Journal of Liberal Arts and Humanities (JLAH)
Issue: Vol. 1; No. 1 January 2020 pp.10-28
ISSN 2690-070X (Print) 2690-0718 (Online)
Website: www.jlahnet.com
E-mail: editor@jlahnet.com

THE RADICALIZATION OF SUNNI JIHADIST GROUPS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT OF A *TOTAL WAR* DOCTRINE

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ABSTRACT

The essay presents this jihadi ideological evolution in four parts. Firstly, it provides an overview of jihadism's three major adversaries the *near* (Muslim apostate), *far* (Western and other non-Muslim civilizations) and *sectarian* (Shi'ite and other heterodox Muslims) enemies. Secondly, the paper examines why jihadi groups prioritized attacks against the *near enemy* during the Cold War only to see most Islamist insurgencies beaten back by Muslim apostate regimes. Thirdly, the paper analyses how these failures invited debate within the jihadist movement leading to a refocus on fighting the non-Muslim *far enemy.* Fourthly, having failed to weaken *near* and *far enemies*, the paper argues that the global jihadi movement has radicalized further by resorting to conspiratorial and eschatological arguments that link *near, far* and *sectarian* enemies.

Keywords: *Jihad, Radicalization, Terrorism, Religious Warfare, and Extremism*

INTRODUCTION

Modern salafi-jihadist thought involves numerous debates over what military strategy to employ to achieve the movement's objectives. Driven by a need to restore Allah's sovereignty *(hakimiyyah*) over Islamic lands, jihadists have fought Muslim apostate regimes (*the near enemy)* and non-Muslim powers (*the far enemy*) that have encroached upon Islamic territory. Violence against the *near* and *far* enemy has been justified by jihadi ideologues as a compulsory religious obligation [*fard al-'ayn]*.[1]

Past jihadi failures to overthrow *near enemy* regimes in Syria, Algeria, Egypt and Libya during the 1980's and 1990's forced jihadist theoreticians to explain why these revolts faltered. In their assessments jihadi theoreticians have examined many factors. Some like Abu Musab al-Suri blamed weak public support, overly centralized command structures, tactical miscalculations, counterproductive extreme violence and internal factionalism within national jihadi movements.[2]

Jihadists often rely on conspiracy theories of cooperation between domestic and foreign adversaries to explain the movement's past failure. Increasingly jihadi tacticians are resorting to Islamic eschatology to fortify their belief that future revolts against their adversaries will succeed. Conspiratorial thinking and the role of Islamic prophecy are recognized in the literature on jihadi groups who have radicalized ideologically and amplified their use of violence. [3] Motivated to eradicate apostasy from the Muslim world and re-instate sharia, global jihadi groups advocate a contemporary version of state that mimics the medieval rule of the Prophet Mohammad's Companions.

Jihadis see this period as the most authentic era of sharia rule that comports with Qur'an and oral and written accounts [*sunnah and hadith*] of the Prophet's life. Global Islamic terror movements like the Islamic State and Al Qaeda (AQ) aim to create a jihadi emirate in the Mideast to drive Western influence from the region. The Islamic State's (IS) formation of a "caliphate" across territories in Iraq and Syria sought to achieve these ambitions through a five year reign marked by a shocking medieval era barbarism.

The Islamic State's territorial *defeat* took over 60 nations comprised of western powers, Kurdish paramilitaries, Shi'ite militias, Turkey, Iran, Russia, and the Iraqi and Syrian governments. Its persistence as an international terrorist-insurgent network suggests that the global jihadism has an organizational resilience because it is fortified by a fanatical belief in "divinely sanctioned" violence. Past failures to overthrow regimes in the Muslim world and eradicate Western influence have been a wellspring for further extremism linking *near* and *far* enemies in a nefarious *conspiracy* against Islam.

Al Qaeda's war against the U.S. *far enemy* was predicated upon a belief that *near enemy* resilience was a function of American military and economic support. Bin Laden reckoned that by taking the war to the U.S. homeland, the Americans could be forced to militarily disengage from the Mideast leaving regional apostate allies vulnerable to jihadi revolts. [4] Far from forcing an American withdraw from the region, AQ's 9-11 attacks resulted in a U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan that weakened the network's centralized command structure and effectively ended its Taliban protected terror sanctuary.

Under pressure after its 9-11 attacks Al Qaeda has further radicalized. Al-Qaeda strategists Abu Bakr Naji and Sayaf al-Adl advocate unrestricted violence against the Zionist-Crusaders and their *apostate* allies.[5] Their ideas are linked to IS' overall strategic doctrine. Within the context of failed states and sectarian fuelled conflicts in the Arab Middle East the Islamic State and increasingly Al Qaeda have tied Shi'ite Iran to Zionist-Crusader ambitions to destroy Sunni Islam. [6] Known previously for its sectarian "moderation", al Qaeda's animosity toward the Shia has grown as its affiliates militarily engage Shi'ite and aligned militias in Syria and Yemen.

This development is consistent with the argument that the jihadi movement has *ideologically hybridized.* [7] Thomas Hegghammer's seminal essay noted the blurring of the *far* and *near* enemy divide over the post 9-11 period. Hegghammer differentiates between revolutionary, global jihadist, nationalist and sectarian groups that historically have targeted distinct enemies. His analysis concentrated on revolutionary groups that targeted local enemies and global jihadist groups that focused on the Western *far enemy.* He measured *hybridization* by examining these groups attack strategies and the ideological statements they issued.

Hegghammer argues *hybridization* reflects environmental changes like post 9-11 counterterror cooperation between the U.S. *far enemy* and apostate *near enemy* and the role of global social media. Both factors make enemy hierarchies less distinct in terms of whom they target; with global jihadists branching out by attacking local enemies and revolutionary groups more willing to assault Western interests.

Inter-jihadi competition and the need for support have furthered this enlargement of enemy hierarchies. Al Qaeda's transformation from a centralized terror organization to a network of regional affiliates has narrowed the *near* and *far enemy* divide. Bin Laden's Abbottabad correspondence communicated his displeasure over his network's targeting of *sectarian* and *near enemy* opponents and its neglect in implementing his *far enemy* strategy of attacking America. [8] The central command has been unable to control the behaviour of its regional branches; as evidenced by ISIS' (The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) expulsion by Al Qaeda in 2014 for not militarily disengaging from Syria. [9]

Jihadi groups in the Maghreb, Somalia, Central Asia and Yemen joined Al Qaeda's network to enhance their global status and gain support to combat local and sectarian enemies. Al Qaeda's branch in Yemen Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is currently at war with the U.S. *far enemy*, Shi'ite Houthi rebels and *apostate* Sunni forces.

Hegghammer argues organizational strain created by counter terror measures has incentivized alliance building between jihadi groups targeting different adversaries. This process can be witnessed in the Islamic State's development of its physical caliphate across parts of Iraq and Syria and its incubation of regional provinces across the world. [10] By targeting Shi'ites, *apostate* Muslim governments and the Western *far enemy* IS has created a global movement pursuing a *total war* strategy against Sunni jihadism's three historic enemies.[11]

Continued *hybridization* also reflects conditions and ideological developments that Hegghammer could not have foreseen. The Arab Spring's weakening of the regional state system and the growing sectarian animus across the Mideast has contributed to further *ideological hybridization*. Both serve as driving forces behind targeting multiple enemies with sectarian factors gaining more salience.

Ideology is also important. Jarret Brachman argues that the global Sunni jihadist movement developed in the late 1970's not only to liberate Muslim land from foreign powers but also to protect the ummah (Muslim global community) from Shi'ite deviance.*[12]* The anti-Shia orientation reflects the role of Saudi Arabian Wahhabi philosophical principles in the development of the contemporary jihadist movement.*[13]*

Al Qaeda's synthesis of Saudi Wahhabi and Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood influences catalyzed global jihadism extremist agenda.[14] Recent events have furthered the movement's radicalization that now wages *total war* against *near, far* and *sectarian* adversaries.

This development has ominous consequences for heterodox Muslim minorities (Shi'ites, Alawites, Sufis and Druze) and Christians who Sunni jihadists see aligned with Western powers, and their apostate and sectarian allies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper concentrates on the global jihadist movement's evolution toward a *total war* doctrine. It focuses on developments in "global jihadism" that Hegghammer defines as that which "promotes military confrontation with the United States and her allies, to avenge and deter non-Muslim oppression of Muslims".[15] I argue "global jihadism" has evolved into a movement that now advocates unrestricted violence against enemies that span across the *near, far* and *sectarian* divide.

Total war evokes imagery of an existential Manichean rivalry requiring full mobilization of resources and the use of unrestricted violence against powerful enemies.[16] Jihadi ideologues Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir and Abu Bakr Naji argue that "diabolical" alliances between *near* and *far enemies* conspire to destroy the Muslim world that must defend itself ruthlessly. [17] Muhajir's *Jurisprudence of Blood* advocates genocide, mass beheadings, killing prisoners and desecrating enemy dead. Naji's *Management of Savagery* moreover hopes to sow disorder across the Muslim world to lay the basis for a jihadi emirate and the liberation of the Islamic world from the depredations of the Zionist-Crusader world order. Such views reflect an uncompromising belief in restoring Islam's lost promise through unrestricted violent confrontation against multiple enemies. The late Abu Musab al- Zarqawi in a September 2005 audio address expresses these Manichean sentiments when he declared "total war" against the Shia and their Sunni *apostate* and Crusader allies when he starkly warns:

"… the mujahideen have prepared for you and for your soldiers, by Allah's virtues, a slashing sword and lethal poison. Allah willing, you will be given to drink from the various goblets of death, and the lands of the Sunnis will contain your rotting corpses."[18]

The essay presents this jihadi ideological evolution in four parts. Firstly, it provides an overview of jihadism's three major adversaries the *near* (Muslim apostate), *far* (Western and other non-Muslim civilizations) and *sectarian* (Shi'ite and other heterodox Muslims) enemies. Secondly, the paper examines why jihadi groups prioritized attacks against the *near enemy* during the Cold War only to see most Islamist insurgencies beaten back by Muslim apostate regimes. Thirdly, the paper analyses how these failures invited debate within the jihadist movement leading to a refocus on fighting the non-Muslim *far enemy.* Fourthly, having failed to weaken *near* and *far enemies,* the paper argues that the global jihadi movement has radicalized further by resorting to conspiratorial and eschatological arguments that link *near, far* and *sectarian* enemies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Putting Al Qaeda's 2004 Madrid 3-11 train attacks within a historical context Mary Habeck examines past jihadist struggles. [19] She argues that jihadi war strategy borrows from the tactics of Mohammad and his *rightfully guided* successors whose governance was characterized by warfare against internal and external enemies and sharia's rigorous application. Calling this "Mohammad's method" Habeck maintains jihadists emulate the Prophet and his Companions tactics associating them with the purest expression of *genuine* Islamic practice. Inspired by this intoxicating vision Habeck argues that jihadists seek to eradicate theological "deviance". This can only be done by militarily engaging the *near enemy* composed of Sunni apostates, the non-Muslim *far enemy* and *sectarian* adversaries composed of Shi'ites, Alawites, and Sufis whose "polytheistic" practices are seen as defiling the Muslim faith.

Mostly the struggle is preconditioned upon cleansing the Muslim world of theological innovations *[bid'ah*) and removing Western influences that have altered the divine trajectory of the Islamic faith away from the Qur'an, sunnah and hadith. Jihadists argue that these forces have created a religious ignorance (*jahiliyyah)* throughout the Muslim world. By emulating "Muhammad's method" jihadists believe that they can revitalize the Muslim world and restore transnational Islamic governance.

Jihadi ideologues presume an inherent clash between Islam and non-Muslim civilizations. Habeck argues that sectarian warfare within the Muslim world and violence against non-Muslim civilizations dominated early Islamic history. Her argument is seconded by others. Nelly Lahoud's study of the 7th century *Kharijites* illustrate the violent theological disputes associated with early Islamic governance.[20]

She argues the *Kharijites* were forerunners of today's jihadists whose personalized view of "authentic" Islamic practice led them to oppose Muhammad's successors for deviating from Prophet's Medina rule. *Kharijite* revolts against Muslim authority were repressed by Islamic rulers. Lahoud argues that the movement collapsed due to internal ideological divisions, leadership rivalries and external military pressure.

Though jihadists reject comparisons to the *Kharijites,* Lahoud asserts that their perspectives are similar. Different interpretations of *al wala' wal bara* [loyalty and disavowal] have produced infighting within the jihadist movement. Lahoud maintains that differences over what *commands loyalty* and *wills disavowal* lead to the jihadist movement's self-destruction. Theological divisions between jihadists over what *commands their allegiance* and that which *wills their repudiation* is at the heart of Al Qaeda's condemnation of the Islamic State's June 2014 caliphate declaration.[21] This contestation over who should lead the global jihadist movement has resulted in bloody clashes between Al Qaeda and Islamic State affiliated jihadists in Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen.

Early Islamic development was also characterized by warfare against Persian and Byzantine powers. Determined to expand the territorial scope of Islamic governance the Prophet's Companions were driven by religious imperatives. Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir *Jurisprudence of Blood* characterizes the theological impulse to violently confront foreign powers:

[The Lord] has through the greatest of his guidance, made it legitimate for his servants that wage jihad in his path to shoot the warring (harbi) unbelievers, kill them, fight them, by every means that may snatch away their souls, drive their spirits from their bodies, cleansing the earth of their filth, and removing their scourge from mankind…"[22]

Ephraim Karsh argues that religiously inspired violence led Islamic armies to conquer a territory stretching from Southern Spain to Southeast Asia.[23] Though successive caliphates signed truces with foreign adversaries such arrangements were considered temporary invariably leading to renewed warfare.

At war with non-Muslim civilizations and stricken by violent internal conflict, Islam's *golden age* laid the foundation for sectarian warfare between the "Partisans of Ali" who see him as the first convert to the Muslim faith and their Sunni "oppressors". As the Prophet's cousin and son in law the Shi'ites see Ali's relationship to Mohammad as legitimating his claim to lead the *ummah* after his death. A right unjustly violated by the community's designation of Abu Bakr as Muhammad's successor.

Though Ali would lead the caliphate, he did so after the death of the third *rightly guided* caliph Uthman. His delayed ascent to govern the *ummah* is viewed by Shi'ites as a travesty magnified by events during Ali's tumultuous reign. Ali's succession to the caliphate was contested by forces loyal to the Governor of Syria Muawiyah. The conflict led to violent internal discord (*fitnah)* that convulsed the medieval Muslim world.

Divisions within his army led Ali into peace negotiations and his removal as caliph. An outcome that sowed discord within Ali's fractured ranks and led the Kharijites to assassinate him. Ali's death contributed to the religious schism between Shia loyal to his familial line and Sunnis who reject genealogically based leadership claims. Ali's destitution and assassination led subsequent generations to revere him, his wife, his daughter and his son Husayn who asserting his claim to lead the *ummah* would be killed at the battle of Karbala.

Shi'ite consecration of Ali's familial line takes the form of rituals, shrines and the veneration of grave sites that Sunni jihadists see as "polytheistic", shattering the unity (*tawhid)* of a faith anchored in the *Qur'an, sunnah and hadith*. These theological rivalries led to civil wars throughout the medieval period and a Shi'ite culture of collective remembrance, revenge and martyrdom.

Historically a basis for violent confrontation, Sunni-Shia grievances since the 1970's have accelerated. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution Shia revivalism clashed with the spread of Saudi Arabian financed Wahhabism throughout the Islamic world.[24] After the 2003 American led war overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime, sectarian conflicts have escalated across the Levant and the Persian Gulf. Aaron Zelin and Philip Smyth argue some Sunni and Shi'ite jihadists view the Syrian conflict in eschatological terms as constituting a prophesied state of internal discord [*fitnah]* that precedes the apocalypse. [25]

Shi'ite dominance of successive Iraqi governments in the post Saddam era has led Sunni jihadists to link Iran with a Zionist Crusader project to reorder the Mideast. Such a conflation of enemies would once be considered unfathomable by modern jihadists who had viewed *near enemy* apostates as their principal enemy. Jihadi groups prioritized attacks against the *near enemy* during the Cold War for they saw the post- colonial Mideast state system as contaminated by Western influence. The origins of the modern jihadist movement partially lie in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The growth of the Brothers in the 1920's was based on anti-colonialism and a desire to return to an Islamic state.

The Brotherhood was afforded some political protection by Egypt's constitutional monarchy who it despised for its subservience to British authority.[26] Despite its contempt for Egypt's limited democracy the Brotherhood made the most of its freedoms to mobilize, preach and expand its movement. Its membership grew throughout the 1940's conspiring with the army officer class to overthrow King Farouk's regime.[27] The MB would expand throughout the Arab Middle East creating chapters across the Levant and North Africa. Betrayed by the secular Free Officers Corps who seized power in a 1952 coup, the Egyptian Brothers were persecuted.

This began a cycle of martyrdom and vengeance that is a hallmark of Egyptian jihadism. Throughout the 1950's the movement foremost leaders and thinkers were imprisoned and executed. Among them was Sayyid Qutb. He is considered by the grandfather of the modern jihadist movement. [28]

Viewed as the MB's most influential thinker, Qutb saw Nasser's Pan Arabist state as the chief enemy to be combated. Though the Egyptian educator hated Western society for its moral vacuity, he never advocated attacking the United States or Europe. Instead his writing focused on reversing the religious atrophy prevalent in Egyptian society that he saw rooted in Westernization and deepened by Nasser's secular state. Qutb argued that outside influences led to a theological ignorance [*jahiliyyah]* affecting Egyptian society whose contemporary worship of Islam bore little resemblance to medieval Islamic practices.[29] Nasser's secular state, moreover, usurped Allah sovereignty over his domain denying Egyptians the "divine perfection" of sharia rule.

Qutb concluded *jahiliyyah* could be surmounted by an "enlightened" minority whose religious knowledge could *re-educate* the masses and arouse their political consciousness. Controversy exists over Qutb's commitment to religiously sanctioned violence. Some analysts argue that Qutb believed that *da'wah (*preaching) could non-violently transform Egyptian society.[30] This narrative, however, is contradicted by Qutb support for revolutionary cells planning violent insurrection

Years of torture and imprisonment had embittered Qutb whose beliefs became totalitarian. After decades of imprisonment Qutb, accused of supporting insurrection, was hanged in 1966 by Nasser's state. His martyrdom inspired future generations of jihadi leaders including Al Qaeda's founders Osama bin Laden (OBL) and Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Muhammad Abd al Salam Faraj's idealization of Qutb led him to form the *al-Jihad* terror-insurgent network and write a manifesto about the primacy of confronting the enemy nearest to Muslims. Faraj's *The Absent Obligation* [also called The Neglected Duty] makes what is considered the first distinction between the *near* and *distant enemy.*[31]

In his treatise Faraj reviews various forms of Islamic resistance to *apostate* rule including *daw'ah (*proselytizing), charitable works, and emigration rejecting them in favour of jihadist revolution that he saw as a forgotten moral imperative. Faraj had contempt for the *ulama (religious scholars)* for he saw them as apologists for *apostate* regimes. The *Absent Obligation* concentrates on why jihadi grievances should focus upon fellow Muslims whose "apostasy" is a religious transgression. Faraj argued focusing on the *far/distant enemy* is a distraction deviating from theological obligations to fight apostasy within the Muslim world. He argued that successful insurrections in the Mideast would lead to a transnational Islamic entity to destroy Israel.

Faraj's *al- Jihad* group lamented the Nasserite state's failed wars against Israel and was enraged by President Anwar al- Sadat's signing of a peace treaty with the Zionist state. Al Jihad assassinated Sadat in 1981 hoping that to ignite a popular rebellion against the state. Instead it invited mass repression of the Islamist movement and *al-Jihad's* obliteration. Hundreds of Islamists including future Al Qaeda leader Ayman al- Zawahiri were rounded up and imprisoned. Many would be executed. Faraj was one of those martyrs.

There is a consensus that the jihadist struggle from the 1950's until the mid- 1990's focused against the *near enemy*. Throughout this period jihadi groups in Egypt mounted terror and insurgent campaigns against the Pan Arabist enemy that Abu Musab al- Suri describes as a "total failure" for its centralized command structure left it vulnerable to government infiltration and dismemberment. [32]

Inspired by Qutb and Faraj's ideas the Muslim Brotherhood's Combative Vanguard in Syria rebelled against Hafez al-Assad regime in the 1980's only to see its movement annihilated at Hama. [33]Thomas Friedman argues Hama's destruction by the Assad regime was designed as a terrifying precedent to deter any future rebellion in the region.[34] Undaunted by the MB's defeat at Hama's radical Islamists rebelled in Libya and Algeria during the 1990's only to see their movements crushed.[35]

Reviewing the failed Syrian rebellion Abu Musab al-Suri argued that the Brothers were weakened by little popular support, by their dependence on external patrons and by a counterproductive military policy of direct confrontation against regime forces.[36] Having supported the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) in the early 1990's Suri and Abu Qutada al-Filistini co-editors of the *Al-Ansar* newsletter in London withdrew their support condemning the GIA's takfiri deviation from the "correct" jihadist path.[37]

Failed Islamist insurgencies in the Arab Mideast prompted jihadi theorists to reflect on the utility of insurrection against a resilient *near enemy*. These intra-jihadi debates produced contrasting interpretations fracturing the Muslim Brotherhood. Some militants within the jihadist movement recanted their commitment to armed insurrection and embraced a peaceful path to an Islamist state. Some imprisoned Egyptian Brothers signed amnesty agreements with President Hosni Mubarak's state recanting armed jihad in return for prison release. Some Libyan and Algerian jihadis years later reconciled with regimes that they once fought.

Reconciliation between ex-jihadists and apostate regimes enraged some jihadist thinkers who angrily lamented their betrayal of the cause.[38] Ayman al- Zawahiri's *Bitter Harvest* rails against the Muslim Brotherhood's "treachery". [39] Flummoxed by their inability to overthrow *apostate* regimes across the Mideast jihadists vented their rage against the *far enemy* often invoking conspiratorial theories to explain past failures. The failures of nationalist jihadist movements were blamed on a Zionist-Crusader order accused by jihadists of plundering the region's wealth and the destroying its religious traditions. The geopolitical environment of the 1990's was moreover conducive to such a doctrinal reformulation.

Foreign conflict zones in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Palestine, Chechnya, and Bosnia involved disputes between Muslim rebels and non- Muslim foreign powers. These struggles involved issues of "defensive jihad" that Islamist radicals would assert required all Muslims to come to the aid of their brethren. The Afghan insurrection against Soviet occupying forces inspired thousands of Arab jihadists to join Abdullah Azzam's "caravan" whose success in liberating the war torn country inspired a collective jihadi mythology and a rekindled global Muslim fighting spirit. [40]

Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden's "defensive" jihad arguments resonated strongly with Islamist extremists. The creation of Muslim international brigades was presented by Azzam and bin Laden as a divinely guided force obligated to protect the *ummah* against foreign conquest.

During the 1980's jihadists began to see wars against the *far enemy* as a vehicle to fulfil Islam's lost promise. Geopolitical developments in the post- Cold War era hastened the move to target the Western (mainly American) *far enemy* whose economic and military power was seen as supporting apostate regimes. Abdullah Azzam's childhood directly experienced suffering and humiliation caused by war and Israeli occupation. Having been driven from the West Bank after the 1967 war Azzam's family relocated to Jordan. At an early age he joined a local chapter the Muslim Brotherhood and lent assistance to Palestinian insurgent organizations who he later abandoned because of their secular-nationalist orientation.

His devotion to the Islamist cause was furthered by his studies at Egypt's *Al-Azhar* University where he earned a doctorate in Islamic Jurisprudence. He later lectured at King Abdullah Aziz University in Jeddah where he developed a cult following among his students.

One of his most ardent student admirers was Osama bin Laden (OBL). Azzam's principal contribution to jihadist thought comes through his 1979 fatwa and treatise *Defense of the Muslim Lands, the First Obligation after Faith*, where he viewed jihad as a mandatory collective obligation when foreign powers occupy Islamic territory.[41]

Non-Muslim military intrusion upon Allah's domain he argued was an affront to Islam. He maintained that all Muslims had a corresponding obligation to rally to the defence of their beleaguered co-religionists. Those able Muslims who refused to participate he reckoned transgressed upon their religion complicating their entry into Paradise on Judgement Day.

Azzam's conceptualization of jihad as a mandatory collective obligation broke with religious traditions that it was a voluntary choice. His argument had enormous geo-political ramifications for it provided the theological impetus for the development of a private pan-ethnic force to liberate Muslim territory under foreign occupation. Kashmir and Palestine were historically areas contested between Muslims and non-Muslims and Azzam prioritized liberating these lands.

His *Defense of Muslim Lands* was sparked by the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan an act that produced outrage across the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan financed and armed Arab and Central Asian mujahidin eager to assist the Afghan resistance. The United States also funnelled weapons and funds through the Pakistani Inter-services Intelligence branch (ISI) that picked the most radical militant groups to engage Soviet forces.

After a teaching at a Pakistani university Azzam relocated to Peshawar close to the Afghan border forming the Maktab al- Khidamat (Services Bureau) that became a conduit for recruitment, housing, financing and training of Arab "Afghans" fighters. He partnered with Osama bin Laden whose connections to the Kingdom's intelligence services secured Saudi support for the Bureau's activities.

Though tens of thousands of Arab fighters joined the "caravan" they did little fighting and their contribution to the Soviet defeat was negligible.[42] Having failed to overthrow native regimes, veteran Egyptian, Libyan, and Algerian jihadists joined the Afghan resistance. Among them were future Al Qaeda leaders Ayman al-Zawahiri, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman and Abu Yahya al-Libi.

The Soviet withdraw in 1989 after a brutal ten year war and the USSR's collapse two years later did however create a holy warrior mythology that suggested the Arab fighters had brought divine providence with them. Their success on the battlefield was strikingly contrasted with the failed wars against Israel by *apostate* regimes.

Such a grandiose conclusion is not surprising for the Afghan jihad began in 1979, a year of turbulence across the Muslim world. The confluence of the Iranian Revolution, the Afghan jihad and the storming of the Grand Mosque of Mecca by an apocalyptic cult were interpreted as "prophetic" signs of Islamic renewal. [43] So significant were these events that David Rapoport theorized that 1979 began a "fourth wave" of religious terror that unlike its predecessors may take longer than a generation to dissipate. [44] His conclusion proved prescient.

The USSR's 1989 withdraw from Afghanistan brought little relief to the Afghan people. The ensuing power vacuum led to tribal and ethnic infighting. The Afghan jihad's end forced the Services Bureau leaders to recalibrate its future purpose. By the late 1980's bin Laden's influence within the organization grew at Azzam's expense. Augmented by considerable financial resources, bin Laden's leverage over the Bureau's Shura Council insured Azzam's marginalization.

Acting upon Zawahiri counsel bin Laden lobbied for the development of a global network to not only liberate Muslim land from foreign oppression but also assist native Islamist insurgents fighting apostate regimes. Azzam rejected OBL's plans to topple Muslim regimes as *takfirist* opposing any broadening of the Bureau's mission as a diversion from the moral imperative to liberate Palestine and Kashmir. After Azzam's conflict with OBL he was assassinated along with his two sons near a Pakistani mosque.

The Cold War's end marked not only an Islamic resurgence but also witnessed American global economic and military hegemony. After returning to Saudi Arabia bin Laden had planned an Islamist insurgency against the communist regime in South Yemen.[45] His plan however was scuttled by larger geo-military events.

Iraq's seizure of Kuwait threatened Saudi security that saw a significant Iraqi military force develop next to its poorly defended frontier. With the Kingdom's backing OBL hoped to raise an Arab volunteer force to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait. To bin Laden's disbelief his entreaties were rebuffed by Saudi intelligence. The Kingdom's granting to the Americans of basing rights in Saudi Arabia as a precursor for a military offensive against Saddam's forces in Kuwait enraged bin Laden.

Bin Laden's anger against the regime built as the Kingdom's religious scholars sanctified the decision granting permission to foreign forces to enter the *land of the two sanctuaries.* By late 1990 more than a half million foreign forces were poised to strike at Saddam's army in Kuwait. For OBL King Fahd's decision violated Mohammad's injunction that forbad foreign military forces to enter the *lands of the twin sanctuaries.* Within the context of the Kingdom's fifty year financial and military relationship with Washington, bin Laden arrived at one fateful conclusion. Namely that the Kingdom was run by apostates whose relationship with crusader forces defiled Islam. Saddam Hussein's crushing defeat during the First Gulf War and the continued basing of American troops underscored the Kingdom's dependence on American military protection.

Bin Laden's letters written from 1994 to 1998 condemned the Kingdom for its support of the Yemeni communists, for its repression of the "righteous" ulama, for its corruption, for its support of Jewish and Christian causes and for its mismanagement of the Saudi economy.[46] Bin Laden's critical posture toward Riyadh led to his exile and to the revocation of his citizenship. He took his business empire and wealth to Sudan where Hassan abd Allah al-Turabi's Islamist regime provided him safe refuge. During this period OBL developed a terror-insurgent movement to strike against American interests. It was during his exile in Sudan and under protection of the Taliban in Afghanistan that Al Qaeda's *far enemy* strategy matured.

Failed jihadist insurrections in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Algeria were attributed by OBL to American economic and military support for apostate governments. *Near enemy* endurance led to a refocus on fighting the non-Muslim *far enemy.* This development was furthered by U.S. military interventions in the Persian Gulf, American support for Israel and globalization's spread of Western culture and financial might.

Bin Laden believed the American power rested upon a weak foundation that could be overcome with ruthless determination. In the post -Vietnam era America's military durability and the courage of its soldiers were for OBL questionable. American militarily disengagements from Lebanon in 1982 and in Somalia in 1993 when attacked by jihadist forces underscored America's lack of resilience.

Bin Laden reckoned a sustained terror campaign against American interests across the globe and a decisive strike against its homeland could force the Americans to end their economic and military patronage of *apostate* forces. In OBL's words:

"Al Qaeda concentrates on its external big enemy before its internal enemy. Even though the internal enemy is considered to be the greater non-believer, the external enemy is more clearly defined as a non-believer is the more dangerous at this stage in our life. America is the head of the non-believers. If God cut it off, the wings would weaken…"[47]

OBL *far enemy* strategy laid the basis for his networks 1996 and 1998 declarations of war against Zionists and Crusaders. After terror attacks against U.S. interests in Africa and Yemen, Al Qaeda launched its *Holy Tuesday* operation in New York and Washington that stuck against what OBL perceived as the economic and military symbols of American "hegemonic" power.

Hoping that its 9-11 operation would force a U.S. military and economic exodus from the region, Al Qaeda miscalculated. The ensuing American counter attack and destruction of its Taliban protected terror sanctuary surprised Al Qaeda leaders.[48] Reflecting upon the Taliban-Al Qaeda defeat at the hands of US forces, Abu Musab al-Suri blamed OBL's overly centralized command structure incapable of withstanding American military superiority. [49]

The disruption of Al Qaeda's global network during the post 9-11 era forced jihadist theoreticians to develop a new strategic military direction. These innovations shaped AQ's future operations and influenced the evolution of its Iraqi branch. Post 9-11 doctrinal developments amplified the network's use of unrestricted violence and increased the enemies it targeted. The 2003 American led war in Iraq took the network into a new controversial sectarian direction.

Al Qaeda's post 9-11 ideological and strategic revisionism was spearheaded by Abu Musab al Suri, Abu Bakr Naji and Sayaf al-Adl all of whom speak to global Islamist insurgency at war with *near enemy* apostates and their Zionist-Crusader patrons. The struggle against Muslim apostates raises difficult issues. Among the most vexing focuses upon determining *takfir* [excommunication] scope that theologically permits the killing Muslims. Jihadi tacticians have wrestled with *takfir's* limits and have failed to establish a precise threshold to guide violence against Muslim regimes. Zawahiri's *General Guidelines* for prioritizes attacking Western countries and their apostate allies, urges jihadists not to target "deviant sects", and cautions them against killing Muslim non-combatants.[50]

Zawahiri's *advice* is however contextual, permitting "proportional" violence against any local or sectarian group that fights against jihadi forces or refuses to "yield" to their authority.

In his *General Guidelines for the Work of Jihad* Zawahiri writes:

"The targeting of America's regional pawns will be different from one place to another, but the general rule is to avoid confrontation with them, except in those countries in which confrontation with them is unavoidable."[51]

Zawahiri then identifies Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Egypt, Jordan, the Arabian Peninsula, the Maghreb, and the Sahel as major conflict zones where confrontation with Muslim regimes is "unavoidable". He furthermore supports jihadist warfare against America's Safavid (Shia) allies in Iraq, against Zionists in Palestine, against "Hindu criminals" in Kashmir, against "Chinese oppressors" in East Turkistan, against Russians in the Caucasus and expresses support for Islamist rebels fighting the Philippine and Burmese governments.[52]

Zawahiri's problematic *guidelines* are exacerbated by his inability to control the militants he *commands* who faced with the battlefield exigencies have largely ignored his guidance. Al Qaeda linked ideologues Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Hamza al-Masri and Abu Qatada al-Filistini condemnation of the Islamic State's takfiri practices have similarly found themselves powerless to restrain IS' appeal among younger jihadists.[53] Following in the footsteps of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, IS's cleric Turki al-Binali (killed in a US airstrike in 2017) repudiated his former mentor Maqdisi.[54] Even within the ultra-takfirist Islamic State its religious authorities have disagreed on takfir's permissible limits. [55]

Though *takfirism* has sown controversy within the jihadist movement, strategists have found justifications for killing fellow Muslims. Some resort to arguments that Muslim civilians who die in jihadi operations against *apostate* and crusader forces are martyred given that these operations are guided by divine providence.[56] Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir argues for example that killing Muslims used as "human shields" by *crusader-apostate* forces is permissible for it guarantees that victims unfettered entry into Paradise. [57] Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, furthermore, argued that "Muslim collateral damage" was an "overriding necessity" in order to effectively fight against heresy.[58]

Since 9-11 increased counter terrorism cooperation between Western and Mideast governments exacerbate the problem of *takfir* for such alliances require jihadis to combat most Muslim regimes. The Arab Spring's turmoil and resulting failed states have led Al Qaeda to concentrate on targeting the *near enemy*. Anne Stenerson argues that Al Qaeda is "opportunistic" and has prioritized the embedding of its forces in insurgencies across the Levant, the Maghreb and the Sahel.[59]

Abu Musab al- Suri's *Call to Global Islamic Resistance* is the earliest statements of the jihadist movement's response to geo-military developments in the post 9-11 era. Suri spent decades studying the failures of the jihadist movement in Syria, Algeria and Egypt. *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance* is considered his master work. It was once viewed as Al Qaeda's blueprint to defeat America in the post 9-11 era. This assessment is an exaggeration.

Although Al Qaeda media outlets published the work, Brynjar Lia argues Suri rejected its *far enemy* strategy, favoured the interests of the Taliban and was disliked by bin Laden.[60] One can however see aspects of Suri's decentralized jihad model in Abu Bakr Naji and Sayaf al-Adl work whose importance as Al Qaeda tacticians are recognized. Suri's model can be viewed as an extension of the Islamic State terror campaign in the West that has inspired hundreds of plots and arracks by disgruntled European Muslims working individually or in small groups.

Suri's book analyses three methods of Islamist insurrection: terrorism by secret hierarchical organization, "open fronts" of guerrilla warfare and jihad waged by decentralized small groups. He argues the efficacy of these models varies with centralized secret organizations described as a "total failure", "open fronts" as a qualified if problematic success and jihad pursued by unaffiliated small groups as the most effective.

Provided that a country's terrain is conducive to guerrilla warfare and the insurgent movement has popular support, "open fronts" can be used with small cells of loosely affiliated jihadists to liberate the Muslim world from Zionist-Crusader domination and *apostate* rule. This outcome Suri argues can be facilitated by terrorist operations against Western countries designed to weaken their will for warfare against the Muslim world.

Suri qualifies his support for guerrilla warfare noting that the technological precision and firepower of America's military arsenal can make "open fronts" a risky strategy as witnessed by the defeat of the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces after 9-11.His pessimism is overcome by his faith that confrontation with the United States and the presence of crusader forces in Muslim territory would catalyse a global decentralized Islamist insurgency.

Borrowing from Robert Tabor's *The War of the Flea* Suri envisions thousands of small scale attacks that will weary crusader forces who finding themselves flummoxed to counter insurgents will militarily disengage from the Muslim world. Suri uses Mao's and Guevara's guerrilla doctrines as a guide for mujahidin forces, who driving government forces from rural hinterlands will use the liberated territories to organize a popular insurrection.[61]

Despite his reputation as a "pragmatist" Suri's decentralized jihad conveys a theological determinism that beyond all odds, jihadis will prevail. The success of his small band insurgency model is predicated upon vast numbers of Muslims waging jihad, the absence of which, has bedevilled past Islamist insurgencies.

Perhaps to fortify his belief that victory is *certain* Suri spends the last hundred pages of *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance* interpreting "prophetic" hadith.[62] As Jean Pierre Filiu notes Suri desperately picked those hadith to fit his faith that Islam's victory is preordained. [63]

Suri isn't alone in his reliance upon Islamic eschatology to reassure his followers that global jihad is "predestined" to succeed. The permissibility of shedding Muslim blood is often reinforced by referencing prophecy that Islam's victory over its adversaries is "inevitable", making any sacrifice worth the cost. In *The Management of Savagery* Abu Bakr Naji's writes:

"After that the throngs will begin to apply themselves (by the aid of God) to liberate Jerusalem and that which surrounds it, liberating Bukhara, Samarkand, Andalusia, and all of the Muslims. Then we will begin by liberating the earth, and all of humanity from the hegemony of unbelief and tyranny. This is the prophecy of the His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him)." [64]

The Islamic State and predecessors justified their extreme violence by referencing eschatology. Will McCants argues that the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) viewed one of its leaders as the Mahdi and that its formation of a Sunni jihadist state in 2006 was designed to spark divine intercession.[65] ISI's Post- Zarqawi leaders Abu Hamza al-Muhajir and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi emphasized apocalyptic themes. Faced with targeted assassination by U.S. Special Forces and an anti-al Qaeda rebellion in Anbar Province the group's delusions may have been a psychological reaction to severe adversity. According to McCants, ISI's decline and the killing of its leaders in 2010 prompted a reformulation of its apocalyptic messaging.

Under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi IS' eschatological interpretation emphasize the group's role in preparing for the Mahdi's emergence and its media presents the caliphate as a *prophetic mechanism* to purify the Muslim world and defeat crusader and Shi'ite forces. Baghdadi's July 2014 Grand Mosque of Mosul sermon for example demanded the loyalty of globe's Muslim population and commanded they join the caliphate to wage war against the forces of disbelief. [66] Baghdadi and Zarqawi actions are presented by IS as predestining an apocalyptic war against Shia and Crusader enemies.

The *Management of Savagery* departs from Suri's decentralized jihad model arguing for an Islamic emirate to centralize insurgent and terror operations. The book advocates a *vexation* and *exhaustion* guerrilla war strategy aimed at weakening crusader and *apostate* forces. Like Suri he assumes that Muslims will en masse heed the call to jihad against Crusader forces. Naji sees his strategy as creating disorder across the region allowing for the development of a jihadi state capable of managing anarchy.[67] Naji's work is viewed as basis for the Islamic State's strategic vision.[68]

The Management of Savagery argues that it was Al Qaeda's intention to draw crusader forces into the Mideast after the 9-11 attacks and use guerrilla tactics to make the crusaders "pay the price" of their intervention.[69] Jihadi strategy aims to overextend U.S. forces drawing them into multiple fronts against Islamist insurgents and deplete the productive capacity of the American economy. Like many Al Qaeda theorists Naji has contempt for American soldiers comparing them unfavourably to the Russians whose endurance and savagery mattered little against the "divinely guided" mujahidin. [70]

Faced with mounting financial costs and battlefield casualties Naji reckoned Western public opinion could be forced to pressure their governments to militarily disengage against Muslim forces. *The Management of Savagery* also argues for mass casualty attacks on North American and European civilians to induce Western policy-makers to militarily withdraw from the Mideast. Connected to Naji war strategy is propaganda that aim to eradicate the deceptive "media halo" of American power.[71]

The *Management of Savagery* cautions jihadists not to be *soft* in using violence and attributes past Islamist failures to timidity.[72] Throughout the book Naji references Muhammad's Companions whose raids and brutality against opponents are seen as a guide for jihadist warfare. Their tactics leads Naji to endorse brutal violence referencing Abu Bakr who set his tribal opponents on fire.

Commenting favourably on the use of "odious" measures against opponents Naji writes:

"We are now in circumstances resembling the circumstances after the death of the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) and the outbreak of apostasy or the like of that which the Believers faced in the beginning of the jihad. Thus, we must massacre (others) and take actions like those against the Banu Qurayza and the like."[73]

This advice foreshadows the Islamic State's filmed burning alive of a Jordanian air force pilot whose plane was shot down by the caliphate's forces. During its bloody five year reign the caliphate beheaded, drowned, crucified, stoned, shot and exploded its opponents often displayed in gruesome execution videos.

Dabiq's *The Return of the Khalifa* presents Abu Bakr Naji's state building strategy outlined in *The Management of Savagery* as its doctrine. [74] *Dabiq* sketches steps: *hijrah* (emigration), *jamaah* (unity), destabilize *taghut* (apostate state), *tamkin* (consolidation) and *Khalifa* (caliphate) contained in Naji's book by comparing this sequence with Zarqawi and his successors actions in Iraq. This path to power was realized by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi's revitalization of Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and his creation of a transnational jihadi state.

Taking its cue from Naji's work ISI rebuild its terror network after the 2011 American departure with its *Soldiers of Harvest* and *Breaking the Walls* military campaigns that assassinated thousands of army and militia personnel and targeted prisons liberating hundreds of former AQI members.[75] Unable to effectively counter a replenished insurgent movement, Iraq's army and aligned Sunni militias withered.

By the summer of 2014 ISI had seized territory across northwest Iraq (including Mosul) and the network was poised to strike at Baghdad. ISI also made impressive territorial gains in northeast Syria capitalizing on the sectarian passions generated by the Sunni dominated insurgency against a weakened Assad regime.

When the U.S. led military campaign against the caliphate began IS' forces occupied Sunni areas in Iraq and Syria along river tributaries "governing" six million people.[76] This geopolitical development gave the jihadist proto state a strategic advantage against its opponents. Baghdadi facilitated his state building project by seizing dams, reservoirs, oil wells, grain bins, gas lines and electricity generating plants.

State development along the Tigris and Euphrates river basin allowed the caliphate to wage *total war* against all who opposed its network. Sunni tribes that rebelled against the newly formed state were annihilated.[77] Other groups like the Yazidi, Shi'ites and Christians were severely persecuted. Mount Sinjar's Yazidi communities were subjected to ethnic cleansing and sexual slavery. A 2016 United Nations report on IS ethnic cleansing of the Yazidi documents that the jihadists displaced 380,000 people, massacred over 5,000 and the kidnapped some 3,500 women.[78] Though most Christians fled before the jihadist military conquests, those few who remained were forced to convert or pay monetary tribute. Churches and monasteries were destroyed. Shia mosques and Sufi shrines were razed.

The destruction of Shi'ite communities is considered by IS ideologues as critical for the *caliphate's* expansion. Their rationale is twofold. First, Shi'ite "polytheism" contributes to a pre-Islamic ignorance that represses the *ummah's* spiritual and martial development. Only by purifying the community of *shirk* (polytheism) can the caliphate fortify its capability to defeat crusader forces. Second, the Islamic State presents Iraqi Shia and aligned Alawites in Syria as Washington's "allies" against the caliphate.[79]

The Islamic State's exaltation of violence is designed to inspire followers, intimidate opponents and avenge past injustices. These sentiments are well represented in jihadi literature. Abu Abdullah al- Muhajir's *Jurisprudence of Blood* for example argues that extreme violence is religiously sanctioned and utilitarian.[80]

According to Tore Hamming Muhajir represented a hard-line salafi-jihadist intellectual current (*the Jalalabad School)* that Al Qaeda historic leaders rejected. [81] Hamming argues that after bin Laden's departure Muhajir influence grew among Arab-Afghan mujahidin. During this period Abu Musab al-Zarqawi came under his instruction finding his book so powerful that the *Jurisprudence of Blood* was presented by Zarqawi network as its spiritual and strategic guide.

Muhajir's lecture series argues mass killing is theologically grounded. Even by Al Qaeda standards the *Jurisprudence of Blood* is extreme for its twenty chapters defend beheadings, desecrating enemy dead, torture and the execution of prisoners. Muhajir separates the world into two rival spheres (*Dar al- Islam* and *Dar al- Harb)* where warfare is natural and eternal. He advocates unrestricted warfare until *Dar al- Kufr* (Land of Disbelief) is destroyed foreshadowing the Islamic State's strategic vision.

Such *takfiri* sentiments led Zarqawi's former mentor Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi to denounce AQI's sectarian based insurgent-terror campaign. [82] Zarqawi's Iraqi jihad created notable strains within Al Qaeda's increasingly fractured ranks.

Though Zarqawi was granted permission by al Qaeda to develop a terrorist training camp in Herat, Afghanistan during the Taliban's rule and was given some organizational support to mount terror operations in Jordan, he was never really part of bin Laden's formal network.

Before the Baathist state's overthrow by the Americans Zarqawi moved his terror organization to Iraq capitalizing on Sunni grievances caused by American efforts to create a post Saddam democratic Iraq. Al Qaeda quickly sensed that the Iraq war gave it an opportunity to rejuvenate its weakened post 9-11 network. They entered into negotiations to bring Zarqawi into AQ's rapidly decentralized franchise culminating in Zarqawi 2004 oath of allegiance *(bay'ah)* to bin Laden's organization.

Zarqawi initially followed AQ's guidelines by prioritizing attacks against coalition forces. However Zarqawi quickly realized that targeting crusader forces would be insufficient to force them to leave Iraq. Instead he opted for a strategy of extreme violence against the Shia majority aimed at inflaming sectarian fissures to point of civil war and state implosion.

Such a policy fits within Zarqawi's anti-Shi'ite world view that he expressed in a 2004 letter to Al Qaeda's high command which he describes the Shia are "the insurmountable obstacle, the prowling serpent, the crafty, evil scorpion, the enemy lying in wait, and biting poison". Zarqawi describes them as "the enemy" and claims they conspire with the Americans against the Sunnis.[83]

In a 2005 audio address Zarqawi declares *total war* against the Shi'ites for their complicity in a crusader project to destroy the Sunnis in Iraq. [84] Reacting to the capture of Tal Afar by American troops and Iraqi forces, Zarqawi declares *"*the interests of the crusaders and their brothers, the hate filled Rafidites, have converged" arguing this alliance's goal is a "Crusader-Rafidite war against the Sunnis."[85] A war that Zarqawi claims resulted in crusader use of poison gas against Sunni communities and mass rape of its women. [86]

AQI's *total war* attacks on Shi'ite religious leaders, shrines, processions and mosques were unrelenting. Thousands of Shi'ites died under Zarqawi's targeted operations.[87] One AQI attack in 2006 attack on the al-Askari Shi'ite shrine in Samarra drove Iraq to the precipice of sectarian civil war when the Shi'ite militias attacked dozens of Sunni mosques.

Zarqawi sectarian strategy alarmed Al Qaeda's high command. Al Qaeda's unease with the strategy is contained in correspondences where Zarqawi is warned against targeting Muslim civilians.[88] Fearing a loss of popular support for the AQI insurgency Al Qaeda Central urged Zarqawi to prioritize killing Americans, Westerners and Iraqi security forces.

In his 2005 letter Zawahiri asks Zarqawi to forgive ordinary Shi'ites for their *ignorance.* Zawahiri cautions his advice obsequiously noting that he says things "from afar". In light of AQI's later decline, Zawahiri's counsel was interpreted as a sign of the network's moderation and prescience foreshadowing its future expulsion of its Iraq affiliate.[89]

A comprehensive reading of the letter, however, suggests a different conclusion. Zawahiri calls the Shi'ites "traitors" for "colluding with the Americans" and says that collision with the Shia is "inevitable".[90] He inveighs against Shi'ism calling it a "religious school based on falsehood and excess" and urges Zarqawi to wait until the mujahidin movement is stronger before confronting the Shia. [91] These comments suggest that Zawahiri's critique of AQI was tactical and that he views a Sunni jihadi war against the Shia as inevitable.

Despite their objections bin Laden and Zawahiri never repudiated Zarqawi's leadership of AQI. Bin Laden, Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi eulogized him as a martyr after his June 2006 killing by US forces. In his July 2006 letter Abu Yahya al-Libi describes Zarqawi as "lion of Islam" a "hero of Tawhid", one who "dignifies Islam" and "humiliates polytheism".[92] Zawahiri in *The Islamic Spring Part 5* lecture praises Zarqawi's fealty to Al Qaeda as "an exemplar for mujahidin [displaying] high morals and behaviour".[93]

Al Qaeda support for its Iraqi branch is reinforced by Brian Fishman argument that Sayaf al- Adl published a 2004 plan integrating Zarqawi efforts within the high commands long term vision.[94] Fishman sees Zarqawi's world view as a major tactical and strategic jihadi innovation *(Zarqawism*) that is far more action orientated, violent and radical than anything previously entertained by Al Qaeda.

Adl is a leader within Al Qaeda's hierarchy and was a bin Laden's associate. After the Taliban's fell Adl escaped to Iran, where subject to restrictions, he was allowed to manage AQ's operations within the country. He was released in 2015 by the Iranian government in exchange for some of their diplomats that Al Qaeda had kidnapped.

Sayaf al-Adl's plan is a totalitarian war vision waged against every civilization on the planet.[95] It begins with the 9-11 operation and a policy confronting U.S. forces in the Mideast. The plan than pursues a guerrilla warfare strategy to defeat crusader forces and their *apostate* allies laying the foundation for an Iraqi-Syrian emirate.

Under the plan Al Qaeda's transnational jihadi state will unleash a wave of Islamist insurrections throughout the region leading to Israel's destruction. Once created the caliphate will be ready to confront and defeat the "forces of disbelief" throughout the world.[96]

In his 2005 communiqué to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) Zawahiri designs for the Mideast mirror Sayaf al - Adl master plan when he notes:

" *…it is my humble opinion that the jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals…First, expel the Americans from Iraq. The second stage: establish an Islamic authority or emirate, and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate….The third phase: Extend the jihad wave to secular countries neighbouring Iraq…The fourth stage: It may coincide with what came before a clash with Israel because Israel was only established to challenge any new Islamic authority!"*[97]

Zawahiri states that once formed the caliphate will fight "generation after generation" until the "day of judgement" implying a final reckoning for the forces of "global disbelief".[98] Under Adl's plan Syria is identified as a major battleground. Adl sees Syria as an exception to AQ *far enemy* doctrine for the Assad regime's anti-Western posture made it a poor candidate for American support. He saw the regime's vulnerability as an opportunity to create an al Qaeda emirate. Adl's choice of Syria may have been influenced by the country's central positioning in Islamic eschatology. "Prophetic" hadith suggest that that Syria will be the epicentre of an apocalyptic war between Islamic and Satanic crusader forces.

Syria's civil war is seen by some jihadis as evidence of *fitnah* a period of prophesied internal conflict within the Muslim world that is a precursor to the Mahdi's rise, Isa's (Jesus) return and the defeat of Satanic (crusader) forces.[99] Though he argues that Al Qaeda failed to reconcile with its Iraqi branch, Fishman describes the master plan as "prescient" for it correctly forecasts the caliphate's emergence after the Arab Spring.[100]

Adl's plan suggests the divisions between AQ and IS are not significant. They share common principles and AQ has moved toward a *total war* strategy. This is evidenced in the military operations undertaken by its affiliates and by the high command's ideological statements.

Environmental forces and sectarian fuelled conflicts have contributed to Al Qaeda's ideological *hybridization*. Since the 2003 Iraq war Iranian power and sectarian aligned militias have steadily grown across the Arab Mideast. Sectarian fissures have been inflamed by the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars and by Riyadh and Teheran's geo-political competition.[101] The Syrian conflict role in linking *near, far* and *sectarian* enemies is recognized in Al Qaeda communications.

Zawahiri 2014 letter annulling Abu Bakr al- Baghdadi's merger of his Iraqi and Syrian operations into a rebranded Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) was driven by a desire to maximize Al Qaeda's direction over Jabhat al Nusra (JN) in Syria and not by ideological opposition to ISI's sectarian strategy.

Zawahiri underscored this point decreeing:

"First, it is inevitable that I remind all the mujahideen and Muslims of the role of the Islamic State of Iraq in resisting the Crusader plan for making an alliance with and dividing the heart of the Muslim world, and their resistance of the aggressive Safavid-Rafidite expansionism into Iraq, ash-Sham and the Arabian Peninsula."…. It is also inevitable that I remind all of the mujahideen and Muslims of the role of Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl ash-Sham in their reviving of the obligation of Jihad in Sham ar-Rabat and the Jihad; and their reviving the hope of the Muslim Ummah in liberating Al-Aqsa and the establishment of the guiding Khilafa with God's permission. Likewise, [it is inevitable that I mention] their resistance to the Safavid, Rafidite, Batinite and secular enemy on the harbour of Islam in beloved Sham"[102].

This sentiment reflects a jihadi drift toward of a *total war* strategy. Zawahiri's later commentary on the Shia tying them to a Zionist Crusader order is not radically different from Zarqawi's 2005 conspiratorial world view.

In his September 2015 *Islamic Spring Part 6* lecture Zawahiri argues that a powerful "secular-crusader-Safavid-Alawite alliance" wages war against Islam and concludes that Al Qaeda and the Islamic State should reconcile their differences and unite against this nefarious conspiracy.[103] Given so many adversaries, Zawahiri believes divisions within mujahidin ranks will hinder the success of the jihadist project in Syria.[104]

Sajjin Gohel argues that Al Qaeda has reprioritized insurgency against a weakened *near enemy* and is increasingly anti-Shi'ite in its ideology.[105] Zawahiri's 2015-2016 *Islamic Spring* lectures condemn Iran, the Assad regime, Iraqi Shi'ite militias, Yemeni Houthi rebels and Lebanese Hezbollah as part of a "secular-crusader-Safavid-Alawite" military alliance against Sunni jihadists.[106]

Regional instability in the Islamic world has reenergized jihadi hatred toward Sunni *apostates* and Shi'ites exacerbating Al Qaeda's inability to control the ideological passions of its overseas franchises. [107] Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) experience in Mali, moreover, illustrates a similar disconnect between the views of the central command and the sectarian anti- Sufi violence of its local commanders.[108]

During JN's early development local commanders to the displeasure of its high command massacred "polytheistic" Syrian Druze communities. Al Qaeda's Yemeni branch has for years pursued a *total war* strategy where it targets the U.S. *far enemy*, fights Yemeni, Saudi and United Arab Emirate (UAE) *apostates* while confronting Iranian supported Shi'ite Houthi rebels. The force of events led to a pragmatic recalibration of enemy hierarchies by Al Qaeda's central command. Al Qaeda's development of a *total war* strategy contradicts the position that the network has not radicalized in response to the Islamic State's emergence. [109]

CONCLUSION

The global jihadism's *ideological hybridization* reflects the movement's frustration with past failures and the opportunities afforded by the Arab Spring's instability. The vulnerability of *near enemy* regimes and the sectarian dimension of the Syrian, Yemeni and Iraqi conflicts have led global jihadi groups toward a *total war* posture. By enlarging the adversaries they target, jihadis are pursuing a maximalist military doctrine to liberate the *ummah* from "Zionist-Crusader-Rifidah-Apostate" exploitation.

The *ideological hybridization* of jihadi groups that Thomas Hegghammer recognized a decade ago has progressed into a *total war* doctrine targeting *near*, *far* and *sectarian* enemies. Such a strategy embraces risk maximization and hyper violence that is problematic yet resilient.[110] For decades jihadi ideologues like Abu Musab al-Suri have cautioned the movement's militants to avoid the ideological zealousness and counterproductive extreme violence, yet the same "mistakes" are repeated.[111]

The destruction of the Islamic State's physical caliphate and the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's do not end its terror-insurgent movement. As seen in its network's horrific attacks against churches and luxury hotels in Sri Lanka and by the movement's Central African expansion, the Islamic State endures.[112]

Past "defeats" of jihadist terror networks have bred more virulent movements propelled by utopian beliefs in the efficacy of *divinely sanctioned* violence and the *prophetic inevitability* of victory. Animated by such visions, the global jihadist movement wages continuous warfare that while unsuccessful is impossible to eradicate.

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