlords accepted and received large sums of money from the U.S. It was an attempt contrary to all facts to present the Islamic resistance as an independent force and not as a proxy in a game between two superpowers.<sup>48</sup>

Since Azzam knew the facts on the ground, he treated a classic Islamic doctrine according to which Muslims might receive assistance from unbelievers under very specific conditions. Even though the U.S. and other non Muslim states counted to the *millat al-kufr* (community of unbelief) in Azzam's worldview, their help (*isti'ana bi-l-kuffar*) would be acceptable if:

pp. 10–11. He refers to knowing the might of God (*haqiqat al-uluhiyah*), the limitation of his servant (*haqiqat al-'ubudiyah*) and prayer (*al-salat bayn al-'abd wa rabbhi*).

48. See Azzam, *Ma haqiqat al-musa'adat al-amrikiyyah li-l-mujahidin al-afghan* (What is the real state of affairs regarding American support for the Afghan freedom fighters?); *Ma sir al-ta'awun bayn Amrika wa l-mujahidin al-afghan* (What is the secret of the cooperation between America and the Afghan freedom fighters?) (both online at [www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77)).



- The rule of Islam is self-evident, so that in the end even the unbeliever who does extend his help to Muslims cannot claim to be in a superior position;
- Assistance must be unconditional;
- Muslims must require this help;
- Muslims are safeguarded against the treason of the unbeliever and confident that he helps them against the common enemy.<sup>49</sup>

The main enemy constellation consisted of 14 countries, the first of them the Soviet Union, followed by the members of the Warsaw Pact and the international communists.<sup>50</sup> A second enemy category within the Muslim world consisted of the puppet regimes, set up or supported by the communists, such as the Soviet-aligned People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA, 1978–1991).<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the whole capitalist West, led by a U.S. that had not yet to be dealt with, was part of the enemy constellation against Islam.

### The Jihad Concept of Azzam (*al-ribat as fard 'ayn*)

Two Qur'an verses and their interpretation are the underpinning of Azzam's jihad concept. They are Surat al-Nisa' 4:84 and Surat al-Taubah 9:5:

"Then fight in Allah's cause — Thou art held responsible only for thyself — and rouse the believers. It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the Unbelievers; for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment." [Surat al-Nisa' 4:84]

49. Azzam, *Ibar wa basa'ir li-l-jihad fi-l-'asr al-hadith* (Lessons and insights for the jihad in the present age), (Amman: Maktabat al-Risalah al-Hadithah, 1987), p. 109.

50. Azzam, *Al-Difa' 'an arad al-muslimin ahamm furud al-'ayan* (The defense of Muslim lands is the most important of all individual religious obligations) (Amman: Maktabat al-Risalah al-Hadithah, 1987).

51. Azzam, *Ilhaq bi-l-qafilah* (Join the caravan) (Sana'a: Maktabat al-Jil al-Jadid, 1990).

"But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." [Surat al-Taubah 9:5]

According to Azzam's understanding, both verses assert individualized action and demand offensive jihad.<sup>52</sup> Qur'an 9:5 commands a general rule in the context of a specific time period. Therefore, the prohibition against fighting during the "forbidden months" was abandoned after 10 AH / 631 C.E.<sup>53</sup>

In his elucidation of the first part of Qur'an 9:5 ("But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them") Azzam states: "[Kill] by any way, as we discussed before... by any way... kill with the sword, by slicing the throat with the knife, by shooting your revolver, or by any other means... in any way... the only condition is that you do your slaughtering and killing well." As shariatic evidence for this condition Azzam cites a Prophetic hadith, which is confirmed by numerous classical transmitters: "If you kill, so do it perfectly, and if you slice throats, so do it perfectly. Everyone shall sharpen his blade in preparation for the slaughter/sacrificial offering." The Islamic concept of *ihسان* ("doing something perfectly") generally refers to the goal of obtaining perfection in acts of worship.

The second part of the verse ("and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [of war]") evidences the legitimacy of carrying offensive jihad surprisingly into enemy lands and of assassinating enemy leaders without warning, claims Azzam. He cites the assassination of the Jewish tribal leader Ka'ab bin al-Ashraf as proof from early Islamic history, which is legitimized by a well known hadith. According to the third part of the verse ("but if

52. The following section is based on Azzam, *Fi zilal surat al-taubah* (In the shades of Surat al-Taubah) ([www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77)).

53. The four "forbidden months" are Dhu al-Qi'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab. Azzam states that this rule applied to the Medinan period between the tenth of Dhu al-Hijjah in 9 AH and the tenth of al-Rabi' al-Thani in 10 AH.

they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful") unbelievers may be spared if they convert to Islam.

Qur'an 9:5 must be read in conjunction with Qur'an 4:84 ("Then fight in Allah's cause — Thou art held responsible only for thyself — and rouse the believers"). In this verse Azzam sees further shariatic evidence of support for individualized action and assassination techniques. He elaborates that "you need to march out, even if you are alone!" In addition, the second part of the verse ("It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the Unbelievers: for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment [*tankillan*]") attests to the legitimacy of exemplary punishment (*tankil*), which will spread fear among unbelievers till they stop conspiring against Muslims. *Tankil* has become an important doctrine in Salafi jihad theology.

In line with the above arguments, Azzam enthusiastically supported single attacks, which in his view epitomized individualized action and martyrdom. Both elements are major strategic and ideological concepts in today's Islamist terrorism. To give but one example: he applied a hadith which says, "our Lord was amazed about a man who raided for the sake of Allah. His companions were defeated, and although the man knew what was about to happen to him, he turned around until his blood was spilled. Then Allah the Exalted said to his angels: Look at my slave, he turned around desiring what I have for him and [fought] full of compassion for me until his blood was spilled." Azzam sees here "shariatic evidence that the Muslim should desire to fight, even if he was alone and even if he was sure to be killed." The main condition is that the single attacker contribute to "the benefit (*maslahah*) of the Muslims and their morale and the harassment of their enemies." Azzam reasons analogically when he says that "this is also shariatic evidence that the Muslim should perpetrate suicide operations (*'amaliyat intihariyyah*), being sure that he will get killed, if this means benefit for Islam. After all, it is a fact that the companions of the Prophet plunged themselves alone (*inghamasu wahdahum*) into the rows of the unbelievers."<sup>54</sup>

54. Azzam, *Itihaf al-'ibad bi fada'il al-jihad* (Presenting the virtues of jihad to Allah's servants) ([www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77)).

The Islamic legal argument expounded here shows Azzam's passionate promotion of martyrdom, which is a major element of his doctrine. His analogical reasoning goes beyond the original case, because the death arising from bold individual action becomes inevitable, a *conditio sine qua non*. His reasoning predates that of ideologues like Ayman al-Zawahiri, who, ever since the 1990s, has justified the legitimacy of suicide bombings, based on analogies to single attacks (see detailed discussion in Chapter 9 of this book).<sup>55</sup>

Azzam's thought gained popularity and legitimacy through his defensive jihad concept. In his major works, *The defense of Muslim lands is the most important of all individual religious obligations* (*Al-Difa' 'an arad al-muslimin ahamm furud al-a'yan*) and *Join the caravan* (*Ilhaq bi-l-qafilah*), Azzam developed the theoretical foundation for the jihad against the Soviet invaders in Afghanistan.

In these works, Azzam propagated a defensive struggle against the Soviets as an intermediary solution before a worldwide offensive jihad was initiated. Despite the international objective, he also remained locally orientated and repeated in numerous texts that the fight against the Soviet Union was a first step to liberate Palestine. Afghanistan was just a more promising arena for jihad during his lifetime.<sup>56</sup>

While offensive jihad (*jihad al-talab*) was said to be a collective duty that needed only to be carried out by a small group of Muslims on behalf of the entire community, defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf'*)

55. One has to do justice to the fact that Azzam does not explicitly justify "suicide bombings," which cause an untold number of deaths and therefore require further theological exhortation. Rather, he puts forward a crucial theological argument for calculating certain death during any jihad operation. Still, the argument cannot be simply narrowed down to guerilla jihad in Afghanistan, since it was Azzam's goal to finally carry jihad into the West.

56. See Azzam, *Defense of Muslim Lands*, Chapter 2, in which Azzam stated the political, strategic and tactical reasons why Afghanistan was to be the starting point for an international jihad. For his local orientation, also see Azzam's *Dhikrayat filastin* (Memories of Palestine) ([www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77)). The design to carry jihad to a global level is very clear in Azzam, *Wasiyat al-shahid Abdallah Azzam* (The testament of the martyr Abdallah Azzam), *Dhikrayat filastin* (Memories of Palestine) ([www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77)).

was an individual religious duty (*fard 'ayn*) and had to be fulfilled immediately.<sup>57</sup> Azzam championed defensive jihad only for strategic reasons, but clearly favored offensive jihad as an umbrella ideology: "Jihad means to fight the unbelievers, so that Islam may be victorious and the word of Allah the highest".<sup>58</sup> Moreover, Azzam claimed that Islam was historically an aggressive religion (*din hujumi*) and had to be imposed upon mankind by force, even terrorism.<sup>59</sup> The defensive concept, however, was the key to individualizing jihad.

According to the four orthodox jurisprudential schools, defensive jihad becomes *fard 'ayn* when

- the kuffar (unbelievers) enter a Muslim place (*balдах*).
- the sides meet and begin to approach each other.
- the Imam calls upon a person or a people to depart for battle (*al-naḥr*).
- the kuffar take a group of Muslims prisoner.<sup>60</sup>

Accordingly, every single Muslim was called to arms if enemies attacked Islamic territory. Azzam referred to the Afghan jihad as a physical invasion, i.e. the advancement of infidel armies, although he also used the concept of ideological invasion (*al-ghazu al-fikri*), which is one of the main themes of the contemporary Salafi jihad movement to fight the West and Muslim opponents. Azzam applied the concept of defensive jihad to Afghanistan and argued:

We spoke long about the judgment of jihad today, in Afghanistan and in Palestine, and in all raped Muslim lands that resemble them, and we reassured what the predecessors and later generations of hadith scholars (*muhaddithun*), Qur'an exegetes (*mufasssirin*), jurists (*fuqaha'*) and scholars of religious

57. Azzam refuted the concepts of "Greater and Lesser Jihad," which according to a hadith mean that the struggle against oneself is more important than the the jihad of fighting. Azzam denied the validity of the hadith and claimed that jihad only meant struggle in the sense of fighting (*qital*) with the sword (*bi-l-sayf*), with reference to the two sub-categories of defensive and offensive jihad. See Azzam, *Jihad la irhab* (Jihad, not terrorism) ([www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77)).

58. Azzam, *Jihad, not terrorism*.

59. Azzam, *Memories of Palestine*.

60. Azzam, *The defense of Muslim lands*, p. 23.

principles (*usultiyun*) decided. If one span of Muslim lands is attacked, the jihad becomes an individual religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for the people of this patch of land. The woman, accompanied by a mahram, goes [to the jihad] without the permission of her husband, and the debtor leaves without the permission of his creditor, and the son without the permission of his father. But if the people of this patch of land do not suffice in numbers, or are not able to participate, or they rest, then the individual religious obligation spreads to those who come after them, and so on and so on, until the individual religious obligation comprises the whole world, being an obligation one cannot omit like prayer, fasting, and other obligations.<sup>61</sup>

Should the enemy enter Muslim lands, individual religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for defensive jihad duty would spread in ever widening concentric circles until it comprised the entire world. Hence no single Muslim had to ask for anyone's permission to join the fight. The basic characteristics of jihad as *fard 'ayn* were as follows:

- Jihad is an individual religious obligation for every Muslim in the whole world;
- No one's permission is required for a Muslim to participate in jihad;
- Financing jihad is a *fard 'ayn* and it is forbidden to take advantage of it for personal gain;
- Neglecting jihad is like neglecting one of the five pillars of Islam.<sup>62</sup>

Defensive jihad was not limited to Afghanistan alone. Azzam's international objective was to restore the *umma* to its full strength and then spread Islam throughout the rest of the world. It was therefore essential to "liberate" without delay every country that at some time in history had been under Muslim rule, even if that event dated back hundreds of years as in the case of Spain (*al-Andalus*). "The jihad is a personal religious obligation for every Muslim who can carry a weapon in every country that was shaded by the Islam and then conquered...

61. Azzam, *Join the Caravan*, Part Three, Point 1, 23.

62. Azzam, *The defense of Muslim lands*, p. 49.

The *fard 'ayn* does not end with a victory in Afghanistan, but the jihad continues to be *fard 'ayn* until the last patch of land that was Islamic returns to Muslim hands and is again governed by Islam. In front of us are Palestine, Bukhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Philippines, Burma, South Yemen and others, Tashkent, Spain (*al-Andalus*)...<sup>63</sup> Reconquered territory should serve as a platform to establish the rule of Islam.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, jihad is a purely functional warfare (*wazifah*) to be tasked with:

- spreading the call to Islam (*da'wa*), which is crucial;
- protecting the territory of Islam;
- helping the oppressed (*mustad'afun*) everywhere.<sup>65</sup>

Azzam wholeheartedly supported internal jihad against local Muslim rulers<sup>66</sup>, but enjoined Muslims to join an international jihad in the border regions of the Arab-Islamic world. This epitomizes of Azzam's idea to fight the "far enemy" under the banner of defensive jihad. He specifically referred to jihad against non-Muslim powers that ruled or occupied Muslim countries. He thus changed the dominant paradigm of fighting the local "near enemy" (after the successful assassination of Sadat by Faraj's group), adapting the category of jihad known as *al-ribat* to modern times.

*Ribat* in classical Islamic law was "the safeguarding of the *dar al-Islam* (Muslim territory) by stationing forces in the harbors and frontier-

63. Azzam, *Basha'ir al-nasr* (Good omens of victory) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77/>) (5).

64. Azzam, *Lessons and Insights for the jihad in the present age*, p. 41. "The value of the land itself has no value and no weight in the view of Islam, except if the program (*manhaj*) of God has the upperhand and it is governed by his law (*shari'atuhu*) and his religion controls it."

65. Azzam, *Lessons and insights for the jihad in the present age*, p. 41.

66. Azzam, *In the shades of Surat al-Taubah*. Azzam remarked that "Islam will not be victorious without such examples." He referred mainly to Khalid Islambuli, the assassin of Sadat and member of the al-Jihad Organization. Moreover, he lauded Shukri Mustapha, leader of the Egyptian *al-Takfir wa-l-Hijrah* group, and Marwan Hadid, founder of the Syrian *al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah* (Fighting Vanguard).

towns (*thughur*) for defensive purposes." This type of jihad developed relatively late, at a time when the Islamic state was on the defensive.<sup>67</sup> In his major works, Azzam repeatedly drew the analogy between *al-ribat* and the jihad in Afghanistan and other regions formerly ruled by Islam. Azzam's favorite tradition (*hadith*) on the *ribat* was "one night of *ribat* is better than a thousand nights during which the days and nights are spent in prayer and the days in fasting."<sup>68</sup>

Azzam was well aware that the Islamic legality of the international mobilization of jihad volunteers was problematic. The question was where permission for such mobilization could be obtained, since in the late twentieth century the Islamic *umma* was an imaginary entity. The caliphate had been abolished by the Turks in 1924 and there was no longer a supreme authority in Islam. Moreover, the Arab-Islamic world was a patchwork of secular regimes, mostly authoritarian in character, with competing state ideologies that did not support Islamist strategies. In order to mobilize volunteers, Azzam referred to Qur'an 9:41 "Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah! That is best for you if ye but knew."<sup>69</sup> Drawing on the Hanbali jurists Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kathir, Azzam called this situation "the general call" (*al-na'fir al-'amm*). If, according to Azzam's revival of the classical concept described above, the enemy entered Muslim lands, the individual religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for defensive jihad duty would spread in concentric circles throughout the world. Accordingly, no Muslim had to ask for anyone's permission to join the fight.<sup>70</sup>

This allowed Azzam to issue a "general call for mobilization" without the order of an Imam. The order for mobilization had to be issued by an Imam only when the jihad was *fard kifayah* (collective

67. Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, 3rd ed., (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1962), 81. The Arabic word *ribat* is a *namen* action; it designates being stationed in the border fortifications at the frontiers of a Muslim land (*dar al-Islam*).

68. Azzam, *Join the Caravan*, pp. 36-42, and *Tenets and Keen Insights for the Jihad in the Present Age*, p. 27.

69. Qur'an Surat al-Taubah 9:41 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00906.htm/>).

70. Azzam, *The defense of Muslim lands*, p. 27.

obligation), but not when the jihad was *fard 'ayn*.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, "if the *ummah* is called to march forward...so she marches forward to protect its religion and the matter of the obligation is according to the need of the Muslims or the demand of the Imam [author's emphasis]."<sup>72</sup> Azzam received critical support for this fatwa from the Saudi Islamic establishment, among them the influential scholar Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz.<sup>73</sup>

*Hijrah* within the *marhaliyah* concept of Azzam was an individual religious obligation and meant the emigration to the land of jihad.<sup>74</sup> This was an innovation of Azzam because, in contrast to doctrinaire internal-jihad ideology, Azzam's concept involved neither the physical retreat from a Muslim society criticized for its unbelief (*takfir*), nor selective expiation, nor the overthrow of local governments. Instead, *hijrah* was the first stage of international jihad, which was followed by preparation and training (*i'dad/tadrib*), frontier guarding (*ribat*), and combat (*qital*).<sup>75</sup>

According to Azzam, education and jihad are connected, since a successful jihad can only grow on a "solid basis" (*al-qa'idah al-sulbah*). We find the term in Qutb's Qur'an commentary "In the Shade of the Qur'an".<sup>76</sup> Qutb was concerned with two meanings when he spoke about the "solid base", an abstract and a physical one. He meant teaching the oneness of Allah in his divinity (*tawhid*

*Allah fi-l-uluhiyah*), which was the most fundamental tenet of his ideology, and he spoke about a social base for a neo-Muslim society (*al-muslimun al-juddad*), an idea which he borrowed from the Leninist scheme of a "revolutionary vanguard". According to Azzam, who was a devout follower of Qutb, the first goal was only realizable by indoctrinating a new generation of Muslims with a strong doctrine (*al-'aqidah*) regarding the martial nature of Islam and the rewards of martyrdom. Thus, he added that "the oneness cannot be defended but by the sword".<sup>77</sup> The second, more concrete goal of the "base" was to organize the "Greater Islamic Army" (*al-jaysh al-islami al-kabir*) in order to facilitate global jihad. This vanguard, would lead the *ummah* in a war of resistance against the West.<sup>78</sup> In short, Azzam's idea of the basis can be interpreted both in a physical and in an abstract sense, namely as an army to create an Islamic core state or as the principle for a global jihad ideology.

Azzam put more weight on ideology and education than on practical training. For him, the keystone of jihad ideology was doctrine (*'aqidah*), which he called the "faithful controller (*al-dabit al-amin*)... If one part of it doesn't work, then it causes a gross deviation from the path of upright conduct."<sup>79</sup> If this sensitive moral compass operates correctly, however, it leads the jihadi automatically to the battlefield. This means that if the Muslim's belief is pure, he also believes in the individual religious obligation of jihad. Therefore, religious education is crucial in the jihad concept of Azzam.

Although Azzam justified killing civilians during warfare, it cannot be regarded as a major ideological element of his paradigm. Yet, he continued a line of thinking similar to Faraj's, justifying the killing of innocent bystanders, which became a common occurrence, together with the justification of suicide bombings in the 1990s. According to Azzam, exceptions are pertinent only when a non-Muslim army uses Muslims as human shields, or when it is impossible to attack an enemy without harming civilians.<sup>80</sup> Even more important is the revival

71. Azzam, *The defense of Muslim lands*, p. 56.

72. Azzam, *The defense of Muslim lands*, p. 29.

73. Azzam, *The defense of Muslim lands*, p. 5.

74. *Marhaliyah* describes the gradual development of the proto-Muslim community around Muhammad from peaceful coexistence with the pagans to offensive jihad against them. An important concept is Muhammad's emigration (*hijrah*) from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD, where he started to build up a Muslim army. Salafi-jihadi ideologues appropriate this paradigm for their strategies of armed jihad.

75. Azzam, *Join the caravan*, 46. For a detailed explanation of Azzam's *marhaliyah* concept see Azzam, *Muqaddimah fi-l-hijrah wa-l-i'dad* (An Introduction to Emigration and Preparation) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77/>).

76. Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the shades of the Qur'an), Qur'an commentary, 15 volumes; volume 7 on Surat al-Taubah (The whole commentary can be downloaded from various websites.

77. Azzam, *Memories of Palestine*.

78. Azzam, *Join the caravan*, p. 23-26.

79. Azzam, *Faith and its Influence on Building the Generation*, p. 9.

80. Azzam, *The defense of Muslim lands*, 3; *Jarimat qatl al-nafs al-muslimah* (The Crime of Killing the Muslim Soul), Introduction (www.

of martyrdom (*istishhad*) in Azzam's literature. Becoming a martyr provides the impetus for jihad because it opens the gates to paradise. The title of his book, *Ilhaq bi-l-qafilah* (*Join the caravan*), can also be understood as "Join the caravan of Martyrs to heaven!"<sup>81</sup> This appeal, together with the call for individualization, supported his concept of "suicide operations" (*'amaliyat intihariyyah*), which he described as legitimate because they benefited Muslims in a state of armed conflict, and terrorized the enemy. Yet, this doctrine remained hidden away in the bulk of his literature and only gained in importance in the mid-1990s, indirectly through the writings of other ideologues.

In summary, Azzam revived the idea of defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf'*), but his doctrine was more complicated; He believed in offensive jihad (*jihad al-talab*) and laid the theological groundwork for Islamist terrorism.

He adopted the rules of defensive jihad in order to promote the concept of individualized action and give legitimacy to global struggle. Since there was no supreme authority to call for jihad, it was every Muslim's individual religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*) to safeguard Muslim borders (*al-ribat*) and to incite other Muslims by exemplary action to do likewise. Western and Muslim governments alike supported Azzam's concept because he redirected the focus of jihad struggle from the home fronts to more distant fronts, and confronted communism. Even the ultra-conservative religious establishment of Saudi Arabia legitimized Azzam's concept of jihad (*al-ribat as fard 'ayn*). However, Azzam promoted the idea that Islam should be imposed upon mankind by force. He believed that Islam was not a defensive religion, but a

tawhed.ws/a?i=77). Moreover, Azzam allows for the killing and excommunication (*takfir doctrine*) of Muslims who collaborate with the enemy or transgress against central tenets of Islamic law. For example, mocking Islam or the Prophet (*istihza'*) is a sin punishable by death - both for Muslims and non Muslims. See Azzam, *Faith and its Influence on Building the Generation*. In this case it is legitimate to assassinate the perpetrator (*ightiyal doctrine*). See Azzam, *Memories of Palestine*.

81. For example, Azzam, *Lessons and Insights for the Jihad in the Present Age*, 33; the prologue to *Join the Caravan*.

religion that expanded aggressively.<sup>82</sup> His ideological concept, the "solid base", entailed the most radical doctrines to realize this goal. Moreover, he was the spiritual and organizational father of the Arab-Afghan movement and one of al-Qaeda's founding members. In this role, he united jihadis from all over the world and created an extensive network of contacts through the Office of Services (MAK).

82. "Al-Islam laisa din difa'i...dinina din hujumt." Azzam, *Memories of Palestine*.

## **PART II**

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### **AL-SURI'S "GLOBAL ISLAMIC RESISTANCE CALL" (GIRC)**

## Chapter 3

# The Biography of al-Suri: from Local Islamist Revolutionary to al-Qaeda Strategist

### A Local Struggle: Jihad in Syria (1980-1982)

Although al-Suri (b. 1958) has been a prominent figure on the jihad scene for more than a decade, he has only lately caught the eye of scholarly research. The following is a brief biographical sketch.<sup>83</sup> Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (also 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim) is the nom de guerre of the jihad strategist Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir Mustafa Hussein bin Sheikh Ahmed al-Muzayyek al-Jakiri al-Rifa'i or Mustafa Sitmariam Nassar from Aleppo, Syria. His grandfather Sheikh Ahmad al-Rifa'i was a famous Sufi Sheikh, whose lineage may be traced back to the fourth caliph 'Ali ibn 'Ali Talib. The family name Sitmariam comes from al-Suri's grandmother.<sup>84</sup>

83. This biographical sketch is mainly based on the following sources: Brynjar Lia, "The al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri: A Profile"; The biography of al-Suri on his official website *Maktabat al-Sheikh: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* ("Library of the Sheikh: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri") ([www.fsboa.com/vw/index.php](http://www.fsboa.com/vw/index.php)), which has been shut down; Guido Steinberg, *Der nahe und der ferne Feind: Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* ("Global Islamic Resistance Call" (GIRC)).

84. In Syria, a male descendant may also be designated with the kunyah (conventionally a surname consisting of Abu- or Umm-) of his grandmother, which in this case is sit-mariam.



Al-Suri grew up in an urban middle-class family in Aleppo and studied mechanical engineering at the University of Aleppo from 1976 to 1980. He had a typical social background for Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members. During these years political relations between the Syrian regime and the Islamist opposition, led by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, were stretched to breaking point. Among the many young people incited by this atmosphere was al-Suri. In 1980, he quit his studies and joined a militant offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Fighting Vanguard (al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah), founded by Marwan Hadid to fight the Syrian regime. Marwan Hadid's strategy was to assassinate government figures — a strategy al-Suri would later revive. When the pressure on al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah from the Syrian regime grew, many of its members left for Jordan, including al-Suri. He would never return from exile to Syria.

Between 1980 and 1982, al-Suri was known under the alias Abu al-'Abd. Following the logic of the Arab Cold War, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood profited from the conflict between Syria and its Arab neighbors, and received military aid and training from different Arab states. Initially, Al-Suri was trained in the bases of the military apparatus of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, and then in training camps in Iraq and Egypt, where he learned guerilla warfare, explosive engineering and special operations tactics. Later, he became an instructor and member of the Military High Command of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in Baghdad under Sa'id Hawwa, with whom he had a close relationship.

Hawwa was chief ideologue of the Syrian Islamic Front (al-Jabha al-Islamiyyah fi Suriya), an umbrella movement for militant Syrian Islamists who distanced themselves from the moderate Brotherhood around 'Isam al-'Attar.<sup>85</sup> The Islamic Front program of November

85. The SIF formed after the first major defeat of the Muslim Brothers by the Syrian regime in Aleppo in 1980. The Front was the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's attempt to gather all Syrian jihad factions under a common umbrella. The northern Syrian Brotherhood factions, which opted for jihad, distanced themselves from the moderate Damascus based Brotherhood around 'Isam al-'Attar. Other leading figures of the Syrian Islamic Front were Sheikh Muhammad al-Nasr al-Bayanuni as secretary general ('alim, Aleppo), 'Adnan Sa'd al-Din member of the executive

1980 explains salient differences between the Egyptian and Syrian Islamist movements and enables us to better understand al-Suri.<sup>86</sup>

1. Syrian Islamists lack the ideological rigidity that has characterized the doctrines of some Egyptian Islamist groups.
2. The ideology and program of Syrian Islamists reflect a greater sense of pragmatism and lack the complex doctrinal subtleties and controversies that have been a feature of the Egyptian Islamist societies.
3. The groups of the Syrian Islamic Front seem to follow a single ideology, which represents the Sunni Islamist mainstream. Messianic and cultic tendencies, as in the case of the Egyptian al-Takfir group, have not played a role in Syrian Islamism. Yet, the chief ideologue of the Syrian Islamic Front, Sa'id Hawwa, was like other Syrian jihadis influenced by Sufi-mystical tendencies.
4. The Islamic Front and its junior partners have shown greater readiness to engage the Syrian government in armed jihad than the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots. The Syrian Islamists may have a greater incentive to fight what they consider an illegitimate "sectarian regime" than the Egyptian Islamists, who are under a Sunni government. The Syrian regime is much tougher than the Egyptian, especially in dealing with its Islamist opposition.

Following the devastating defeat of the Muslim Brotherhood rebellion in Syria in 1982, al-Suri turned his back on the organisation. He was deeply depressed about the death of thousands in Hama and protested against the entanglement of the Muslim Brotherhood with secular allies, especially Iraq and Jordan, and the influence of Shiite Iran. This major internal dispute, coupled with policy disagreements among the top leaders, led to the split-up of the Islamic Front and the Brotherhood itself. In desperation, al-Suri turned toward the Islamic

council (originally from the Northern Circle, Hama), and 'Adnan 'Uqla (member of al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah).

86. The following chart leans on R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution*, p. 111.

University of Medina, but was then offered the opportunity to study engineering in France.

From 1982 to 1987, al-Suri built himself a new life in Europe and tried to regroup scattered members of al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah. He coordinated some unsuccessful missions in Syria and moved from France to Spain in 1985 to open his own import-export business. In 1988, he married a Spanish woman and gained Spanish citizenship. Clearly, he was neither a confused academic nor a doctrinaire fanatic, but showed the first signs of becoming a non-conformist autodidact and calculated military strategist. The "practical strategist" al-Suri, who oftentimes used mechanical analogies in his theories, thought like an engineer, analyzed like a strategist, and traded his ideas like a salesman among different jihadis. Between 1987 and 1989 he wrote his first major work, a 1,000 page study on the Syrian jihad, titled *The Syrian Islamic Jihad Revolution — Pains and Hopes (Al-Thawrah al-Islamiyyah al-jihadiyyah fi Suriya — Alam wa amal)*.<sup>87</sup>

His life in Europe in the 1980s was complex and many-faceted: He was a European citizen with ties in Spain, a student, businessman and husband, yet was consumed with the idea of an Islamist revolutionary struggle in the Muslim world.

### **Fighting for Another People's Cause: Jihad in Afghanistan (1987-1991)**

The Soviet invasion in 1979 drew a large number of foreign jihad volunteers to Afghanistan. Resistance against the Soviets was a legitimate jihad concept that sparked a flame of enthusiasm among Islamist militants and pious Muslims alike. Many Islamist revolutionaries, who found their own revolutions at a standstill, joined this enterprise. In 1987, al-Suri too decided to join the Afghan jihad and left for Peshawar, Pakistan. He stayed in Afghanistan for most of the time between 1987 and 1992 and set up a wide network of contacts in the international jihad scene.

87. The book can be downloaded from [http://www.al-znada.com/temp/atthaura\\_alislamiya.pdf/](http://www.al-znada.com/temp/atthaura_alislamiya.pdf/) (as of March 2006).

His most influential mentor was Abdallah Azzam, the chief ideologue of the Arab-Afghan (al-afghan al-'arab) movement in Afghanistan and a founder of al-Qaeda. Al-Suri met Azzam for the first time in July 1987 and spent almost every day in his company until Azzam's assassination in November 1989. Another ideologue with a profound influence on al-Suri and al-Qaeda was 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, the Mufti of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad Organization. His book *Al-'Umda fi 'iddat al-'udda li-l-jihad fi sabil Allah* (Laying the foundation for jihad in the way of Allah) was a standard text for the Arab-Afghans.<sup>88</sup> Between 1988 and 1992, al-Suri also worked for Usama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization and became the Syrian representative in al-Qaeda's Shura Council.<sup>89</sup>

Both men, al-'Aziz and Azzam, were the proofreaders and final authorities of the early literary output of al-Suri. His first major work, *Al-Thawra al-Islamiyyah al-jihadiyyah fi Suriya — Alam wa amal*, was read and approved by both. In 1991 al-Suri presented the first bayan (communiqué) for Global Islamic Resistance to 'Abd al-'Aziz.<sup>90</sup> Following Operation Desert Storm in 1990 and the announcement of a "New World Order" (which according to him "exposed the real enemy who used to hide behind our governments"), al-Suri claimed that he had conceived a paradigm change toward global jihad together with fellow mujahideen in Peshawar.<sup>91</sup>

The first blueprint (in the form of audiotapes and written notes) for the Global Islamic Resistance Call (*Da'wat al-muqawamah al-Islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah*) was drawn between late 1990 and early 1991. Sometime during that period, al-Suri returned for a short while

88. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, p. 716.

89. Brynjar Lia, "The al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri: A Profile," OMS Seminar 15 March 2006, p. 6.

90. *Maktabat al-Sheikh*: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri ("Library of the Sheikh: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri"), Ta'rif bi-l-sheikh ("Information about the Sheikh") (<http://fsboa.com/vw/index.php?subject=4&rec=22&tit=tit&pa=0&tit=تعريف%20بالشيخ>), not longer accessible.

91. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Introduction, "Information about the phases of the crystallization and development of the thoughts of this book," "The first stage: Peshawar 1990-1991."

to Madrid and wrote a 40-page study, titled "Communiqué for the establishment of a Global Islamic Resistance" (Bayan min ajlin qiyamat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah), which he printed and distributed secretly among mujahideen upon his return to Peshawar early in 1991. According to al-Suri this formed the basis for his later work, the Global Islamic Resistance Call (GIRC).<sup>92</sup>

The activities of al-Suri in Afghanistan included a wide range of practical and theoretical training for jihad volunteers. He was an explosives engineering instructor and trained volunteers in the use of explosives, shooting and hand-to-hand combat, making use of the black belt in judo he had gained in France in 1984. He also gave lectures on jihad theory and guerilla warfare.<sup>93</sup>

### The European Network and the Algerian Jihad (1991-1997)

The end of the Afghan jihad and the erosion of the international jihad movement in Afghanistan led to the return of many jihadis to their home countries. Sometime in 1991, Al-Suri returned to Spain and helped to build up an al-Qaeda cell under the former Syrian Muslim Brotherhood member Imad al-Din Barakat Yarkas (Abu Dahdah). The Spanish-based cell, in which Syrians played a major role,<sup>94</sup> later became one of al-Qaeda's main bases in Europe.<sup>95</sup>

92. Until the beginning of June he was able to print 1,000 copies in Peshawar and distribute them secretly. Al-Suri, GIRC, Introduction, "Information about the phases," "The second stage," Madrid 1991.

93. The clear sense of "gang-warfare" corresponds here to guerilla-warfare. Maktabat al-Sheikh: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, *Ta'rif bi-l-sheikh* (<http://fsboa.com/vw/index.php?subject=4&rec=22&tit=tit&pa=0&tit=تعريف/20>) (accessed in December 2005, the page has been shut down).

94. Kathryn Haahr, "Assessing Spain's al-Qaeda Network", *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 3.13 (2005). ([http://www.ja.estown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/ter\\_003\\_013.pdf](http://www.ja.estown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/ter_003_013.pdf)) (1-3).

95. Lia, "The al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri: A Profile," p. 8.

Upon the request of the Algerian Qari Sa'id, whom he knew from Afghanistan, al-Suri assisted in the formation of the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) (also al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah al-Musallahah). In 1994, he moved to London and, together with Abu Qutada al-Filastini ('Umar Mahmud Abu 'Umar), published the weekly newspaper al-Ansar ("the supporters") for the GIA. In writing for the al-Ansar bulletin, al-Suri provided the GIA with an important theoretical-ideological framework. Yet, he and Abu Qutada distanced themselves from the brutal terrorist campaign of the GIA in 1996 and stopped the publication after some important figures in the GIA leadership had been liquidated.

The bloody terrorist campaign of the GIA included eradicating entire villages with "hand-held" weapons (i.e. machetes, knives), as well as murdering journalists and Westerners. "In all of these cases, GIA factions paid lip service to the defensive [jihad] legitimization, as adapted from the call to arms in Afghanistan."<sup>96</sup> The argument was that all the targeted individuals supported the Algerian government, in reality a surrogate for French imperialism. To justify his departure from the GIA, al-Suri later argued that an initially strong GIA leadership had been infiltrated by Western spies and collaborators, turning the Algerian jihad experiment into a perversion that proved detrimental to attracting followers.<sup>97</sup> He based his claim on frequent allegations in the European Press, which stated that the Algerian Military Intelligence SM (Securité Militaire) had manipulated the GIA.<sup>98</sup> More important, however, was that the murderous campaign of the Zitouni-led GIA contradicted the transnational policy of al-Qaeda, which redirected its support to the GIA offshoot "Salafi Group for Preaching and Fight" (GSPC).<sup>99</sup> Al-Suri and Abu Qutada too followed suit.

In 1996, al-Suri founded the Islamic Conflict Studies Bureau and tried to earn money with his inside knowledge of Islamic conflicts

96. Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 8 (2001), pp. 18-38.

97. Al-Suri, GIRC, Introduction, "Information about the phases," "The third stage: London 1996" and chapter seven.

98. Muriel Mirak Weissbach, "The case of the GIA: Afghans out of theatre," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 22 (1995). [http://www.jarouchepub.com/eirtoc/1995/eirtoc\\_2241.html/](http://www.jarouchepub.com/eirtoc/1995/eirtoc_2241.html/).

99. Steinberg, *Der Nahe und der Ferne Feind*, pp. 192-193.

in the international media. One of his ideas, for example, was to send email newsletters to different news agencies. Additionally, he organized visits of BBC and CNN reporters to Bin Laden's base in Afghanistan.<sup>100</sup>

### Al-Suri's Return to Afghanistan under the Taliban (1997-2001)

Al-Suri claimed that he had returned to Afghanistan in August 1997 to realize his idea of Global Islamic Resistance and that Afghanistan was the best location for it. One major reason was that Bin Laden was on the spot, and that al-Suri had established good relations with the Taliban during his first visit in 1996. Second, he reckoned that stepped-up security measures against jihadis worldwide would once more make Afghanistan a haven and perfect breeding ground for the propagation of his ideas.<sup>101</sup> A third reason was his own involvement in al-Qaeda, which had made even a short sojourn in Europe impossible.<sup>102</sup>

Sometime in 1997, al-Suri founded the "Camp of Foreigners" (Mu'askar al-Ghuraba'), which was one of the 14 jihad groupings officially recognized by the Taliban regime. The camp was situated in the Kargah military base in the hills north of Kabul. Al-Suri was in charge of the camp until its destruction in October 2001 by U.S. warplanes. He pledged allegiance (bay'ah) to the leader of the Taliban, Mullah 'Omar, in Kandahar in April 2000. Hence, he did not formally belong to Usama bin Laden's Organisation of the Base (Tanzim al-Qaeda), which was one of the eleven Arabic jihad-formations. All of these groupings, including the Camp of Foreigners, coordinated their activities directly with the Defense and Interior Ministry of the Taliban

100. *Maktabat al-Sheikh: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Ta'rif bi-l-sheikh.*

101. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Introduction, "Information about the phases," "The fourth phase: Afghanistan 1997-2001."

102. His websites claims that the British secret service "applied pressure" on al-Suri. *Maktabat al-Sheikh: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Ta'rif bi-l-sheikh.*

and their secret services. It seems that al-Suri had an especially close relationship, exceeding that of other jihad groups and leaders with the Taliban.<sup>103</sup>

The term ghuraba' means "strangers" and "aliens" in a physical and in a spiritual sense, comparable to the meaning of the word pilgrim.<sup>104</sup> Strangeness and alienation are very important Islamic concepts and connected to the hijra paradigm (emigration). In the earliest Islamic period, before the emigration to Medina, the nucleus of the nascent Muslim community lived in a hostile, alienating environment in Mecca. A popular reference to this time is a prophetic, messianic hadith, which not only explains that Islam started as alien religion, but also predicts that it will return to this state before Judgment Day (akhir al-zaman), a time during which even the remaining real Muslims will again be strangers: "Islam began alien and it will again be alien like it began – May the strangers be blessed."<sup>105</sup> This reveals a lot about the mentality of al-Suri's camp. Like other jihadis, al-Suri felt "estranged" from Muslim society as a whole and from the jihad scene in particular.

103. For example, his camp was directly financed by the Defense Ministry of the Taliban. *Ashraq Al-Awsat*, 17 November 2006, 7.

104. "Pilgrim" derives from the Latin word peregrines, which means "stranger" (lit. someone who comes "per agnum," i.e. "via or from beyond the field" in the sense of civilized and cultivated land). Like its Arabic-Islamic counterpart, the word has a variety of meanings, which can be divided mainly into the catholic or protestant understanding of it. Catholicism has traditionally supported the practice of pilgrimage to religious places like Jerusalem for spiritual reasons. Protestantism rejected, even prohibited pilgrimage, arguing against the superstitions and indulgences connected to the catholic practice. Yet, its modern use refers to Protestantism, namely the Protestant settlers, who arrived in New England with the Mayflower in 1621 and are called "pilgrim fathers." Conceptually, the protestant concept of pilgrimage is strikingly similar to the Islamic understanding of hijra. A group of dissidents escapes from a hostile environment, builds up a protocommunity, and carries back its ideology with a messianic sense of mission to the point of origin and finally the rest of the world.

105. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Introduction, *Fasl fi al-ghurbah wa-l-ghuraba' wa-l-zahirin 'ala-l-haqq* (Chapter on the exile and the strangers and those who will come to know righteousness).

Since the umma was not up to the task, the individual Muslim had to step in and take up arms alone. This thinking became the basis of al-Suri's idea of "individualized terrorism," epitomized by Qur'an Surat al-Nisa 4:84, and central to his jihad concept: "Then fight in Allah's cause — Thou art held responsible only for thyself — and rouse the believers."<sup>106</sup> He clearly regarded himself above other jihad groups and despised their narrow ideology and organizational framework.<sup>107</sup> Thus, he founded the Bataillon of Foreigners (Katibat al-Ghuraba'), in accordance with his own global jihad ideology and principles. In 2000, he also founded a center for studies, research, and lectures (Markaz al-Ghuraba' li-l-Dirasat al-Islamiyyah wa-l-'Ilam), which was supposed to complement combat training with ideological and military education.<sup>108</sup> It is quite likely that al-Suri, together with Abu Khabab al-Masri, experimented with chemical weapons in the Derunta Camp near Jalalabad by poisoning dogs.<sup>109</sup>

At times, the situation between Bin Laden and al-Suri in Afghanistan was very tense. However, it never developed into an open conflict of interests. Thus, in July 1999, al-Suri criticized Bin Laden's frequent statements to the press, which provoked the anger of the Taliban and Mullah 'Umar. An email by al-Suri and another Syrian called Abu Khalid, which was retrieved from a captured al-Qaeda laptop, illustrates their differences of opinion and sheds a light on the various factions within al-Qaeda:

106. Qur'an Surat al-Nisa' 4:84 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/index.htm/>).

107. *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 17 November 2006, 7.

108. *Maktabat al-Sheikh: 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Ta'rif bi-l-sheikh*.

109. Al-Masri, who was al-Qaeda's bombing engineer and chemical weapons expert, was killed in a U.S. missile strike in Pakistan in January 2006. See Evan Kohlmann, "Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and his Plan for the Destruction of America: 'Dirty Bombs for a Dirty Nation'," *Global Terror Alert* (July 2005) (<http://www.globalterroralert.com/pdf/0705/abumusabalsuri.pdf>); "U.S. Strike killed al-Qaeda Bomb Maker," *ABC News*, 18 January 2006 (<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/Investigation/story?id=1517986/>).

Noble brother Abu Abdullah,  
Peace upon you, and Allah's mercy and blessings.

This message [concerns] the problem between you and the Commander of the Faithful.

The results of this crisis can be felt even here in Kabul and other places. Talk about closing down the camps has spread. Discontent with the Arabs has become clear. Whispers between the Taliban with some of our non-Arab brothers has become customary. In short, our brother Abu Abdullah's latest troublemaking with the Taliban and the Leader of the Faithful jeopardizes the Arabs, and the Arab presence, today in all of Afghanistan, for no good reason. It provides a ripe opportunity for all adversaries, including America, the West, the Jews, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the Mas'ud-Dostum alliance, etc., to serve the Arabs a blow that could end up causing their most faithful allies to kick them out...Our brother [bin Laden] will help our enemies reach their goal free of charge!

The strangest thing I have heard so far is Abu Abdullah's saying that he wouldn't listen to the Leader of the Faithful when he asked him to stop giving interviews...I think our brother [bin Laden] has caught the disease of screens, flashes, fans, and applause...<sup>110</sup>

Yet, the crisis between Bin Laden and al-Suri did not last long; indeed, by the middle of the year 2000, al-Suri was already a guest of honor at Bin Laden's wedding to a Yemenite woman.<sup>111</sup>

## Flight and Arrest (2001-2005)

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States declared the War on Terrorism, a massive military, economic, cultural and intelligence effort to completely isolate al-Qaeda's leadership and its jihad affiliates. The

110. Allan Cullison, "Inside al-Qaeda's Hard Drive", *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 2004). <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200409/cullison>.

111. Lia, "The al-Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri: A Profile", p. 11.

first step of this campaign was the U.S. bombardment and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, which toppled the Taliban regime in December 2001.

While this phase of the U.S. strategy was successful, the second phase failed. al-Qaeda gradually dissolved as an organization, and transformed into an ideology. Al-Suri's main goal was to formulate this change as a strategic-operative guideline for the "third generation" of jihadis. Seeing himself as "one of the few who remained" from the second generation, he wanted to serve as a bridgehead for this third "generation of Global Islamic Resistance" and strengthen its identity as a continuation of the first (1960s and 1970s) and the second generation (1980s and 1990s).<sup>112</sup>

In point of fact, his main concern after December 2001 was avoiding arrest and completing the huge encyclopedia *Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* (Global Islamic Resistance Call). For al-Suri, a three-year writing marathon began, during which he kept changing locations. He lived in total isolation, contemplating and evaluating the "methods and means" of resistance, analyzing the lessons of jihad, and "examining the nature of the confrontations and battles that await us, since I am one of the few that are left among the mujahideen specializing in this."<sup>113</sup> When the U.S. State Department put a \$5 million bounty on his head on 18 November 2004, al-Suri reappeared on the scene with a nine-page statement in response to the accusations against him. He wholeheartedly supported 9/11 and warned the European states not to participate in the Israeli-U.S. "policy of aggression", but denied his collaboration with Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi as well as his involvement in the Madrid bombings on 11 March 2004.<sup>114</sup>

112. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Introduction.

113. Bayan sadir 'an maktab al-sheikh...raddan 'ala i'lan wizarat al-kharijiah al-amirikiyyah ("Statement published by the office of the Sheikh... answering the announcement of the U.S. State Department"), point 4. <http://www.fsboa.com/vw/index.php?subject=1&rec=29>.

114. Bayan sadir 'an maktab al-sheikh...raddan 'ala i'lan wizarat al-kharijiah al-amirikiyyah ("Statement published by the office of the Sheikh... answering the announcement of the U.S. State Department").

Evidence, however, suggests that at least one of the charges has substance. While it is not clear whether al-Suri was linked to the Madrid bombings, he was probably linked close to al-Zarqawi. European intelligence sources disagree about whether he was involved in the network that planned the Madrid attacks. But, it is quite certain that he was in contact with Zarqawi ever since his arrival to Afghanistan in 1999, and that he visited one of al-Zarqawi's training camps in the Kurdish part of north Iraq in 2002. Also Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran were stations on al-Suri's escape route after December 2001. He was reportedly arrested in the Pakistani city Quetta near the southern Afghan border between late October and early November 2005.<sup>115</sup>

115. Lia, "The al-Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri: A Profile," p. 15.

## Chapter 4

### **Description of the Global Islamic Resistance Call (*Da'wat al-muqawamah al- islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah*, hereafter referred to as GIRC)**

Al-Suri wrote his 1,600 page magnum opus between early 2002 and December 2004.<sup>116</sup> The main part was based on audio- and videotapes, which he probably packed into bags after 9/11 fearing the destruction of his lifework. The book was written at different locations and under very restricted circumstances (*zuruf al-iqamah al-jabriyyah wa qillat al-harakah*), which al-Suri recalls as having been fruitful to his work. Whether this means that he was under constant house arrest or at times fleeing his pursuers is not quite clear. He himself does mention that he was constantly on the move or was taken from one destination to another during this entire period. When the U.S. State Department placed a bounty on his head in November 2004, he decided to promote GIRC without delay, lest his arrest might prevent the publication. A completely revised edition was planned for 2005. The main chapters and basic concepts thus stand, but al-Suri apologizes for the numerous syntactical, grammatical and printing mistakes, and for the fact that the work is not up to date, lacks a general summary, as well as a commentary on the Islamic traditions in the ninth chapter. What's more, it was not reviewed by prominent

116. The following section is based on Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, *GIRC*, *Tanwih* (information) and the *Silsilat rasa'il al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* (Series of letters of the global Islamic resistance). Both are subsections at the beginning of the 2004 edition.

friends such as Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, Abu al-Laith al-Libi, and Abu Khalid al-Suri.

GIRC developed over a period of 14 years in six stages, from the European to the Central Asian exile, i.e. from the late 1990s to the end of 2004. The trigger for the theory of global jihad in the early 1990s was the First Gulf War (January 1991–February 1991), U.S. president George W.H. Bush's announcement of a New World Order (September 1990), and the Madrid Peace Conference (October 1991). Much material on the ideological development of GIRC between 1990 and 2004, such as lectures, audio- and videocassettes, could be downloaded from al-Suri's old website ([www.fsboa.com/vw/index.php](http://www.fsboa.com/vw/index.php)), which has meanwhile been shut down.

The book itself develops a theory that is based on observation and offers a strategic guideline for jihadis. It is divided into two parts, whereby the cognitions of the first part ("the roots – the history – the experiences") form the basis for the practical theories in the second part ("the call – the program – the method"). The first part of the book consists of introductory historical, political-analytical and religious-ideological chapters. The main topics dealt with are:

1. the intolerable situation of the Muslim population and the shari'a rulings pertaining to it;
2. the Third Crusade of the West against Islam;
3. an analysis of the failure of the last 40 years of jihad.

The second part contains ideological-doctrinal, strategic and operative findings, and theories rendered in a pseudo-scientific language, frequently repeating portions of the first part, such as the Islamic legal foundation of the concept of jihad. Chapter eight, which includes the constitution of the *Global Islamic Resistance Call*, summarizes the main objectives of jihad in 36 articles. Chapter nine is a largely uncommented collection of Islamic traditions and literature with a salutary messianic character.

Al-Suri's main concern was that the 1,600 page work would be difficult to read because many readers might be deterred by its length and find it difficult to focus on the key jihad theories in chapter eight. Therefore, he planned to publish a sectionalized version of GIRC under the title "*Silsilat rasa'il al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah*" ("Series of letters of the global Islamic resistance"), i.e. eleven smaller

books, each containing a specific topic and a summary of the complete version. To gain a broader audience, al-Suri wanted to add new topics to the series and have the work translated into other languages. This division into sub-topics was provided by a website (called *Saraya al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah*, or Squadrons of Global Islamic Resistance), which was apparently set up by his supporters and offered material written by him and by related ideologues. The website was shut down in summer 2007.

The logo of GIRC, which symbolizes the occupation of Muslim countries, reflects the essence of al-Suri's credo. On the left-hand side is a sword with the slogan "your guide to jihad" (*dalilak ila tariq al-jihad*); to the right is the circular logo of GIRC. The three most holy places of Islam are arranged behind steel bars against a blue sky background with scattered clouds. The Ka'bah stands in the foreground, the Prophet's Mosque (*masjid al-nabawi*) is slightly elevated in the background to the right, with the al-Aqsa mosque (*masjid al-Aqsa*) to the left. The lettering underneath reads "Global Islamic Resistance" (*al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah*), two small red circles contain the exhortation "Allah is the greatest" (*Allahu akbar*) and the top depicts the first part of Qur'an 4:84, which epitomizes the concept of individualized terrorism: "Then fight in Allah's cause — Thou art held responsible only for thyself — and rouse the believers."



## Chapter 5

# Al-Suri's Political Worldview: Identifying the New Enemy

### The Third Crusade of the West against Islam

In al-Suri's worldview, the Third Crusade of the West against Islam after 1990 is a "world war" and the continuation of the First Crusade from 1050 to 1291 and the Second Crusade from 1798 to 1970.<sup>117</sup> His virulent anti-Semitic tirade against Jews is based on Azzam's books "Sketch of Historic Change," "Spotlights on Arab Nationalism," and "The Red Cancer."<sup>118</sup> In the same way, al-Suri argues that the Third

117. The observations in this section are based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, Introduction, "Information about the phases of the crystallization of the thoughts of this book" and the complete chapters 3 and 4. Note that the categorization of the Crusades is al-Suri's, not a historic one. He initially refers to the first medieval Crusade to the Middle East and then to the colonial period between the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 and 1970, when Bashar al-Assad, a heretic Alevite in al-Suri's view, took power in Syria. During this period, the West established total cultural, economic, political and military hegemony over the Muslim world, he claims. With the War on Terrorism, which is the third major Crusade, the West wants to cement this control.

118. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Chapter 4, *Masār al-ma'sat wa asbabuha bayn al-hamlatayn al-salibiyyatayn al-thaniyyah wa-l-thalithah 1798-1990* (The course of the tragedy and its reasons between the second and third Crusade from 1798 to 1990). The Arabic titles of Azzam's books are *Khatt al-tahawwul al-tarikhi* (A sketch of the historic change), *Adwa' 'ala al-qawmiyyah al-'arabiyyah* (Treatment against Arab nationalism) and *Al-Saratan al-ahmar* (The red cancer).

**Crusade is nothing** but the continuation of European colonialism of the last three centuries, i.e. of the Second Crusade. The interpretation of events after 1990, however, is al-Suri's, and is based on his views of civilization, and of religious and economic struggle.

The main stage of the Third Crusade was set in motion in 1990 by the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, by George H. W. Bush's announcement of a New World Order, and the First Gulf War in 1991. This situation was compounded by the Madrid conference in 1991, which in al-Suri's view served U.S. plans for the recolonization of the Middle East under the cloak of normalization between Israel and the Arabs. All Muslim governments were viewed as infidels and collaborators with the neo-colonialist Jewish-Christian coalition. The New World Order is thus seen as being controlled by the Jews, led by the U.S., and supported by a huge fifth column of apostate Muslims.

According to al-Suri, various elements contributed to the realization of the New World Order. The U.S. is the best henchman to execute Jewish colonialist plans; in addition, U.S. neo-colonialist ambitions in the Middle East went back to President Carter's announcement of the Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF) in 1973 [sic] to safeguard vital U.S. oil interests in the Persian Gulf region. And, finally, traditionally the U.S. has tried to secure the supremacy of the white Christians over the rest of the world and to arrest the industrial progress of developing countries. Al-Suri's arguments smack of leftist *dependency theory* concepts, which suggest that the wealthy nations of the world need peripheral poorer states to maintain their wealth.

In his view, the neo-Byzantines, namely the U.S., Europe and Russia, have suffered from economic decline ever since their incomes from colonial exploitation ceased. Furthermore, though they have switched their industrial and agricultural production sectors to the production of consumer goods, they have no export markets for their products since the former colonies are not willing or can't afford to buy them. The practices of charging interest, condemned as usury (*riban*), and of female employment weaken Western economies, create greed and erode the very fabric of the family. Colonizing the Middle East and its energy sources is the only way to halt the socio-economic decline of the West. Hence, to create an outlet for its products and meet its needs, the West must plunder the oil resources of the Arab world.

Second, the U.S. — the strongest military power in the world, with its overwhelming air superiority, supported by satellite-based ground-surveillance and guiding systems — also has the largest arsenal of nuclear warheads and long-range missiles. Naturally, this has furthered U.S. ambition to control the world and turn the twenty-first century into an *American Century* after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. To this end, it must control the lifeblood of world economy, namely the oil arteries of the Middle East. Europe and Russia, on the other hand, worried that the U.S. would monopolize control of the oil production, joined the neo-Byzantine alliance.

Third, a radical group of neoconservative, born-again Christians in the White House supports Israel's goal to destroy the al-Aqsa mosque, erect the temple of Solomon in its place and proclaim the Kingdom of Greater Israel from the Euphrates to the Nile. To prevent the establishment of a strong Muslim army like that of Iraq in the region, the Jews have used a "traditional Jewish method" and wormed their way into the White House. There, the most radical Jews merged with born-again Protestants and created a doctrinal coupling, which one might label "Protestant Zionism." Now they control the U.S. army, as well as the European armies.

The Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI) to "promote democracy", which Bush announced in November 2003,<sup>119</sup> is merely a Jewish-Byzantine strategy to plunder the riches of the Middle East. The occupation of Iraq in 2003 initiated the practical phase of the Third Crusade, which is reflected in the political strategy of GMEI. GMEI is thus a master plan to redraw the political and geographical map of the Middle East. This correlates with U.S. plans to control Central Asia, which began with the stationing of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and the

119. The Whitehouse, "Fact Sheet: President Bush Calls for a 'Forward Strategy of Freedom' to Promote Democracy in the Middle East" (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-11.html/>); "G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership Working Paper," al-Hayat (English version) (13 February 2004) (<http://www.meib.org/documentfile/040213.htm/>); Gary C. Gambill, "Jumpstarting Arab Reform: The Bush's Administration Greater Middle East Initiative" *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 6 (2004) ([http://www.meib.org/articles/0407\\_me2.htm/](http://www.meib.org/articles/0407_me2.htm/)).

close U.S. cooperation with Pakistan, one of the most heretic regimes in the Muslim world. Presently, there are more than one million U.S. soldiers stationed in the Arabian Peninsula, which is a nightmare for Islam.

All political justifications for the present American and Western campaign are lies. For example, the accusation that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction was utterly false, as was the argument that democratic countries led "the global War on Terror". In reality, it is a war of civilizations between the West and Islam. After 9/11, U.S. President George W. Bush revealed what al-Suri saw as his real intentions when the former used the term crusade in connection with the "War on Terror." Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld confirmed that a "war of ideas" was underway. This war, carried forward by the neocolonial media, subliminally furthers the Westernization and Americanization of Muslims. In the end, this war is particularly dangerous because it is a form of intellectual colonization that undermines Muslim identity. The true values of Islam suffer from this attack.

Al-Suri sees a clear line of development. As part of the post-1990 New World Order the U.S. integrated the countries of the former Warsaw Pact into NATO, and gradually took control of the policies of all governments in the Muslim world. At the same time, after the Madrid conference in 1991, the U.S. developed its War on Terrorism as an integral part of the Third Crusade. Witness to this development are countless international security conferences on ways to overcome Islamic resistance in the Muslim world. This has indeed been successful, since 80% of the jihadis have been arrested or killed. In addition, a co-opted religious establishment was nurtured at the very heart of infidel Muslim regimes that collaborate with the new crusaders.

U.S. policy makers believe in Samuel Huntington's concept of "clash of civilizations". As there is not enough space for conflicting civilizations on this planet, it is inevitable that the stronger will eliminate the weaker civilization. This will happen to Islam if Global Islamic Resistance does not act. The clash between Islam and the U.S. became inevitable after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, which brought a fundamental change in the geopolitical world order: Islam had become the new enemy of the U.S. The U.S. could then convince

Western Europe, Russia, and the former Warsaw Pact states of the necessity to "remove Islamic civilization" and to impose their own infidel culture upon the Muslims.

Finally, the core of the conflict is as old as mankind. The everlasting fight of the Muslims against the Byzantines reflects the struggle between truth and falsehood (*al-sira' bayn al-haqq wa-l-batil*) from the days of Cain to those of Bush. The Manichaean dichotomy of good and evil explains the aggressive and murderous inclination of the West. It all began with Cain's warning to his brother Abel: "I will kill you!"<sup>120</sup> This warning, which symbolizes all evil, has become part of Western civilization and its attitude towards other civilizations. There is neither mercy, compassion and benevolence, nor justice in the creed of Cain. He committed the first crime on earth and passed his "malevolent" genes on to his descendants and, finally, to Western civilization as a whole. Nowadays, the U.S. leads Byzantine civilization and revives Cain's warning.

Western civilization, infested with Cain's "malevolent" genes, will always try to assault the East. With the nascent prophetic state and the inception of the Islamic caliphate, the East-West conflict stabilized along the Islamic-Byzantine-fault line. The Byzantines successively fought against the Prophet, the true caliphs, the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates and the Ottoman Empire. The gradual infiltration of the Ottoman Empire during the Second Crusade (1798-1970) and the introduction of Western political concepts was a conspiracy of the Jews and the Free Masons. After World War I the colonial powers, led by Zionist Jews, fragmented the Muslim world into 52 states. Generally, Jews are the manipulators of colonialism and Marxism.

120. Qur'an 5:27 "Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold! They each presented a sacrifice (to God): It was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter: "Be sure I will slay thee." "Surely," said the former, "God doth accept of the sacrifice of those who are righteous." (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00505.htm/>). According to al-Suri, the comparison between the U.S.-aggression and Cain's murder of Abel goes back to the Arab-Afghan thinker Abu Walid al-Masri (Mustafa Hamid). Al-Masri held lectures in the Afghanistan-jihad against the Soviets. See al-Suri, *GIRC*, chapter 2.

This argument, like others, is based on Abdallah Azzam's works.<sup>121</sup> The third stage in this long clash of civilizations is the Third Crusade that followed the declaration of a New World Order.

### The Conflict Constellation of the Third Crusade

In the summer of 1991, al-Suri held a lecture in the *Markaz al-Nur li-l-I'lam* (Center of Illumination for Information) in Peshawar, Pakistan, under the title "The political balance of the New World Order". He predicted the imbalanced constellation of future conflicts.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, a tiny and fragmented jihad would struggle against the New World Order announced by Bush senior. Al-Suri differentiates between an allied, a neutral and a hostile camp.<sup>123</sup> Western powers, supported by Muslim states and their clergy, are the hostile camp. NATO, which expanded in 1999 (al-Suri mistakenly claims 2002) to include three former communist countries, today comprises 26 member states. More than 52 apostate Muslim states could be added to this number. On the other hand, says al-Suri, the Islamic resistance is a small elite that needs to recruit and propagate in order to grow.

The neutral camp lacks a detailed description, but when viewed in detail, the general constellation is portrayed as follows: The hostile camp, led by the U.S. and controlled by the Jews, consists of five groups. First, the U.S. with its superior military power is the only great power — or, in al-Suri's words, "the only pole" (*al-qutb al-awhad*) — in the world, so that its centers for strategic studies play a crucial role in the stationing of troops. Israel is the second major enemy force, commanding the hostile alliance from her position on

Muslim territory. The third such force is Great Britain, a natural ally of the U.S. Since Great Britain has a long history of colonialism in the Middle East and the majority of its population is Protestant, it is a perfect ally of the U.S. The fourth power is NATO, which has been the main military link between the U.S. and Europe since World War II. After 9/11, NATO invoked Article 5, the mutual defense clause of the North Atlantic Treaty, for the first time, and declared that the attacks were against all 19 member states. As an organization it has profited from the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and from its gradual expansion from 15 to more than 26 member states. From military-strategic perspective, the most important NATO states include European countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, and Portugal, as well as the U.S. and Canada. Together with allies that are not members of NATO and lie scattered over Africa, Europe and Asia, the fifth force are countries allied with the U.S., such as Japan, Russia, and India. Although the U.S. and Japan have competing economies, the U.S. succeeded in integrating Japan into its military camp and deploying its troops in Iraq. Russia's role in Europe has declined so that Russia is now constrained to maneuver between a moderate European axis (Germany, France and Spain, following the 11 March 2005 Madrid bombings) and a pro-U.S. axis (Britain and Italy). In spite of the conflicting U.S.-Russian interests in Central Asia, Russia has become part of the crusader alliance. India, with its nuclear weapons and long-lasting conflict with a Muslim minority, is an extremely important ally both of the U.S. and of Israel. In addition, numerous developing countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America allow U.S. troops access to their territory in the War on Terrorism.

The enemy who is perceived as the most dangerous, however, is the internal enemy within the Muslim world. This includes the more than 52 apostate Muslim states that have opened their doors to the U.S., giving its troops access to air, sea and land bases. They are led by apostate Muslims (*murtaddun*). All 22 Arab states, without exception, belong to the forces of apostasy (*quwan al-riddah*). They have reached a state of "historic corruption" and are a huge fifth column for the neo-Byzantine crusaders. Every person who works for

121. The specific argument refers to Azzam's books *Khast al-tahawwul al-tarikhi* ("Sketch of the Historical Change") and *Dhakha'ir* ("Provisions").

122. This Center was led by Sheikh Abu Khadhifa from the Egyptian Jihad Organization (*Tanzim al-Jihad*) and bolstered the Afghanistan jihad from Pakistan with global Salafi-Jihadi ideology. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Introduction.

123. The following description is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, chapter 1, points 4 and 5, and chapter eight, subsection 3.

their military, administration or media is an enemy. Their brutal and repressive security apparatuses only serve U.S. interests.

Al-Suri's directive is to gradually convert as many hostile Muslims as possible to the neutral side, until they eventually become supporters or members of the resistance. Relying on guerilla literature, he seeks to create a "revolutionary jihad climate." Revolutionary concepts show that mobilization may become a chain reaction if political propaganda touches the right switch in people's minds. Al-Suri hence counts on the propagandistic effect of Islamist terrorism.<sup>124</sup>

Hypocritical clerics, who support the American "war of ideas", form the backbone of the apostate regimes. They destroy the Islamic legacy, legitimate everything that is un-Islamic, create an Islamic-legal base for these heretic regimes, and break the spirit of jihad. They abuse Islamic texts to justify the U.S.'s War on Terrorism. The "democratic Islamists" complement the treason of the ulema with their westernized concepts.

But ethnic and religious minorities, too, pose a danger to jihad because they serve as possible allies of the U.S. Indeed, al-Suri claims that recent history shows that the U.S. has enjoyed the collaboration of Turkmen, and of Shiite and Kurdish minorities when it invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. An especially dangerous maneuver of the U.S. is the exploitation of the Shiite-Sunni divide — a time bomb waiting to explode. In fact, one of the most effective ways of destroying the unity of the *ummah*, says al-Suri, is to take advantage of minorities. Yet, his fight focuses on the U.S., not on the Shiites.

From within the Islamic emigrant communities, the West nurtures a class of highly educated technocrats in order to graft them onto Muslim governments. Westernized Muslim emigrants, who have double nationalities and are loyal to the U.S., are therefore very dangerous. A few examples suffice to illustrate this: the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, the Iraqi Shiite opposition leader, Ahmad Shalabi, and the former prime minister of the Iraqi interim government, Iyad Allawi.

Secular Americanized Muslims are similarly dangerous. They support the cultural Third Crusade with pledges of democratization

and reform. Popular Arab programs like "Video Club" and "Star Academy" and the satellite channel *Rotana* exert an insidious influence on Muslim populations, westernizing them and making them collaborators in the ideological onslaught on Islam.

The camp of the Global Islamic Resistance has a large pool of potential followers. The focus is on the formation of a jihad elite, the attraction of the masses, international justification and search for support. Al-Suri speaks mainly about the remaining Afghan-Arabs, about al-Qaeda and other jihad organizations, and about dispersed jihadis of a jihad movement (*al-tayyar al-jihadi*) that recognizes the conglomerate of Arab jihad groups and ideologies since the 1960s.<sup>125</sup> Possible recruits are lone youngsters, or members of Islamist centers that draw people with radical inclinations. Lower cadres of non-militant Islamic leaders and the few remaining virtuous ulema, who sympathize with GIR, are also possible recruits. The biggest potential, however, is to be found in the overpopulated Muslim street, claims al-Suri. Every Muslim who feels inclined can contribute to the struggle by deed, money and the dissemination of propaganda. Also disconcerted Muslims from national-conservative or oppositional groups may support GIR.

Moreover, non-Muslim support can also be found abroad, amongst anti-American political parties, human rights organizations, left-wing movements, and Marxist and leftist Western terrorist groups, such as the Italian Red Brigades, the Japanese Red Army, ETA, or the Real

125. Namely "the organizations, groups, crowds, ulema, thinkers, symbolic figures and individuals who carry the idea of armed jihad against the existing [apostate and secular] regimes in the Islamic world, or against the external [colonial] enemies according to the principle of *hakimiyyah* (divine sovereignty), on the basis of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* ("Friendship and enmity"), and according to the contemporary political jihadi ideology based on Islamic law." In al-Suri's terminology *mujahid* groups ("struggling") stand for nationalist jihad groups, whereas *jihadi* groups stand for doctrinaire-internal and external groups, which struggle for ideological reasons locally or internationally with the goal to build an Islamic system. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, chapter 6. For a definition of internal and external paradigms see Introduction.

124. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, chapter 8, subsection 2.

Irish Republican Army (an offshoot of the Provisional IRA before the Good Friday Agreement in Belfast, 1998).

The neutral camp is not clearly defined, leaving it wide open to different explications. But al-Suri opens up new avenues for enlisting strategic support in the international arena. For example, the political and media-efforts of the GIR cadres could turn toward China, which has been under heavy pressure from the U.S. ever since the *China Policy Act*, passed by Congress in 1995 for China's human rights violations. Therefore, there is a possibility that the U.S.-China rift might encourage support for GIR. Though al-Suri makes it clear that the Chinese too are atheists (*mulhidun*), his first concern is that GIR should obtain international recognition as "legal resistance" (*muqawama mashru'a*) and rid itself of the "terrorism" accusation. Moreover, numerous other Asian and African states might serve the same purpose. In addition, the anti-U.S. population in the West, especially in big cities, must be informed about the programs and goals of GIR. Disinformation about GIR in the West draws the majority of the neutral camp toward the U.S. A concerted information campaign is hence crucial. Again, al-Suri, who has lived in the West and knows the Western mind, wants to capitalize on marginal leftist and anti-globalization movements.

The description of the neutral camp clearly shows that al-Suri hopes to gain support from non-Muslim Western and Asian populations and governments. In much of his writings, he uses a secular leftist and anti-globalization discourse, coupled with programmatic ideas common to such movements. My assumption is that he expects his work to be translated into numerous languages so as to make the "true intentions" of GIRC known and thus draw sympathizers from the non-Muslim world.

## Chapter 6

# The Geopolitical Analysis of al-Suri's Thought: Reasons for the Present Distress of Muslims Worldwide

## The Reality of Muslims after 11 September 2001 — the Global Level

Understanding the dreadful reality of Muslim life, argues al-Suri, is the precondition to solving it.<sup>126</sup> Al-Suri wants to illustrate the problems Muslims experience at present. These problems are related to the question on how to confront the enemy and ultimately determine his strategy. His analysis of the present situation and critique of jihad will later allow al-Suri to plan his strategy and lay its religious and legal foundations. Indeed, he argues, the first chapter of GIRC is the theological basis of any fatwa, since it treats the reality of Muslim life.

Al-Suri first refutes any claim that the catastrophic situation is a result of 9/11. Rather, it is the long-term effect of the Third Crusade. In reality, the attacks of 9/11 were just reactions to the neo-Byzantine aggression controlled by the Jews. The terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 was justified, and was exploited by the media to the detriment of the Muslims. There are three general reasons for this situation namely secularization, material exploitation and the rule of the enemy.

First, growing secularization is a major problem in Islamic society. Muslim governments do not apply the shari'a, but on the contrary try to substitute it with man-made laws. The most holy places of Islam are occupied by Israel, the U.S. or heretics, and the Muslim

126. This section is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, chapter 1, point 4.

creed is corrupted by a constant mass-media offensive via satellite channels that makes Muslims sympathetic towards Western thought, values, and way of life. This, he says, inevitably results in immorality, disobedience and forbidden deeds (*munkarat*). In short, Muslim society lacks righteous Muslims (*ahl al-haqq*).

Second, the dwindling of material wealth incapacitates the Muslims. Today's oil resources are exploited not only with the help of pro-Western puppet regimes, but also by occupying forces. The Muslim treasury is hence practically depleted. Al-Suri once more shows an inclination towards the dependency theory. What's more, the distribution of income is totally imbalanced — a situation which leads to poverty, violence, fear, and creates tremendous social pressure. This in turn has led to the social erosion of Muslim societies that used to be very stable and peaceful, but are now chaotic, e.g. in the Gulf States, Asia and Islamic Africa. This process of erosion intensified after 9/11.

Third, the present-day enemies control the Muslims through direct and indirect military occupation. No single Muslim government opposes Western domination. Moreover, the neo-colonial economy of the West infiltrates Muslim markets to exploit them, create outlet markets and find cheap labor for its own products. This affects the Muslim economy, and its workers become servants of the enemy. Al-Suri leans on anti-Washington consensus critique, a leftist concept that criticizes trade liberalization and its effect on developing economies.<sup>127</sup>

International factors have also contributed to this situation. Among these is the destruction of the Islamic caliphate in Afghanistan in December 2001, which the U.S. and her allies had been planning since 1997. Again, the terrorist attacks in the States offered a welcome opportunity to carry out this plan. The invasion of Afghanistan was the culmination of an attempt to destroy the international jihad awakening

127. Al-Suri again leans on an anti-globalization concept often propounded by leftist intellectuals like Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein. He rephrases the Washington Consensus, a leftist term criticizing exploitation by trade liberalization and the funneling of economic productivity from the labor markets of underdeveloped economies to large multinational companies from more developed countries. The term was coined in the context of Latin America.

(*al-sahwah al-jihadiyyah*). After the dissolution of the Afghan-Arab jihad movement in Afghanistan in 1992, and the return of most fighters to their home countries, the U.S. step by step closed all jihad shelters in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The remaining jihadis returned to Afghanistan, only to be smashed by the U.S. in 2001. Here, al-Suri saw first-hand the awesome air power of the U.S.

The War on Terrorism, one of the most effective strategies of the U.S. in its search for domination of the global security order, goes back thirty years. However, U.S. plans depend on European participation. Hence, the Third Crusade to occupy the Middle East would not have been possible without its extension to NATO and the European Union, other bulwarks of Christianity. Together, those two large factions make international opposition to U.S. aggression almost impossible. The background of this alliance is the Jewish-Talmudic plan for a Greater Israel.

## The Reality of the Muslims after 11 September 2001 — The Islamic level

The catastrophic decline of the Arab and Islamic world in the post-9/11 period may be observed on five levels.<sup>128</sup> These are the Arab and Islamic governments, the Muslim ulama, the Islamic awakening (*al-sahwah al-islamiyyah*), the Islamic *ummah* itself, and the jihad movement (*al-tayyar al-jihadi*).

On the government level, no political institutions any longer hold a common Arab-Islamic stand against the West. The manifold cross-alliances of the U.S. in the Middle East has put the different Arab and Muslim countries under constant pressure. Moreover, the U.S. threatens many of these states militarily. Yet, the only common Arab-Islamic denominator is to compete for the favor of the U.S. and to provide help to the U.S. in exchange for financial, political and military support. This goes especially for the War on Terrorism, and the U.S. drive that Arab and Muslim states "normalize" (*tatbi'*) relations with Israel.

128. This section refers to al-Suri, *GIRC*, chapter 1, point 5.

One prominent example of the betrayal of Arab states is the peace initiative at the Arab summit of 2002 in Beirut, where the Saudi Prince Abdallah Bin 'Abd al-Aziz initiated the process of normalization with Israel without imposing prior conditions. Another example is the Arab summit of 2004 in Tunis, where U.S. President Bush attempted to dictate Tunisian President Bin 'Ali's policies, which led to internal division divisions in Tunisia. The Islamic summit conferences shamelessly confirmed all of the above policies, claims al-Suri.

On the military level, the stationing of U.S. troops in the Arab region acts like a Trojan horse: The U.S. Central Command for the Middle East is now in Qatar; U.S. troops entered western Iraq via Jordan; a massive contingent of U.S.-British troops is stationed in Kuwait, and non U.S.-allied players like Syria turn towards Europe. This leaves room for Iran to mobilize Shiites and their anti-Sunni bluster in Europe and Iraq. Al-Suri summarizes the situation with the verse: "the wolf cannot be blamed for its attack, if the shepherd himself attacks the sheep."<sup>129</sup> This means that, although the U.S. is the "wolf", apostate Arab regimes cause the main damage because they neglect to safeguard their own people.

The Muslim ulema divides into two classes. The silent and fearful ulema are basically good clerics, but they do nothing to support jihad and thus do not teach the central Islamic tenet commanding the good and forbidding evil (*al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-n-nahiy 'an al-munkar*). Much more dangerous are what al-Suri calls the "hypocrites" (*al-munfiqun*), who support the War on Terrorism from the pulpits of the main mosques in Mecca, Medina, Damascus, Casablanca, and other major cities. This is nothing but a misinterpretation of the sacred Islamic law in favor of the U.S.

Examples of this strand of ulema are plenty. The Saudi-regime cleric 'Ayed al-Qarni, a radical who spearheaded a campaign against the U.S. and against Jews<sup>130</sup>, is a condemnable moderate in the eyes of al-Suri because he criticized 9/11. The harshest criticism, however, is aimed at 'Abd al-Muhisin al-'Abikan, whom al-Suri

129. "La yu'lim al-dhi'b fi 'udwanihi . in yak {un} al-ra'iy 'adu al-ghanam."

130. Memri Special Dispatch Series, No. 886 (<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP88605/>).

calls the "Satan of the ulema." Al-'Abikan stated on television that according to Islamic law the jihad in Iraq was not legal. The basic problem, laments al-Suri, is that there are no clerical authorities like Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) and no noted Hadith collectors like Abu Da'wud (817-888), who gave a radical interpretation of Islamic law. Together with a pious commander like Salah al-Din (1137-1193), who expelled the crusaders, the clerical authorities could put an end to Muslim suffering.

Al-Suri also criticizes today's Islamic awakening (*al-sahwah al-islamiyyah*),<sup>131</sup> which is scattered over various political parties, non-political movements, and associations without participating in jihad. They are either onlookers, or hide behind the cloak of neutrality. He mainly condemns the "democratic Islamists", their reform programs, their gradual approach, and reasoning. They are, he says, afraid of every Islamic word uttered in public because the security forces have completely intimidated them. Moreover, they want to avoid any connection with al-Qaeda. Many of them participate in an informational war against the jihad movement, and are therefore an integral part of the New World Order. This applies to the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood movement and, even worse, to jihad groups that have negotiated truce agreements with Arab governments. Examples are the Syrian Brotherhood in the mid-1980s and the Egyptian Islamic Group in the late 1990s.

The Islamic ummah is in even worse shape. For al-Suri, the spirit of the Islamic nation is dead and its conscience is erring. Also here the media, influenced by the West, plays a destructive role. As before, al-Suri often mentions the program *Star Academy* on the Lebanese channel LBC to illustrate this. To him, the popular program symbolizes moral decadence. The following personal experience of al-Suri shall serve as an eye-opener. When al-Suri spent Sylvester night in a Muslim country in 2003, working on GIRC, he suddenly realized that Muslims were celebrating the Christian New Year at midnight. This

131. The term Islamic awakening (*al-sahwah al-islamiyyah*) describes the political Islamist movement since the 1930s. Yet, al-Suri here refers to today's Islamists in the context of post 9/11. See a short and practical summary of the Islamic awakening on page 618 of the GIRC (internal document number on top of page).



implied nothing but alcohol, dancing, and prostitution — encouraged by the media. At the same time, brutal wars were waged in Muslim countries, like Chechnya and Palestine.

Yet, al-Suri still hopes that the U.S. invasion of Iraq will create a fertile ground for terrorism. Indeed, the sporadic actions of the resistance, which are still limited to individual initiatives, do indicate that the revolutionary climate is heating up. In contrast to passive and inactive Muslims, the attackers of 9/11 shall serve as models. They are the "falcons of Islam". Surat al-Nur, Qur'an 24:55 shows what they will achieve: "Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; ..." <sup>132</sup>

The present persecution has put the jihad movement in jeopardy. The clash between Islam and the West, dubbed "War on Terrorism", is a far cry from prior confrontations with Arab-Muslim governments. It is a real world war, and causes more damage than any conflict in the past. Al-Suri claims that the "biggest security campaign in history" verifies the millenarian prophetic Hadith about the end of time: "then they spread the darkness until the believer doesn't find a place to go to."

132. "...that He will establish in authority their religion — the one which He has chosen for them: and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: 'They will worship Me (alone) and not associate with Me. If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked,' Qur'an 24:55 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/Quran/02407.htm/>).

## The International War on Terrorism (1990–2000) and the Gradual Destruction of the Jihad Movement

With the term "fight against terror" (*mukafahat al-irhab*), al-Suri refers to the U.S.-led anti-terrorist policies since 1990. <sup>133</sup> Hence, al-Suri claims, the so-called post-9/11 War on Terrorism is just an extension of a process that began in the 1990s with international security conferences. In the period from 1990 to 2000, he adds, Western security cooperation developed from the state to the regional and international levels. He points to the worldwide anti-terrorist meetings in Barcelona, Paris, Milan, and Sharm el-Sheikh. <sup>134</sup> In addition, Arab ministers of the interior gather frequently to coordinate their anti-terrorist policies on the regional level and discuss counter-terrorism measures. This global security cooperation has caused unprecedented isolation and damage to the jihad movement and its affiliates, even before the U.S. retaliation to 9/11.

The financial network of jihad organizations has also come under attack, preventing access to their bank accounts. In addition, jihad cadres and leaders were sharply reduced by targeted assassinations and arrests, which started in the late 1980s with the assassinations of the radical preachers Tamim 'Adnani and Abdallah Azzam. Countless assassinations, kidnappings and arrests followed in the 1990s, sometimes targeting the wrong people. <sup>135</sup> Mutual extradition

133. This section refers to al-Suri, *GlRC*, chapter 6, subpoint 13, *Al-khutut al-'aridah li-l-baramij al-'alamiyyah li-mukafahat al-irhab 1990-2000* ("The vast plans of the worldwide programs to fight terrorism 1990 to 2000").

134. Al-Suri probably speaks about the anti-terrorism conferences in Barcelona 1995 (Nov 27–28), Paris 1996 (July 27), Sharm el-Sheikh 2001/2003 and Milan 2003.

135. Al-Suri mentions here the assassination of Anwar Sha'ban, the Egyptian jihad leader in Bosnia in 1996, the kidnapping of the Emir of the Egyptian Islamic Group (*al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah*) Fu'ad Qasim in Croatia in August 1995, and the arrest of the Egyptian zealot Sheikh 'Omar 'Abd al-Rahman in connection with the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 (convicted in 1995). He laments that even the

agreements made escape for jihadis impossible. Instead, they were oftentimes arrested in the West, to be forcibly transferred and tortured in their home countries. The expansion of anti-terrorist laws have reduced the rights of foreigners in European states like France, Great Britain and Scandinavia, and affected exiled jihadis. In addition, a vicious information war helped to demonize the jihadis and their struggles.

In the period between 1975 and 1995, security campaigns were coordinated at state level. Locally persecuted jihad groups found temporary shelters, training bases and support in neighboring Arab countries, and were supported by governments who were on a rival footing with the jihadis' home countries. In the Middle East, superpower rivalry was fought by Arab proxy states. Inter-Arab rivalries of local governments on the other hand were fought by different radical groups. The existing conflicts between rival regional systems, aligned either with the West or with the Soviet Union, helped jihad groups to evade persecution in their home countries. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the possibility to exploit proxy conflicts and super power rivalries gradually disappeared. This very accurately describes al-Suri's own experience as member of the Syrian Fighting Vanguard (*al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah*).

After 1991 the fight against jihad groups gradually shifted to the regional level. The Saudi Minister of Interior Nayef bin 'Abd al-'Aziz initiated the first Conference of Arab Ministers of Interior to coordinate a common Arab security strategy. This prevented Egyptian, Libyan, Moroccan, Algerian, and other jihad groups from crossing into bordering Arab states, receive military training, meet other militant leftist or Islamist groups, and pursue their aim of igniting a local revolution. Al-Suri also relates to European security cooperation against the secular IRA and ETA, or the Turkish-Syrian cooperation against the Kurdish PKK. All of these organizations lost their local shelters.

Security cooperation on the international level began with the U.S. policy on terrorism in 1995 (U.S. Presidential Decision Directive [PDD] 39 under Clinton). The U.S. policy drained European and Middle Eastern shelters like Bosnia and Sudan, and constricted the remnants of the jihad movement in Afghanistan, finally shattering it in 2001. This policy also ended the "period of shelters" (1992–1996) after the Afghan jihad (1984–1992) and before the return of foreign jihadis to Afghanistan (1996–2001). Repressive Arab secret services started to cooperate fully with countless CIA and, according to al-Suri, FBI offices in the Middle East.

The second period of refuge in Afghanistan (1996–2001) began with the return from Sudan of the al-Qaeda hardcore centered around Bin Laden. From a security perspective this shelter wasn't ideal either, for which Al-Suri explicitly criticizes the Taliban. Foreign jihadis were sometimes placed under house arrest in the training camps in Afghanistan when international pressure on the Taliban rose. Al-Suri speaks of restricted movement and "forced residence". Moreover, it was difficult for foreign jihadis to leave Afghanistan via Pakistan because headhunters seemed to operate in the border region. He further discusses the role of CIA and FBI agents operating from Pakistani territory in his book *Pakistan Musharaf — Al-Mushkilah wa-l-hall wa-l-faridah al-muta'ayyanah* (Musharaf's Pakistan — The Problem and the solution and the incumbent individual religious obligation [for jihad]).

moderate Saudi Islamists Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-'Audah were arrested in 1994 and 1998. For further info on some of these arrests see Amnesty International — Middle East and North Africa Report 1999; <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aireport/ar99/mde23.htm/>.

## Chapter 7

### Al-Suri's Critique of Jihad

#### Jihad Errors Committed over the Last 40 Years and Suggested Corrections

Al-Suri's criticism of jihad is a brilliant example of jihad strategic analysis. In his view, merciless self-criticism is conducive to thorough reform of the jihad movement and to detailed insight into jihad thought, organizational structures and methods. Most Islamist ideologues blame internal failures on external conspiracies. Yet, al-Suri categorically rejects this approach. As a military strategist, he does not project mistakes, his critique of the Algerian jihad being an exception.<sup>136</sup> This approach is reminiscent of secular guerilla warfare carried out by secular groups, where self-criticism is regarded as a standard method of instruction, aspiring to enhance the persuasiveness of propaganda. Al-Suri's object is to build a bridge for the third generation of jihadis. He takes an almost paternal interest in them and sees himself in the role of a physician who prescribes the right therapy to his patients.

The critique concerns a specific spectrum of the armed jihad phenomenon (*al-zahirah al-jihadiyyah al-musallahah*) that developed between the 1960s and 1990s, namely Salafi jihad groups (*al-jama'at al-salafiyyah al-jihadiyyah*) with a manifest Islamist methodology that provides ideal solutions to all political, doctrinal and Islamic legal questions. Al-Suri points to two kinds of programmatic jihad groups (*al-jama'at al-manhajyyah*).<sup>137</sup>

136. Al-Suri claims that the Algerian jihad, in which he was heavily involved as an ideologue for the GIA, was infiltrated by secret services who laid the seeds for *takfir*. This has personal reasons, because he tries to avert accusations against him and minimize his own guilt.

137. According to al-Suri, the jihad-phenomenon divides into programmatic groups (*jama'at manhajyyah*) and non-programmatic groups (*jama'at ghayr manhajyyah*). The latter ones are nationalist groups, also called

- 1) The *haraki-jihadi* groups (*al-jama'at al-jihadiyyah al-harakiyyah*), which evolved from the Egyptian Islamic awakening (*al-sahwah al-islamiyyah*) in the early 1960s.

Though they originate intellectually from the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-fikr al-ikhwani*), their ideology is heavily informed by Sayyid Qutb's concepts of dynamism (*harrakiyah*) and divine sovereignty (*hakimiyah*). The concept of neo-jahiliyah — formulated by the Indian Islamist thinker Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi and further expounded by Qutb — also played an important role in the evolvment of these groups' ideological tenets.

- 2) The Salafi jihad groups (*al-jama'at al-jihadiyyah al-salafiyyah*). In the late 1970s, a fusion took place between the earlier *haraki-jihadi* concept and the *fiqh* of Ibn Taymiyyah.<sup>138</sup> An even more purist Salafi school of thought filtered Ibn Taymiyyah's theology through the lens of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab's ideology, and entered the Afghan jihad movement in the late 1980s. This school was the radical Saudi Arabian proselytism (*wahhabi da'wah*). Other, modern, jihad ideologues contributed to this thought. The jihad groups of the 1980s and 1990s are also called the Salafi jihad school (*al-madrasa al-jihadiyyah al-salafiyyah*).

Although Sayyid Qutb relied heavily on Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Suri calls him a "dynamic jihadi", instead of "Salafi jihadi." This seems to be a common internal Salafi jihad distinction, which emphasizes Qutb's own innovations. Qutb's concept of "dynamism" (*harakiyah*) seems to be the main distinguishing factor here. *Harakiyah* refers to an active, social revolutionary approach to Islamic law, unrestricted by traditional concepts of obedience to secular or traditional authority, and focuses on a practical, Everyman's application of Islamic law. The ultimate objective of a "dynamic" exegesis on the base of *fiqh al-waqi'* (reality-oriented jurisprudence) is an Islamic form of government, for

fighting groups (*jama'at mujahidu*) or individual fighters (*mujahidun*), who defend Islam against foreign aggressors or things deemed un-Islamic, without, however, having a specific Islamic political program on their own. Al-Suri, *GIRC, Ta'rif al-tayyar al-jihadi wa tasnifihi* (Definition of the jihad-movement and its categories), chapter 6.

138. Via Egyptian Islamists, Ibn Taymiyyah's *fiqh* spread first from Saudi Arabi to Egypt, then to Syria and later to the rest of the Arab world.

which Qutb used the neologism *hakimiyah* (divine sovereignty). This objective must be fulfilled through armed jihad.

The jihad movement (*al-tayyar al-jihadi*), then, comprises a range of various groups that arose out of the *haraki* jihad and salafi jihad schools on a local basis and with the aim of overthrowing the existing regimes and building an Islamic state order. Most organizations share the three common principles of secret action (*sirriyat al-harakah*), regional objectives (*qutriyat al-ahdaf*) and a pyramid-shaped organizational structure (*haramiyat al-hana' al-tanzimi*), observes al-Suri.<sup>139</sup> Examples include the Moroccan *Harakat al-Shabihah*, the Syrian *al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah*, and the Egyptian *Tanzim al-Jihad* among twenty-five "paradigmatic jihad movements."

Al-Suri attributes different external reasons to the failure of the jihad groups to reach their goals, most notably the imbalance of power and severity of the enemy's attack (see chapters 5 and 6). Yet, he warns that obvious internal factors should not be ignored. Hence, he addresses three topics with the aim of distilling the perfect program (*manhaj*) structure and method for the future Global Islamic Resistance:

- Programmatic and ideological mistakes (*akhta' fi l-manhaj wa-l-tafkir*)
- Institutional and structural mistakes (*akhta' fi-l-bunyah wa-l-haykal*)
- Methodological mistakes (*akhta' fi-l-uslub wa-l-masir*)

### 1. Intellectual misconceptions of jihad organizations

Al-Suri enters into a lengthy critique of a way of thinking that incapacitates the jihad movement.<sup>140</sup> An extremist himself, he accuses the jihad groups of fanaticism and exaggeration caused by Wahhabi-Salafi influence paired with a weak pedagogic and an over-emphasis on military education.

139. Al-Suri, *GIRC, Ta'rif al-tayyar al-jihadi wa tasnifihi* (Definition of the jihad-movement and its categories), chapter 6.

140. The following section is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 1, chapter 7, subsection *Akhta' al-manhaj wa-l-tafkir* ("Programmatic and thinking-mistakes").

One of the main concerns of al-Suri is the restrictive influence of the Wahhabi doctrine on the current jihad agenda. He wants to strengthen the global jihad agenda, i.e. carry terrorism to the outside world, and feels that the Wahhabi doctrine is limited to the purification of faith within the Muslim world.

Conceptually, the jihad movement developed in two stages — the Qutbian stage of the 1960s (*al-marhalah al-fikriyyah al-harakiyyah*) and the stage of Salafi jihad thought of the 1980s (*marhalat al-fikr al-jihadi al-salafi*). In the early 1980s, Salafi *fiqh* (jurisprudence) was of great value because it closed the jurisprudential gaps of the jihad trend, which Qutb or the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* were not able to fill. Al-Suri refers especially to Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwa on the Mongol Tartars, which by analogy justified the overthrow of modern rulers. Ibn Taymiyyah argued that the Mongols, who repeatedly raided the Arab Middle East in the thirteenth century, remained pagans even after they professed the article of faith (*shahadah*). It was the Egyptian ideologue, 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, who adapted this fatwa to modern times. Faraj did not focus on external attackers, but used the fatwa to strengthen the internal agenda of jihad, namely to declare present Muslim rulers apostates and thus justify the struggle against them. Al-Suri sees this as a very positive development. Yet, he warns that during the first stage of the Arab-Afghan struggle, i.e. the participation of international jihad volunteers who were called the "Arab-Afghans" in the Afghan struggle, in the late 1980s, Salafi *fiqh*, as interpreted through the lense of the Saudi Wahhabis, had a very adverse effect on the jihad movement.

Al-Suri claims that the influx of purist and fanatical Wahhabi disciples from the contemporary Salafi movement (*al-tayyar al-salafi al-mu'asir*) from Saudi Arabia into the Afghan-Arab jihad-movement has caused a major crisis. First, minor methodological and doctrinal problems overshadow the jihad discourse. Later, Heavy disputes have broken out over the right application of faith with other Islamic circles. The basic problem, he argues, is the mixing of two movements with very different objectives. Typically, the Wahhabis want to rescue Islam from what they perceive to be innovation (*bida'*), a term with utterly negative connotations in Wahhabi discourse. Changed prayer rituals are innovations and, therefore, sins, as well as superstitions, deviances,

heresies and idolatries. Thus, under Wahhabi influence jihadis have become doctrinal fanatics and lost clear jihad objectives.<sup>141</sup> The major point of disagreement between them concerned the question of jihad versus religious purification. The outward-turned radicalism of the jihadis and the inward-turned purism of the Wahhabis are reversed ways of looking at the surrounding world, yet similar in their extremism. The critique of the deviant practices of fellow Muslims, mixed with jihad against the enemies of Islam, has become a dangerous doctrinal hybrid ("Salafabism").

In order to understand the concept of "Salafabism", we should look briefly at its components. The Salafism (*salafiyyah*) of the late-nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century describes an "Islamic modernizing effort to challenge Western political and cultural dominance. It sought to free Islam of the shackles of traditionalism by a return to the example of the pious ancestors (the *salaf*), and thus restore its initial strength. By its ever growing rejection of the religious institutions of later generations — the schools of law and mystical orders — it made room for modern organizations such as the Muslim Brothers and the national movement. The *sahwah* (awakening) of the second half of the twentieth century expresses Islamic disillusionment with the secular authoritarian military regimes that swept the Middle East after independence. This most radical type of revival has turned against the modern all-pervasive secularized state and seeks to replace nationalism with Islam..."<sup>142</sup> Al-Suri calls this post-1960s trend *sahwah jihadtiyyah*, which in the 1980s developed into Salafi jihadism. In contrast, he refers to earlier intellectual Salafism, advanced by the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century thinkers Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, as *salafiyyah taqlidiyyah* (traditional Salafism).

141. While the first and second generation of jihadis (1965–1985) still produced their own literary output and education (*tarbiyah*), a new class of jihadis originated with the first generation of Afghan-Arabs (1984–1992). They were trained by Saudi cadres and influenced by the purist Salafi doctrine.

142. Itzhak Weismann, "Sa'id Hawwa and Islamic Revivalism in Ba'thist Syria," *Studia Islamica* 85 (1997), pp. 131–154.

Wahhabism goes back to the late eighteenth century. It is a Sunni fundamentalist movement named after its founder Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792). Saudi Arabia's intellectual foundation on Wahhabi thought in the early twentieth century, and its legendary oil wealth since the 1970s helped to export Wahhabism's anti-rationalism, anti-intellectualism, anti-mysticism and strict literalism to other countries of the Muslim World via religious schools, mosques and preachers. Followers of 'Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine do not call themselves Wahhabis, but *al-Muwahhidun* or *Ahl al-Tawhid* (Asserters of Divine Unity).<sup>143</sup> Moreover, Wahhabis have consistently described themselves as Salafis (adherents of Salafism).<sup>144</sup> The term Wahhabis is used mainly by opponents and has a derogatory meaning.

The term Salafism describes the merger between Salafism and Wahhabism into a hybrid ideology that inherited both Salafi and Wahhabi mindsets and worldviews. This merger is also called "neo-traditional Salafism" (NTS).<sup>145</sup> El-Fadl elaborates:

Wahhabism proceeded to co-opt the language and symbolisms of Salafism in the 1970s until the two had become practically indistinguishable. Both theologies imagined a golden age in Islam; this entailed belief in a historical utopia that is entirely retrievable and reproducible in contemporary Islam. Both remained uninterested in critical historical inquiry and responded to the challenge of modernity by escaping to the secure haven of the text. And both advocated a form of egalitarianism and anti-elitism to the point that they came to consider intellectualism and rational moral insight to be inaccessible, and thus corruptions of the purity of the Islamic

143. Using the word "Wahhabi" would imply the worship of a person (Abd al-Wahhab), which is taboo.

144. Paul Aarts, "The Internal and the External: The House of Saud's Resilience Explained," *European University Institute (EUI) Working Papers*, Vol. 33 (2004) ([http://cadmus.iue.it/dspace/bitstream/1814/2775/1/04\\_33.pdf/](http://cadmus.iue.it/dspace/bitstream/1814/2775/1/04_33.pdf/)).

145. Adis Duderija, "Islamic Groups and their Worldviews and Identities: Neo-Traditional Salafis and Progressive Muslims," on Muslim webforum *Understanding Islam*, posted 24 August 2006 (<http://www.understanding-islam.org/related/text.asp?type=article&raid=442>).

message. These similarities facilitated the Wahhabi co-optation of Salafism...I will call this unity of Wahhabism with the worst that is in Salafism. "Salafism."<sup>146</sup>

Al-Suri describes how Salafism originated, approaching it from a jihadi perspective. He argues that the distinction between politically oriented Egyptian Salafism and quietist but ultra-strict Saudi Wahhabism became blurred in the 1980s. He doesn't further clarify this, but does claim that the topic requires further study. His expression "contemporary-salafi movement" is a pejorative term for today's Wahhabis. When he speaks about "traditional Salafism", he refers to late nineteenth century Salafism. And when he speaks about Salafi jihadis, he seems to include the main tenets of Qutbist ideology of the 1960s, namely that Islam is heading towards a new era of pre-Islamic "moral ignorance" (*jahiliyah*). Moreover, he adds, in the early 1980s Qutbism merged with a new radical revivalist trend that utilized fatwas of thirteenth-century Hanbali-Salafis to compare present Muslim rulers to the heathen Tartar Mongols. According to him, these seem to be the two basic tenets of Salafi jihad thought.

The doctrine of *takfir*, claims al-Suri, developed at the cutoff point between the jihad and Salafi movements. *Takfirism* is basically an overzealous interpretation of the *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (friendship and enmity) doctrine against fellow Muslims, and can be traced back to poor education. Al-Suri acknowledges that the jihad movement was especially prone to this "disease". By nature, he observes, jihadis are zealots, which makes them an easy prey to the purist doctrine of the Wahhabis.

Al-Suri follows the tradition of Abdallah Azzam to criticize doctrinal disputes among the Sunnis.<sup>147</sup> He invokes his own experiences in Afghanistan, where the main problem was the frequent accusation of innovation (*bida'*) among the jihadis. At times, this concerned

146. Khaled Abou el-Fadl, "The Orphans of Modernity and the Clash of Civilizations," *Global Dialogue* 4 (2002) (<http://www.scholarofthehouse.com/orofmodandcl.html/>) (1–16).

147. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, subsection 1, point 9 *Mas'alat al-khilaf al-'aqa'idi wa-l-madhhabi dimna ahl al-sunnah* ("The problem of doctrinal and school-disputes among the Sunnis").

quite insignificant events. On one occasion, a jihadi accused al-Suri of innovation because he did not raise his hands during bowing in prayer (*ruku'*). These are problems of the neo-Salafi (or Wahhabi) movement, claims al-Suri, and not of the jihadis. Yet, al-Suri supports the view that the Salafi jihad school incorporated the thirteenth-century Hanbali jurisprudence of Ibn Taymiyyah, and thus main elements of Wahhabi-*fiqh*, into its ideology. Moreover, it seems that both al-Suri and his ideological mentor Azzam appreciate radical doctrinal elements of Saudi Wahhabism, while rejecting its method (*manhaj*) of focusing on the revival of religious rituals and practice. There is an inherent contradiction in the ideology of al-Suri, which is based on the same fanatic Wahhabi doctrines he claims to reject. A key to understanding this contradiction is his concern that applying the shari'a is less important than practicing jihad, a typical feature of global jihad ideology.

As we have already seen, al-Suri distinguishes between Salafis and neo-Salafis. For him, neo-Salafis are Wahhabis who have appropriated the language and symbols of Salafi jihadism. Yet, they have no tradition of political activism or of challenging official authority, and they are much too narrow-minded to develop a comprehensive jihad concept. The Salafi jihad trend, in contrast, is a post-1920s offshoot of a politically orientated Egyptian Salafism, yet it suffered, especially since the Afghanistan jihad in the 1980s, from an influx of Wahhabi views and strict interpretation of their faith. Thus, al-Suri concludes that detachment from the Wahhabis is necessary because

- neo-Salafis [Wahhabis] split the *ummah* with their doctrinaire and legalistic disputes, so that jihadis have to reunify the *ummah* against the outside enemy.
- the majority of the *ummah* are not Salafis. The ulema mostly follow the mainstream Sunni *asha'irah* school, and not the Salafi school. However, it is of secondary importance to which school a jihadi belongs, since he must first and foremost be willing to fight — a fact which Abdallah Azzam explained in his book *Doctrine and its influence on building the generation*.<sup>148</sup>

148. Ibid. The Arabic title of Azzam's book is *Al-'aqidah wa atharuhā fi banna' al-jil*. I compared al-Suri's lengthy quotations from the book to

- the insistence on radically exclusive Salafi concepts has caused loss of popularity and isolation. Between 1990 and 2000, this led to a media war between Islamic factions (*al-awsat al-Islamiyyah*) and caused anarchy in Islamic legal affairs (*fawda fiqhiyyah*). Moreover, the neurotic mentality of the jihadis under Wahhabi influence has led to the proliferation of the *takfir* doctrine.

Al-Suri also claims that the intellectual base of the Salafi jihad movement is minimal in comparison to those of other ideological schools of the Islamic awakening. He divides its intellectual development into three stages. Sayyid Qutb's ideas make up the core principles of the Salafi jihad movement.<sup>149</sup> A second intellectual faction around Qutb's ideas developed in the late 1970s. Prominent thinkers of this group were mainly Egyptians and included the blind Egyptian Sheikh Omar 'Abd al-Rahman, 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, and 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz.<sup>150</sup> By the late 1970s, and with their help, the jurisprudence of Ibn Taymiyyah had become the ideological basis of two important groups, the Egyptian *Tanzim al-Jihad* (Jihad Organization) and *al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Group). The third faction is inspired by the Afghan-Arab literature of the late 1990s, and is based on Qutbist dynamism (*harakiyyah qutbiyyah*) and a new Salafi jurisprudence filtered through the radical lenses of Saudi Wahhabism. Yet, none of the groups inspired by Salafi jihad thinking

the version published in Beirut by Dar ibn Hazm, 1996.

149. Al-Suri claims that the radical strand of Muslim Brotherhood literature that followed was either a mere repetition, or an interpretation, or a re-formulation of Qutb. Salafi-*fiqh* (Salafi-jurisprudence) details are the only contributions worth mentioning.
150. Sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman was leader of the Islamic Group (*al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah*) during the 1980s and presently serves a life sentence in the U.S. for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Abd al-Salam Faraj was the chief ideologue of the al-Jihad Organization (*Tanzim al-Jihad*) and was executed in 1981 for his involvement in the assassination of Sadat. 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz was Mufti of *Tanzim al-Jihad* ("The [Egyptian] Jihad Organization") and an influential ideologue in Afghanistan. He was arrested in Yemen in October 2001 and extradited to Egypt in February 2004.

conceives of a comprehensive strategy to achieve an exchange of secular with Islamic law (*taghyir al-ahkam*) on the military, political, social-economic and cultural fronts. Although the above distinctions have no support in current academic literature, they offer an important insight into the internal terminology of the jihad movement through the lens of al-Suri.

He claims that the overtly practical orientation of the jihad movement generally leads to a low literary output and that nobody explores contemporary issues. For most trainees education is limited to firing bullets. But this totally contradicts al-Suri's claim that "knowledge became the most important weapon. It is impossible that uneducated ignorants lead this struggle. We may even have to break [our pledges of] faith to them."<sup>151</sup>

The solution is self-evident. In order to raise the level of education, jihadis must apply *fiqh al-waqi'* (a reality-oriented jurisprudence). Many political Islamist groups and parties in the second half of the twentieth century (*al-sahwah al-siyyasiyyah*) were successful in this. But all schools of the missionary, reformist Salafi, and especially jihad awakening (*al-sahwah al-jihadiyyah*), failed both in comprehending reality and expanding their knowledge of civilization. With this description, al-Suri again shows the wide scope of the modern Islamic phenomenon and offers two key concepts: reality and civilization. These terms refer to Sayyid Qutb's realistic jurisprudence and al-Suri's "clash of civilizations" approach, which is based on a conspiracy of the West against Islam (see Chapter 5, section "The Third Crusade of the West against Islam" of this book).

Internal jihad struggles are good illustrations of a failed *fiqh al-waqi'*. The internal jihad concept lacks any notion of jihad against an outside attacker. In a nutshell, between 1960 and 1990 the literal interpretation of Qur'an 9:123 "O ye who believe! fight the unbelievers who gird you about"<sup>152</sup> epitomized the idea of jihad against the near enemy (*al-'adu al-qarib*). This legal interpretation was relevant to confrontations with local regimes. But within a unipolar world order led by an international enemy constellation it has become obsolete. Jihadis must avoid fighting where the enemy

dictates the battle, and instead draw the enemy into battlefields that seem favorable to the jihadis, claims al-Suri.

Yet, the imperative to fight the near enemy holds. Al-Suri wants to integrate local struggles into his global strategy. While he rejects local strategies, he supports the 1980s and 1990s *fiqh* of the Salafi jihad movement, based on Ibn Taymiyyah's edicts to fight only nominal Muslim rulers. According to *asbab al-nuzul*, which is a genre of Qur'anic exegesis regarding the circumstances of revelation, the above-mentioned verse refers to the wars of the Prophet against the Byzantines. Since local regimes throughout the Middle East are at present allied with the neo-Byzantines led by the U.S., they are the first enemies to be attacked.

In summary, al-Suri's critique of jihad thinking led him to call for:

1. comprehensive education for global jihad against the U.S. and its allies and integrating local struggles within a global strategy;
2. the curbing of doctrinal Wahhabi influence. Yet, taking distance from Western culture and mores, and ousting heretic rulers are crucial meeting points of radical Wahhabi and Salafi jihad doctrines;
3. declaring Muslim regimes and collaborators with the West infidels (*takfir*), but not applying it to civilian populations.

## 2. The structural mistakes of jihad organizations

According to al-Suri, all jihad groups are founded on three principles:

- secret action (*sirriyat al-harakah*)
- pyramidal structure (*bunyah haramiyyah*)
- regional objectives (*qutriyat al-ahdaf*)<sup>153</sup>

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, experience has shown that these principles all too often lead to defeat. Indeed, the same problems are encountered over and over: detection by state security apparatuses, premature entry into battle, decimation of skilled cadres, breakdown of propaganda and of recruitment networks, and organizational fragmentation.

151. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Introduction.

152. Qur'an 9:123 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00916.htm/>).

153. The following section is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, Part 1, Chapter 7, "Akhta' fi-l-bunyah wa-l-haykal."



First, secretiveness is counterproductive to publicity. In addition, it also affects the four cornerstones of jihad: education, preparation, propaganda and recruiting. In the early stages of the jihad movement, secretiveness was an obligatory measure to avoid state repression, as advised by a Qutbist strategy. But international security cooperation and brutal repression drove the jihad organizations too far underground, claims al-Suri. The more secretive they became, the more their effectiveness and popularity deteriorated. Even popular jihad groups like the Syrian *al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah*, or the Egyptian *Tanzim al-Jihad* and *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah* were dwarfed by their host populations.

If the key to high level performance is education (*tarbiyah*), then secret cells are counter-productive. All training hinges on meetings with a single leader. He alone prepares the cell (*i'dad*) in practical and theoretical aspects. Meetings seldomly take place more than once a week, and are sometimes dropped altogether if the security situation is bad.<sup>154</sup> That also affects propagandists, who fill a very sensitive position and need time to analyze the persons they want to recruit.

Second, jihad organizations have a pyramidal structure (*bunyah haramiyyah*), which causes great security problems. The problems start with the way the pyramidal organization is built. Initially, a few individuals define the program and goals. Then they pledge allegiance to an emir among them. The first group thus forms the leadership and the *shura* council. At the same time, it is the head of the pyramid, and carries out the recruitments. Every founding member becomes

154. In contrast, some of the first cadres of the early jihad groups were well prepared before they went underground, using mosques, public and quasi-public Islamic groups as preparation grounds. As a result they achieved a high level of performance (*ada' jihadi 'ali*). Yet, these cadres perished. They became cannon fodder in unnecessary battles, were arrested or emigrated. Unfit cadres without Islamist background, mostly common people (*'awamm*), succeeded them. Oftentimes security apparatuses detected the groups during the first stage of preparation. Following, the preparation had to continue during the battle. Yet, abrasion had already begun. This required new recruitments. But forced security and secretive measures did not allow for either recruitment or propagation.

responsible for another cell. This system is duplicated over and over. This so-called mode of "dynamic building" (*bana' haraki*) has the advantage of enabling a more effective control over the affairs of the entire organization as orders are issued from above. Then, reports and ideas are channeled back from below. On the other hand, the system becomes vulnerable to information leaks.

Arrested jihadis often cannot withstand brutal torture and interrogation. Mostly, they disclose everything they know. Al-Suri claims that the pyramid organization resembles a liquid-filled plastic bag with holes through which the information leaks. Some jihad groups tried to develop variations of the pyramid structure, such as the "threadlike structure" or the "clusterlike structure." However, the communication channels between the single threads still lead back to the head of the pyramid.

Third, the jihad organizations in the second half of the twentieth century were regionally oriented. They operated within borders drawn by Western colonialists and had nationally limited aims. Few Arab countries offer geographic or demographic conditions conducive to jihad guerilla warfare, the topography is not diverse enough, the borders do not allow for easy crossing, and the populations are too small. These factors prevented a successful guerilla war, which could escalate gradually and spread from country to country in a comprehensive guerilla war.

Another major problem that concerns the structure of jihad organizations is the fact that the leadership is often in exile. The leadership forms the first cadre of a group that for security reasons had to seek refuge abroad. From there they continued to direct affairs in their home countries and communicated via messengers, telephone and fax with a loyal group, i.e. with the local leadership. This method proved to be deadly for such organizations.

Al-Suri experienced it first-hand as member of the Syrian *al-Tali'ah al-Muqatilah*. He claims that exiled leaderships lose touch with the local reality. The leadership of the Syrian Muslim Brothers, for example, established itself in Baghdad and Amman, and issued unsuitable military and political directives to the local leadership in Syria. The local leadership obeyed because it needed the money that came with the orders and felt bound by a pledge of allegiance (*bay'ah*),

which in al-Suri's view was contestable given the mismanagement by the exiles.

The nature of the *bay'ah* in jihad organizations is very problematic, laments al-Suri. The rights and duties of the emir and the members, or the relationship between emir, members and organizations are unclear. At times, different jihad organizations in the same country fight each other over the pledge of allegiance. If a member wants to leave an organization, he may be excommunicated. In addition, the emir or a consultative council (*shura*) can also expel a member. Leaders of traditional jihad organizations have altogether too much power, he adds.

Prolonged quarrels about the formation and decision-making of the *shura* fragmented the jihad movement, as groups split over and over again, forming ever-increasing numbers of organizations. Al-Suri speaks about "amoebae-like organizations," which split endlessly, like protean organisms. Irrelevant of whether groups chose the principle of obligatory consultation, non-obligatory consultation, or a mixture of both, all efforts to build an efficient and cohesive administration failed.<sup>155</sup> In short, persecution, concealment, exile and paucity of qualified cadres only too often exacerbate structural deficiencies.

Jihad organizations also suffer financial difficulties. Organizations that are elitist instead of public are frequently deprived of a potential financial base at home. Therefore, they resort to external financing, which is rarely interest-free. Still, this support, which mostly comes from the Gulf States Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, seldom suffices.

As an alternative to the above-summarized weaknesses, al-Suri suggests that Global Islamic Resistance should use small and mobile guerilla gangs (*'asabat khafifah*) in combination with individual

155. The majority of groups chose the principle of obligatory consultation (*shura mulzamah*) where the emir must exercise the decision of the the consultation council (*majlis al shura*). The minority of groups chose the principle of non-obligatory consultation (*ghayr mulzamah*). The emir may take his own decision after he has heard the opinion of the leadership of the group. Some groups combined both principles: They chose obligatory consultation for strategic decisions, and non-obligatory consultation for tactical decisions.

terrorism (*irhab fardi*).<sup>156</sup> Motivated individuals are not called upon to join distant fronts, as in the Afghanistan jihad (1984–1992), but are expected to stay where they are and operate locally. At the moment, what al-Suri calls "open fronts," i.e. guerilla-based resistance in Muslim countries occupied by foreign powers, are not viable because the U.S. possesses enormous air superiority. However, if certain local conditions allow for an open front, it shall be established, such as in Iraq. It is crucial because a larger central squadron, i.e. a GIR mother-cell (*sariyah markaziyyah*) can be established on its territory, which may be responsible for strategic guidance, political work, and propaganda. Al-Qaeda's building of a political wing in Iraq confirms this exactly.<sup>157</sup> At a later stage in the strategy, the plan is to construct an Islamic state or states within the political space cleared by open fronts.

The small operational units are called Squadrons of Global Islamic Resistance (*saraya al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah*). The slogan of GIR squadrons is *nizam la tanzim* (System, not Organization). This refers to a system of thought and action that shall allow worldwide participation in terrorist attacks, yet prevent infiltration by security apparatuses. The only common denominators are name, ideology, and objective. Otherwise, nothing connects one squadron or cell to another. The pledge of allegiance is sworn to Allah himself and not to an emir.

An average cell should not have more than 5 to 10 members. The best size would be 1 to 3 members. A cell can develop, when an individual decides to enter GIR and build a cell. There are sufficient resources for self-managed training, says al-Suri.

The "call" (*nida'*) for Global Islamic Resistance instructs the squadrons on how to form a cell:

1. What we call for doesn't require membership in an organization, a journey, emigration (*hijrah*), or a change of life.

156. The following section is mainly based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, subsections 4 and 5.

157. Allister Bull, "Al Qaeda Building Political Arm in Iraq: General," *Reuters*, [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/9933](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/9933).

All that is needed is for you:

2. to form your commando (*sariyah*).<sup>158</sup>
3. to prepare yourself and who is with you according to your capabilities.
4. to choose a target that you can hit.
5. to hurry and fulfill your jihad duty.<sup>159</sup>

However, also a cell builder may be able to assist. Cell builders are the Achilles heel of the GIR squadrons because their arrest can lead to the detection of one or more cells. Although they are the weakest point in al-Suri's suggested structure, their knowledge and organizational talent are vital. They must be inconspicuous, well educated, and able to provide a cell with start-up money. Each cell builder has to assist 4 to 5 cells, which are totally isolated and unknown to each other. The intensive preparation should not last more than one or two months. It includes light arms training, explosives engineering and ideological indoctrination. Then, the cell builder must withdraw without leaving any trace that could lead to him or to a cell. Ideally, he would join an open front, flee to another country, or carry out a suicide attack.

Cells should become active immediately after members have teamed up or the cell builder has left. They should finance themselves or acquire donations, but should not build any new cells. The smaller the cell, the better it is from a security perspective. Even if a cell carries out merely one operation every few months, this is sufficient to begin with. Cell members should live normal lives, not engage in propaganda, and work out their plans secretly. Ever-increasing numbers of cells should perpetrate an ever-increasing number of terrorist attacks.

GIR guerilla gangs operating in cities should acquire all possible information on military tactics, secret service methods and guerilla warfare and educate themselves in computer science. The aim is to create an effective "terrorist culture" (*thaqafah irhabiyyah*). Al-Suri

158. *Sariyah* literally means "military company". Yet, this translation does not fit, since al-Suri speaks about the smallest possible units, namely 1 to 10 men. Therefore, I translated *sariyah* as commando, or squadron.

159. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, end of subsection 4 ("military theory").

recalls that his training of cadres of the al-Qaeda organization in 1989 included a lecture titled "terrorism is a talent" according to which a "good" terrorist distinguishes himself by talent, excellent general knowledge, and rigorous preparation.

**Table 1**

**Al-Suri's comparison between traditional jihad groups and the system of GIR cells**

| Feature    | Traditional Organizations  | System of GIR Squadrons   |
|------------|--|---|
| Size       | up to several thousands  | 1-10  |
| Objective  | overthrow of the government and formation of an Islamic regime in a specific state | resistance against occupiers and their allies wherever possible   |
| Program    | Jihad organization   | Global Islamic Resistance Call  |
| Leadership | central emir and leadership  | general informational guidance for squadrons globally and a specific emir for each squadron                               |
| Financing  | often interest-bound financing from abroad, donations                              | primarily self-financing, donations; at a later stage distribution of foreign assets and treasuries of overthrown regimes |
| Allegiance | pledge of allegiance ( <i>bay'ah</i> ) to a central emir                           | unmediated contract ( <i>'ahd</i> ) with Allah and contract of obedience to a squadron's emir                             |

Source: Al-Suri, *Da'wat al-muqawamah*, Chapter 8, subsection 5.

### 3. The Methodological Errors of Jihad Organizations

Al-Suri considers numerous methodological mistakes, which are similar to the above-mentioned structural and conceptual mistakes.<sup>160</sup> First, the jihad movement has failed to lay down comprehensive strategies, due to external repression and internal radicalism and failure to exercise self-criticism. Second, internal ideological battles and squabbling with other Islamist schools discourage ordinary people from joining. There is no united front against the real enemy, namely regional governments and their Western backers, who are the external aggressor (*al-sa'il al-khariji*). Third, the entrenchment of conflict with the governments ravages the best cadres, while state militaries and security apparatuses are able to recruit more pliant Muslims. Another problem is that this strategy has inflicted no damage on the more dangerous, external enemy (*al-'adu al-akbar*). Fourth, jihad slogans have failed to mobilize people against their governments. Basic concepts like divine authority (*hakimiyah*) have never been addressed persuasively from a jihad standpoint, which could have convinced people of the unbelief (*kufr*) of the ruler. Broad social issues like hunger, injustice, humiliation, and colonialism are not exploited effectively. In addition, propaganda has been a total failure. Jihad sermons are so unpopular and stereotyped that caricatures of the jihad personality have surfaced in the Arab media.

### The Missed Opportunity for Reform: Afghanistan (1996–2001)

Between 1996 and 2001 the remnants of the Arab jihad movement that had escaped international security measures gathered in Afghanistan.<sup>161</sup>

160. The following section is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, Part 1, Chapter 7, "*Akhta' fi-l-uslub wa l-mastr*" (Methodical mistakes).

161. The following section refers to al-Suri, *GIRC*, Part 1, Chapter 6, *Al-Jihadiyun wa-l-fursah al-da'i'ah fi rthab al-taliban 1996–2001* (The jihadis and the lost opportunity in the regions of the Taliban); and *Al-Afkar allati tarahat lada al-jihadiyin (l-hal) al-azmah mundhu 1996* (The ideas that were laid down by the jihadis after 1996 to solve the crisis).

This period is known as the "second Arab-Afghan phase". By then, all cadres had acknowledged the failure of local revolutions guided by exiled leaderships. This offered a "golden opportunity" for reform and restructuring. The conditions in Afghanistan were perfect, too, although al-Suri claims that they became less so at a later stage (see Chapter 6, section "The International War on Terrorism" of this book). Unfortunately, claims al-Suri, erroneous thinking was not corrected. Upholding the principles of regionalism, secretiveness and pyramid organizations, the Arab jihad groups in Afghanistan maintained a regionalist and partisan perspective. Even Bin Laden, who was the most suited for the task of fostering cohesion, failed to unify the groups. Thus, the main reasons for the lack of reform were:

- the mentality of regionalism and party loyalty;
- al-Qaeda's failure to present a clear institutional structure and program, which would facilitate the objectives of the jihadis.

Al-Qaeda evolved from the Egyptian Jihad Organization (*Tanzim al-Jihad al-Masri*) and continued to be dominated by Egyptian and Saudi Arabian group members; consequently, their local interests informed al-Qaeda operations. The organization could thus not pose as a convincing umbrella organization, nor offer programmatic slogans for all jihadis in Afghanistan. Neither did its program attract the third generation of jihadis. Al-Suri admits that in this period the third generation was notable for its ignorance and for being focused solely on military training.

A sweeping reassessment of jihad never took place. Yet, the realization of total failure among jihad cadres led to an intensified debate among three schools of thought between 1996 and 2001:

- The school advocating capitulation and laying down the arms (*madrasat al-istislam wa ilqa' al-silah*). This school argues that the crisis is the outcome of armed struggle and will only be solved through a peaceful agreement with the regime. Prominent examples of reconciliation agreements are the Egyptian *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah* in 1996, the "Penance Project" (*mashru' al-tawbah*) in Tunisia in the 1990s, and

the referendum on "national harmony" (*al-wi'am al-watani*) in Algeria in 1996.<sup>162</sup>

- The school advocating the consolidation of internal jihad (*madrasat al-thabat wa-l-istimrar 'ala darb al-jihad wa-muwajahah*). Most jihad organizations that established themselves in Afghanistan under the Taliban adopted this school. They saw the continuation of jihad as an individual religious obligation that forbids capitulation. According to al-Suri the positive aspect of this school is that it didn't digress from the principles of jihad. To the detriment of this school, however, old structures (regionalism, secretiveness and pyramid organizations) and old objectives (the overthrow of local regimes) persist, reducing the effectiveness of jihad.
- The school advocating international jihad against the U.S. and its allies (*madrasat al-ittijah al-umami nahw jihad al-sa'il al-kharij amrika wa hulafa'iha*). It maintains that the fight with local regimes is legitimate but useless as the crusader coalition profits from it. The solution is jihad against the U.S., which will in turn lead to the destruction of these regimes. Since the proclamation of "Jihad against America" in 1996, Bin Laden and his organization al-Qaeda have accurately assessed the changed geopolitical situation and adapted their jihad strategy accordingly.

162. Al-Suri criticizes the fact that amnesty laws (*qanun al-'afu*) often times include the clause that armed struggle was a mistake. One of the most dangerous examples, condemns al-Suri, is the gradual reconciliation between the Egyptian government and *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah*. The formerly respected *al-Jama'ah* ideologues switched sides and started a counter propaganda, which shook the bedrocks of the jihad movement. After 9/11, this form of instrumentalization became an element of the "War on Terror." Al-Suri claims that the school of capitulation actually goes back to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's initiative for "Peace with the System" (*al-sulh ma'l-nizam*) in 1982, which also signifies the period in which jihad groups started to suffer substantial losses in their confrontations with a number of governments. Here, al-Suri once more reveals his personal trauma, and condemns the role of "mediators," which probably refers to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's Damascus-based reform group around 'Isam al-'Attar in the early 1980s.

Al-Suri argues that an international orientation will in the long run also satisfy the objectives of locally orientated jihad groups. Activists must realize that one and the same strategy can attain both the local and the international goals. This substantiates our thesis that al-Suri tries to break the tension between local anchorage and international orientation. In a fundamentally changed geopolitical situation the schools of internal and international jihad must be combined. The new school of jihad is build on three principles:

- continuity (*thabat*)
- correction (*tashih*)
- development (*tatwir*)

Initially, al-Suri proposed to coin these principles the Call for the Squadrons of Global Islamic Resistance (*Da'wat saraya al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah*). However, later he renamed it the Global Islamic Resistance Call. Between 1998 and 1999, he presented this approach to numerous jihad groups in Afghanistan and discussed it with them. He claims that he trained a new jihad core troupe (*nawat tajammu' jihadi jadid*) in early 2000 to consolidate his ideas and broaden their application. The U.S. attack against Afghanistan in response to 9/11 disrupted the training. Still, we can assume that al-Suri exerted considerable influence over numerous members of al-Qaeda and other jihad cadres with his strategy.<sup>163</sup> Although al-Suri supports Bin Laden for redirecting jihad to the international arena (especially the U.S.), he criticizes the latter for being too locally orientated when he links the jihad against the U.S. with the struggle against the Saudi or Egyptian regimes. Moreover, Bin Laden's organization, says al-Suri, is too exclusivist to attract a worldwide following among jihadis.

163. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, Part 1, Chapter 6, *Al-Afkar allati tarahat lada al-jihadiyin li-hall al-azmah mundhu 1996* (The ideas that were laid down by the jihadis since 1996 to solve the crisis).

## Chapter 8

# Al-Suri's Reform of Jihad

### Political Strategy

For al-Suri, the era of revolution is not over, since he continues to search for ways to implement a comprehensive Sunni-Islamic revolution.<sup>164</sup> His strategy is essentially based on Marxist guerilla warfare and social-liberation literature, which he recommends should be read and reformulated in Islamist terms. He advocates a merger between the revolutionary concepts of the twentieth century and the Islamist extremism of the twenty-first century. This shall create the necessary "revolutionary jihad climate" (*al-manakh al-jihadi al-thawri*). Tactics are supposed to be fluid and unpredictable. GIRC must retain the initiative and force the enemy into head-on confrontation, not vice versa.

According to al-Suri's theory of revolutionary jihad, the number of mobilized masses will grow exponentially if political propaganda is used effectively. Al-Suri puts his trust in the propagandistic effects of Islamist terrorism. However, the strategy of GIRC is merely a blueprint for future strategists. Al-Suri does not claim to offer a definitive solution to the Sunni struggle, nor is his paradigm innovative. The concept of international enemy is known to jihadis since Qutb, and the set of doctrines we find in al-Suri's worldview seems to be copied from Azzam. Yet, al-Suri implements Azzam's utterly aggressive concept of the 1980s, in line with his strategic analysis of the twenty-first century but with a much stronger focus on terrorism. As a doctrine it is thus no longer related to classic jihad, but an irrational interpretation of it.

The strategic goal of GIRC differs from that of traditional jihad organizations. Traditional jihad organizations first and foremost

164. The following section is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, subsection 2, *Usus al-nazariyah al-siyasiyyah* (Fundamentals of the Political Theory).

wanted to establish an Islamic state. GIRC, however, is not primarily concerned with an Islamic state. Its primary aim is to defeat the U.S. and its allies, and force them to withdraw from the Muslim world. Al-Suri warns that the attack against specific regimes in future confrontations must not turn into local revolutions. After the "Zionist-U.S. Project" has been destroyed, GIRC must turn against all bases of U.S. influence and support at home. Al-Suri's total disengagement from any specific local struggle again contrasts with Bin Laden, who seems eager to overthrow his home government in Saudi Arabia.

It is only in the second phase of the political strategy that apostate governments must be overthrown and "the Islamic system" (*al-nizam al-islami*) introduced in their place. At this point, GIRC integrates local campaigns into its international strategy. But al-Suri is very vague and speaks of "one" Islamic system without further clarifying how it will be created out of scores of local Islamic states.

The slogan "Resistance is the Battle of a Nation and not the Struggle of an Elite"<sup>165</sup> epitomizes the concept that all Muslims should participate in general forms of resistance. They should facilitate the task of the actual GIRC cells and exert "political resistance" through activist groups, "media resistance" via the Internet and satellite TV stations, and "civil resistance" by spraying graffiti or distributing revolutionary slogans via leaflets, audio-sources, and pictures, or by using the weapon of "passive resistance," refusing to do business with the enemy. Cultural resistance through the strengthening of Muslim identity implies the formation of a moral police to preserve the religious identity of Muslims. An important aim is to gain international legitimacy and deny accusations of terrorism. His argument is very weak in view of the fact that the main strategy of GIRC builds on terrorism. Yet he claims that — and this is an argument which appears frequently in the Salafi jihad discourse — since the enemy calls legitimate resistance "terrorism," Muslims should be proud to call themselves "terrorists," — all the more so as the related term *irhab* (terrorizing) also appears in the Qur'an. Al-Suri's viewpoint is, however, basically inconsistent. On the basis of the above argument, he also builds his concept of individualized terrorism (*irhab fardi*), a

165. Arabic: "*Al-Muqawamah ma' rakat ummah wa laisa sirra' nukhbah.*"

continuation of Azzam's idea of jihad as individual religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*).

The actual activists of GIRC should fight against direct aggression with armed jihad (*jihad al-sinan*) as well as with non-violent jihad (*jihad al-haffah wa-l-bayan*). Armed jihad may be waged against Jews, neo-crusaders and apostates. The non-violent jihad is against the hypocritical ulema, moderate Islamists and the corrupt media. Al-Suri claims that a mufti supporting the U.S. must be fought with words. But the instigator of a "normalization" project like the Jordanian-Israeli development cooperation in Wadi 'Araba must be assassinated. Al-Suri's concepts of terrorism and publicity are well-balanced. He is careful not to touch the clergy, who could turn out to be powerful supporters. But any secular collaborator may be killed without scruple.

### **"Legal" Terrorism (*irhab mashru'*) and Assassinations (*ightiyalat*): New Fronts in Global Jihad**

The imbalance of power between Muslims forces and their enemies makes "individual terror" necessary and legitimate, argues al-Suri.<sup>166</sup> Terrorism is part of defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf'*) and an integral part of Islam, one must only look at Qur'an 8:60, "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know."<sup>167</sup> The modern translation of *irhab*, which appears in this verse, is terrorism. However, the Qur'anic translation is different and means terror in the sense of instilling a deep sense of fear. Since the modern translation is related to the Qur'anic meaning, the War on Terrorism is a war against Islam, reasons al-Suri. His argument shows the influence of the Egyptian jihad ideologue 'Abd al-Qadir

166. The following section is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, subsections 2 and 4.

167. Qur'an 8:60. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00808.htm/>.

bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, who writes that "terrorism is a part of Islam, and who denies this is an infidel!" 'Abd al-'Aziz argues, on the strength of Qur'an 8:60, that fighting terrorism in reality means fighting Islam. He apologetically lists all cruelties that have been committed during U.S. military campaigns against civilians and then argues that the killing of civilians, especially women and children, is allowed if they stand among targeted enemies (*tatarrus*).<sup>168</sup>

Thus, al-Suri claims. Muslims should be proud to call themselves terrorists. This, however, contradicts his claim that GIR should get rid of the terrorism accusation. He continues that Muslims should not be swayed by the negative U.S. coinage of the word. "Terrorizing the enemies is an individual religious obligation and the assassination of their leaders is sanctioned by prophetic tradition." Al-Suri refers to the practice of assassinations (*sunnat al-ightiyal*). According to a narrated tradition (*hadith*), Muhammad sent the Muslim Ibn Maslamah to kill his opponent Ka'ab bin al-Ashraf, a Jewish tribal leader. Al-Suri claims that this is a valid doctrine which, according to Egyptian jihad veterans, was already taught in the Muslim Brothers' Secret Apparatus (*al-Jihaz al-Sirri*) in the 1930s.

The assassination and liquidation of Western leaders include top level politicians, civilians, media people, generals and Western intelligentsia that criticize Islam. Since individual terrorist operations are still spontaneous reactions to Western aggression, they must be systematically developed as a strategy of GIR and serve as examples that draw Muslim youth into battle. Such operations should not occur spontaneously, but must be coordinated as part of a global strategy. Exemplary actions have high propagandistic effects that must be exploited. A website of the Global Islamic Resistance Brigades ([www.sraia.org](http://www.sraia.org)), which was launched on 30 November 2006 and shut down in the summer of 2007, presents a document entitled "Incitement of the heroic fighters to revive the custom of assassinations." The text by a Saudi scholar minutely details how to choose and kill targets and has

168. 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, *Al-firhab min al-Islam wa man Ankara dhalika fa qad kafar* (Terrorism belongs to Islam, and who denies this is an infidel) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=6/>), pp. 1-5.

been published under the label of GIR since it fits well into al-Suri's paradigm.<sup>169</sup>

The main purpose of terror attacks is to inflict the greatest possible human and material damage to the U.S. and its allies. The U.S., as well as its allies, should be ousted from the Muslim countries, which are the primary battlefield of the war between Islam and the West. Of special concern are the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, Egypt and Iraq.<sup>170</sup> Targets are Christian missions and foreign companies, embassies, military bases, the tourism sector with its air companies and tourist offices and anything that smacks of "normalization" with Israel, like for instance the Wadi Araba Project. In short, al-Suri wants the Muslim world to become totally isolated from the West.

In the Islamic world, presidents, kings and ministers of governments should be assassinated since they are the most important allies in the U.S. coalition. To supplant the agencies of occupation, local security forces that cooperate directly with them — such as the Iraqi police or Kashmiri police — should be wiped out before they grow powerful enough to supplant the occupation forces. Regular military forces should only be confronted in self-defense; otherwise they should be persuaded to abandon the government side and join the resistance movement. Social scientists like the Egyptian Saad Eddin Ibrahim should be assassinated, along with leaders of un-Islamic media such as the Saudi billionaire al-Walid bin Talal — the man behind the popular music channel Rotana and LBC's program "Star Academy." Hypocritical ulema, however, must only be fought by means of *jihad al-bayan*, i.e. non-violent jihad.

Economic and military infrastructures that serve Western interests are also viable targets. Local oil reserves destined for the U.S. are to be cut off as must all U.S. market outlets in the Islamic world and all

169. Abu Jandal al-Azdi, *Tahrid al-mujahidin al-abtal 'ala ahliya' sunnat al-ightiyal* (Incitement of the heroic fighters to revive the custom of assassinations), formerly on the website of the Global Islamic Resistance Brigades (<http://www.sraia.org>); The document can be found on other websites as well, for example, al-Tawhed ([www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws)).

170. The Levant refers here to the region that comprises today's Jordan, the occupied Palestinian Territories, and the Gaza Strip; Israel, Lebanon and Syria.



strategic shipping lanes. Oil wells and pipelines should be sabotaged and come under the control of jihadis. All four strategic sea straits in the Muslim world should be closed, namely the Straits of Hormuz, the Suez Channel, the Gate of Lamentation and the Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>171</sup> U.S. and allied naval traffic should be intercepted and sunk by mines, in suicide attacks, acts of piracy, or by any other military means.

Outside the Muslim world, civilians should be targeted "in general." This means that terrorist operations against civilians in hostile countries are seen as legitimate. Especially in the U.S., claims al-Suri, more large-scale "strategic operations" like 9/11 should take place, including the use of weapons of mass destruction, possibly nuclear bombs and biological weapons. Aggression against Muslims necessitates retaliation in the same manner (*'amalayat bi-l-mathal*) or operations that deter aggression (*rad' al-'adwan*).<sup>172</sup> This contradicts his statement that GIR fights only governments of hostile states, and not civil populations.

In al-Suri's view, the U.S. government and the American people must be fought at the same time (*hukumatan wa sha'ban*). Europeans have "mostly good standpoints," as most of them reject U.S. foreign policy. Moreover, their governments show a tendency to distance themselves from the U.S. and should be given the chance to do so on a diplomatic level. In the long run, this may lead to the breakup of NATO, hopes al-Suri.

However, this process can be accelerated if strategic terrorist attacks against civilians should break up the European-U.S. coalition. It is hence permissible to attack them, but the decision should best be left to local cells. Al-Suri illustrates this with the Madrid train bombings in March 2004, which we will be discussed in the next section (B.6.3). As to the London bombings of July 2005, he confirms that the death of civilians, though evil, is nevertheless justified.<sup>173</sup>

171. The Arabic names: *madiq hurmuz*, *qana'at al-suyis*, *bab el-mandeb*, *madiq jabal tariq*.

172. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, subsection 2, point 4, "Political Standpoints of the Global Islamic Resistance;" subpoints 6, 7, and 8 on targeting civilians.

173. Al-Suri says that he is "sorry" about the Spanish and British victims, but their countries participated in the war against Muslims and the attacks

Muslim diaspora communities in Europe, Australia, Canada and the U.S. also receive al-Suri's special attention. Although the dwelling of Muslims in the West should be generally forbidden, they are nonetheless crucially important. Al-Suri aims at the recruitment of second-generation Muslims who have no criminal or political record, and are well integrated into their societies — in short, unsuspecting, autonomous, independent, practically invisible amateurs. These characteristics outline the perfect recruit. Al-Suri claims that specific strategic interests underlie terrorism in the West, namely the position of European governments toward the U.S. and its War on Terrorism, but adds that this rule cannot be expected to curb terror attacks. GIR cells in the West may become active as soon as there is a rationale for it, like the scandal caused by the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in 2006, for example.

### **Terror as Strategy of Deterrence (*istiratijiyyah al-rad' bi-l-irhab*): the Madrid Bombings of 11 March 2004**

Al-Suri is convinced that as a strategy of deterrence terror is always successful. This concerns targeted assassinations as well as large-scale terror attacks against civilians. Nobody shall be able to ignore the "long and intimidating arm" of GIR. The justification for deterrence is the "law of equality," as laid down in Qur'an Surat al-Baqarah 2:194 "The prohibited month for the prohibited month — and so for all things prohibited — there is the law of equality. If then any

were necessary. He also wishes the planes against the states had carried weapons of mass destruction to kill more U.S. citizens. See the bayan (communiqué) that treats the Madrid bombings and his strategic demand from European states, especially points 3, 5 and the following section on Europe. (<http://www.fsoa.com/vw/index.php?subject=1&rec=29/>). See also al-Suri's bayan on the London bombings, "*Nass al-bayan al-sawti 'an 'Omar 'Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus'ab al-Suri) al-muwajjah ila al-biritaniyyin wa-l-awrubiiyyin bi-sha'n tafjirat London, July 2005 wa mumarasat al-hukumah al-biritaniyyah*," obtained from Reuven Paz, director of the Gloria Center in Herzliyyah, Israel.

one transgresses the prohibition against you, Transgress ye likewise against him..." [italics added for clarity]

The Madrid train bombings of March 2004 are the "best example" of the political effect of military deterrence (*al-rad' al-'askari*) and warrant further "jihad research", claims al-Suri.<sup>174</sup> From al-Suri's standpoint, the analysis of the attacks is as follows:

The attacks, which came three days before the Spanish parliamentary elections, caused a reversal in Spanish public opinion. Until before the attacks, the population had supported the conservative government of Prime Minister José Aznar and his People's Party (*Partido Popular*), which was allied with the U.S. and had sent 2000 Spanish troops to Iraq. Immediately after the attacks, however, public opinion swung in favor of José Zapatero's Spanish Socialist Workers' Party PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*), who had pledged to bring about the retreat of Spanish troops from Iraq in case he won the elections. This led to the victory of the socialists. Hence, one single operation, which had cost just a few "martyrs" and prisoners, overthrew the right-wing government and removed an ally from the U.S. coalition.

One deterring terror attack hence led to the retreat of a state and its army from the Iraq war. Moreover, the attacks shocked the U.S.-European alliance, and numerous other states also considered retreating. The Madrid bombings were the first real "deterrence operation" since the beginning of the Third Crusade in 1990.<sup>175</sup>

For the future, al-Suri lays down a number of conditions that require an immediate deterrence operation (*'amaliyat rad'*):

**Table 2**

**Conditions for an immediate deterrence operation according to al-Suri**

1. Any state that arrests and extradites mujahideen to the U.S. or their home countries must be hit immediately, even if is not a U.S. ally.
2. Any action by a hostile state that causes the death of a Muslim civilian must be answered with an exemplary deterrence attack.
3. Any state that joins the U.S. coalition must be hit immediately in a terror operation so that the coalition will disintegrate.

174. The Madrid train bombings, also abbreviated as 3/11, were a series of coordinated bombings against the commuter train system of Madrid on the morning of 11 March 2004. The militant Moroccan Islamist group *Salafiyyah Jihadiyyah* with a very tenuous connection to al-Qaeda has been linked to the attack. The group is an offshoot of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (*Groupe islamique combattant marocain*, or GICM). Al-Suri, who trained together with the Moroccan jihadis, refers to the group as "fighting squadron" (*sarayah mujahidah*).

175. For al-Suri's categorization of the Crusades, see Part II, Chapter 5, section "The Third Crusade of the West against Islam".

## Chapter 9

# The Islamic Legal Foundation of al-Suri's Concept of Jihad

Individualism is the main dictum of al-Suri's jihad concept. He underlines this with Qur'an Surat al-Nisa' 4:84: "Then fight in Allah's cause — Thou art held responsible only for thyself — and rouse the believers. It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the Unbelievers; for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment." This interpretation, as well as all other strategic key pillars of his thought, can already be observed in Abdallah Azzam's work. Yet, al Suri is much more radical than Azzam in his focus on terrorism as the sole means of fighting the West.

Al-Suri's Islamic legal argument has five key components:<sup>176</sup> First, following Qutbian tradition, he wants to prove that the natural state of relations between Islam and the West is war, and that this war has to be entered upon immediately. Second, he seeks to create a global jihad ideology based on individualized terrorism. Third, he justifies defensive international jihad as *fard 'ayn* against foreign occupation. Fourth, he extensively deals with the questions of *kufr* (unbelief) and *takfir* (declaring a Muslim an infidel).<sup>177</sup> Fifth, he justifies terror against civilians. Moreover, al-Suri legally justifies the merger of international and local jihad paradigms.

Few, if none of the theological arguments are his own. Most are based on the authority of others and on the principal four sources of

176. This chapter is based on al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 1, chapter 2, and part 2, chapter 8, subsections 1, 2, and 3.

177. He argues that all Muslim regimes are apostatical. Global jihad requires first and foremost the overthrowing and killing of infidel local rulers. Muslims who work for these regimes must be challenged and even excommunicated.

Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), which in authoritative order are the Qur'an; the practice of the Prophet as transmitted through his sayings and laid down in the literary genre of *hadith*, i.e. oral transmission, which was later written down (the *sunnah*); scholarly consensus (*ijma'*); and the analogical deduction from these three (*qiyas*). This classical Islamic legal theory is also the basis of Salafi jihad theology. It is al-Suri's mix which makes it especially dangerous when applied to his new strategy of individualized terrorism.

Salafi jihad ideologues generally rely on the judgements of classical jurists, which they adapt to their contemporary worldview, strategy and specifically jihad-focused interpretation of Islam. Classical jurists were deeply engaged in legal discourses of the Islamic Law of War based on the *usul al-fiqh*. If no classical discussion suffices to justify present-day Salafi jihad arguments, then modern ideologues themselves apply the process of analogical reasoning (*qiyas*). A major point in case is the justification of suicide bombings, which is based on an analogy between the medieval battlefield tactic of single attacks, where a Muslim plunged himself in enemy ranks (*inghimas*), and the self-detonation of a Muslim fighter in the midst of a target group (see detailed discussion below). Another example is the analogy between the classical assassination of enemies of Islam (*ightiyalat*) and modern political assassinations. Both tactics are justified in Salafi jihad theology by the central doctrines of terrorizing (*irhab*) and exemplary punishment (*tankil*), whose permissibility is deduced from the first two authoritative sources of the Qur'an and the *sunnah* (see a detailed discussion in Chapter 11 of this book).

Thus, classical sources and passages from the writings of modern ideologues form the spadework of al-Suri's theological argument. Accordingly, he refers frequently to the thirteenth and fourteenth century Damascene Hanbali scholars Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah and Ibn Kathir, but also extensively draws on the traditionalist Abu Da'ud. He mixes Wahhabi and Qutbist concepts, such as the nullifiers of belief (*nawaqid*) and divine sovereignty (*hakimiyah*). Al-Suri synthesizes the Islamic legal arguments of Abdallah Azzam and 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, mixing their respective external and internal concepts with radical doctrines that became popular in the 1990s, such as friendship and enmity (*al-wala' wa-l-bara'*) and the Islamic

legal justification of terror and suicide bombings. Since he is a millenarian, and awaits the arrival of the Mahdi at the end of times, his legal interpretation is exceedingly radical and irrational. But let us now return to the main components of al-Suri's Islamic legal argument and discuss them successively.

1. The natural state of affairs between Islam and the West is war. With this basic conception al-Suri pays tribute to the godfather of radical Islamism, Sayyid Qutb. While al-Suri disagrees with Qutb over his locally orientated jihad strategy, he also makes clear that the central tenets of Qutbism are the essence of jihad ideology. Al-Suri wants jihadis to remember this fact. This relates to Qutb's concepts of neo-pagan society (*jahiliyah*), divine sovereignty (*hakimiyah*), separation from society (*mufasalah*), the among Salafis popular theological concept of reality oriented jurisprudence (*fiqh al-waqi'*), and especially Qutb's concept of jihad. Therefore, he quotes the opening passage of the chapter Jihad for the sake of Allah (*Al-Jihad fi sabil Allah*) from Qutb's groundbreaking manifesto *Milestones* (*Ma'alim fi-l-tariq*). The passage includes a description of the different stages (*marhaliyah*) of the relationship between Muhammad and the unbelievers, based on *Zad al-Ma'ad* ("Provision for the Way [to the hereafter]") by the famous Hanbali jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1292–1350 AD).

After Muhammad's *hijrah* in 622 from Mecca to Medina, he was commanded by Allah to fight his enemies.<sup>178</sup> Muhammad was initially ordered to fight only those who fought him, i.e. to fight in self-defense. He should leave in peace those who did not oppose him or who distanced themselves from him. Later, he was ordered to fight all polytheists, "until the whole order (*din*) is Allah's order." Before the Battle of Tabuk (9/631) and the revelation of Surah 9, non-Muslims were divided into three groups:

178. See al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, subsection 3, "*Ahkam al-jihad wa l-siyasah al-shar'iyyah wa istinaduha li-l-waqi'*, *wa marhaliyyah al-taktikat wasulan li-l-hadaf al-istaratiji*" which is copied almost word for word from Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'alim fi-l-tariq* (*Milestones*), see beginning of chapter *Al-Jihad fi sabil Allah* (Jihad for the sake of God) (*Maktahat al-Najaf*, 2003), pp. 55–56.

- *ahl al-sulh wa-l-hudnah*, namely non-Muslims with whom Muhammad had a peace agreement. He should abide by the agreement unless he feared betrayal, in which case he could cancel the contract, on condition he informed them about it before taking further action
- *ahl al-harb*, namely non-Muslims in state of war with Islam
- *ahl al-dhimma*, namely non-Muslims under the protection of Islam

After the revelation of Surah 9, the very conception of contact with non-Muslims changed. Muhammad was ordered to fight against all non-Muslims. First, he had to fight the *ahl al-kitab*, namely, Christians and Jews, until they paid him the poll tax (*jizyah*) or converted to Islam. Moreover, he was ordered to abstain (*bara'ah*) from any new, long-term contracts with non-Muslims. The maximum time for a temporary agreement was four months. Infidels were now grouped into three new categories: those who fought Muhammad (*muharibun lahu*); non-Muslims who had a previous or temporary contract with Islam (*ahl al-'ahd*) and had not violated the agreement; and non-Muslims under the protection of Islam (*ahl al-dhimma*). After the contracts ended, non-Muslims were again grouped, this time into only two categories: "protected" and "martial infidels." The world was thus divided into Muslims, peaceable infidels under Muslim protection, and infidel adversaries.

Al-Suri upholds Qutb's basic idea that the injunctions in Qur'an 9, Surat al-Taubah, remain valid and explain the basic state of affairs between Islam and the West. The last revealed jihad verses in Surah 9 (just before, during, and after the battle of Tabuk in 9/631) decree unmitigated, out-and-out fighting until "the whole order (*din*) is Allah's order."<sup>179</sup> Like Qutb and Azzam, al-Suri endorses only the sequence of verses of fighting (*ahkam niha'iyyah*). He appropriates Qutb's ideas in the sense that he seeks to recreate the ideology of the original Islamic community. He thus creates coherence and homogeneity in the oftentimes contradictory jihad teleology in order to promote a

179. Qur'an 9:36 and Qur'an 9:29. See Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, *Herrschaft und Gesellschaft. Der islamistische Wegbereiter Sayyid Qutb und seine Rezeption* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003), pp. 180–183.

military understanding of jihad.<sup>180</sup> For al-Suri, the epitome of relations between Islam and the West is war.

The *marhaliyah*, or the *Muhammadian Paradigm*, is the step-by-step development of a proto-Muslim community, emulated by all Salafis. According to Ibn Qayyim's description of the development of the relationship between Muhammad and his enemies, the first Muslim community went through four successive stages. These were non-confrontation in Mecca (Qur'an 4:77); emigration to Medina (Qur'an 22:39–40); defensive jihad against aggressors (Qur'an 2:190); and finally offensive jihad against all non-Muslims (Qur'an 9:29). Qutb based his standardized sequence for internal jihad on the same principles, but without the first stage. In his view, modern Muslims had outlived the stage of non-confrontation; they had to act and rise up against heretic Muslim regimes in a hostile world, the so-called neo-pagan society. The Muhammadan concept of emigration to Medina was somehow modified. The Leninist-inspired Muslim vanguard had to separate itself from neo-jahili society, a process which Qutb termed *mufasalah* (physical or spiritual separation).<sup>181</sup> This should be followed by preparation for jihad against the apostate home government. Twenty years later Abdallah Azzam modelled a new *marhaliyah*-sequence for an international jihad vanguard. This sequence leaned on the classical concepts of defensive jihad and border guarding and became much more widely accepted than Qutb's paradigm. Azzam defined its stages as emigration (*hijrah*), preparation (*i'dad*), frontier-guarding (*ribat*), and finally fighting (*qital*).<sup>182</sup> At the same time, Azzam followed Qutb's rationale that the final state of affairs between Islam and the unbelievers is war.

Al-Suri ultimately calls for a radically shortened sequence of jihad, based on immediate action rather than on protracted preparation. Therefore he quotes Qur'an 9:46: "If they had intended (*aradu*)

180. Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, *Herrschaft und Gesellschaft*, p. 183.

181. Qutb, "Milestones," ch.3: *Nasha'at al-mujtama' al-muslim wa khasa'isuhu* ("The nascence of the Muslim society and its characteristics"), pp. 50–51.

182. Azzam, *Muqaddimah fi-l-hijrah wa-l-i'dad* (An introduction to emigration and preparation [for jihad]). <http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77/>.

to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation (*a'addu*) therefore; but Allah was averse to their being sent forth (*inbi'athuhum*)..." For al-Suri there is only one possible reading of this verse: Jihad has three stages, namely "will (*iradah*), preparation (*i'dad*) and sending forth [into battle] (*inbi'ath*)", i.e. to strike. This sequence is adapted to suit jihad cells in the post-9/11 heightened-security environment. The cells are expected to organize and strike at once, before being detected.

2. Al-Suri wants to define and create a robust doctrine for jihadis.<sup>183</sup> The "jihad ideology" or "jihad doctrine" (*al-'aqidah al-jihadiyyah*) is the set of religious tenets and basic beliefs that drives the jihadi.<sup>184</sup> He claims that Azzam was the only ideologue who tried to build a jihad ideology during the first stage of the Arab-Afghan involvement in Afghanistan (1985–1992). The idea evolves from Azzam's book "Ideology and its Influence on the Generation Builder," according to which Azzam interpreted "creed" (*al-'aqidah*) as the "faithful controller" (*al-dabit al-amin*) of jihad ideology.<sup>185</sup> If a jihadi's creed was in any way flawed, it caused a gross deviation from the path of "upright conduct" (*sirah*).<sup>186</sup> If this sensitive moral compass operated correctly, however, it led the jihadi automatically to the battlefield. That means that if the Muslim's belief is pure, he will also believe in the individual religious obligation of jihad. By the same token, ideology is more important than military training.

Al-Suri copies Azzam's idea that the "solid base" (*al-qa'idah al-sulbah*) is the doctrine (*al-'aqidah*) on which global jihad is built.

183. The following three paragraphs are based on al-Suri's lengthy explanation of "Jihad Ideology," GIRC, part 2, chapter 8, subsection 1, *Nazariyat al-manhaj wa l-'aqidah al-jihadiyyah* (Theory of the Program and Fighting Ideology).

184. I use the terms doctrine and ideology interchangeably because al-Suri perceives Islam both as religion and as political system.

185. "Faithful controller" (*al-dabit al-amin*) refers to a moral, i.e. abstract, gauge of conduct, which controls the Muslim's behavior and indicates when he goes astray or is on the right path. Azzam introduced this concept to lead Muslims back to jihad and Islamic piety.

186. Abdallah Azzam, *Doctrine and Its Influence on Building the Generation* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 1996), pp. 9–12.

Introduced by Qutb in the 1960s, the "base" offers additional interpretations, namely as jihad vanguard, or territorial haven.<sup>187</sup> However, its interpretation as doctrine epitomizes al-Suri's idea that in the age of the information revolution al-Qaeda is not an organization, but an amorphous ideology. The basis of GIRC ideology is individualism. The prototypical "ideological fighter" (*al-mujahid al-'aqa'idi*) must be totally independent in his decisions. His trainer may coach him and his teacher may teach him, but he must learn, find and evaluate his targets by himself. We find instructions for responsible and individual action in numerous books of Azzam, for example in "Defense of Muslim Lands,"<sup>188</sup> in the context of guerilla warfare where the question "Does one fight alone when the rest stays behind?" is answered with the fatwa: "Yes, he fights alone, because Allah the Almighty revealed this verse: [Qur'an, Surat Nisa 4:84] 'Then fight in Allah's cause — Thou art held responsible only for thyself — and rouse the believers...'"<sup>189</sup> Azzam also used this verse as shari'a evidence to motivate fighters to assassinate heretic Muslims and enemy leaders (*a'imat al-kufr*), and agree to go on suicide missions, which to him are the epitome of individual action.<sup>190</sup> Yet, Azzam not only interpreted the verse in a narrow tactical sense, but also to express the general idea that global jihad should be carried out by determined individuals.<sup>191</sup> Thus, Qur'an 4:84, which crowns the logo of al-Suri's GIRC, is critical for a clear understanding of the conceptual development of global jihad. Al-Suri takes it as the basis for his concept of "individualized terror" (*al-irhab al-fardi*). This is his continuation of Azzam's dictum of jihad as an "individual religious obligation" (*fard 'ayn*), yet with a strong emphasis on the use of individualized terrorism.

187. Compare to Chapter 2 "Abdallah Azzam and the International Jihad Paradigm" of this book.

188. Azzam, *Defense of Muslim Lands*, chapter 4, fourth question: "Does one fight alone if the rest stays behind?"

189. Qur'an 4:84, <http://www.sacredtexts.com/isl/quran/00411.htm/>.

190. Azzam, *In the Shades of Surat al-Tauba and Presenting the the Virtues of Jihad to the Worshippers*, (both online at <http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77>).

191. See his call for jihad directed at jihad ideologues in Azzam, *The Last Will of the Martyr Abdallah Azzam* (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77>).

According to Azzam, individual creed starts with a declaration of faith, which is the first pillar of Islam, i.e. the belief that "there are no gods but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger". This is the essence of divine power (*uluhiyah*), with which the worshipper ascertains the oneness of Allah and his position as Allah's faithful servant (*'ubudiyyah*). Al-Suri elaborates that the profession of faith is the basis of the jihad doctrine (*al-'aqidah al-jihadiyyah*); as such, becoming a Muslim should mean becoming a jihadi. Contemporary Muslims must hence rebuild their faith on the basis of jihad. "The GIR is the child of jihad doctrine, and jihad doctrine is part of the complete Islamic doctrine", he says. The prophetic tradition "Become a Muslim and then fight!" (*aslim thumma qatl*) should suffice to guide today's Muslims.

In addition, al-Suri synthesizes this with the concept of a victorious sect (*ta'ifah mansurah*) by the Egyptian jihad ideologue 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz. *Ta'ifah* here means "group," and refers to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad in the famous Battle of Badr,<sup>192</sup> the paradigm of asymmetric victoriousness where a small group of Muslims defeated an overwhelming enemy. 'Abd al-Qadir describes an envisioned collective of Salafi jihadis, who don't care about organizational affiliations and fight apostate infidel governments throughout the Muslim world in order to establish an Islamic State. This idea is central to his book *Laying the Foundation for Jihad in the Ways of Allah* (*Al-'Umdah fi 'idad al-'uddah li-l-jihad*), a standard manual for doctrinaire jihadis, which al-Suri quotes at length.

3. Defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf'*) is an individual religious obligation (*fard 'ayn*), which spreads in ever-widening concentric circles until it comprises the whole world.<sup>193</sup> Al-Suri adopts Azzam's apologetic view to justify jihad. Like Azzam, he uses this defensive concept of jihad

192. International Crisis Group (ICG), "In their own words: Reading the Iraq insurgency," *Middle East Report*, Vol. 50 (2006) ([http://www.c4ads.org/files/ICG\\_report\\_021506\\_iraqi\\_insurgency.pdf?PHPSESSID=4d0b61ee3bd3857e1880cdb6bc049a60/](http://www.c4ads.org/files/ICG_report_021506_iraqi_insurgency.pdf?PHPSESSID=4d0b61ee3bd3857e1880cdb6bc049a60/)).

193. The following section on jihad as *fard 'ayn* refers to al-Suri, GIRC, part 1, chapter 2, *Khulasat al-ahkam al-shar'iyyah fi hadha al-waqi'* (Summary of the Shari'a Judgments in this Situation). For a comparison with Azzam's original text see Chapter 2 "Abdallah Azzam and the International Jihad Paradigm" of this book.

merely as a cloak to hide the conviction that war is the final state of affairs between Islam and the West, a war that has to be fought offensively. The individual religious obligation to join jihad must be fulfilled by every Muslim. Al-Suri replicates this argument from Azzam's book *The defense of Muslim lands* and incorporates it into GIRC. On the strength of Azzam's writings, he reiterates the four conditions for jihad of the four orthodox jurisprudential schools, claiming that three conditions have now been fulfilled:

- the kuffar (unbelievers) enter a Muslim place (*baldah*);
- the two sides meet and begin to approach each other;
- the Imam calls upon a person or a people to depart for battle (*al-nafir*) — this condition remains unfulfilled since there is no central Imam in the Muslim world;
- the kuffar take a group of Muslims prisoner.

To support "defensive jihad" and circumvent the unfulfilled fourth condition, al-Suri invokes a "general call to arms" (*al-nafir al-'amm*), another hallmark of Azzam's international jihad paradigm, and integrates it into GIRC. Azzam argued that in modern times Muslims were not bound by an Imam's directive to join the jihad. If jihad was *fard 'ayn*, all Muslims were called to arms.<sup>194</sup> Originally, the Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymiyyah used this concept to mobilize troops for jihad against the Mongols in the thirteenth century, when the Abbasid caliphate was under attack. In modern times, the best analogues to Ibn Taymiyyah are Azzam and Bin Laden, argues al-Suri. They personify GIR.

4. Al-Suri declares all present day Muslim regimes and their collaborators to be apostate infidels (*kuffar murtaddun*) because they combine the Islamic shari'a with secular laws.<sup>195</sup> They thus neglect the unity of divine authority (*tawhid al-uluhiyyah*) and fail to serve Allah unreservedly (*'ibadat Allah wahdahu*). These are the basics of Sayyid

194. Qur'an Surat al-Taubah 9:41 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00906.htm/>).

195. This section is based on al-Suri, GIRC, part 1, chapter 2, points 2.3 and 4 of *Khulasat al-ahkam al-shar'iyyah fi hadha al-waqi'* (Summary of the Shari'a Judgments in this Situation) and part 2, chapter 8, subsection 1, point 3, *Tafasil wa adillah shar'iyyah* (Islamic Legal Details and Proofs), subpoint 10, *Mas'alat al-takfir* (The question of *takfir*).

Qutb's *hakimiyah* (divine sovereignty) concept. In addition, according to the rules of friendship and enmity (*al-wala' wa-l-bara'*) they are also infidels because they cooperate with unbelievers.

*Al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (friendship and enmity; or loyalty and renunciation) is the central doctrine in Salafi jihadi discourse, which divides the world into dichotomous fronts. According to this doctrine, Muslims should never befriend non-Muslims and the world is infinitely divided into two warring camps consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims. The doctrine dictates that "true Muslims must always strive to be in a state of *wala'* by being devoted to Allah and loyal to one another, while maintaining a state of *bara'* by hating or at least being clean from everything — and everyone — outside Islam. In fact, if everyone followed this doctrine, a clash between the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world would inevitably occur — which is precisely what al-Qaeda seeks."<sup>196</sup> The doctrine is grounded in a multiplicity of Qur'an verses such as Surat al-Ma'idah 5:51: "O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them."<sup>197</sup> Yet, the rigidity of its interpretation has varied over times. The principle of spiritual and physical separation between Muslims and non Muslims has already been treated by medieval jurists like Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Some modern jurists are of the opinion that the doctrine does not forbid befriending non-Muslims, but only forbids taking them as protectors and signing contracts, and entering alliances with them. This is how Sayyid Qutb, for instance, interpreted Surat al-Ma'idah 5:51 in his influential Qur'an commentary *In the Shades of the Qur'an*. Yet, since the 1980s, more austere and rigid interpretations have become popular in Salafi theology. Muhammad ibn Sa'id al-Qahtani's book *Friendship and enmity: according to the belief of the pious forefathers* may be regarded as an important theological work in this sense, and has become standard reading for Salafis.<sup>198</sup> A

196. Raymond Ibrahim, *The al-Qaeda Reader* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), p. 63.

197. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00303.htm>.

198. This especially refers to Qahtani's book *Al-Wala' wa-l-bara': According to the 'aqidah of the Salaf*, which has been translated into English and

more radical interpretation entered the Salafi-jihadi discourse in the mid 1990s, when the Jordanian scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the mentor of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi (1966-2006), expounded the doctrine in his book *Millat Ibrahim [Abraham's creed]*, arguing that both governments and individuals who violate the rules of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* fall under *takfir*.<sup>199</sup> Also al-Qaeda's senior ideologue Ayman al-Zawahiri has treated the doctrine of "friendship and enmity" in a lengthy legal treatise. Zawahiri's interpretation is notable because he focuses on the doctrine of *taqiyyah*, combining it with the concept of "friendship and enmity."<sup>200</sup> Zawahiri finds shariatic evidence in Surat al-Imran 3:28, which commands "Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah, *except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them [tattaqu minhum tuqatan]*"<sup>201</sup> [italics added for clarity]. Accordingly, the doctrine of *taqiyyah* allows Muslims to deceive unbelievers by apparently befriending them and imitating their practices, in extreme cases even their beliefs. Yet, in reality, they should feel contempt for unbelievers and look upon them through the rigid principles of "friendship and enmity." This applies if Muslims are in a position of weakness and fear for their lives. The most radical interpretations of the doctrine have become deeply anchored

can be purchased at various Salafi centers. See an excellent analysis of Qahtani's impact and the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* from an Australian perspective in Naomi Peled's article "Jihad in the Suburbs: Incitement to Holy War in Australia", *The Review* (August 2005) (<http://www.aijac.org.au/review/2005/30-8/hatebooks30-8.html/>). Qahtani's book was also available in Arabic on the Global Islamic Resistance Web-site (opened on 30 November 2006 and closed in the summer of 2007) (<http://www.sraia.org/sraia/autobhtml.php?filename=qwer/8.htm>).

199. Al Maqdisi completed the manuscript of the book already in 1984 in Pakistan while participating in the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union argues Nibras Kazimi. "A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi," in Hillel Fradkin, Husain I Jaqani, Eric Brown (eds.), *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: The Hudson Institute, 2005), 2:59-74 ([www.hudson.org/files/publications/Current\\_Trends\\_Islamist\\_Ideology\\_v2.pdf](http://www.hudson.org/files/publications/Current_Trends_Islamist_Ideology_v2.pdf)).

200. See Ibrahim, *The al-Qaeda Reader*, pp. 3-4; 64-65; 72-73.

201. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00303.htm>.



in the Salafi jihadi discourse and al-Suri's appropriation of it clearly reflects this very trend.<sup>202</sup>

Also al-Suri's interpretation of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* is extensive and radical. Like al-Zawahiri, he stresses the doctrine of *taqiyyah*. Muslims should remain deeply committed to the inflexible rules of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*, but may breach them on the surface to deceive unbelievers. He quotes 27 Qur'an verses to illustrate forbidden conduct, which includes even the most minimal association with unbelievers:

**Table 3**

**Al-Suri's Doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (friendship and enmity)<sup>203</sup> (i.e. forbidden conduct of Muslims in association with non-Muslims)**

- 1) imitating their dress, behavior, habits and names
- 2) living in the same houses without this being a real necessity
- 3) celebrating non-Muslim feasts and exchanging presents with them, i.e. Christmas, New Year
- 4) sitting with them (i.e. sharing a meal with them)

202. The less abstract and more practical interpretation of the doctrine by some radicals refers to individuals accused of breaking the rules of "friendship and enmity" and demonstrating even a minimal form of "association" with infidels. For example, in Iraq's capital Baghdad a number of barbers were assassinated for shaving beards and giving "Western-style haircuts;" two members of a tennis team were killed for wearing shorts; and street vendors selling falafel with U.S. style hot chilli sauce were threatened with death. In this case, the doctrine is applied together with nationalist and ethnic arguments, as they are prevalent in the Iraq (civil) war arena. See "Extremists Hunt Barbers in Iraq", *Fox News*, 7 February 2005 (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,146565,00.html>); Wael Hussein and Colin Freedman, "Pack up or die, street vendors told", *Telegraph.co.uk*, 4 June 2006 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/06/04/wirq04.xml&Sheet=/news/2006/06/04/ixnews.html/>).

203. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, subsection 1, point 3, *Tafasit wa adillah shar'iyyah* (Islamic Legal Details and Proofs), subpoint 1, subheadline *Min akhtar mazahir muwalat al-kafirin* (The Most Dangerous Aspects of Friendship to the Infidels).

- 5) employing them in the capacity of advisers and traveling with non-Muslims
- 6) advising them and helping them form unfavorable opinions of Muslims
- 7) ruling and judging according to their laws
- 8) fighting for them

After the 1980s, Hanbali *fiqh* against Turco-Mongols has served internal Salafi jihadis as justification for attacking their regimes. Ibn Kathir commented on Qur'an 5:50 ("Do they then seek after a judgment of (the days of) ignorance?") that the Mongols were unbelievers. Al-Suri compares the Mongols to modern Muslim governments, and argues that they use laws comparable to the heathen Mongol *Yasa* law (*yastiq*). Hence, they have defied the Qur'an injunction to obey Allah's laws in Qur'an 5:49: "And this (is the command): Judge thou between them by what Allah hath revealed [...]." Here we find traces of the Egyptian ideologue 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, who used the same argument to prove the apostasy of the Egyptian regime. Al-Suri elaborates:

The *Yasa* is the constitution and collection of laws, which Genghis Khan laid down when he raided the Middle East and saw its multitude of religions and philosophies. He consulted his legislators and [...] they mixed Islamic and Christian rules with their own heathen religions.

Today's Muslim rulers do exactly the same with the help of their legislators and parliaments, which they built on the basis of French and British laws of Roman origin. They mixed a bit of the Islamic shari'a into them simply as was convenient for them. Then some wrote on top of their constitution: "The Islamic shari'a is the basic source of legislation." Others did not even use this bastardly lie.

The present Muslim rulers must be overthrown and killed. Al-Suri uses a typical argument of Salafi jihadis that whoever does not rule by "what Allah has revealed" (Qur'an 5:49) is guilty of "greater unbelief" (*kufr akbar*). This requires the overthrow of the ruler, which is the first

step of changing un-Islamic laws into Islamic ones (*taghyir al-ahkam*).<sup>204</sup> In contrast, nonviolent Salafis hold this to be "smaller unbelief" (*kufir asghar*), which can be corrected by reformative measures (*tariq al-islah*). Rulers are held to be guilty of "greater unbelief" only if they believe that their own legal codes are superior to Allah's. That is, if they explicitly reject the shari'a, they are infidels. But for al-Suri, like for other jihadis, a leader can even be an infidel if he doesn't proclaim his deviation. It is enough if something indicates his unbelief.

Al-Suri bolsters this radical interpretation with Wahhabi *takfir*, an ultra purist form of the *takfir* doctrine. This is, of course, an inherent contradiction to his criticism of the Wahhabis. Yet, according to al-Suri's logic, appropriating certain Wahhabi doctrines does not contradict his goal to curb their influence on the Salafi jihad movement. He thinks that certain Wahhabi beliefs can serve as radical underpinning for the internal agenda of global jihad, i.e. the fight against apostate Muslim regimes. Hence, he appropriates the ten nullifiers (*nawaqid*) of Islam by Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab, who explained the ten acts and beliefs that automatically expel a Muslim from his religion:

**Table 4** <sup>205</sup>

**The ten "nullifiers of belief" according to Ibn Wahhab (i.e. automatic apostasy)**

- 1) polytheism (associating other gods with Allah in worship)
- 2) using mediators for Allah (for example, praying to saints)
- 3) doubting that non-Muslims are unbelievers
- 4) judging by non-Islamic laws and believing these are superior to divine law
- 5) hating anything Prophet Muhammad practiced
- 6) mocking Islam or the Prophet Muhammad

204. Salafi jihadis assume that Muslim society is egalitarian and that such laws should be compiled to be used freely by every Muslim. Moderate Salafis hold that existing fiqh literature must suffice for non-violent approaches. Based on author's interview with Jordanian moderate Salafi source. Amman/Jordan, 4 March 2006.

205. Table borrowed from Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 28.2 (2005), p. 81.

- 7) using or supporting magic
- 8) supporting or helping non-believers against Muslims
- 9) believing that someone has the right to stop practicing Islam
- 10) turning away from Islam by not studying or practicing it

By posing the question "who are the apostate infidels?" al-Suri instructs GIR activists whom to attack. There are basically two systems of government in the Arab-Islamic world. There are constitutional governments as well as military-, party-, or family-based dictatorships (e.g. Syria, which combines all three kinds). In constitutional governments, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government should be resisted. Presidents or kings, their representatives and their ministers as well as all members of parliament or the *majlis al-shura* (consultative council), and judges, in short everybody who legislates un-Islamic laws and enforces them, can be killed. In dictatorships, the same applies to despots and their entourage.

Muslims in state armies or security apparatuses are apostate unbelievers as well. They are part of a chain of unbelief between the West and the Islamic world. Since they serve apostate regimes, they too are guilty of this crime. Worse, they are infidels because their masters are allied with the real infidels, i.e. the U.S. The punishment for apostasy is death and therefore, they may be killed, argues al-Suri.

The basic argument can again be traced back to Faraj, who based his claim that Muslims in an enemy army were enemy combatants, even if they were drafted by force (*tajnid ijbati*), on Ibn Taymiyyah's assertions. If they were drafted by force, however, they slayed Muslims and entered heaven as martyrs when killed. In contrast, Muslims who voluntarily joined an enemy army were apostate infidels and were denied entry into heaven.<sup>206</sup> In a long legalistic argument, al-Suri rejects the concept that forceful recruitment excuses today's Muslims, since Muslims can easily refuse the draft.

During the Algerian jihad in the 1990s, the doctrine of *takfir* spun out of control. Fanatic jihadis massacred thousands of innocent

206. Faraj, *Al-Jihad*, subsection: *Al-Muqaranah bayn al-tatar wa-l-hukom al-yaum* (Comparison between the Tatars and contemporary rulers) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=8/>), p. 7.

civilians. Although al-Suri was heavily involved as an ideologue, he tried to distance himself from such acts by condemning them as a perversion. He claimed that his doctrine was completely different. Minor problems outside the sphere of politics may be judged according to the precepts of practical unbelief (*kufr 'amali*), for which the punishment is lenient and which is not viewed as doctrinal unbelief (*kufr i'tiqadi*). Non-violent Salafis promoted this distinction. Al-Suri advised jihadis to leave the interpretation of *takfir* entirely to GIR scholars and simply implement the latter's decisions.

5. Al-Suri justifies terrorism and the killing of civilians as divine injunctions. Besides, terrorism is simply the "best political means" to achieve strategic aims. Both the prophetic tradition that already circulated in the training camps of the Muslim Brotherhood's Secret Apparatus in the 1930s on the killing of the Jewish tribal leader Ka'ab bin al-Ashraf and Qur'an 8:60 condone the use of terror and assassination.<sup>207</sup> Nowadays, killing civilians, even on a massive scale as facilitated by the use of weapons of mass destruction, is justified by the "law of equality" as laid down in Qur'an 2:194 "...there is the law of equality. if then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, transgress ye likewise against him..." Al-Suri describes six conditions for killing civilians (see table 5, below). His apologetic justification for killing women and children is reminiscent of arguments in Faraj's pamphlet "The Neglected Duty." We also find this argumentation in al-Qaeda's justification of the 9/11 bombings,<sup>208</sup> and in several texts of the Egyptian jihad ideologue 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz.<sup>209</sup> Al-Suri argues that Islam essentially rejects such methods. The danger

is that it may lead to intrasectarian killing, a point that he does not further clarify. However, if Muslim women and children are being used as human shields (*tatarrus*) in front of the enemy, then they may be killed. This point of view was first presented in 'Abd al-Salam Faraj's *The Neglected Duty* in the early 1980s, referring to civilians that might be killed during an assassination attempt against Sadat.<sup>210</sup> Al-Suri claims that this rule is especially valid when the people involved are non-Muslim civilians (*madaniyun min al-kuffar*). Since when, asks al-Suri rhetorically, appropriating a dictum of Azzam, "is the blood of polytheist women and children more inviolable than the blood of Muslims?"<sup>211</sup> If a Muslim fighter is disinclined to kill a woman, he is reassured that in today's Western world many women serve as soldiers or civilian army personnel. Therefore, old Islamic codes of honor protecting women have become obsolete. Al-Suri here refers to the Afghanistan jihad, where the killing of captured "communist women" was mandatory, while killing male prisoners was not. This is a typical example of the inferior position of women in radical Salafi thinking.

Suicide bombings are an integral part of al-Suri's jihad concept. Their legal explanation is inextricably connected to an Islamic martyrdom ethos. Therefore, they are called "martyrdom operations" (*'amaliyat istishhadiyyah*). Like the majority of today's Sunni jihad ideologues, al-Suri sees them as a central pillar of global jihad. Suicide bombings were introduced to the Arab Middle East by the Shiite Lebanese militant organization Hizbollah, which killed hundreds of U.S. marines and French paratroopers in a series of spectacular attacks in 1983. At about the same time Sunni ideologues too became interested in their legal justification; at that point Azzam was already supportive of

207. Qur'an 8:61 "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies..." <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00808.htm/>.

208. Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam: al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11," *Middle East Policy Council Journal*, Vol. 10 (Summer 2003). [http://www.mepc.org/journal\\_vol10/0306\\_wiktorowicz Kaltner.asp/](http://www.mepc.org/journal_vol10/0306_wiktorowicz Kaltner.asp/).

209. 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, *Al-'Umdah fi i'dad al-'uddah li-l-jihad fi sabil Allah* (Laying the foundation for jihad in the way of Allah); *Al-Irhab min al-Islam wa man Ankara dhalika fa qad kafar* (Terrorism

belongs to Islam and who denies this is an infidel!) (both online at <http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=6/>).

210. Faraj, *Jihad: The neglected duty, Shubuhah fihiyya wa-l-radd 'alayha* (Fallacious judicial arguments and the answer to them) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=8/>) (23).

211. Abdallah Azzam originally posed the question in his book *Adab wa ahkam al-jihad* [Literature and rules of jihad] ([www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77/](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77/)). Yet, it is clear that al-Suri's appropriation must be considered in the context of a terrorism-focused jihad, not a guerilla jihad.

the legal reasoning behind suicide missions.<sup>212</sup> Yet, this debate did not fully develop until the mid-1990s, when the Palestinian group Hamas (*Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah*) used them on a large scale against Israeli civilians. The major legal argument that justified suicide bombings for militant Sunni groups consequently emerged only in 1995–1996.<sup>213</sup> The legal justification of suicide bombings is based on the *inghimas* doctrine (i.e. to plunge oneself into the enemy), which has spread like wildfire among Sunni militants.

The *inghimas* doctrine, which justifies Sunni suicide bombings, became prominent in the mid-1990s through the Jordanian jurist Ibrahim al-Ali. He justified the Hamas suicide-bombings as "martyrdom operations", comparable to "single attacks" in medieval times. He referred to attacks in which a Muslim fighter penetrated into the ranks of the enemy and was consequently killed.<sup>214</sup> It is noteworthy that this interpretation became strong in the Palestinian discourse after the Jewish extremist Baruch Goldstein massacred praying Muslims in Hebron in 1994. Support for this argument came from different corners. The internationally known Qatar-based Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who claims to promote a "moderate Islam" (*Islam al-wasta*) and a group of local Jordanian ulema supported the argument.<sup>215</sup> At

212. Azzam already analogized the classical *inghimas* concept with present suicide operations (*'amaliyat intihariyyah*). He used almost the same legalist doctrine as Salafi-Jihadi ideologues of today. See Azzam, *Presenting the the Virtues of Jihad to the Worshippers*.

213. Philipp Holtmann, "The construction of Hamas's *inghimas*-doctrine justifying suicide bombings" (unpublished).

214. Philipp Holtmann, "The construction of Hamas's *inghimas*-doctrine justifying suicide bombings" (unpublished); Ibrahim Al-Ali "Hawla al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiyyah" ("[Prophetic traditions] On martyrdom operations"), 3 parts, *Filastin al-Muslimah* ("Muslim Palestine"), October 1995, pp. 51–52; November 1995, pp. 52–53; December 1995, pp. 51–52.

215. "Fuqaha' urduniyun yaftun bi-mashru'iyat al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiyyah: Al-Shir' yajib qital al-yahud wa ikhrajihim min filastin" (Jordanian jurisprudents judge that martyrdom operations are legal: The Islamic law orders fighting the Jews and throwing them out of Palestine," *Al-Safir*, 26 March 1996, pp. 1, 15; Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, "Al-'Allama al-Qaradawi: Hadha ra'iyi fi shar'iyyat al-'amaliyat al-

the same time, Ayman al-Zawahiri and other globally oriented jihadis started using this doctrine.<sup>216</sup>

Connected to the legal argument is the justification for killing civilians that are used as human shields (*tatarrus*) or cannot be distinguished from the enemy during nightly attacks (*bayat*). Generally, this argument goes hand in hand with the stipulation that civilians should not be targeted directly, but that their death should be caused unintentionally and as collateral damage if no other means remain.

Yet, within the hardliner spectrum of the Salafi jihad discourse, non-Muslim civilians may also be killed if none of the above rules apply, simply because they are associated with the enemy. Here, the general rule is qualified by a specific rule, namely the prophetic saying "they belong to them" (*humma minhum*), which refers to the siege of Ta'if in 630 CE, when Muhammad ordered the Muslims to use catapults indiscriminately against the polytheistic inhabitants of the besieged city. Muslim civilians, in contrast, should only be killed if not killing them would lead to defeat; if the Islamic territory would be overrun; or if a greater number of Muslims would be killed than those used as human shields. These conditions are part of the classical Islamic Law of War, which regulates Islamic conduct in war and is comparable to Western *jus in bello*. Salafi jihadi ideologues oftentimes use these stipulations to rationalize the murder of civilians in terrorist attacks. This includes the killing of Muslim civilians with the argument that they cannot be distinguished from combatants, or that targeting the combatants is a more vital necessity than safeguarding Muslim lives.

Al-Suri's justification for suicide bombings also borrows from the classical legal discussion of the *inghimas* doctrine. The thirteenth-century Damascene Hanbali theologian Ibn Taymiyyah stated that there was scholarly consensus (*ijma'*) about the basic conditions for a legitimate *inghimas*: "The four Imams (i.e. founders of the four orthodox jurisprudential schools in Islam) allowed the Muslim to plunge himself into the row of the infidels, even expecting certain death at

*istishhadiyyah fi filastin al-muhtallah*" ("The erudite al-Qaradawi: This is my opinion on the martyrdom operations in occupied Palestine"), *Filastin al-Muslimah*, September 1996, pp. 50–51.

216. See Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Shifa' sudur al-mu'minin* (Healing the breasts of the believers) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/c?i=50>).

the hands of the enemy, if this was in the interest (*maslahah*) of the Muslims (i.e. killing or terrifying the enemy and thus strengthening the morale of the Muslims)." The main condition was that the decision of the fighter to carry out an attack had to be triggered by an intention that was pure (*niyah khalisah*). That was a given if he sacrificed himself for the benefit of religion.

From a popular perspective, the concept of *niyah* is central to Muslim belief. Muslims believe that on Judgment Day they will be judged according to their intentions, not their actions or, in other words, that the end justifies the means. An exemplary hadith states: "The actions [will be judged] by the intentions and everyone shall get what he has intended." Thus, speaking about *niyah* in the context of a single attack deeply touches upon popular sentiment regarding proper rules of Islamic conduct.

From an Islamic legal perspective, the underlying intention of a single attack has to be the protection, or the welfare and benefit (*maslahah*) of Islam. *Maslahah* is a tremendously important concept in Islamic law. It is the focal point of the *maqasid al-shari'ah* (the objectives of Islamic law), ensuring the good of Islam and preventing harm in this life and in the Hereafter. Moghul observes that an elaborate set of conditions must be fulfilled in order to permit reliance upon the *maslahah* concept when arriving at a particular ruling. He illustrates this, saying that "most jurists divide *maslahah* into three categories, each of which must be protected: (1) the essentials (*daruriyat*), (2) the complements (*hajiyyat*), and (3) embellishment (*tahsiniyat*)."<sup>217</sup> Since Salafi jihad jurists perceive a state of war between Islam and the West, they content themselves with addressing the *daruriyat*: "The *daruriyat* are those interests upon which life depends and the disregard of which results in 'disruption and chaos.' They consist of five essential interests: the preservation of *din* (religion), *nafs* (life), *'aql* (intellect), *nasl* (progeny), and *mal* (property)." In order for any rule of law to be valid and applicable it must not violate any of these

five essentials.<sup>218</sup> The permissibility of self-sacrifice (*tadhīyah*) first and foremost underlies the condition that it serve the benefit of religion (*din*) and that the intention behind it concur with this condition.

There are numerous pieces of shariatic evidence to support the analogy between medieval *inghimas* and modern martyrdom operations (*'amaliyat istishhadiyyah*), i.e. suicide bombings. Suffice it to say that one hadith often recurs, namely the hadith about the Youth and the People of the Ditch (*al-ghulam wa ashab al-ukhdud*), which the classical jurist Ibn Taymiyyah used to justify *inghimas* attacks.<sup>219</sup> Interestingly, the story probably refers to a Christian sect that was persecuted by a Jewish king in the sixth century in today's Saudi Arabia.<sup>220</sup> However, most of today's Muslim interpreters understand the anonymous monotheist protagonists to be Muslims. The story of the People of the Ditch, first referred to in Surat al-Buruj 85:4, is seen as evidence for the legitimacy of being killed as well as of purposely killing oneself, which is critical to the justification of suicide bombings.<sup>221</sup> Technically, there is a difference between modern martyrdom operations (i.e. suicide bombings) and the classical precedent (i.e. *inghimas*). Al-Suri, like other ideologues, is well aware of the problem. An *inghimas* means that the attacker breaks through enemy ranks, kills, and finally may get killed by the enemy, though he may also survive the attack. A suicide bomber, on the other hand, kills himself and by doing so causes the death of others.

The tradition tells about a young slave who preached monotheism. His king tried in vain to execute him for his beliefs. The young slave advised the king on how to kill him. If the king agreed to profess faith in monotheism, he would be able to take an arrow from the young slave's quiver and shoot him. The king did as advised and killed the boy. This part of the hadith is used to illustrate the legitimacy of indirectly causing one's own death (*al-musharakah fi qatl al-nafs*) for

218. Moghul, "Approximating certainty in ratiocination".

219. See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu' al fatawa al-kubra* (28/540).

220. David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 20.

221. For a detailed discussion see the paper of the jihad researcher David Jan Slavicek, "Deconstructing the Shariatic Justification of Suicide Bombings", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Spring 2008.

217. Umar F. Moghul, "Approximating certainty in ratiocination: How to ascertain the 'illah (effective cause) in the Islamic legal system and how to determine the *ratio decidendi* in the Anglo-American common law," *Journal of Islamic Law*, Vol. 4 (Fall/Winter 1999), pp. 125–200.

the benefit of religion, which applies to an *inghimas*. The decision to penetrate the enemy's ranks leads to almost certain death at the hands of the enemy. Death is not only expected — it is even wished for. The second part of the hadith deals with the monotheist followers of the boy, who were faced with the choice of either renouncing their faith or being burned alive. They voluntarily jumped into ditches in which fires had been lit. This is seen as evidence for directly causing one's own death (*al-tassabub fi qatl al-nafs*), as also applies to suicide bombings. The story comes to prove that indirectly causing one's own death and directly causing one's own death are equivalent. Although the two cases are technically different, the analogy (*qiyas*) holds and is valid as long as the same rationale ('*illah*'), i.e. "self-sacrifice for the benefit of religion," can be applied to both cases.<sup>222</sup> In Salafi jihadi theology, this bolsters the analogy between *inghimas* and suicide bombings.

The above-described verdict of legitimacy is illustrative of the reasoning of Salafi jihad ideologues — indeed, the verdicts of classical jurists must frequently be extended to justify terrorist arguments. The process of analogical reasoning is called *qiyas* and comprises four elements. In Islamic legal terms, the *qiyas* is the extension of a shariatic ruling (*hukm*) from an original case ('*asl*') to a new case ('*far*') because the new case has the same legal reasoning ('*illah*') as the original one. The legitimacy of life-threatening single attacks, i.e. *inghimas*, is extended to martyrdom operations ('*amaliyah istishhadiyyah*', i.e. suicide bombings) on the basis of the reasoning that they are self-sacrifice for the benefit of religion.

222. Especially illustrative of this *qiyas* is a legal text by Abu Sa'ad al-'Amali. *Al-'Amaliyat al-istishhadiyyah: Dhirwat sirat al-istishhad* [Martyrdom operations: the peak of the hump of martyrdom] (<http://www.tawhed.ws/r/i-819>). He uses the same reasoning as al-Suri, yet explains the case more clearly.

**Table 5: The process of analogical reasoning applied to suicide bombings**

| ' <i>asl</i> '  | ' <i>far</i> '                     | ' <i>illah</i> '                           | ' <i>hukm</i> ' |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| original case   | new case                           | reasoning                                  | ruling          |
| <i>inghimas</i> | ' <i>amaliyah istishhadiyyah</i> ' | self-sacrifice for the benefit of religion | permission      |

Yet, Muslim critiques claim that suicide bombing is not self-sacrifice, but self-destruction. The Qur'anic term *tahlukah* in Surat al-Baqarah 2:195 literally means peril, or destruction and approximates the modern concept of suicide. It is the opposite of *niyah khalisah*, i.e. acting with an intention that is pure. Thus, moderate jurists frequently use this concept to oppose suicide attacks. They argue that the perpetrators intend *tahlukah*.

Al-Suri refutes such criticism. First of all, suicide is a matter of desperation and lack of faith, while self-sacrifice is one of courage and strength of faith. Secondly, a hadith speaks about a Muslim attack against Constantinople, probably the siege of Constantinople under the caliphate of Mu'awiyah in 668 AD, which invalidates the moderates' interpretation of Surat al-Baqarah 2:195: "We raided Constantinople and...a man attacked the enemy alone [i.e. executed an *inghimas*] and our people cried out: 'No, no, he contributes with his own hands to his destruction (*tahlukah*)!' But Abu Ayub al-Ansari [a Muslim hero and companion of Muhammad] said: 'This verse was revealed to the al-Ansar, when they wanted to give up jihad and lead a settled life.'"

The hadith proves that giving up jihad means self-destruction, claims al-Suri. It is in this sense that Muslims should interpret Qur'an 2:195. Finally, he stresses that jihad has special rules which allow what normally is forbidden. He bolsters this opinion with a legal opinion by the prominent ideologue 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz. Al-Suri asks: "How do you judge a man who puts an explosive belt around his body and explodes himself in the midst of the unbelievers?" 'Abd al-'Aziz answers affirmatively, quoting Qur'an 6:151: "...take not life, which

Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law..." Al-Suri's concludes that "jihad against the enemies and their harassment is the most just of all just things."

In summary, al-Suri picks up the main argument of the radical Islamist debate that justifies suicide bombings since the mid-1990s. Since then, the argument has been developed considerably.<sup>223</sup> The justification for suicide bombings has become more radical, with more justifications for killing civilians being added to the original doctrine.

223. Especially influential in this debate were radical Jordanian jurists, supported by the prominent Qatar based and Egyptian-born legalist Yusuf al-Qaradawi. *Inghimas* "(plunging oneself into the enemy) is a classical Islamic battlefield tactic and doctrine, which was revived in the context of suicide bombings. This argument originated in the 1995 to 1996 debate around the Hamas suicide bombings and has been globalized by al-Qaeda ideologues in the years thereafter. The original argument is based on the following sources:

1) A lengthy legal treatise on Palestinian "martyrdom-operations" by the Hamas affiliated Jordanian cleric Ibrahim al-'Ali, "*fi awla al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiyyah*" ([Prophetic Traditions] On martyrdom operations), *Filastin al-Muslimah* (Muslim Palestine), October 1995, pp. 51-52; November 1995, pp. 52-53; December 1995, pp. 51-52.

2) The opinions of the Jordanian radicals Abu Faris and Hamam Sa'id as quoted in: Majid al-Khudri, "*Hal yujuz al-Islam al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiyyah?*" (Does Islam allow these martyrdom operations?), *Al-Sabeel*, 12-18 March 1996, p. 3. Their arguments are summarized in: "*Fuqaha' urduniyyah yaftun bi-mashru'iyya al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiyya: Al-Shir' yujib qital al-yahud wa ikhrajihim min filastin*" (Jordanian jurists judge that the martyrdom operations are legal: Islamic law allows the killing of the Jews and their expulsion from Palestine), *Al-Safir*, 26 March 1996, pp. 1, 15. Twenty-six signatories from the radical Islamist community and Jordanian *ulema* countersigned the fatwa of Faris: "*Hunak farq bayn al-shuhada' wa al-intihariyin*" (There is a difference between martyrs and suicides) *Al-Safir*, 1 May 1996, p. 2; Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "*Al-'allama al-Qaradawi: Hadha ra'iyi fi shar'iyyat al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiyyah fi filastin al-muhtallah*" (The erudite al-Qaradawi: This is my opinion on the legitimacy of the martyrdom operations in Occupied Palestine) *Filastin al-Muslimah*, September 1996, pp. 50-51.

The use to which al-Suri puts this doctrine represents the latest stage in this development, which materialized in a very different context, namely to justify Hamas's suicide attacks in a nationalist struggle.

**Table 6**  
**Conditions for permitting the murder of civilians according to al-Suri (only one condition suffices)**

- 
- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1) | cases in which the "law of equality" necessitates deterrent terrorism against civilians |
| 2) | an operation requiring the use of weapons of mass destruction                           |
| 3) | civilians mingling with enemies and preventing the former from being singled out        |
| 4) | civilians assisting the enemy in battle   |
| 5) | civilians being used as human shields by enemies  |
| 6) | the necessity to burn the stronghold of the enemy                                       |
- 

Finally, al-Suri justifies the strategic shift to the international arena through the writings of the early Islamic legal scholar al-Shafi'i (767-820). Al-Shafi'i claimed that as a matter of necessity the more deadly enemy should always be attacked first, even if he was the "more distant enemy" (*al-'adu al-ab'ad*). This puts in mind Azzam's imperative always to strike at the "greater evil", e.g. the Soviet forces that occupied Afghanistan.<sup>224</sup> Both Azzam and al-Suri essentially refer to the concept of the "far enemy" (*al-'adu al-ba'id*, also termed *al-'adu al-khariji*). While Azzam referred to the Soviet Union as initial target, al-Suri speaks about the "neo Crusaders" led by the U.S. and Israel. Yet, at the same time he wants the strategic shift to be read in conjunction with Qur'an 9:123 "O ye who believe! fight the unbelievers who gird you about"<sup>225</sup>. This Qur'anic verse epitomizes the strategy of local jihads since the 1960s, namely to fight against the "near enemy" (*al-'adu al-qarib*). Today's new form of foreign occupation often takes the form of "indirect occupation," supported by apostate local regimes. Fighting local regimes thus also means fighting foreign occupation -- the two targets thus merged.

224. Azzam, "The defense of Muslim lands," Chapter 4.

225. Qur'an 9:123 (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/00916.htm/>).

The "two targets, one enemy" concept advocated by al-Suri was expected to improve al-Qaeda's strategy from the 1990s onwards. This concerned mainly the "local agenda" of global jihad. When Islamist militants, spearheaded by al-Qaeda, first took up the war against the U.S., their efforts to internationalize local strategies were still tentative. Later, the international objective became more pronounced. Yet, al-Qaeda's strategic planners failed to offer a comprehensive concept that would integrate different local struggles into one global jihad. The strategic planners of al-Qaeda during this period, laments al-Suri, did not manage to go beyond their own local objectives.

Since 1996, al-Qaeda recognized local jihad as a failed strategy.<sup>226</sup> However, the impact of this conclusion on future strategies was somewhat ambiguous because the upper echelons of al-Qaeda, centered on the Saudi Arabian and Egyptian factions within the organization, were mainly concerned with their own local struggles. From the mountains of Afghanistan, Bin Laden declared "jihad against the Americans occupying the land of the two holy sites", i.e. Saudi Arabia.<sup>227</sup> Saudi Arabia being his home country, the proclaimed jihad concerned both his visions of local and international jihad. In February 1998, al-Zawahiri and Bin Laden and three other signatories co-signed the fatwa of the "World Islamic Front for Fighting the Jews and Crusaders" (*al-Jabha al-'Alamiyyah li-Qital al-Yahud wa-l-Salibiyyin*), which was the "initial organisational structure for what later became al-Qaeda."<sup>228</sup> The fatwa stated: "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies — civilians and military — is an individual duty incumbent upon every Muslim who can do it in any country in

226. Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press), pp. 92–93.

227. Usama Bin Laden, "Declaration of War on America" (<http://www.islamistwatch.org/main.html>) In this August 1996 declaration Bin Laden pledged to carry the war to the U.S. This was probably a reaction to the new U.S. stance against terrorism under the Clinton administration and Bin Laden's expulsion from Sudan in May 1996 under pressure from the U.S.

228. Diaa Rashwan, "Two targets, one enemy," *Al-Ahram Weekly* online edition, 9–15 June 2005, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/746/focus.htm/>.

which this is possible." The two main objectives under the umbrella of an international strategy were "to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [in Mecca] from their grip," and "to move [all] occupying armies] out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim."<sup>229</sup> While Bin Laden's interest was addressed directly, the Egyptian al-Zawahiri had already stated in a pamphlet in 1995 that "the road to Jerusalem leads through Cairo,"<sup>230</sup> i.e. that Jerusalem would only be conquered after the overthrow of the Egyptian regime. Thus, the international strategy of the nascent al-Qaeda was heavily overshadowed by various local objectives.

In practical terms, however, the international strategy went into effect in August 1998, when a series of devastating blasts, financed and coordinated by Bin Laden and Zawahiri, hit the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. But at the same time, it would take several years before an ideological reconciliation took place between the Saudi and Egyptian factions of al-Qaeda. Only after the U.S.-British invasion of Iraq in 2003 did the aim to overthrow local regimes, as well as to destroy the U.S., merge into one strategy.<sup>231</sup>

Especially illustrative of the local orientation of al-Zawahiri is his 2001 pamphlet "Knights under the Prophet's Banner" (*Fursan taht rayat al-nabi*), which offers the most comprehensive analysis of the genesis of global jihad from within al-Qaeda. Al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second in command, confirms the importance of carrying the battle into the international enemy's field, i.e. the U.S. and the Jews. But he nevertheless stays committed to his own local struggle against the Egyptian regime, as proposed by the 1980s al-jihad-ideologue 'Abd al-Salam Faraj. Faraj argued that the jihad objective to liberate Jerusalem would only come after the overthrow of the Egyptian regime, which

229. "Text of fatwa urging jihad against Americans," *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 23 February 1998, translated by the Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Israel (<http://www.ict.org.il/articles/fatwah.htm>).

230. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Al-Tariq ila al-quds yamurr abra al-qahirah* (The Road to [Liberate] Jerusalem Goes through Cairo), 1995. <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=1102/>.

231. Diaa Rashwan, "Two targets, one enemy."



al-Zawahiri confirms.<sup>232</sup> Al-Zawahiri appropriates Faraj's dictum and combines it with Azzam's concept of a "solid base," in a physical sense. He reckons that the overthrow of the regime in Egypt will lead to the creation of a platform for global jihad, which will enable the conquest of Jerusalem. Thus, he combines his own internal struggle with an international strategy.<sup>233</sup>

Where al-Suri vehemently disagrees with al-Zawahiri and Bin Laden is their exploitation of the global jihad agenda for their own regional aims. Although he displays a similar approach in his book against the Syrian regime *Ahl al-sunna fi-l-sham fi muwajahat al-Nusairiyah wa-l-salibiyyin wa-l-yahud*, he now claims that local strategies are outdated. It is not the local strategy that must be appropriated, but the ideology that lies behind it. Thus, al-Suri calls for appropriating only the Islamic legal principles that have bolstered local strategies. He especially refers to the Egyptian ideologue Faraj and his justification for killing apostate Muslim rulers and their entourage. This is the subtle, but crucial difference between al-Zawahiri's, Bin Laden's and al-Suri's concepts. Al-Suri is convinced that his is the better solution for closing the gap between the internal and external agendas of global jihad.

## PART III

# THE IMPLICATIONS OF AL-SURI'S JIHAD CONCEPT IN A FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION

232. Reuven Paz, "From Riyadh 1995 to Sinai 2004: The Return of al-Qaeda to the Arab Homeland", *PRISM Occasional Papers*, 2.3 (2004) ([http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM\\_no\\_3\\_vol\\_2\\_-\\_From\\_Riyadh\\_to\\_Sinai.pdf/](http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM_no_3_vol_2_-_From_Riyadh_to_Sinai.pdf/)); Faraj, *Al Jihad*, point 7: *Al-'Adu al-qarib wa-l-'adu al-ba'id* (The near and the far enemy) (<http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=8/>), p. 15; Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Al-Tariq ila al-quds yamurr 'abra al-qahirah* ("The way to [liberate] Jerusalem leads via Cairo") (<http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=1102>).

233. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Fursan taht rayat al-nabiy* ("Knights under the Prophet's Banner"), published in 11 parts in the London based Arabic language newspaper *As-Sharq Al-Ausat* (No. 8405-8415), part 11 (12 December 2001).

## Chapter 10

### Al-Suri's Revival of Azzam in a New Global Setting

Al-Suri revives Abdallah Azzam's work in a fundamentally changed geopolitical situation. In order to understand how al-Suri interprets Azzam, we have to look at both ideologues in the broader context of their times. Based on this understanding, we can see why and how Azzam's doctrine of Defense of Muslim Lands translates into al-Suri's radicalized concept of Global Islamic Resistance, how the doctrine of jihad as individual religious obligation has become the strategy of individualized terrorism.

The Afghan jihad was a proxy war of the Cold War, which intensified in the first half of the 1980s.<sup>234</sup> A major factor was the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979, when an Islamist insurgency threatened the Marxist regime. The Soviets justified their invasion with the Brezhnev-Doctrine, a guideline for Soviet foreign policy since 1968. Accordingly, any attempt to change the political system of a Soviet-allied country would be seen as a hostile act. Two factors determined the Soviet decision: fear of losing their grip on the highly strategic region between Central Asia and the oil-rich Middle East, and the aggregating effect that an Islamist state in Afghanistan might have on Muslims in neighboring countries.

The U.S., on the other hand, feared for its access to oil in the Arabian Peninsula. President Carter warned in 1980 that any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf would be regarded as an assault against the vital interests of the U.S.;

234. Benjamin B. Fischer, "A Cold War Conundrum," *Center for the Study of Intelligence. Central Intelligence Agency CIA* (<https://www.cia.gov/csi/monograph/coldwar/source.html>).

this became known as the Carter Doctrine.<sup>235</sup> Carter's successor Reagan extended this policy in 1981 to protect Saudi Arabia from any domestic effects of the regional turmoil<sup>236</sup>, thus also promising internal stability. However, the doctrine was mainly put to use in the context of the Afghan jihad. The CIA and the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) supported Islamist resistance against the Soviet forces with money, training, and weapons. Stinger rockets especially, which immobilised the Soviet air force, played an important role in the guerilla strategy of the Islamist fighters.

The proxy war in Afghanistan was crucial for the growth of the global jihad movement. The Cold War and its proxy wars offered shelters for militant groupings on both sides of the Iron Curtain. U.S. Support for Afghan resistance and international jihadism against Soviet communism was one such example. Approximately 20,000 foreign "freedom fighters" actively supported the Afghan resistance throughout the 1980s.<sup>237</sup>

Global jihad strategy developed accordingly. It was protracted and ambivalent in terms of alliances, but perfectly rational in terms of organizational survival. From a jihad perspective, the temporary support of the U.S. and her allies was crucial to gradually liberate "occupied" Muslim countries allied with the Eastern Bloc before turning

235. While the Carter doctrine was aimed at outside forces, the Reagan Corollary pledged to secure internal stability too. Some analysts have argued that the strategic principles of the Carter Doctrine and the Reagan Corollary are reflected in Operation Desert Storm and the Iraq invasion of 2003. Howard Teicher and Gayle Radley-Teicher, *Twain Pillars to Desert Storm: America's Flawed Vision in the Middle East from Nixon to Bush* (New York: Morrow, 1993); Michael T. Klare, "The Carter Doctrine Goes Global," *The Progressive* (December 2004) ([http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1295/is\\_12\\_68/ai\\_n8582775](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1295/is_12_68/ai_n8582775)).

236. With the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the start of the Iran Iraq war in 1981 and a growing Islamist opposition in many Muslim countries, the whole oil-rich region became destabilized.

237. Jihadis were heralded as freedom fighters by conservative Western politicians like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. In contrast, the same people regarded the PLO and its foreign volunteers as terrorists.

against Western-allied home governments and the West itself. During this transitory period of dependence on U.S. and Western shelters, jihad organizations were structured hierarchically and transparently. Jihad-guesthouses along the roads of the Pakistani bordertown Peshawar in the mid-1980s were divided according to organizational affiliation, and were in close contact with unofficial recruitment offices in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East.

This clearly illustrates how global jihad, under the banner of anti-communist struggle, resulted in open propagation and low-level secretiveness of the jihad networks, which did not yet have today's decentralized structures. International jihadis had to defend themselves against the Soviet label of "terrorism", when major Western powers heralded them as "freedom fighters."

The pullout from Afghanistan in February 1989 was a clear sign of Soviet economic and military weakness and heralded the final demise of the S.U. A decade of internationally legitimized jihad ended, leading to the split up, while previously a common cause had united the international jihad movement. Foreign jihad fighters were convinced that they had "defeated" the Soviet Union and carried this myth wherever they went. But they also suffered a sense of disorientation regarding the next enemy. A number of options were available: returning home and struggling against local regimes, seeking political asylum in the West or propagating radicalism and staying committed to global jihad and taking on the next enemy, namely the West, with the U.S. as the prime target.

Azzam, the core ideologue of global jihad, began his strategic planning for the post-Afghanistan era in the 1980s. The lesser-known parts of his work focus on individualized jihad and call for self-reliant fighters to strike everywhere. As if foreseeing the dominant role of the U.S. in world and Middle Eastern politics, Azzam laid conceptual cornerstones for a future global jihad concept, which al-Suri took up and formulated as Global Islamic Resistance (GIR). The logo of GIR, the three holiest places of Islam behind bars, is a scenario Azzam dealt with intensively in his late 1980s writings; in terms of concept, ideology and theology al-Suri seems to have been his major student.

However, not only Islamist militancy underwent a process of fundamental reorientation in the late 1980s. With the gradual decline

of the Soviet Union, the U.S., too, experienced a fundamental paradigm change connected to its new role as the only remaining superpower. The transition from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism began in the early 1990s. A landmark event was the First Gulf War, which lasted from August 1990 to February 1991, and in which an international coalition gathered behind the U.S. to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Shortly before its dissolution, the Soviet Union quietly acquiesced to the international coalition interfering in the Middle East, where previously the superpower balance had halted any such efforts.

The Gulf War demonstrated a new geopolitical pattern. In order to legitimize safeguarding U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region, President George Bush Sr. announced the Gulf War as the beginning of a New World Order, based on international interventionism and on Judeo-Christian thought. The spread of "freedom" and "justice" depended on fighting terrorism globally, he said, and thus asserted that the Cold War struggle between capitalism and communism had come to an end.<sup>238</sup>

Many Muslims perceived the deployment of U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia in August 1990 as an aggressive foray into the Muslim world. Some described it as the "occupation of Mecca and Medina." Radicals picked up this slogan, which facilitated a new interpretation of defensive jihad, strengthened anti-government sentiments among Muslim populations and bolstered the weakened ranks of militants. Already in the 1980s Azzam had preached a form of individualized jihad if unbelievers should dare to put foot on the Arabian Peninsula. This dictum of Azzam became the guideline for the Global Islamic Resistance Call. Another factor played in the hands of militants — namely, the tacit consent of many Muslim governments for the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries, which further undermined their legitimacy in the eyes of the Muslim populations, and especially affected young males susceptible to the zealous ideas of radical preachers. Throughout the 1990s, fresh

238. "Toward a New World Order," speech by 41<sup>st</sup> President of the U.S. George Herbert Walker Bush on 11 November 1990 in front of a joint session of the U.S. Congress (<http://www.sweetliberty.org/issues/war/bushsr.htm>)

jihad recruits went to conflicts and training camps in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

The decade of transition ended with the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The spectacular attacks, which cost thousands of American lives, drew the U.S. into an international confrontation with Islamist terrorism and the rogue regimes supporting it. Eleven years to the day after it was proclaimed, the New World Order had to be protected by a war on terrorism.<sup>239</sup> Globally, governments had to choose sides for or against the U.S., a scenario similar to that of tense periods during the Cold War. 9/11 was also the turning point after which the administration of George W. Bush openly adopted an agenda guided by two currents of thought, neo-conservative and religious. Neo-conservatism is a school of thought in American politics that subscribes, amongst others, to the idea that national security and national interests can be achieved by the promotion of democracy abroad. Protestant fundamentalism supports this concept with a strong religion-inspired sense of mission.<sup>240</sup> This

239. The War on Terror includes military, logistic or political U.S. intervention and assistance against substate groups and states, such as in Lebanon (2006), Pakistan (2004), the Philippines (2002), Indonesia (2002), and Afghanistan (2001). Following 9/11, NATO for the first time invoked Article 5, the mutual defense clause of the North Atlantic Treaty, and declared that the attacks were against all 19 member states.

240. The central tenets of neo-conservatism were formulated in the 1960s by former leftists who had moved to the right side of the political spectrum and became influential under Reagan. Neoconservatives share an idealist stance on foreign policy in the sense that relations with other countries must be based on shared democratic values. In contrast, traditional conservatism in U.S. politics supports U.S. friendly regimes, whether they are democratic or not. In the neoconservative view, military intervention is legitimate if the cause is morally justifiable. See Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds*, pp. 1-69.

The rise of Christian fundamentalism in the U.S. goes back to the 1980s, when severe conflicts about social values and norms resulted in a religious revival. Among the root causes were state prohibition of school prayer and thus prevention of a Christian education for children in public schools, the principle of the legalization of abortions, and the Watergate Affair, which challenged fundamental evangelical religious values: The connection between private morals and commonweal

ideology has had a dramatic effect on U.S. foreign policy. While U.S. Middle East policy has favored friendly relations with Saudi Arabia over Israel's security since the 1960s, the new foreign policy strategy has upset this equilibrium.<sup>241</sup>

Thus, claims the French scholar Kepel, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was the expression of a neoconservative agenda disguised as the War on Terrorism.<sup>242</sup> It conformed to plans for restructuring the Middle East that dated back to the 1990s.

After the Cold War, the doors to the oil-rich Middle East stood wide open, while the region itself drifted into instability. Growing Islamic fundamentalism and the threatening scarcity of oil attracted both neo-conservative and religious thinkers to develop new forward strategies on how to deal with this volatile region. A second invasion of Iraq was expected to help spread democracy in the Middle East in a domino-like effect,<sup>243</sup> while at the same time securing U.S. influence in

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seemed to be lost and Christian fundamentalists found their social milieu under threat. Consequently, a number of religious organizations organized lobbying groups to directly influence U.S. domestic politics. See Katja Mertin, "Die Religiöse Rechte in den U.S.A.," in Killian Kindelberger (ed.) *Fundamentalismus: Politisierte Religionen*, (Potsdam: Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2004), pp. 28-37.

241. Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds*, pp. 1-29. Kepel goes so far to argue that U.S. neoconservative policy toward the Middle East in the 1990s was motivated by the aim to enhance Israel's security and independence from the U.S.

242. Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds*, pp. 1-29.

243. Neo-conservatism did not have a strong influence on U.S. foreign policy during the Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations. Yet, since the mid-1990s neoconservative planners, such as Paul Wolfowitz, developed a radical agenda to restructure the Middle East. Military intervention with superior "smart weapons" was regarded as a legitimate means to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and initiating a wave of democratization in the Middle East. Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" theory helped to transpose the conceptual tools of the Cold War to the Middle East and thus helped to initiate a new era of conflicting and mutually hostile ideologies. Huntington argued that future global conflict would be fought between the West and other civilizations, primarily the Islamic

the wider region. In fact, after the tragic events of 9/11 the purpose of neo-conservatism experienced a delayed shift from the threat of communism to the threat of Islamist terrorism.

Critical voices against the current U.S. foreign policy say that the War on Terrorism undermines the moral stability behind foreign policy goals,<sup>244</sup> and that current U.S. foreign policies subscribe to a Manichaeism that divides the world into absolute good and absolute evil.<sup>245</sup> Religious ideas obviously influence U.S. political culture. Currently, observers point at the political power of evangelical fundamentalism, which ascribes to the belief that the existence of Israel is a precondition for the *Parousia*.<sup>246</sup> With their "death wish," their longing for the Apocalypse, evangelical fundamentalists stand behind an aggressive Middle East foreign policy, unconditionally supporting Israel, the occupation of Iraq and a preemptive strike against Iran. Fundamentalist Christians have met with White House officials and urged them "to adopt a more confrontational posture toward Iran" and support Israel.<sup>247</sup> How big their influence really is remains debatable. Yet, conservative and right-wing Israelis welcome such ambitions with open arms. One example is the conservative *Jerusalem Post's* section "Christian World," which is a mouthpiece

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and Sinic ones. Neoconservatives have appropriated Huntington's key ideas, although he strongly disagrees with them over their Middle East policy. For Huntington's theory, see Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72 (summer 1993), pp. 22-28.

244. Ira Chernus, "The Theology of American Empire," *Foreign Policy in Focus* (September 27, 2007) (<http://www.fpiif.org/fpiifxt/4585>).

245. Hussein Solomon, "Global Security in an Age of Religious Extremism," *Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM)* (<http://www.e-prism.org/>).

246. The Greek word *Parousia* means "second coming" and describes the return of Christ and fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy in the Holy Land.

247. Max Blumenthal, "Birth Pangs of a New Christian Zionism," *The Nation* (8 August 2006) ([http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060814/new\\_christian\\_zionism](http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060814/new_christian_zionism)). See also Max Blumenthal's video "Rapture Ready: The Christians United for Israel Tour," available on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). See also Jon Basil Utley, "America's Armageddonites" in *Foreign Policy in Focus* (10 October 2007) (<http://www.fpiif.org/fpiifxt/4630>).

for the U.S. evangelical movement and its coalition Christians United for Israel (CUFI).

Let us sum up our findings: During the Cold War, jihadis could build up large networks capitalizing on their role as proxies against the Soviets. However, in the post-Cold War era, especially after 9/11, this situation has changed. International campaigns against Islamist terrorism, first and foremost the War on Terrorism, have replaced the rivalry between capitalism and communism. This confrontation between radical Islam and Western states can lead to conventional warfare, such as in a possible engagement with Iran. Such conflicts are, however, mostly highly asymmetrical ones between states and sub-states, with Islamist extremists falling into the latter category.

The effect of this reality on the teachings of the main ideologues has been very clear. Azzam, for example, participated in classical guerilla warfare in the guise of jihad. He had secure bases in different countries, such as recruitment offices in Brooklyn and Peshawar. Conditions were excellent for recruiting fighters for global jihad. In contrast, al-Suri, who belongs to the next generation, lacked such opportunities in the latter part of his "career." He was bound to the Afghan enclave from the mid-1990s and was on the run between 2001 and 2005 after the fall of the Taliban regime. This constant flight and ensuing feeling of insecurity translated into his overall strategy, in which he applied many principles of Azzam's.

One of al-Suri's strategic key concepts in the post-9/11 security environment is that jihad must not be based on organizations, but on "individualized terror." It must run under a common ideology, the essence of which is hostility against the West and Muslim regimes. He revives the concept of urban guerilla warfare and adaptes it to terrorist methods and fragmented organizational structures: He thus advises that small isolated cells, not consisting of more than ten individuals, be created. These individuals, possibly friends, should avoid building a larger group or joining an overarching network. Instead, focus is to be placed on the Internet for recruiting and training. This will save time and enable the group to strike after a short period of autodidactic preparation, says al-Suri. The main driving force is the common ideology, the principles of which had been laid down by Azzam.

The American anthropologist and student of radical Islam, Scott Atran, has observed correctly that "at this point, the most active and dynamic terrorists belong to spontaneously self-generated, self-organized networks of friends and kin, who are radicalized collectively and collectively decide to carry out terrorist operations." Moreover, "global al-Qaeda is now a viral, social movement and political ideology, not a well organized organizational structure with command and control."<sup>248</sup> In addition, al-Suri envisions larger GIR mother-cells, which will be responsible for political propaganda and protracted Islamist indoctrination. Such cells are to be created in war zones like in Iraq. Moreover, spectacular large scale attacks such as in Madrid and London are expected to create a general sense of fear in the West.

Regarding the political strategy, neither Azzam nor al-Suri have offered a theory that could supplant jihad. Jihad comes before the establishment of an Islamist order. Therefore, the implementation of the political program is postponed until jihad has been completed, i.e. until all contemporary Muslim regimes and the West have been defeated. Both al-Suri and Azzam are like Salafi-Trotskyists who aim at a worldwide Islamic revolution. While Azzam apparently had an additional goal in mind, the liberation of Palestine, al-Suri lacks such a concrete objective and fundamentally opposes local strategies. At the same time, paradoxically, Azzam paid less lip service to the local agenda of jihad than al-Suri, who utilizes the local paradigm to call for parallel struggles against local Muslim collaborators, a struggle that is integrated into global jihad.

Al-Suri himself is a victim of the same disease he ascribes to the most radical fringes of the jihad movement, namely an irrational fanaticism based on an overtly puritan interpretation of faith and the belief in evermore radical doctrines of jihad. Al-Suri clearly went through a process of alienation from his own roots. He disassociates

248. Scott Atran, "Terrorism and Radicalization: What not to do, what to do," lecture presented at the U.S. State Department/UK House of Lords (October/November 2007) ([http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/Atran07/index.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/Atran07/index.html)).

himself from the Sufi mystical tendencies that informed Syrian Islamism in general and his family background in particular.<sup>249</sup>

The re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate remains a diffuse goal. Although authoritative classical theories exist, Sunni Islamists have not yet had the chance to prove that they are capable of translating them into a modern Islamic system. Even the more radical jihad ideologues have not treated this question seriously.

Al-Suri speaks vaguely about an Islamic System based on "Islamic governments," but he does not explain its formation. Sunni Islam is not organized hierarchically, and *'asabiyyah* (clanship) is the strongest factor of social cohesion in Arab society.<sup>250</sup> Therefore, governments in Arab countries are often clan- or family-based and work on the basis of patronage, i.e. client-patron relationships. Al-Suri explains this in his analysis and critique of the Syrian regime. How, then, does he expect to form a unified Islamist system in the second phase of his strategy, i.e. after jihad has been completed? Al-Suri assumes that, by then the Islamic world will have been cleansed of any Western presence. A likely scenario based on this assumption is that bloody coups would lead to factional clan-based warlord regimes in different Muslim countries. Concerted attempts to curb factionalism and unify Islamist systems would lead to massive civil war and chaos in the Arab world. Let us not forget that al-Suri is a millenarian, whose basic expectation would be that a new, Islamic order will inevitably arise out of total crisis. Therefore, he anticipates an Islamic world that will sink into complete anarchy. This is preferable to an Islamic world ruled by "apostate infidel" collaborators with the West. In brief, total chaos is assumed to be a fertile ground for restructuring Arab-Muslim society. Terrorism has thus become a strategy in itself, instead of a tactic to pressure for specific goals (as was the case with most leftist terrorist groups of the 1970s and 1980s). For the present no realizable goal remains but the reign of terror.

249. Al-Suri himself comes from a Sufi family; also the Syrian Islamic Front leader Sa'id Hawwa, who had a close relationship to al-Suri in the early 1980s, was influenced by Sufism.

250. Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture and State* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

## Chapter 11

### The Arab World: New Fronts Confirming al-Suri's Jihad Strategy

#### Targeting the Tourism Sector in Egypt

Some of the events related to Salafi jihadism over the last years bear a marked similarity to the guidelines of Global Islamic Resistance (GIR). A case in point is the targeting of the tourism sector in the Sinai Peninsula between 2004 and 2006.

These were not the first eruptions of violence against foreigners and tourists in Egypt. The terror attacks against tourists by the Islamic Group (*al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah*) in the 1990s illustrate this.<sup>251</sup> The Mubarak government successfully contained the wave of violence and, by the late 1990s, had concluded a truce (*sulh*) with the group's leadership.

In actual fact, the large bombings that hit holiday resorts along the popular eastern coast of Sinai in 2004 effectively ended a seven-year timeout of terrorist operations in Egypt.<sup>252</sup> These, and subsequent attacks in 2005 and 2006, killed hundreds of people, a majority of them Egyptian workers in the tourism sector. All attacks had a similar pattern: they consisted of a series of successive or simultaneous

251. Motivated by opposition to the Mubarak government and by Islamic fundamentalism, acts of terrorism harming the tourism sector and killing non-Muslims were perceived as serving both aims. The Egyptian government successfully checked the group, which led to a lull of several years in terrorist activity.

252. Reuven Paz, "From Riyadh 1995 to Sinai 2004: The Return of al-Qaeda to the Arab Homeland," *PRISM occasional papers* 2.3 (October 2004), p. 1 ([http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM\\_no\\_3\\_vol\\_2\\_-\\_From\\_Riyadh\\_to\\_Sinai.pdf](http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM_no_3_vol_2_-_From_Riyadh_to_Sinai.pdf)).

bombings, reminiscent of the first al-Qaeda attacks against international targets, such as the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. Several groups, one of them called itself Monotheism and Jihad in Egypt (*Tawhid wa Jihad fi Mtsr*), claimed responsibility for the bombings. As Paz observes, the attacks may be a backswing of global jihad to the local front. In a "return home" syndrome, Egyptian jihadis who have returned from the global front continue their struggle in the domestic arena.<sup>253</sup> Further insight was offered by an al-Suri follower, called Abu Muhammad al-Hilali. Following the series of bombings in Dahab in 2006, al-Hilali published a unique analysis of these events on the Internet. He interpreted jihad activism in Sinai as an example for operations by Global Islamic Resistance squadrons in the Arab world and called upon the new jihad network, which according to Egyptian intelligence estimates consists of local Bedouins and possibly foreign fighters,<sup>254</sup> to act upon in accordance with the guidelines of al-Suri's GIRC.<sup>255</sup>

Al-Hilali's analysis, which is based on GIRC, reminds the jihadis in Sinai that the most important targets of today's jihad are "foreign tourists, who regard the Muslim countries as their backyard and import with them their moral dirt." He states that "the places that were attacked in Sinai are world famous for tourism and show a high level of [moral] corruption." Therefore, he advises future jihadis in Egypt to

253. Ibid.

254. Mohammed al-Shafey, "Dahab Bombers Inspired by al-Qaeda," *Alsharq Alawsat - English edition* (29 April 2006) (<http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=1&id=4749>). Also the "Abdallah Azzam Brigades" took responsibility for the bombings in 2005 which, however, has not been confirmed. The investigation of the first bombing was concluded by the Egyptian government as having been carried out "with the help of local Bedouins;" no al-Qaeda affiliation was mentioned.

255. Abu Muhammad al-Hilali, "*Risalah ila ahl al-thughur fi sina*" (A letter to the people in Sinai) (Thread from an Islamist web blog used with the friendly permission of Reuven Paz); See also Paz, "al-Qaeda's Search for New Fronts. Instruction for Jihadi Activity in Egypt and Sinai," *PRISM occasional papers* 3.7 (2005) ([http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM\\_no\\_7\\_vol\\_3\\_-\\_The\\_new\\_front\\_in\\_Egypt\\_and\\_Sinai.pdf](http://www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM_no_7_vol_3_-_The_new_front_in_Egypt_and_Sinai.pdf).)

build their strategy on the basis of GIRC and operate through small, mobile terror cells that focus on:

- targeting tourists by killing them or taking them hostages
- targeting ships and attacking the main ports in both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea
- targeting the transfer of oil and gas to Israel
- targeting the entire spectrum of foreign presence and interests in Egypt, from cultural centers to companies and embassies.

Al-Hilali claims that, though the attacks were operationally successful, they lacked both an efficient Islamic propaganda infrastructure and a clear message to the Egyptian government and people. In future, he adds, the propagandistic effects ought to be better exploited. Yet, al-Hilali lauds the attacks against tourists because they fit into al-Suri's strategy. The attackers just have to improve their propagandistic performance on the basis of al-Suri's GIRC concept. This example undoubtedly demonstrates how the strategic imperatives of al-Suri are applied to current jihad activism.

In the summer of 2007 an Egyptian al-Qaeda offshoot instructed prospective jihadis "how to join al-Qaeda" and form cells; it called for small isolated cells and individualized acts of terrorism, which ought to be perpetrated sporadically to impede the detection of an operational pattern.<sup>256</sup> The message is strikingly similar to al-Suri's Call for Global Islamic Resistance and his instructions on forming small cells (see Chapter 7, section "Jihad Errors Committed over the last 40 Years").

256. *Al-Thabitun 'ala al-'ahd (Qa'idat al-jihad fi urd al-Kananah)*, "Dimna silsilat 'kaifa tujahid liwahdaka'; *Al-halqah al-Ula - Kaifa tukawwin khaliyataka*" (Those who Observe the Treaty (Jihad Base in Egypt): "From the series how to struggle by yourself: How to form your cell") ([www.alqasagat.net/vb/archive/index.php/t-2933.html](http://www.alqasagat.net/vb/archive/index.php/t-2933.html)), retrieved 10 Feb 2008. For an English translation of the text see MEMRI Special Dispatch Series No. 1702, "Islamist Websites Hosted in Minnesota on How to Join al-Qaeda, Form a Jihad Cell, and Select a Western Target - '[Is] Assassinating the American Ambassador ... Difficult for Someone Who Has Already Crushed America in Her Own Home?'" ([www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP170207](http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP170207)), retrieved 10 Feb 2008.



The Egyptian al-Qaeda offshoot called upon young militants to "imagine that the 'organization' al-Qaeda does not exist." The purpose is to focus on the common al-Qaeda ideology. Since larger organizational structures have become insecure, the tackifying kit should be spiritual, not organizational. Small units should be built on the basis of neighborhood, friendship or kinship relations. "You know devoted youth who are zealous for jihad like yourself in your area, mosque or university. So build a cell on your own...Every jihad cell is a microcosm of the world jihad organization." This clearly shows how the concept of individualized terrorism expounded by al-Suri is gaining a foothold in the Middle Eastern jihad scene. Via the Internet, it is exported to the rest of the world. An important strategy within this individualized jihad concept is assassination. The Egyptian propaganda message, too, stresses the importance of choosing single figures, like the American ambassador to Egypt, and murdering them in order to deliver a message.

### Al-Suri's Concept of "Central Squadrons" in Iraq

Our next example deals with Iraq, where al-Qaeda is trying to build a political arm. A U.S. intelligence report released in the summer of 2006 stated that "al-Qaeda in Iraq wants to present itself as a legitimate organisation and is striving to increase its operational power by building a political base with a military wing."<sup>257</sup> Since the death in June 2006 of al-Qaeda's former leader in Iraq, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, and the emergence of his successor Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, the network seemed to focus its propaganda on broad social

257. Alister, Bull, "Al-Qaeda building political arm in Iraq: General", *Reuters*, 16 August 2006 (retrievable from <http://www.iraquupdates.com/p/articles.php/article/9933>), Bill Roggio, "MNF Update on al-Qaeda in Iraq" *Counterterrorism Blog*, retrieved 29 August 2006 ([http://counterterrorismblog.org/2006/08/mnfiraq\\_update\\_on\\_alqaeda\\_in\\_i.php](http://counterterrorismblog.org/2006/08/mnfiraq_update_on_alqaeda_in_i.php)).

issues,<sup>258</sup> such as Iraqi anger over high unemployment, poor security and unreliable supplies of electricity and fuel, and aiming this anger at the government and its U.S. backers.

The policy of al-Muhajir brings to mind al-Suri's imperative to build what he called "central squadrons," i.e. larger GIR mother cells. Such squadrons would serve for strategic guidance, political work and propaganda and become the basis for an Islamic system at a later time. Very importantly, they need to integrate into local struggles since the goal is to win the support of local populations before taking over power. Political work and cooperation are the keys to achieving this goal.

Zarqawi's network, the Mujahidin Shura Council (*Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin*), used to kidnap and kill rival tribal leaders and clerics. It terrorized civilians and seized their property. In response, an al-Qaeda hostile tribal alliance, called Council of the Awakening of the al-Anbar Province (*Majlis Sahwat al-Anbar*), was formed in September 2006. The alliance fights al-Qaeda in collaboration with U.S. troops, and at times inflicts heavy damages upon the jihad network.<sup>259</sup> Friedman

258. Al-Muhajir is a seasoned fighter. Since 1982, he has been a follower of al-Zawahiri; he stayed with al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda hard core in Sudan until 1995. He is a mix of cell builder, skillful propagator and strategist like al-Suri. Al-Muhajir, who is in his forties and known under the nom de guerre Sheikh Abu Ayyub al-Masri, fits many other characteristics of al-Suri. Like al-Suri he belongs to the second generation of jihadis (since the 1980s) and was a lecturer and teacher, as well as an expert on road side bombs and explosives. In 1999, he trained and lectured in al-Farouq Camp in Afghanistan, where he met al-Zarqawi. Since the U.S.-British invasion of Iraq, he was responsible for recruitment for the Egyptian al-Qaeda network and traveled under faked names to countries all over the Middle East and North Africa. He is educated in Shar'ia law and was tasked with teaching Salafi-jihadi ideology to new recruits. See Abdul Hameed Bakier, "A Profile of al-Qaeda's New Leader in Iraq: Abu Ayyub al-Masri," *Terrorism Monitor* 3.24 (2006) ([http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/tf\\_003\\_024.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/tf_003_024.pdf)).

259. The Awakening alliance works with the U.S. troops, whose strategy it is to fight al-Qaeda and its followers by cooperating with local tribes. At times, they inflict heavy damages upon the network. Similar Awakening alliances have formed in other provinces on the model of the Al-Anbar

observes that "particularly since the death of al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq, the United States has adopted a more nuanced view of the Sunni insurgency, drawing a distinction between the largely native Iraqi insurgents and the largely foreign jihadists."<sup>260</sup> This has led to the rise of other "awakening alliances" modeled on that of the al-Anbar province.

Zarqawi's successor Abu Hamza al-Muhajir tried to reverse Zarqawi's policy. He quickly integrated armed groups from friendly tribes into an Alliance of the Anointed / Good People (*tahalluf al-mutayyabin / al-mutayyibin*).<sup>261</sup> This sharply contrasted with al-Zarqawi's strategy of intimidation. At the same time, al-Muhajir tried to appease the nationalist-oriented Sunni insurgent scene. He created the Islamic State of Iraq (*Dawlat Iraq al-Islamiyyah*) under its Iraqi leader Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi. Yet, "Abu Umar al-Baghdadi is a notional character developed by al-Qaeda to put an Iraqi face on the Islamic State of Iraq, which is itself equally notional."<sup>262</sup> In November 2006, al-Muhajir put the Mujahidin Shura Council under al-Baghdadi's command, a "virtual leader" played by an Iraqi actor.<sup>263</sup> Muhajir was rewarded with the post of minister of war in the cabinet of the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella label for Sunni insurgents which is supposed to be dominated by Iraqis instead of foreign fighters.<sup>264</sup>

The policy of al-Qaeda in Iraq after the death of al-Zarqawi reveals the impact of al-Suri's strategy. Since al-Qaeda has lost the support

alliance. *Asharq Al-Awsat* (13 October 2006), p. 2; also 27 October 2006, p. 2.

260. George Friedman, "Iraq: Positive Signs," Strategic Forecasting (Stratfor): Geopolitical Intelligence Report — 13 November 2007 (subscription-based intelligence reports).

261. *Asharq Al-Awsat*, (13 October 2006), p. 1.

262. Steve Schippert and Nick Grace, "The Fiction of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi", Threats Watch, 5 December 2007 (<http://threatswatch.org/analysis/2007/12/the-fiction-of-abu-omar-albagh/>).

263. Tina Susman, "The Conflict in Iraq: A 'Virtual Organization'", *Los Angeles Times*, 19 July 2007 (<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jul/19/world/fg-iraq19>).

264. Kathleen Ridolfo, "Iraq: al-Qaeda in Iraq Leader Struggles with Native Insurgents," Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 1 May 2007 (<http://www.rferl.org>).

of many Sunni insurgent groups and local leaders, presenting itself as political force under Iraqi command has become crucial for its survival. There is a strong underlying tension between the local Sunni insurgents and the foreign jihadis. Local insurgents realize that the foreign jihadis want to revolutionize the local Sunni community. In the long term, they want "to supplant the local leadership with their own by supporting and elevating new local leaders dependent for their survival on al-Qaeda power."<sup>265</sup>

Moreover, internal rivals also pose an obstacle to a unified al-Qaeda strategy for building up a stable base. A local leader, Abdullah bin Rashid al-Iraqi, sharply protested al-Muhajir's integrative and political approach. He contested al-Muhajir's leadership status only a few months after the latter's ascension to power, and asked Bin Ladin for his "removal" as al-Qaeda leader in Iraq.<sup>266</sup> In response, al-Qaeda in Iraq made its virtual leader Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, played by an Iraqi actor, declare that he wants to take a hard line against the U.S.-backed Councils of the Awakening. In late 2007, he announced the formation of the *Al-Sadiq Brigades*, which are experts in "killing every apostate and unbeliever" who is involved with the Awakening movement.<sup>267</sup> This is a continuation of al-Zarqawi's strategy and is based on brutal intimidation.

Thus, al-Qaeda's struggle for a political and military base in Iraq is not straightforward. Foreign al-Qaeda leaders in Iraq must tackle internal and external rivals from the local scene. As regards their strategy, we can see two tracks: first, intimidating those who work with the coalition forces or the Iraqi government; second, trying to integrate them into their own rows with a conciliatory approach. The policy of al-Muhajir is much like the policy proffered by al-Suri.

265. Friedman, "Iraq: Positive Signs".

266. Al-Iraqi asked Bin Ladin to "remove al-Muhajir" as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq in October 2006. *Asharq Al-Awsat* (13 October 2006), p. 1.

267. "ISI Commander Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi Announces New Raid on Awakening Movement in Iraq", The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Special Dispatch Series — No. 1779, 6 December 2007 (<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=iraq&ID=SP177907>). The audio file of al-Baghdadi's speech can be downloaded from numerous jihadi websites.

He formed a counteralliance, called for the integration of the local population, and adopted central strategic principles of the enemy by courting tribal leaders.<sup>268</sup> Yet, the local al-Qaeda leader, al-Baghdadi, revived a hardline approach. Due to growing Iraqi insurgent anger against al-Qaeda in Iraq, it remains a question for speculation whether the organization will gain in popularity and become a potent political force.

Despite this rivalry, it is clear that both local insurgents and foreign fighters share a common goal. They claim to represent a unified Sunni Islamist system in the face of a U.S.-backed Iraqi government. Foreign fighters can only succeed to build an Iraqi base for global jihad if they skillfully play along with local Sunni insurgents. That does not prevent them from being attacked by rival Shiite organizations, the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces.

### Current Jihad Developments in Europe: Invisible Cells and Individualized Terror<sup>269</sup>

Current jihad activism fans out into a broad spectrum, yet runs under a common ideology. This development validates al-Suri's jihad concept. One should remember that al-Suri has not invented anything new. He simply describes what he observes — and demonstrates how he

masters the skillful interplay between ideology and strategy, reality and tactics.<sup>270</sup>

Postmillennium jihad activism in Europe may be divided into pre- and post-2003 days (after the U.S.-British Iraq invasion). The major postmillennium plots between December 2001 and December 2002 were all detected by police and security agencies in the run-up to the attacks. All these cases shared a common characteristic. They were planned by cells that belonged to larger groups and networks. The operational area with regard to the residency, preparation and target selection was limited to France and Germany, but contact networks stretched over the whole of Europe, as well as Middle Eastern countries. The cell members were North African and Middle Eastern Arabs.<sup>271</sup> Some of them were jihad veterans from Afghanistan and Chechnya and had contacts with the al-Qaeda hardcore. They were motivated by struggles in their own home countries, by their solidarity with other nationalist Islamist causes, as in Chechnya, by diaspora grievances, and by the global jihad ideology of al-Qaeda.

The main post-2003 attacks and plots, too, are set apart by certain distinctive characteristics. The U.S.-British Iraq invasion had an aggregating effect on European jihadism. The post-2003 period

270. An important question is whether the ideologues are leading the operatives, or vice versa. Jihadi clerics usually provide the ideological umbrella for the radicalization of the *modus operandi*. But al-Suri seems to master both. He has observed and integrated, and then developed new paradigms.

271. Petter Nesser, *Jihad in Europe - A survey of the motivations for Sunni Islamist terrorism in postmillennium Europe*, Norwegian Defense Research Institute FFI (rapporter.ffi.no/rapporter/2004/01583.pdf). The main postmillennium plots were the "The Strasbourg Plot," planned by a splinter-cell of the Algerian *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSCP) (arrested 26.12.2000), the plan of the Al-Takfir wa-l-Hijrah cell to attack U.S. targets in Europe. The al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra cell was multiethnic consisting of Franco-Algerians, Tunisians and one Dutch-Ethiopian (arrested 28.6.2001); the plan of the Germany based Al-Tawhid cell consisting of Jordanian asylum seekers to attack Jewish targets in Germany (arrested April 2002) and "The Chechen Network" consisting of Algerian Chechnya veterans who attempted to attack the Russian embassy in France (arrested 16.12.2002).

268. Finally, al-Muhajir's has twice been reported killed. However, no definite proof of his death exists. If he is still alive, his future strategy may be a mixture of al-Suri and al-Zawahiri concepts. The Egyptian al-Qaeda bloc aligned with al-Zawahiri is radically anti-Shiite, targets Iraqi "collaborators" and government forces and capitalizes on other regional struggles. See for general info Bakier, "A Profile of al-Qaeda's New Leader in Iraq: Abu Ayyub al-Masri".

269. Philipp Holtmann, "Current Jihadi Developments in Europe: Invisible Cells and Individualized Terror," lecture for the Geneva University Strategic Studies Group, Geneva, 13 December 2006 (<http://www.gesug.unige.ch/Upcoming-e.php>).

started with the Madrid bombings in March 2004. It witnessed an increase of jihad activity and an improved performance of cells. A few examples would include the Madrid bombings, the Theo van Gogh murder, and the London bombings.<sup>272</sup> Traditional groups gave way to more diffuse cell structures. At the same time an ideological unification took place in the sense that al-Qaeda's global jihad ideology supplanted other incentives. The operational area now covered the whole of Central Europe and the backgrounds of the terrorists became much more diversified, including people from Pakistan and other non-Arab Muslim countries, as well as Muslim converts. Many of the perpetrators were naturalized European citizens, i.e. second- or third-generation immigrants.

In short, independent cells driven by a common ideology now adds to traditional groupings. This process is related to the international war on terrorism and started between the fall of the Taliban regime, which was an important shelter for groupings and networks, in late 2001 and the Iraq war, which is today's most important reference point of global jihadis. The structure of jihad cells in Europe leans towards cells and networks based on friendship and kinship links. Moreover, elements like individualization, rapid radicalization, self-recruitment and shortened preparation of small cells are becoming more common, as the impact of al-Suri's jihad concept becomes more clearly visible. A look at the spectrum of postmillennium jihad activism in Europe confirms this:

272. Four major pre-2003 plots between December 2001 and December 2002: 1) "The Strasbourg Plot" – GSCP, attempt, arrested 26.12.2000; 2) Al-Takfir wa-l-Hijrah, U.S. targets in Europe, attempt, arrested 28.6.2001; 3) Al-Tawhid, Jewish Targets in Germany, attempt, arrested April 2002; 4) "The Chechen Networks" conspiracy to attack the Russian embassy in France, attempt, arrested 16.12.2002.

Eight Major post-2003 plots between March 2004 and August 2006: 1) Madrid, March 11 2004 – cell; 2) Amsterdam – Theo van Gogh, 2 November 2004 – individual; 3) London 1, 7 July 2005 – cell; 4) London 2, 21 July 2005, attempt – cell; 5) Copenhagen, May 2006 arrests – cell; 6) Montpellier arrest of Hamid Bach, June 2006 – cell/individual; 7) Deutschland, 31 July 2006, attempt – cell 2 members; 8) London 3, 10 August 2006 – cell.

1. "solid" groupings with ties to larger Islamist networks that plotted attacks against Christian-European, Jewish and American targets;
2. independent cells operating according to the al-Qaeda strategy of "terror as deterrence," as in Madrid, London I, London II and London III;
3. attacks by individuals using tactics of political assassination;
4. the "blowback effect": European Muslims joined jihad-groups in Iraq, received training and return to Europe where they plan to perpetrate attacks;
5. Undetectable Domestic Amateur Cells (UDACs), which aim to actualize the idea of Global Islamic Resistance squadrons.<sup>273</sup>

The first category of "solid" traditional groupings, which planned conventional attacks with bombs and small arms, proved to be ineffective because all cells were uncovered. Such groupings, i.e. traditional organizations, nevertheless remain important support networks for infrastructure, tactical knowledge and contacts.

The second category of independent cells committed to al-Qaeda's strategy has been more successful. The cells are harder to detect because they do not belong to overarching organizations or networks. They are formed on the basis of neighborhood, friendship and family bonds. Cell members often move in the halo of the larger local Salafi community, whose basic principles they share. Due to tighter police control and repression, many of the Salafi networks in Europe have become secretive and classes moved from mosques to private homes.<sup>274</sup> This complicates the detection of Salafi jihad cells. Finally, the virulent spread of jihad ideology and teaching via the Internet facilitates radicalization and autodidactic training. The Madrid (11 March 2004) and London (7 July 2005) bombings by jihad cells are typical examples thereof. They appropriated the al-Qaeda strategy

273. UDACs represent al-Suri's idea of "small cells and individualized terror" (*al-khalaya al-saghira wa l-irhab al-fardi*).

274. Juan Jose Escobar Stemmann, "Middle East Salafism's Influence and the radicalization of Muslim communities in Europe," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs* (MERIA), Vol. 10.3 (September 2006) (<http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/Issue3/jv10no3a1.html>).

of "terror as deterrence" (*al-rad' bi-l-irhab*), combining it with the operational pattern of successive or simultaneous suicide bombings which al-Qaeda first tested in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

The third category of single attackers has added the element of individualization to that of autonomy, as was demonstrated by the Theo van Gogh murder in the Netherlands in November 2004. Though the perpetrator, Muhammad Bouyeri, belonged to an independent local network, the Hofstadgroep or Hofstadnetwerk, which was influenced by a radical preacher, he acted autonomously. Over a period of years, he developed from a well-integrated second-generation Muslim immigrant into an ultra-radical Salafi *takfiri* militant.<sup>275</sup> Bouyeri chose to strike at a person critical of Islam in order to deliver a political message, namely a warning to all people expressing adverse comments about Islam, especially to the Dutch politician Ayan Hirsi, who worked closely with Van Gogh. His attack on van Gogh was part of a strategy perceived as exemplary punishment (*tankit*) and as applying the tactical doctrine of assassination (*ightiyal*) based on a Salafi jihad hero-ethos. Terrorists are called upon to identify with the Muslim Ibn Maslamah who volunteered to kill Muhammad's critic Ka'b bin al-Ashraf. Pamphlets about this proto-assassination are widely distributed on the Internet. For example, the "Incitement of the Heroic Believers to Revive the Tradition of Assassinations" by the Saudi al-Qaeda ideologue Abu Jandal al-Azdi has been downloaded thousands of times.<sup>276</sup> Moreover, al-Suri treated it extensively in GIRC, and in April 2006 al-Qaeda leader Bin Ladin used the example of Bin Maslamah to call for assassinations worldwide.<sup>277</sup> Before Bouyeri

murdered van Gogh, he circulated the theological tractate on Ibn Maslamah per email to his friends.<sup>278</sup> In brief, it is more than likely that al-Suri's doctrine influenced Bouyeri's decision to assassinate van Gogh.

The fourth category of the "blowback effect" (i.e. the effect of their return to Europe) shows how Iraq is developing into a horrific training camp. European jihadis can acquire tactical skills under the toughest conditions. The typical itinerary of European jihad recruits progresses via Turkey or Syria.<sup>279</sup> Following a period of rapid indoctrination in a camp or Koranic school, he is sent to join the fighting in Iraq. Returnees to Europe bring back combat experience, guerilla warfare skills, ideological fervor and leadership status. They are likely to propagate radical ideas, set up a network or plan an attack. So far, networks in Europe have recruited substantial numbers of Muslims to fight in Iraq. For example, the French-Moroccan Farid Benyettou (arrested in 2005) organized a recruitment network in a poor banlieue in Paris for suicide bombers in Iraq. Three of his recruits died in Iraq, and one was arrested and detained by the U.S. According to estimates, the number of Muslims raised in Europe and returning from training in Iraq exceeds one hundred.<sup>280</sup> Especially dangerous may become their explosive engineering skills, e.g. the technical know-how to construct Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIED) used as powerful car bombs in Iraq. The case of the French Muslim Hamid Bach clearly demonstrates the danger of the "blowback effect".

275. His radicalization was probably caused by personal problems. His mother died of cancer during this period and Bouyeri was unable to realize the establishment of a youth center for immigrants in his community. See Annieke Kranenberg, "Nachbarsjunge, Gotteskrieger," *Die Zeit* (28 Juli 2005) ([http://nurtex.zeit.de/2005/31/Van\\_Gogh\\_31](http://nurtex.zeit.de/2005/31/Van_Gogh_31)).

276. Abu Jandal al-Azdi, *Tahrid al-mujahidin al-abtal 'ala ihya' sunnat al-ighthiyal* ("Incitement of the heroic fighters to revive the tradition of assassinations") (<http://www.tawhed.ws/files/802.zip>).

277. Usamah bin Ladin, *Qatilu a'immah al-kuffar; la'allahum yuntahun* ("Kill the leaders of the unbelievers; maybe they will stop [insulting the Prophet]") (<http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=3872>); Eng. trans.: "Arab

Reformists Under Threat By Islamists: Bin Ladin Urges Killing of 'Freethinkers'." *The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI)* No. 1153 (3 May 2006) (<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=reform&ID=SP115306>).

278. Kranenberg, "Nachbarsjunge, Gotteskrieger".

279. Christopher Dickey, "Jihad Express: For Islamic Militants in Europe, Iraq far outshines Afghanistan as an Urban-Terrorism Training Ground," *Newsweek* (21 March 2005) (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7169294/site/newsweek/>).

280. Sebastian Rotella, "Bringing Jihad Home to Europe," *Newsday.com* (23 September 2005) (<http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-eurojihad23sep23,0,721231.story?coll=ny-leadworldnews-headlines>).

Bach, a Frenchman of Moroccan origin, trained in Syria to become a suicide bomber in Iraq. He returned to France, but was arrested by the French police in June 2006 after stockpiling the ingredients for making bombs in his flat.<sup>281</sup>

The last category concerns Undetectable and Unexpected Domestic Amateur Cells (UDACs). They come nearest to al-Suri's concept of individualized terrorism (*irhab fardi*) and small cells (*khilaya saghtrah*), in which the factor of rapid radicalization comes into play, mixed with individualization and autonomy. The "call" for Global Islamic Resistance instructs how to form a UDAC:

1. What we call for doesn't require membership in an organization, a journey, emigration (*hijrah*), or a change of life.  
All that is needed is for you
2. to form your commando (*sariyah*)<sup>282</sup>.
3. to prepare yourself and who is with you according to your capabilities.
4. to choose a target that you can hit.
5. to hurry and fulfill your jihad duty.<sup>283</sup>

In order to support rapid radicalization and shortened preparation, al-Suri breaks with the conventional *jihad-marhalayah* (i.e. a development in stages that leads to jihad militancy). Conventionally, the jihad sequence builds on a physical or spiritual journey, an emulation of Muhammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina in 622 (*hijrah*), and then preparation for the confrontation. Al-Suri favors a simplified jihad teleology based on Koran 9:46. The sequence of stages leading to jihad is "...will (*iradah*)...preparation (*i'dad*)... sending out (*inbi'ath*)."<sup>284</sup> The time-costly concept of emigration (*hijrah*) is practically absent.

281. Ibid.

282. *Sariyah* literally means "military company". Yet, this translation does not fit, since al Suri speaks about the smallest possible units, namely one to ten men. I therefore translated *sariyah* as commando, or squadron.

283. Al-Suri, *GIRC*, part 2, chapter 8, end of subsection 4 ("military theory").

The terror plot that comes closest to al-Suri's ideal was carried out in Germany in July 2006. The Lebanese students Youssef al-Hajib (22) and Jihad Hamad (21) tried to bomb two German trains with improvised firebombs. The trigger was the publication of the Muhammad caricatures in two German newspapers in the spring of 2006. The instructions for building the bombs had been downloaded from the Internet. The material for each bomb cost less than 300 Euro. The time span between radicalization and planning, as well as between preparation and execution, was very short. Al-Hadjib and Hamad first met in April 2006. They immediately started searching the Internet, and preparing terrorist acts. The preparation of the improvised explosive devices took about two weeks, from the beginning of July. Then the attack was delayed for two weeks because the Israeli bombardment of Beirut Airport had blocked the escape route. In addition, the suitcase bombs on two trains did not explode because of a minor technical flaw.<sup>284</sup> At no point did Hajib or Hamad plan a suicide operation.

The two perpetrators were not members of a radical group or network. But both come from northern Lebanon, the area around Tripoli, where a lot of radical Islamists live. Al-Hadjib's family is connected to the *Hizb al-Tahrir*, a proselytizing Salafi movement. "Therefore, one can assume that they had already experienced a yearlong radicalization in the family environment."<sup>285</sup> However, the real process of radicalization probably occurred in Germany, where Hadjib and Hamad, the two perpetrators, downloaded jihad propaganda from the Internet.<sup>286</sup>

The following characteristics may apply to future UDACs: UDAC members are native, naturalized or Muslim immigrants. They lack any connection to the jihad scene in their countries of residency in Europe, although migrants may have contacts in their respective countries of origin in the Middle East. The process of radicalization is very rapid.

284. Focus, "Bombe getestet", 30 October 2006, pp. 46–48.

285. Author's interview with Guido Steinberg, researcher on radical Islam at the *Stiftung für Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP), Berlin, 25 January 2006.

286. Focus, "Ein ernster Warnschuss," interview with Jörg Ziercke, Präsident, *Bundeskriminalamt*, 1 September 2006, pp. 42–44.

The methods used, though amateurish, are effective and could be dangerously improved by European jihad returnees from Iraq. Use of the Internet relieves them from personal contact with other jihadis. They themselves recruit new members, stay alone, or merge into small cells. This makes it extremely difficult to detect them in a run-up to an attack.

## Conclusion

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We may well stand at the beginning of an al-Suri era of international terrorism. Al-Suri's analysis of internal- and global-jihad concepts may not have a realizable objective. Yet, he takes a step forward to close the doctrinal gap between local and international jihad paradigms. His comprehensive doctrinal approach, paired with meticulously elaborated strategies and tactics, may in future attract the broadest following among Sunni extremists. Thus, we may face an era of global jihad that is dominated by al-Suri's thinking. This era will see an extremist, irrational and uncompromising jihad ideology that adopts clear, analytical and rational analyses and develops more sophisticated military and political strategies.

Al-Suri gives us immense insight into the formative era of al-Qaeda and global jihad between the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Although heavily biased and contradictory in his critique against Wahhabi influences on jihad thinking, he explicates the development of strategic planning of global jihadis. And he makes clear how U.S. neoconservative policy has allowed al-Qaeda to capitalize on major blunders (such as the unconditional support of Israel, the invasion of Iraq under the "pretext" of WMD, Guantanamo, secret CIA prisons, the Abu Ghraib scandal) in the "War on Terror" and to strengthen the anti-imperialist and anti-U.S. impulse among Muslims globally. Jihadis have become aware of the fundamental dichotomies that drive U.S. foreign policy much earlier than the majority of Western countries. One might argue that this, of course, concurs with their worldview. But, in fact, today's world is polarized between the fundamentalist Islamist and the Christian worlds and the dichotomy between "Good and Evil."

Generally, it is recommendable that researchers on radical Islamism familiarize themselves with al-Suri's concepts, learn to recognize evidence of the espousal of al-Suri's ideology and strategy by jihadis.

A reading of al-Suri's *Ahl al-sunna fi sham fi muwajahat al-nasiriyah wa-l-salibiyyin wa-l-yahud* [The Sunnis in Syria and their confrontation with the Nasiriyah [Alawis], Crusaders and Jews], which al-Suri wrote in Afghanistan around the year 2000, shows a merger between the Syrian local struggle and the concept of Global Islamic

Resistance. For further research it would be interesting to investigate how his concept of jihad developed between his major writings, namely *al-Thawra al-Islamiyyah al-jihadiyyah fi Suriya – alam wa amal* (1989) and *Da'wat al-muqawamah al-Islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* (2004), and the role his book *Ahl al-sunna fi-l-sham* played between 1989 and 2004.

Al-Suri's work is a general guideline and blueprint, which requires a great deal of self-discipline from jihadis. It is very doubtful whether future jihadis will be able to exercise such restraint. Inbuilt into al-Suri's doctrine and strategy are fundamental contradictions. Al-Suri, who lauds Azzam's call for moderation among Muslims, actually is himself a radical, and relies on the most extreme doctrinal outgrowths of Wahhabism that justify the strategic killing of civilians. Moreover, his strategy of splintered isolated cells prevents the acquisition of education as postulated by Abdallah Azzam. Lastly, it paves the way for doctrinal clashes and the misinterpretation of doctrines such as *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (friendship and enmity) and *takfir* (excommunication).

The problems of "distributed networks," which al-Suri calls "individualized terror," namely small cells that are isolated from an overarching network of jihadis and are galvanized by extreme radical doctrines via the Internet, will be manifold in the future.

The European jihad development is the best example for this. Future Islamist terrorists will be found on a spectrum between classical al-Qaeda sleeper cells and individual homegrown cells. As a paradigm, they will be defined by the four characteristics discussed above (see Chapter 11, section "Current Jihad Developments in Europe"): They will be Undetectable and Unexpected Domestic Amateur cells (UDACs) who recruit themselves, similarly to the five steps of the "call" for Global Islamic Resistance (see Chapter 7, section "Jihad Errors Committed over the Last 40 Years").

The future strategy of al-Qaeda will be defined by both political and terrorist methods. Although the military strategy of al-Suri might pose a more immediate concern to Western policy makers, the political track should not be neglected. Surely, the higher echelons of al-Qaeda-affiliated networks will put emphasis on the mastering of ideological, propagandistic and media warfare. This will enhance al-Qaeda's standing in opposition to that of the West, and allow al-Qaeda to build more viable political and propaganda programs based on its growing popularity.

## Glossary of Arabic Terms

**'aqidah** (theological doctrine or school) -- the three main theological schools of Sunni Islam are the traditionalist Ash'arites and Maturidis, and the textualist Atharis. In early Islam, break-away sects like the rationalist Mu'tazilis and the ultra-literal Zahiris attempted to present alternative theological doctrines; their failure was largely due to repression by the Sunni mainstream. Yet, some of their tenets are still influential today, e.g. the ultra-literalism of the Zahiri doctrine on Salafis. Salafis and Wahhabis are perceived as modern theological schools. Though they are basically fringe schools, the geopolitical conflict between Islam and the West, in conjunction with religious propaganda -- especially through modern mass media -- has facilitated the spread of radical outgrowths of the Wahhabi and Salafi doctrines, that have had considerable influence on Muslims. The different strands of Salafism follow separate strategies, or methods → *manhaj*. Jihadi Salafism (→ *al-salafiyyah al-jihadiyyah*), for instance, adopts a violent strategy (the strategy of jihad), whereas moderate Salafism (*al-salafiyyah al-mu'tadilah*) assumes a non-violent strategy.

**al-'adu al-qarib** (the near enemy) -- In the perception of jihadis these are local Muslim governments, as opposed to Western governments, which are "the distant enemy" (→ *al-'adu al-ba'id*). Fighting "the near enemy" was the main strategy of jihad groups throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By initiating a revolutionary change in their home countries, numerous groups hoped to ignite an Islamic revolution throughout the Muslim world. This concept changed gradually, beginning with the international Afghan jihad against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. It is noteworthy that a local Islamic revolution only took place in Shiite Iran, where the hierarchically organized clergy cooperated with the revolutionaries and the opposition. The clergy in Sunni Muslim countries is not organized hierarchically, nor has it rebelled against the governments of Arab states in the postcolonial era (i.e. after the 1950s).



**al-'adu al-ba'id** (the distant enemy) — Although it originated in the 1960s, the view that Western governments are directed by a "conspiring World Jewry" evolved mainly during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Some jihadi ideologues of the 1980s, first and foremost Abdallah Azzam, portrayed Marxism and Soviet communism as an evil force guided by World Jewry, and were calling for worldwide Islamist guerilla warfare by joining proxy wars against communism. During the post-Cold War era, the U.S., capitalism and Western culture became the main target of global jihad. Today, the "root evil" is perceived as World Jewry dictating a Christian neo-crusader alliance, led by the U.S. This conceptual change went hand in hand with a strategic shift toward global terrorism and the exploitation of its terrifying media effects. At the same time, the fight against "the near enemy" and local struggles were to be integrated into a worldwide Islamist revolution.

**'amaliyat intihariyyah** (suicide operations) — term used in the 1980s by radical Islamists to describe suicide bombings. Nowadays, the expression is used by Muslim opponents of suicide attacks. Since suicide is forbidden in Islam, a legal debate was sparked in the 1990s between its supporters and opponents, a debate that has led to the use of an alternative term by its supporters, namely "martyrdom operations" (→ *'amaliyat istishhadiyyah*).

**'amaliyat istishhadiyyah** (martyrdom operations) — the term is used by supporters of suicide bombings to underscore what they see as the legitimacy of such operations. The justification of suicide bombings is based on a complicated and casuistic Islamic legal reasoning; it draws an analogy (→ *qiyas*) with individual attacks by medieval Muslim fighters who penetrated enemy lines and were killed in the process.

**al-ghazu al-fikri** (ideological invasion) — the infiltration of Western ideas, mores and customs into Muslim societies. The ideological invasion has been widely denounced both in secularist and in Islamist discourse.

**da'wah** (proselytizing) — spreading the call of Islam, a religious obligation for Muslims.

**al-dabit al-amin** (the faithful control) — an important concept introduced by Abdallah Azzam, indicating the process of leading Muslims back to jihad and Islamic piety. It refers to a moral, abstract gauge of conduct, which controls individual behavior and indicates whether a person is going astray or is on the right path to Islam and jihad. In Azzam's rhetoric it is also a synonym for theological doctrine (→ *'aqidah*) and refers to correct religious belief that leads Muslims to the battlefield against Islam's enemies.

**ahl al-dhimmah** (protected people) — refers to non-Muslims residing within Muslim territory under the rules of the *shari'ah*. Generally, *dhimmis* in Islamic law are monotheists who are protected by the Islamic state, but whose legal status is restricted. The concept and definition of the *dhimmi* ("protected one"), as well as the juridical status of non-Muslims, originated in the eighth century AD in the context of Islamic conquests. It was laid down by the Islamic law of nations (*siyar*) and its juridical branch, *ahkam ahl al-dhimmah* (judgments of the protected people). *Dhimmis* may live their private lives unhindered; yet, within the realm of Islamic public law and the exercise of their own religious practices, they are subject to limitations of the *shari'ah*, insofar as they may not assume public office, must refrain from overt display of their religious practices, and pay a "poll tax" (→ *jizyah*). Initially, the definition referred to Jews and Christians, but was eventually extended to followers of other religions, such as Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Mandeans, Hindus, and Buddhists. People who are neither Muslims nor *dhimmis*, and who do not live under Muslim rule, are *harbis* (people belonging to the realm of war), and must be fought. The same goes for *dhimmis* who refuse to pay their poll taxes, thus losing their protected status.

**al-jihad dhirwat sinam al-Islam** (jihad is the top of the hump of Islam) — an important metaphor in radical Islamist discourse. According to one hadith, the Prophet Muhammad compared the nature of Islam to the hump of a camel (symbol of a precious animal,

and hence wealth in seventh-century tribal Arab society). According to tradition, Muhammad reasoned that the top of the hump, i.e. the summit of Islam, is jihad.

**al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiyyah dhirwat sinam al-jihad** (martyrdom operations are the top of the hump of jihad) — an extended classical metaphor of modern radical Islamist discourse. This is a very important concept since it illustrates how the most radical of today's jihadi ideologues promote an understanding of Islam based on terrorism. They claim that the highest form of Islam is jihad, and that the highest and purest expressions of jihad are suicide operations. This must be seen within the framework of a concept of jihad transformed from one of a local guerilla-based struggle to an individualized form of international terrorism (→ *irhab fardi*).

**al-faridah al-ghai'bah** (the neglected duty) — refers to jihad; it was the title of Abd al-Salam Faraj's manifesto, which aimed to justify the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat in 1981. Subsequently, the Islamic legal reasoning of jihad as "neglected duty" became a cornerstone of the concept of the fight against the "near enemy" (→ *al-'adu al-qarib*) by local jihad groups. Faraj compared Sadat and other contemporary Muslim rulers with thirteenth-century Mongol invaders who attacked the Abbasid caliphate and converted to Islam, yet were eventually excommunicated (→ *takfir*).

**fard 'ayn** (individual religious obligation) — According to classical Islamic law, there are five such obligations, also called "the pillars of Islam." They are: profession of faith (*shahadah*), prayer (*salat*), giving alms (*zakat*), pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) and fasting during the month of Ramadan (*saum*). In the jihadi view, however, jihad is the sixth and most important individual religious obligation. If the territory of Islam is under attack, jihad stops being a (secondary) collective religious obligation (*fard kifayah*) and supersedes all other individual religious obligations.

**fatwa** (religious legal opinion) — a written or oral opinion on a specific subject that requires clarification based on Islamic jurisprudence

(→ *fiqh*) and is issued by an authorized Islamic scholar (*mufti*). The Islamic law (*shari'ah*) is put into practice through Islamic jurisprudence, the product of which is called a *fatwa*. A classical *fatwa* consists of a request (*istifta'*) made by a petitioner (*mustafti*, pl. *mustaftiyun*) and the reply (*jawab*). A Sunni *fatwa* is not binding and can be disputed (*ikhtilaf*), since there is no central body with sole authority to issue *fatwas*, nor is there a central hierarchy of scholars in Sunni Islam. Nevertheless, the nature of authority in radical Islamist movements, i.e. the subordinate status of followers vis-à-vis their leaders, often enhances the binding character of *fatwas*. The massive proliferation of virtual *fatwas* through modern mass media, like the Internet and satellite television, also makes it increasingly difficult for petitioners to discern authentic from spurious legal opinions. This facilitates the issuing of extremist *fatwas*.

**fitnah** (civil strife) — describes infighting or civil war among Muslims and a breakdown of the religious, social, political, and governmental order. Examples are the early Shia-Sunni divide, or the split of various other sects from the mainstream Sunni community.

**fiqh** (Islamic jurisprudence) — *fiqh* complements the Islamic → *shari'ah* law based directly on the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, with rulings and interpretations by Islamic jurists. It is thus an extension of the *shari'ah*. Classical *fiqh* is derived from the legal principles of consensus (*ijma'*) and analogy (*qiyas*), according to the "principles of jurisprudence" (→ *usul al-fiqh*). An Islamic scholar trained in *fiqh* is called a *faqih* (pl. *fuqaha'*) or 'alim (pl. 'ulama').

**fiqh haraki** — a concept of dynamic Islamic jurisprudence that goes back to the writings of the ideologue Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966). He claimed that a wide spectrum of official Islamic jurisprudence represented by clerics had become "sclerotic," overly theoretical and centered on theological issues. Thus, it posed no challenge to secular socialist and nationalist thought. Qutb called for the application of Islamic law on a day-to-day basis, thus enhancing popular Islamic awareness and acceptance of the concept of a modern Islamic state, a nomocracy based on divine law. In the late 1980s, the Salafi trend

adopted Qutb's approach, calling it "jurisprudence that gives justice to reality" (*fiqh al-waqi'*).

**hadith** — an Arabic literary form based on oral transmission; the term is derived from the verb *hadatha*, "to narrate." The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions were transmitted orally and collected in the *sunnah*, literally "the way of the Prophet," i.e. the mores and customs of Muhammad, influenced by Arab customary law.

**al-hakimiyah** (divine sovereignty) — the ultimate goal of Islamic struggle. Hakimiyah is a neologism describing a modern Islamic form of government and coined by the "godfather of jihadism," Sayyid Qutb. In Qutb's view, recognizing the unity of divine authority (*tawhid al-uluhiyah*) and serving Allah unreservedly (*'ibadat Allah wahdahu*) — as well as a modernized canon of Islamic law, unregulated by traditional clerics, but exercised by Muslim laymen — will initiate *al-hakimiyah*.

**harakiyah** (motive of dynamism) — Another element contributed by Qutb to extremist Islamist thinking was the concept of "dynamic strategy," or dynamic exegesis of religious texts, as opposed to passivity and traditionalism. This should shatter the traditional monopoly on religious issues by the '*ulama*' (religious scholars), who were "sclerotic" in the eyes of Qutb and many other Muslims. According to Qutb Islam had to be interpreted practically and in a revolutionary sense, by popular use of → *fiqh haraki* or *fiqh al-waqi'*.

**hukm** (*shari'ah* ruling) — In its original sense, *hukm* is a ruling based on Islamic legal evidence from the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, i.e. the *shari'ah*. Following Muhammad's death and the development of Islamic law, *hukm* came to mean a ruling based on the principal four sources of Islamic jurisprudence (→ *usul al-fiqh*).

**ihسان** (doing something perfectly) — refers to the goal of achieving perfection in acts of worship. In Salafi jihad, it refers to perfection in battle.

**'illah** (rationale or reason) — the Islamic legal reasoning underlying → *qiyas*.

**imam** (leader) — generally, a Muslim leader, often the provost of a mosque or a Muslim community. In Sunni Islam the title was given to prestigious and famous Sunni Islamic jurists responsible for interpreting Islamic law and advising people on proper Islamic conduct. Even so, the concept is more central to Shi'ite than to Sunni Islam, and refers to a leader who is bestowed with divine guidance and is able to lead all mankind. He has exclusive authority to interpret the Qur'an and must be a descendant of Muhammad's daughter, Fatima, and his son in law, Ali. According to mainstream Shi'is, who venerate the 12 Imams, the twelfth imam, called the *mahdi* or "guided one," disappeared in 868 AD and will reappear before the end of times.

**irhab** (terror) — the main strategy of today's Salafi jihad, the concept of which developed in radical Sunni Islamist circles from their understanding that they neither have the popular support to ignite large-scale Islamic revolutions, nor the power to counter an overwhelming military offensive, especially not the aerial power of state armies. It is based on a combination of classical guerilla warfare and traditional military tactics, and makes use of terrifying and media-effective acts of terrorism in an age of information revolution. The term itself can be found in the Qur'an (sura 8:60): "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know." While the original sense refers to instilling a deep sense of fear in the non-Muslim enemy in the context of classical warfare, the last two decades have seen a radicalized interpretation with ever-growing support for terrorism against civilians in the Salafi jihad trend.

**irhab fardi** (individual terrorism) — the key concept of the Syrian al-Qaida ideologue Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. The concept of individual terrorism is a by-product of the organizational splits of jihad groups and movements during heightened international persecution in the

post-Cold War era, especially after 9/11. Accordingly, jihadis are called upon to organize independently into the smallest possible operational units, possibly even acting as individuals, since these are hard to detect in the run-up to an attack as they are not embedded in umbrella organizations. Strategic guidance, training and propaganda are largely taken from the Internet. This strategy anticipates the creation of a community of hidden terrorists able to strike the world over. *Irbab fardi* is Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's continuation of Abdallah Azzam's concept of jihad as an "individual religious obligation" (→ *fard 'ayn*).

**Islam al-wasta** (moderate Islam) — a trend that is represented by the Egyptian-born and Qatar-based Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Al-Qaradawi is radically anti-Western and anti-Semitic. Though he is by no means a moderate, he represents the conservative mainstream among international Muslim clerics.

**isti'ana bi-l-kuffar** (seeking help from the unbelievers) — an Islamic legal doctrine that allows Muslims to ask for help from unbelievers in pressing circumstances. Most Salafi jihadis vehemently deny the legality of this doctrine, since in their view none of the necessary conditions is fulfilled at the present time. The conditions generally stipulate that Muslims, even when asking for help, must at the same time keep a considerable measure of independence from the unbeliever. During the Afghan jihad against the Soviet occupation forces in the 1980s, receiving assistance from the U.S. (weapons, logistics) was sometimes interpreted as *isti'ana bi-l-kuffar*.

**istishhad** (seeking martyrdom, or becoming a martyr) — a classical Islamic concept, which states that every person who dies for the sake of Islam will be granted immediate access to paradise and benefit from privileges in the afterlife. The ever-growing focus on the rewards of martyrdom since the 1980s is characteristic of the ideology of jihadism. Jihadism puts a disproportionate emphasis on martyrdom and supports this by sophisticated means of propaganda. Audio, video and graphics via the Internet, which use classical Islamic symbols, facilitate propaganda aimed at strengthening the wish for martyrdom in worldwide Muslim target audiences.

**Jahiliyah / neo-jahiliyah** (pre-Islamic era of tribal infighting and moral ignorance / new era of moral ignorance) — The Indian Islamist thinker Mawlana Abul Ala Mawdudi developed the concept of "new jahiliyah" (circa 1939) and claimed that Western influence was corrupting Muslim society. Sayyid Qutb contrasted neo-jahiliyah with → *hakimiyah*, i.e. perfect order as against total chaos. Later, different jihad groups developed different views on how to separate themselves from jahili society and how to identify an "infidel" Muslim (→ *takfir*).

**al-jaysh al-Islami al-kabir** (the Great Islamic Army) — a key concept of Abdallah Azzam for a worldwide jihad group. In contrast to numerous locally oriented groups in the 1980s, Azzam put forward a new and visionary organizational concept that was supposed to span the earth.

**jihad al-dafi'** (defensive jihad) — According to classical Islamic law, defensive jihad is an individual religious obligation (→ *fard 'ayn*) and has to be fulfilled immediately. Its underlying conditions are that 1) a non-Muslim enemy attacks Muslims on their territory, 2) another army approaches the Muslim army, 3) an Imam calls the Muslims to battle and 4) Muslims are taken prisoners. According to classical Islamic law, defensive jihad is a reaction to an attack from the outside. While Islamic historiography — since the late Medina period — narrates that Islam expanded through offensive jihad and conquest, the early Medina period was in fact dominated by defensive jihad against hostile surrounding Arab tribes. Today's radical ideologues take "defensive jihad" as their main justification for Salafi jihad ideology and liken it to the ideology prevalent in early Muslim communities. In the same context, Salafi jihadis claim that terrorism is part of defensive jihad (*jihad al-dafi'*) and an integral part of Islam. They thus imply that the martial injunctions of offensive jihad, like single attacks and collateral damage (i.e. suicide bombings), are especially valid for defensive jihad. This reasoning facilitates the justification of terrorism.

**jihad bi-l-sayf** (jihad with the sword) — According to Islamic tradition, there are different ways of waging jihad, a term that literally means "to exert every effort." Jihad through the sword is a violent

struggle perceived as fighting (*qital*) and is the main interpretation of the Salafi jihad trend. Most ideologues of this trend deny that there is any other form of jihad (such as the struggle against oneself).

**jihad al-talab** (offensive jihad) — According to classical Islamic law, *jihad al-talab* is a collective duty (*fard kifayah*) to be carried out by a small group of Muslims on behalf of the entire community, namely to terrorize the enemy (→ *irhab*), perform at least one annual raid into enemy territory (*ghazu*), and safeguard the Islamic border regions (*ribat*).

**jizyah** (poll tax) — According to Islamic law, Christians, Jews, and other non-Muslim minorities living under Muslim rule have to pay a poll tax, otherwise they lose their legal status as protected infidels. They may convert to Islam, in which case the payment of the poll tax is cancelled. Instead, they would have to pay the *zakat* tax, like all other Muslims.

**kufr** (unbelief) — Salafis distinguish between "greater unbelief" (*kufr akbar*) and "smaller unbelief" (*kufr asghar*), or between "practical unbelief" (*kufr 'amali*) and "doctrinal unbelief" (*kufr i'tiqadi*). Minor problems may be judged according to the precepts of practical unbelief (*kufr 'amali*); punishment is lenient and is not viewed as doctrinal unbelief (*kufr i'tiqadi*). While Salafi jihadis judge that whoever does not rule by "what Allah has revealed" (Qur'an 5:49) is guilty of "greater unbelief" or "doctrinal unbelief," and may hence be killed, nonviolent Salafis hold this to be "smaller unbelief" (*kufr asghar*), which can be corrected by reformative measures (*tariq al-islah*).

**manhaj** (method) — the way theological doctrine (→ *'aqidah*) is put into practice, based on adherence to certain methodological principles. This has a direct effect on Salafi strategy. Methodologically, → Salafis deduce rulings from the Qur'an and the *sunnah* wherever possible. They favor transmitted dogma (*naql*) from the Qur'an and the *sunnah* over reasoning (*'aql*), and reject allegorical interpretations (*ta'wil*), as well as personal opinions (*ra'iy*) and dialectic debate on Islamic theology (*kalam*), which in their view all lead to innovation (*bid'ah*) that

is contradictory to Prophetic custom (*sunnah*). The main differences touch upon questions on how strictly monotheism (*tawhid*) — and deviations from it, like sin (*kufr*) and idolatry (*shirk*) — and the duty to follow Muhammad's example (*itribah*) ought to be interpreted and judged. As a result of these differences, Salafis split into missionary, political, and violent trends, respectively *Salafi-mu'tadilis* (also *Salafi-sheikhis*), *Salafi-ikhwanis*, and *Salafi-jihadis* (also *Salafi-takfiris*). Respectively, they follow a strategy of acquiescence by formally supporting Muslim regimes, which in turn allow them to proselytize; engage actively in politics through Islamist parties; or fight Muslim regimes and the West under revolutionary slogans. Most strands see themselves only as "Salafis," that is, without qualifications, and use the various definitions of *manhaj* to condemn other sects. *Manhaj* is also used in a positive sense, however. The al-Albani movement in Jordan, for example, endeavors to portray itself as a moderate "mu'tadili", not a "jihadi" branch of the Salafis in order to avoid government repression.

**maqasid al-shari'ah** (the objectives of Islamic law) — To ensure the good of Islam and to prevent any harm to the community of believers is the overriding objective, called public "benefit" or "interest" (*maslahah*). In order to arrive at an Islamic legal ruling, an elaborate set of conditions must be fulfilled making reliance on the *maslahah* concept possible. The *maslahah* concept is classified in descending order of importance as essential interests (*daruriyat*), complementary benefits (*hajiyyat*) and embellishments (*tahsinat*). A legal ruling (→ *hukm*) or a scholarly opinion (*fatwa*) is often based on the *maslahah* concept and oriented at the *daruriyat*, i.e. the main benefits gained by Islam and the Muslim community.

**marhaliyyah** (development of stages in the relationship between Muhammad and unbelievers) — the step-by-step development of a proto-Muslim community, emulated by all → Salafis. The medieval jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah derived from the Qur'an that the first Muslim community around Muhammad had gone through four successive stages. These were non-confrontation in Mecca (Qur'an 4:77), emigration to Medina (Qur'an 22:39–40), defensive

jihad against aggressors (Qur'an 2:190), and finally offensive jihad against all non-Muslims (Qur'an 9:29). Salafis emulate Muhammad's emigration to Medina in order to build up a new proto-community of pious Muslims. The difference between jihadis and moderates is that the former build their strategy on immediate violence, while the latter follow a quietist, long-term strategy until their ranks become strong enough to wage jihad. In this respect it is difficult to speak of a clear-cut division between moderate and radical Salafis.

***munafiq*** (hypocrite) — a religious hypocrite, who outwardly practices Islam while inwardly remaining a sinner and infidel. Some Muslim legal schools see hypocrites as the worst enemies of Islam, and the act itself as a crime punishable by death. The modern Salafi jihad discourse took up the discussion about hypocrites, implementing death sentences on many Muslim opponents in word and deed.

***qiyas*** (process of analogical reasoning) — one of the four sources of Islamic jurisprudence (→ *usul al-fiqh*), which in authoritative order are the Qur'an, the *sunnah*, *ijma'* (scholarly consensus) and *qiyas* (analogy). In Islamic legal terms, the *qiyas* is the extension of a *shari'ah* ruling (*hukm*) from an original case (*asl*) to a new case (*far'*), in which the new case has the same legal reasoning (*'illah*) as the original. *Qiyas* is applied where no concrete, timeless and divinely ordained law can be found in the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, which are the primary sources of the → *shari'ah*. In Salafi jihad jurisprudence, for example, *qiyas* is employed to justify the perpetration of suicide bombings. It is argued that suicide bombings (*far'*) are analogous to single medieval attacks (*asl*) in which the perpetrator gave his life willingly for the benefit of the religion (*'illah*) because his intent (*niyah*) was pure (*khalis*).

***usul al-fiqh*** (the principles of Islamic jurisprudence) — in authoritative order: the Qur'an; the *sunnah*, i.e. the practice of the Prophet as transmitted through his sayings and laid down in the literary genre of → *hadith* (oral transmission, which was later written down); scholarly consensus (*ijma'*); and analogical deduction (→ *qiyas*). The Qur'an and *sunnah* are seen as primary sources and divine principles, while

consensus and analogy are human interpretations and at the discretion of religious scholars. Bound by the primary sources, scholars can either form a legal opinion on the basis of an analogy or agree on a consensus which is oriented at the *maslahah* and *darurah* concepts and shall reflect the "essential interests" of the *ummah* (→ *maqasid al-shari'ah*). Frequently, however, modern scholars who issue a → *fatwa* or a → *hukm* rely on canonized precedents set by the followers of Muhammad (*sahabah*), or by other early Islamic scholars.

***al-salaf al-salih*** (the pious forefathers) — the first three generations of Muslims, including many direct followers of Muhammad. The time span of three generations is seen as the golden age of Islam in terms of piety, morality, spirituality, strength, and guidance. Salafism is the modern political-religious ideology emulating examples set by the forefathers. It claims to build on an ideal interpretation of scripture and to involve the independent application of reasoning (*ijtihad*), rather than being a mere replica of other masters (*taqlid*). By the same token, Salafism takes the interpretation of religious texts out of the hands of the clergy and puts it into the hands of the individual, thus bypassing the authority of traditional Sunni scholars. In reality, the reasoning and theological doctrine of Salafism is mainly restricted to the Qur'an, the *sunnah* and the imitation of idealized models.

**Salafis** — Sunni Muslims who follow the theological doctrine of Salafism, i.e. the principle that correct Islamic practice is based on following the example of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers among the first three generations of Muslims (*al-salaf al-salih*). The self-perception of the Salafis as a pious elite among the corrupt Muslim masses is based on the Prophetic saying, "One faction of my *ummah* remains to stand up for truth until the Hour of Resurrection." Salafis are roughly split into three groups, according to their *modus operandi* (→ *manhaj*): namely violent *Salafi-jihadis*, who wage revolutionary and terrorist struggles; quietist *Salafi-sheikhs*, who want to proselytize Muslim society; and political *Salafi-ikhwanis*, who try to become part of the political systems of their various home countries. Examples of the three groups would be respectively, al-Qa'ida; Jama'at al-Tabligh; and the Muslim Brothers. Statements by followers give reason to

believe that all three strands follow a long-term jihad strategy, that is, they would wage jihad once they consolidated their power.

**al-salafiyyah al-jihadiyyah** (Salafi jihadism) – one of the most radical branches of the theological doctrine of Salafism within Sunni Islam. The Arabic noun “salafiyyah” refers to the doctrine (→ ‘aqidah, in this case: Salafism), while the attribute “jihadiyyah” describes the method (→ *manhaj*) by which the doctrine is put into practice. An even more radical branch includes *Salafi-takfir*, who have waged ferocious terrorist campaigns against fellow Muslims regarded as infidels (*kuffar*), as in the Algerian civil war in the 1990s and in Iraq. Yet, the line between *Salafi-jihadi* and *Salafi-takfiri* cannot be drawn clearly, since the classical *Salafi-jihad* doctrine is also based on a selective → *takfir* of Muslim rulers and their entourage. At times, the pendulum can swing from a selective to an indiscriminate *takfir*, which is an especially dangerous radicalization process in jihad movements.

**shari’ah** (system of Islamic law) — considered by Muslims as divinely revealed law regulating all religious, political, social, domestic, and private aspects of Muslim life. A dispute around the clear definition of *shari’ah* informs academic and common literature. Strictly seen, the *shari’ah* consists of the Qur’an and the *sunnah*, which are the immutable basic codes of Islamic law. They are extended by an ever-evolving law, as interpreted by humans (→ *fiqh*). However, the *shari’ah* is often simultaneously defined as Qur’an, *sunnah* and *fiqh*. Critics say that this definition equates the revealed with the unrevealed elements of Islamic law, and thus creates the dangerous assumption that scholarly interpretations are as sacred and beyond revision as the Qur’an and the *sunnah*.

**takfir** (excommunication) — is the act of declaring another Muslim an infidel, and can be traced back to the earliest Islamic sect, the Kharijites, in the late seventh century AD. It is one of the most important ideological doctrines of contemporary Salafi jihad. This doctrine gained importance in the Salafi jihad discourse with the *takfir* sentence against Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat, who was assassinated in 1981. The relevance of the doctrine grew throughout

the 1990s and has come to be used widely in Islamist conflicts. Examples are Algeria in the 1990s and, presently, Iraq, where thousands of Muslims were and still are being murdered, following accusations of *takfir*.

**tatarrus** (shielding oneself) — According to medieval Islamic law, especially the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Damascene Hanbali school, civilian Muslim casualties were justifiable if they were used as “human shields” by an enemy army (at that time Mongols who were attacking the Abbasid caliphate). In contemporary Salafi jihad, *tatarrus* is an important tactical doctrine to justify civilian casualties during suicide bombings, so-called “martyrdom operations” (→ ‘*amaliyat istishhadiyyah*). The killing of civilians, including women and children, is thus allowed if they stand among targeted enemies. This argument applies mainly to attacks against military targets; it is, however, often used as a pretext for the deliberate killing of civilians. Closely related to the legal reasoning are complex arguments about the various conditions that might allow for the killing of civilians, such as the likelihood that the damage inflicted upon a Muslim community might be greater than the deliberate killing of a part of it. This argumentation has its roots in classical legal deliberations.

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