

February 6-9, 2011

WORKING PAPER

The Views and Strategy of Global Jihad toward Shi'ism

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A. Introduction

The ideologues of the jihadi Salafist movement devote an extensive part of their thought to Twelver Imamist Shi'ism (*a-shiyya al-imamiyya al-ithna ashariyya*), including its beliefs, its historical and current political path, its attitude toward the Sunnis, and its status today. In general, they regard Shi'ism from a religious perspective as heretical and polytheistic, and from a political-strategic perspective as a principal enemy of Sunni Islam, along with the other main infidels/enemies – the “Crusaders,” led by the U.S., and the “heretical” (*murtadun*) regimes ruling the Arab and Sunni Muslim states. They cast aspersions on Shi'ites, calling them “infidels, abandoners of Islam, dissenters” (*al-kufra, al-murtada, al-kafra ar-rafda*). From their perspective, the Shi'ites abandoned the religion and community of Islam (already at the beginning of its development, when they split from the Sunnis), adopted beliefs that became increasingly foreign to Islam (that is, Sunni practice), and became completely heretical. This explains the title in Islamic law of “heretic who abandoned the religion of Islam” (*murtada*). The jihadi Salafist movement applies this title to Shi'ism, as it does to the Islamic regimes that have abandoned the religion of Islam (from its perspective). Abu Basir emphatically states that the Sunni religious ruling vis-à-vis Shi'ism declares that the latter is completely heretical.

According to the jihadi Salafist movement, Shi'ism – which has been “heretical” since its establishment – fights against the Sunnis alongside the other “infidel” enemies of Islam at home and abroad. And it is expected to continue to wage battle against the Sunnis, apparently until the end of time.

Iran, as a regional superpower, is identified with Shi'ism more than any other Shi'ite entity. It is even portrayed as the patron of Shi'ism. Numerous essays in jihadi Salafism are devoted to denouncing Iran from a religious, institutional and political perspective.

The considerable attention the jihadi Salafist thinkers devote to Shi'ism in their essays, religious rulings and responses to questions from the general public can apparently be attributed to the following factors, among others:

1. Declarations and rulings by religious regimes and institutions in the Sunni world that have tried to portray Shi'ism as an inseparable part of Islam, with an equal status to that of the Sunni schools of thought. This, in addition to the initiatives of Sunni institutions to facilitate rapprochement between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. The jihadi Salafist ideologues reject these initiatives and make it unequivocally clear that Shi'ism is heretical and external to the Islamic community. It also attempts to undermine the efforts invested by both Sunnis and Shi'ites to create an atmosphere of conciliation and rapprochement between the two sides.
2. The growing concerns among the jihadi Salafist ideologues that Shi'ism has become (under the leadership of Iran, particularly since Khomeini's Islamic Revolution) an existential danger for the Sunni world and is actually seeking to take over it. This concern has grown since the occupation of Iraq by the U.S. and its allies. The involvement of Shi'ite Iran in Iraq is regarded as an attempt to gain control of this state – whether by collaborating with the Shi'ite majority or by cooperating with the United States. The relentless Iranian effort to acquire a nuclear military capability has even further underlined the Shi'ite threat against the Sunnis.
3. The concern that exists in light of what is described as subversive activity against the Sunnis conducted by Shi'ite minorities living in the Sunni states, especially with

encouragement and incitement from Iran.

4. The concern about the “Shi’itization” of Sunnis; the signs of this are growing as the Shi’ite forces – led by Iran and Hezbollah – win military and political gains in the region.

For the ideologues of the global jihad movement, the combination of these threatening factors turns Shi’ism, and Iran in particular, into a bitter and difficult rival, and a serious obstacle standing in the way of the battle this movement is conducting to attain influence in the region in the short term and to realize their declared, long-term aspiration of establishing a caliphate under their leadership.

The ideologues and leaders of the global jihad movement are trying to formulate a comprehensive outlook for waging the battle against Shi’ism. In practice, there are disagreements among them regarding the strategic path of action to take against Shi’ism, its government institutions and its general public. Each of the sides anchors its position in both religious rulings and political-military reasons. Leading the camp that advocates adopting an aggressive and violent policy against Shi’ism is the al-Qaeda organization in Iraq, where it is conducting a bloody war (jihad) against the Shi’ite population and sometimes also against the Sunni population. On the other side of the jihadi camp are those who oppose this violent strategy. While they believe that it is necessary to fight to the bitter end against the government establishment and its foreign “Crusader” allies, they also think it is necessary to simultaneously engage in proselytization (*da’wa*) and education in order to assimilate the general Shi’ite public among the Sunnis and return them to the fold of Islam.

This paper will present and analyze – based on the extensive literature disseminated by the religious and political jihadi Salafist movement – the view of its ideologues vis-à-vis Shi’ism, with an emphasis on the leading al-Ja’afari Twelver stream. Religious-legal approaches toward Shi’ism will be presented, as well as strategic-political positions. The paper will note the efforts of the jihadi Salafist movement to undermine the trend of rapprochement between Shi’ites and Sunnis, which is regarded as a threat to the global jihad. The strategy of the global jihad vis-à-vis Shi’ism will also be presented – a strategy that is not monolithic, but rather composed of various approaches that are at odds with each other in regard to the best way to fight against Shi’ism.

B. The Views and Attitudes of the Jihadi Salafist Ideologues toward Shi’ism and the Shi’ites

General

In their many writings on Shi’ism, the jihadi Salafist ideologues explain quite explicitly what they view as Shi’ism’s serious deviations from the unique faith of the original Islam – that is, Sunni Islam. They list these deviations from two perspectives: The first focuses on Shi’ism’s challenge to the beliefs, views and practices that constitute the foundations of Sunni Islam, while the second entails the beliefs that Shi’ism has adopted for itself and which, in their view, constitute heresy and polytheism. Their emphatic conclusion – which they say is anchored in Islamic law and reflects the consensus of all Islamic sages – is that Shi’ism betrayed Islam and removed itself from the framework of the religion and community of Islam.

From the standpoint of these ideologues, Shi’ism stands on the other side of the barricade – not only from a religious-legal perspective, but also from a political one. This is because, in their view, Shi’ism from the outset has waged an all-out war against Sunni Islam that continues to this very day, while switching allies along the way. This chapter includes three sections that clearly reflect the stance of the jihadi Salafist

ideologues toward Shi’ism from the religious and political perspective. The first section focuses on a comprehensive work by Abu Basir on Shi’ism. The second section presents a summary of the “heresies” of Shi’ism written by al-Alwan. In the third section, a number of writers describe Shi’ism’s “betrayal” of Sunni Islam, which they see as an attempt to delegitimize Sunnism.

Abu Basir al-Tartusi

Abu Basir, one of the leading ideologues of jihadi Salafism, declares Shi’ism to be an heretical community that actually lies outside of the framework of Islam. He devotes a book to portraying Shi’ism as a community that left Islam and rejects what he regards as the principles and foundations of Islamic religion and beliefs.¹

In the introduction to his book, he notes that he saw a need to write the book in light of two phenomena: The first is the presentation of Shi’ism by unknowledgeable Muslims as if it were a fifth school in Islam that should be recognized as part of Islamic law. As a result of this, a second phenomenon developed in which Muslims ask and wonder whether Shi’ism is indeed Islamic or instead a heresy that abandoned the Islamic religion (*murtad*) and lies outside of its bounds. In the introduction to his book, he summarizes in a few lines the characteristics of Shi’ism as a religion based on falsehood, denial and damage to Islam, conspiring against “the nation of monotheism” (*ummat at-tawhid*). He states that despite the fact that these are the characteristics of Shi’ism, the Shi’ites claim to be Muslims in every way. From this description of the characteristics of Shi’ism and his introductory remarks, which include a religious ruling on the status of Shi’ism, the author makes his view very clear: Shi’ism is not part of true Islam and lies outside of it.

In the introduction, the author implicitly refers to Iran, without mentioning it by name, when noting that the greatest danger in Shi’ism stems from the fact that the Shi’ites rely on a state that provides patronage and disseminates its falsehood and heresy.

According to the author, the book is intended for Muslims (*ahl al-Islam*) in order to familiarize them with the essence of Shi’ism, something that is necessary to do in every period of time. This book is also intended for those among the Shi’ites who are trying to lead mankind astray.

Abi Basir’s ruling on Shi’ism

Abu Basir summarizes the ruling on the Shi’ites-dissenters (*hukam a-shi’a ar-ruafad*) as follows: All of the definitive evidence points to the fact that the Shi’ites-dissenters-Twelvers are a group of polytheism (*shirq*) and heresy (*rada*) that lies outside of the Islamic community. Their religion is based on falsehood and denial and concealed hatred for Islam and its followers. Abu Basir later presents evidence to prove and support this ruling.

Falsification of the Quran in two aspects:

Abu Basir states that the “distorted” approach of the Shi’ites toward the Quran has two aspects: The first is the actual falsification of its content and the second is their open declaration that Sunnism’s version of the Quran is distorted.

The first aspect pertains to the field of allegorical/homiletical interpretation (*tawil*) and literal translation (*tafsir*). Abi Basir claims that Shi’ism’s interpretation of the Quran is an interpretation of “people of heresy and atheism” and is more of a distortion of the Quran’s content than a true and correct homiletical (*tawil*) or literal (*tafsir*) interpretation. In order to support this claim, Abu Basir quotes a series of interpretations given to Quranic verses in the book *al-Kafi* by the Shi’ite writer al-Kalini,

¹ Abu Basir al-Tartusi, *The Dissenting Shi’ites: A Community of Polytheism and Heresy (a-shi’a ar-ruafad: taefat shirq warida)* July 2002, <http://www.abu-qatada.com/r/?i=1382&c=4250>

which Abu Basir describes as the most prominent and credible book of Shi'ism. Many of the interpretations attribute supernatural, cosmic qualities and virtues to the fourth caliph and nephew of Muhammad – Ali bin Abi Talib (who is given the title *amir al-muaminim*) – that deviate from the perspective of Sunnism. For example, the interpretation identifies Ali with the concept of “the Great News” and the verse that contains this concept (Sura LXXVIII, 1-2: “Concerning what are they disputing? Concerning the Great News”). According to the Sunni sages, this concept refers to the tidings included in the Quran about the Day of Judgment, and other subjects (“The Quran” – Uri Rubin). This means, according to Abu Basir, that “the Shi'ites attribute to Ali a verse that is greater and loftier than the prophets, the messengers, the holy Quran, the creation of heaven and earth, as well as ‘the Great News,’ which is loftier than the Day of Judgment and its frights.”

The second aspect pertains to the open declaration by the Shi'ites that the Quran is falsified, and this goes beyond their distorted interpretation of the Quran. Abu Basir again brings examples from the book *al-Kafi*. The most prominent example is the declaration by the Shi'ites that whoever claims to have possession of the Quran as it was handed down by Allah is speaking falsehood, because the true Quran that Allah brought down from heaven is the one that was compiled and edited by Ali and the imams who succeeded him. This constitutes an open declaration that the Quran that has been in the hands of Muslims since the time of the Messenger and his companions to this very day is not the full Quran. Rather, the full Quran is the one the imams of Shi'ism compiled and preserved. This declaration constitutes a falsehood and represents what Abu Basir calls “a belief that the Quran is untrue” (*aqidat tahrif at-tanzil*), which is a heretical belief (*aqida kufra*). Abu Basir states that Allah instructed to guard the Quran against any distortion, addition or deletion of its contents. In this context, Abu Basir cites the verse: “We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and we will assuredly guard it (from corruption)” (Sura XV, 9). He also quotes other verses from the Quran which he says determine that anyone involved in distorting, adding or deleting from the contents of the Quran is engaged in an act of heresy. (Suras XVII, 10; XXI, 6).

Abu Basir even quotes the words of Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, to illustrate how far the Shi'ites go. According to Abu Basir, Khomeini states in his book *Revealing the Secrets (Kasaf al-Asrar)* that the Prophet refrained from referring to the “*imama*” [imamate] in the Quran for fear that the Quran would later be distorted or that the conflicts between the Muslims would intensify. If the Prophet had spoken about the “*imama*” in the Quran, conflicts and fights would not have broken out in the Muslim states and disputes would not have erupted about the foundations of the religion. Abu Basir adds: The words of this “heretic, lunatic and dreamer” suggest that the Prophet is to blame and the concealment and distortion came from him, because he allegedly did not deliver the versions about the imams and the “*imama*,” despite the fact that these were handed down, and as a result the Islamic nation became entangled in problems and internal wars.

Abu Basir makes an effort to emphasize that Ali, his sons Hassan and Hussein and others from the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) are completely clean of these heretical and false beliefs; the things that are said in their names are untrue and they are innocent of these falsehoods.

The belief in the existence of the Fatima Quran and the bestowal of prophesy upon her

Abu Basir cites from the book *al-Kafi* the Shi'ite belief that attributes the Prophet's qualities and virtues to Ali's wife and Muhammad's daughter – Fatima. These qualities center on “the existence of the Fatima Quran (*madhaf fatima*) and the descending of prophesy upon her (*nuzul al-wahi alayha*). This means that Muhammad is not the Seal of the Prophets, that the religion was not completed in his lifetime, that prophesy did not end after Muhammad's death and needed to

pass onto Fatima during the course of her life so that she could receive, through prophesy, her book – which is three times the size of the Quran. And this is contrary to the accepted view of all Muslims. Abu Basir wonders “if there is indeed a Fatima Quran, which is three times the size of the existing Quran, as the Shi'ites believe, then why don't they present it?”

Attributing divine qualities to the imams

According to *al-Kafi*, the imams are treasures of Allah in the sense of treasures of divine knowledge that are beyond the understanding of man (“*khazan Allah*” – see this concept in Sura VI, 50) They are exemplars for the worshippers of Allah – exemplars that surpass the Quran, the prophets and messengers and the signs of heaven and earth. The imam controls the entire universe – but this has never been or never will be. This is reserved for Allah alone.

The view of the Prophet's companions and the Muslim public as heretics

Abu Basir quotes from the introduction to the *al-Kafi* to argue that the book clearly shows that the Shi'ites regard the Prophet's companions and the Muslim public as heretics (*takfiruhum lildahaba wal'amat al-muslimim*). First, Abu Basir quotes from *al-Kalini's* book that “no one before Ali was given the title of ‘*amir al-muaminim*’ and no one will be called by this title in the future, except if he is a heretic.” Abu Basir understands from this that the caliphs Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman are considered heretics in the eyes of the Shi'ites. The same applies to all of the Muslim rulers who came after Ali, because they were called *amir al-muaminin*.

Second, Abu Basir states that the Shi'ites regard all of the people of Islam as heretics because they do not believe in the infallibility of the imams, do not turn to the imams when disagreements arise between them, and do not show submission toward them. Abu Basir explains that the Muslims do not do this because, according to the Quran, one should turn to Allah and His Messenger alone in times of disagreement, and that submission is to the Messenger, his law and his *sunna* [Islamic practice] (Sura VI, 59). In addition, Allah determined that one of the foundations of the faith is to turn to Allah and His Messenger (and to the Quran and the *sunna* after his death) in times of dispute, and not to the imams as Shi'ism claims (Sura VI, 650).

Third, Khomeini disparaged the Prophet's companions (*sahba*) when he said in his last testament that he prefers the errant people of our generation to the people of the Hijaz during the period of God's Messenger. Abu Basir says in summary that the statements in Khomeini's book (and in other books of Shi'ism), which regard the Messenger's companions as heretics, prove the heresy of Shi'ism and place it outside the community of Islam.

According to Abu Basir, there is much evidence proving that whoever regards the Prophet's companions as heretics is a heretic himself, and this evidence can be found in the Quran. Abu Basir quotes verses IX, 65-66 in the Quran and infers from them that the Shi'ites became heretics after first being believers, and this is because they spoke ill of the Messenger's companions.

The Shi'ite's denial of the sunna

Abu Basir finds that the Shi'ite's heresy is also expressed in their denial of the *sunna*. The writers of Shi'ism clearly demonstrate their denial of the *sunna* taught by the Prophet Muhammad. The Shi'ite writer Hasin al-Almi states that the words of Ali are inferior to the words of God, but they are loftier than the words of any creature. In their view, the words of the Prophet Muhammad and his *sunna* are inferior to the words of Ali and to the book falsely attributed to Ali – *Nahj al-Bilagha*. Abu Basir states that whoever raises a person above the personality of the Prophet Muhammad or places a law above the law of the Prophet deserves to be considered a heretic and outside of the community of Islam. The proof that Shi'ites became heretics because of their denial of

the *sunna* can be found in the Quran in verse IV, 64: “We sent not an Apostle, but to be obeyed in accordance with the will of Allah.” They do not deny the *sunna* because they have disproved its trustworthiness, but rather because it is inconsistent with their false and worthless foundations. According to the rule they follow, they deny anything that contradicts their false foundations and accept everything that is congruent with them.

The assistance to heretics in their war against the Muslims

The heresy of the Shi’ites is expressed in the fact that they help the heretics and polytheists, the enemies of the nation, in their war against the Muslims, the believers in one God. Abu Basir states that due to the hatred of the Shi’ite dissenters for Islam and its people, they chose and choose to ally themselves with the heretics and atheists, the enemies of the nation, against Islam and its people. This is an unequivocal fact. Abu Basir presents an example of this from the distant past and quotes the “Sheikh of Islam,” Ibn Timiya, from his book of *fatwas* on this subject. Ibn Timiya noted that since the Shi’ites regard the people of Islam as heretics, they assist the heretics and Tartars against the community of Muslims. The Shi’ites were the main reason that the leader of the Tartars, Genghis Khan, attacked the Islamic states and that Hulego sacked Iraq. Abu Basir presents examples from our period, noting that “the Shi’ites align themselves, like treacherous foxes, alongside the Americans and the other heretical states that conquered Afghanistan and participate with them in the brutal Crusader attack against Islam and the Muslims – until their wish was realized and the Islamic Taliban state fell. Today they are collaborating with the Americans and others in conquering Iraq, based on the pretext of deposing the tyrant of Iraq.” In addition, Abu Basir notes that Shi’ite Iran oppresses the Sunni minority in Iran, which numbers about 10 million people. The Shi’ites are the most eager of all people to provoke divisiveness among the Muslims. Their strongest fundamental characteristics pertain to accusing others of heresy and cursing the most enlightened Muslim rulers – the honest caliphs and sages of Islamic law and sheikhs of the Muslims. This is in light of their belief that anyone who does not believe in their infallible imam – who actually does not exist – does not believe in Allah and His Messenger.

Worshipping and praying to man

The heresy of the Shi’ites is expressed in the fact that they accept polytheism and worship the human creature and pray to him – and also seek help, support and longevity from the dead. The pilgrimage to the tombs scattered in Iran, Iraq and other countries is evidence of this. Their belief that the dead are capable of assisting them and responding to them is absolute apotheosis and heresy. Khomeini said in his book *Revealing the Secrets (Kasaf al-Asrar)* (page 49) that “we seek longevity from the holy spirits of the prophets and imams, whom Allah endowed with the ability. Ibn Timiya said that the Shi’ites are similar to the Christians in that they exaggerate the ability of man, conduct religious rituals that are forbidden innovations (*abadat mubtada’ah*) and accept polytheism.

The different attitude toward Shi’ism as a community, on one hand, and the individual Shi’ite, on the other hand

In concluding his essay, Abu Basir notes that these are the aspects which require us to say that the dissenting Shi’ites, the Twelvers, are a community of apotheosis, departure from Islam and heresy (*taifat, shirq warida*). He says that any of these alone is sufficient to determine that this community is heretic. The fact that the dissenting Shi’ites comprise a community of polytheism and heresy means that it is subject to all of the laws of the heretic community (*ihkam at-taifa al-murtada*) and the laws of heresy (*murtada*) and their provisions stipulated in the books of *hadith* [oral traditions linked to Muhammad] and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Despite the fact that all of the laws of a dissident community apply to Shi’ism, we do not determine that everyone who belongs to this deviant community is a heretic. This is for the following reasons: There may be a factor that prevents regarding a person

as a heretic. Individuals might also be innocent of the accusations leveled against this deviant community because there are some among the Shi’ites who do not identify with the foundations of heresy that we attribute to Shi’ism. The laws aimed at declaring the Shi’ites as heretics will not be applied to them.

To support this position, Abu Basir quotes Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Timiya, who said in his book of fatwas 500/28: It is true that the things the dissenting Shi’ites espouse are heresy and contrary to the words of the Prophet. It is also true that their actions, which are the type of actions that infidels take against the Muslims, are also heresy. However, to identify an individual Shi’ite as a heretic and sentence him to hell forever requires evidence proving that he should indeed be regarded as a heretic. We advocate the principles of “the promise of heaven and the threat of hell” (*al-wa’ad wal-wa’id*) and of “the declaration of a person as a heretic and sinner” (*takfir* and *tafsik*), but will not impose these on any person until there is something in him that mandates this and as long as there is nothing contradicting it.

According to Abu Basir, Ibn Timiya’s remarks indicate that if there is indeed evidence testifying to the fact that a particular individual is a heretic, it is obligatory and unavoidable to declare him a heretic unless there is a recognized legal cause to prevent this.

Abu Basir states in summary that the closer a person is to the area of preaching to accept Shi’ism and refusal (*al-daw’at ila at-tashyu’a war-rafa’*), the less leeway there is for treating him with forgiveness and lenient interpretation. This is because a person can be forgiven in the case of ignorance and when he is unable to shake off this ignorance. The preachers and senior legal sages of Shi’ism, who preach for dissension and acceptance of Shi’ism, are not ignorant, do not recognize the truth, and are capable of shaking off ignorance by virtue of their knowledge. For this reason, they should not be treated with forgiveness or lenient interpretation.

Summary of the words of the people of knowledge (ahl al-’ilam) on Shi’ism

Abu Basir does not suffice with the aforementioned evidence to prove the heresy of the Shi’ites. To reinforce this evidence of the danger and heresy of the Shi’ite community, he cites a number of statements by wise men: Whoever curses Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Aisha has no part in Islam. Whoever curses the Prophet’s companions has no part in Islam. Whoever, in addition to cursing, also declares them to be heretics deserves more than anyone else to be declared a heretic (*kafir*) and to be expelled from Islam. The Shi’ites comprise a community that is not part of Islam and follows the path of the Jews and Christians in falsehood and heresy (*kufri*). I do not eat from the ritual slaughter of Shi’ites because they are considered dissidents from Islam (*murtadun*).

An appeal to the Shi’ite masses to return to the true Islam and the Islamic nation

Abu Basir turns to the Shi’ite masses (*‘amat a-shi’a war-ruafad*), “who were led astray by their religious sages and officials” and tells them “in complete sincerity” – return to Allah, return to your true religion that you have left and attacked, return to your logic and straight path, return to the nation that you left and attacked. Our main concern is to extract you from polytheism and ignorance and the worship of the past, and to bring you back to the world of Islam, faith and monotheism.

Sulayman al-Alwan

Sulayman al-Alwan lists nine heresies (*mukafirat*) that are considered by Muslims as beliefs that contradict the religion of

Islam (*nuqḍ al-Islam*) and corrupt the faith (*mufsidat al-iman*).^{2,3}

- The insertion of polytheism into the belief in one God (*shiqūhum fi tawhīd ar-rabūbiyya*) – their belief that the first creature that Allah created is the Light of the Imams (*nur al-imama*) from which all of the creatures in the universe emerged. That is, this light is a partner of God in creating the creatures in the universe.
- The insertion of polytheism into the worship of the one God (*shiqūhum fi tawhīd al-ʿabada*). This is expressed in the fact that their prayer is not directed toward Allah, but instead toward others, such as the dead – who are elevated to the rank of a god.
- Their rejection of the titles of Allah and their description of Allah by negation and opposition.
- Attributing the first things to Allah – among the Shiʿites, this means that Allah is not aware of developments and makes judgments that are contradictory to those He made in the past.
- The Shiʿites claim that the Quran is falsified and that it has extraneous content, on one hand, and is missing content, on the other hand.
- Quoting their imams as knowing what was and what will be, and the belief that nothing is hidden from them.
- The emergence of the claim that the imams of Shiʿism (*aʿimat ar-rafd*) know what was and what will be, and that nothing is hidden from them.
- Their attitude toward the Prophet’s companions as heretics (*takfir as-sahba*).
- Slandering ʿAisha (the Prophet’s wife) in the case of “*al-ifak*” (a concept related to a woman’s modesty)

Al-Alwan praises the Internet site “Defense Network of the Sunna” (*shibkat ad-difaʿa ʿan as-sunna*) that seeks to accurately publish the beliefs of Shiʿism and its crimes throughout history, on one hand, and to present the “correct belief” and open the eyes of the ignorant Shiʿite masses “regarding the corruption of their religion and the treachery of their religious sages,” on the other hand.

C. Accusation of Shiism of delegitimizing the sunna

‘The great treachery’

Some of the spokesmen for jihadi Salafism depict Shiʿism in a derogatory way from the perspective of its “treachery” (*al-khayna*) and alienation toward the *sunna*, as opposed to the “faithfulness” (*al-amana*) of the Sunnis. According to Amad Ali Abd al-Samia Hasin, treachery is one of the most contemptible attributes that Islam warns against and prohibits, while faithfulness is among the loftiest attributes that Islam urges one to acquire.⁴ The treachery of Shiʿism

2 Sulayman bin Nasir bin Abdallah al-Alwan, *The Imams of Dis-sent* (*aʿimat ar-rafd*), November 18, 2002, Minbar al-Tawhid wal-Jihad.

3 Note – According to Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, as quoted by Salafi ideologues, the beliefs that are considered to be contradictions (*nuqḍ*) to Islam remove the people who hold them from the Islamic community. Thus, Shiʿism, because it believes these heretical things, has removed itself in effect from the Islamic community.

4 Amad Ali Abd al-Samia Hasin, *The Treacheries of Shiʿism and Their Influences on the Defeats of the Islamic Nation* (*khianad a-shiʿa wat-tariha fi hazaim al-uma al-islam*), July 30, 2003, Minbar al-Tawhid al-Jihad. The author quotes from the Quran about the meaning of these two concepts. In regard to the faithful, Allah said: “Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants” (Sura XXIII, 8; LXX, 32). In regard to the traitors, Allah said: “For God loveth not the treacherous” (Sura VIII, 58) and that “Allah does not guide the device of the unfaithful.” (Sura XII, 52)

is the most despicable because it is a public treachery that the religious sages defined as “the great treachery.” It entails treason vis-à-vis the religion and the nation. This is sometimes perpetrated through collaboration and sometimes through espionage and exposing state secrets, and sometimes by demonstrating weakness in extending assistance to the nation when it is possible to do so.

The laws of treachery are stipulated in the research literature of Islamic law. Faithfulness for the Sunnis is the religion – there is no faith for someone who is not faithful. On the other hand, treachery, fraud and deception constitute the religion for the Shiʿites. For the Shiʿites, *taqiya* leads them to the reins of power and centers of influence in many places, and through their treachery they succeed in carrying out their conspiracies.⁵

Treachery is inherent to Shiʿism

According to al-Rifaʿi, the nature of Shiʿism is expressed in behavior characterized by hiding oneself (*takhafi*), inconstancy/hypocrisy (*talon*), behavior that conceals the faith (*taqiya*) and adopting an internal path (*batani*). As a minority and because they are unable to display their false belief, the Shiʿites sufficed with concealing their faith – except to someone they trusted. When possible, they openly displayed their belief and utilized every means to liquidate their enemies, not hesitating to carry out their intrigues and collaborate with any of the enemies of Allah and the devils.⁶

The delegitimization of the sunna

The jihadi Salafist stream attributes beliefs to Shiʿism that alienate and revile the *sunna*, and even treat it as heretical. From the perspective of this stream, these beliefs illustrate the treachery (*khayna*) of Shiʿism and the double meaning derived from them: On one hand, Shiʿism does not accept Sunnism as a legitimate Islamic school, challenges its status and undermines its foundations. On the other hand, Shiʿism regards itself as the only legitimate Islamic community and religion.

According to the jihadi Salafist stream, the Shiʿite rejection of the *sunna*’s authentic legitimate standing is expressed in two ways. The first is to challenge the religious sources of the *sunna*. In regard to the Quran, the prevalent argument among the Shiʿites is that the Quran was forged and that certain suras were omitted. In regard to the *hadith*, the Shiʿites reject the *hadiths* presented in the name of the Prophet’s companions (*sahba*) and accuse those who presented these *hadiths* of forgery and falsehood.

The second way is to challenge the historical connection that Sunnism attributes and claims for itself vis-à-vis the Prophet’s family (*ahl bayt rasul allah*, or simply *ahl al-bayt*). This is done, first of all, by undermining the standing of the *sahba*, who are regarded in Sunnism as the authentic heirs of the Prophet Muhammad and as the continuers of his path and the historical and exemplary leadership of the Islamic community. In this context, the jihadi Salafist stream argues that legal authorities in Shiʿism accuse the *sahba* of outwardly accepting Islam out of a lust for power, while concealing their non-belief and hypocrisy.⁷

5 Amad Ali Abd al-Samia Hasin.

6 Abd al-Muhsan ar-Rifaʿi, *The Dimensions of the Alliance between the Dissenters and the Crusaders in Iraq and its Effects on the Region* (*abʿad al-tahaluf ar-rafdi as-salabi fi iraq wa-itharahu ʿal al-mantiqa*), Minbar al-Tawhid a-Jihad, January 2005.

7 Dr. Ali bin Muhammad Nasir al-Faqihi, “Presentation and Critique - Critical and Advisory Research Conducted on Studies of Groups in the History of Muslims, the *Hawarij* and the Shiʿites” by Dr. Ahmad Mu-

In addition, this is done by severing and separating the *sunna* from the Prophet's family. Shi'ism even claims that Sunnism is the greatest enemy of the Prophet's family and calls Sunnis "*nuadab*" (singular: "*nadb*") – that is, those who demonstrate animosity toward the Prophet's family (*eledina yandubuna al-'adaa lilahl al-bayt*).⁸

On the other hand, the Shi'ite's legal writings state that whoever does not believe in the authority (*walaya*) of the twelve imams, or of even one of them, is considered a heretic, and that belief in these imams is one of the pillars of the religion (*usul ad-din*).⁹

Permission for Shi'ites to kill and rob Sunnis

The jihadi Salafist stream also goes one step further and attributes a legal ruling to Shi'ite sages that not only regards Sunnis as heretics, but also "makes their blood and money forfeit, and states that they are impure" (*i'tiqad a-shi'a fi kufr ahl as-sunna wastibahat damaihum wamuwalihum, walhukam binjastihum*)¹⁰ And the jihadi Salafists argue that this ruling is contrary to Islamic law (*as-shari'a*), which prohibited spilling the blood of others, particularly when this is done in a treacherous way.

The prohibition on embarking on jihad before the mahdi appears

The jihadi Salafist stream argues that Shi'ism forbids jihad prior to the appearance of the mahdi, on one hand, and condemns the Sunnis for embarking on jihad, on the other hand. Shi'ism's rejection of the jihad is expressed from a political perspective by the fact that it is standing on the sidelines while a disaster is besetting the Islamic nation. On the other hand, Shi'ism embarks on jihad only when it is fighting in a treacherous way against Sunnism.¹¹ According to the jihadi Salafist stream, this Shi'ite view is contrary to a fundamental element in jihadi Salafism, which stipulates that only the faith takes precedence over the jihad in the hierarchy of Islamic values and beliefs.

hammad Ali (*arad wanuqd – dirasa, nuqdiya, watujjih likitab: dirasa 'an al-firak fi tarih al-muslimin, al-hawarij wa-shi'a*), Minbar al-Tawhid al-Jihad

8 Abd al-Sami'a Hasin. The author cites Shi'ite writers who include exemplars in the Sunni world (such as the first three caliphs, the Prophet's wife 'Aisha and Sheikh Ibn Timiya) in the category of "*nuad-ab*" – that is, those who are hostile to the Prophet's family. In particular, this includes the book by the Shi'ite sage Muhsan al-Mualem – *an-Nadb wan-Nudab* – which was published in Beirut. The quotes indicate that the concept "*nuadab*" became synonymous with the Sunni school. Another quote, from Muhammad al-Tijani, states that "the people of the *sunna* and the *jama'a* are those who fought against the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt an-nabi*) under the leadership of the Umayyads and the Abbasids." It is clear from the perspective of the Shi'ite writers that the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) is identified with Ali bin Abi Taleb, the founder of Shi'ism, whom the Sunnis fought against (and against his descendants).

9 Abd al-Sami'a Hasin. He cites a central Shi'ite sage as saying that anyone who rejects the imamate of Ali bin Abi Taleb and of the imams who succeeded him is like someone who rejects the prophesy of all of the prophets. Whoever recognizes the emir of the believers – that is, Ali – and rejects all of the imams who succeeded him is like someone who recognizes all of the prophets but rejects the prophesy of Muhammad. A Shi'ite *hadith* is quoted as spoken by Muhammad: The imams who come after me are twelve in numbers. The first is Ali and the last is al-Kayem. For those who obey them, it is as if they obeyed me, and for those who rebel against them, it is as if they rebelled against me.

10 Abd al-Sami'a Hasin quotes Shi'ite writers who authorize the murder and robbery of Sunnis and even command them to do this because they are "*nuadab*." He even infers from the words of Shi'ite sages that there is nothing wrong with a Shi'ite forging an alliance with the devil – whether it be Tartar, Crusader, American or English – in order to kill the "*nuadab*." According to his account, the Shi'a "ruling" on "kill-ing Sunnis" has been in effect throughout Muslim history and remains in effect to this very day. In addition, the author suggests that Shi'ites conspire with non-Muslims to kill Sunnis.

11 Abd al-Sami'a Hasin

D. The Jihadi Salafist view of Iran

General

The way in which the ideologues of jihadi Salafism view Iran – including its religious and political establishment – is based on a number of central starting points:

From a religious perspective, Iran, which is part of the Twelver imamist stream, is seen – like Shi'ism in general – as heretical from the standpoint of Islamic law and outside the borders of the religion and faith of the true Islam, on one hand, and external to the human community of Islam and its rule, on the other hand. In the eyes of these ideologues, this perspective applies to an Iran led by the current religious and political Shi'ite establishment, and which adheres to the Shi'ite religion, with its heretical (*kufr*) and polytheistic (*shirq*) characteristics. The conclusion stemming from a purely religious and moral perspective is that Iran, as a "heretical" Shi'ite state, has no place on earth and must be eradicated – as is the fate of any other "heretical" political entity in the Muslim world. On the other hand, these ideologues recognize that the success of the Iranian Shi'ite religious system in generating an Islamic Revolution and bringing to power an Islamic government led by religious sages (*waliyat faqih*) boosts Iran's prestige in the eyes of the Sunnis and constitutes a source of attraction for them.

From a political perspective, they portray Iran as a collaborator with the Crusader enemy against the Muslims, even if there are ostensibly clashes and conflicts of interest between the two sides. In addition, Iran is depicted as having an interest in signing cultural, economic and social rapprochement agreements with Arab states with the aim of exploiting the agreements as leverage for spreading its influence in the region and even for the Shi'itization of the region.

From a military perspective, Iran is seen as a state that is becoming more and more of a regional power. This ongoing buildup is financed by the enormous revenues from oil resources. This process stems from a deliberate policy to build a modern and sophisticated army and, especially, to attain a nuclear military capability and long-range missiles that would give it a qualitative military advantage over Muslim states in the region in particular and in the world in general.

From a strategic perspective, Iran is attributed with aspirations to expand and a desire to exploit the weaknesses of rival Sunni states as well as local opportunities and developments – such as the fall of the regime of its sworn enemy, Saddam Hussein – in order to spread the Shi'ite religion and culture among the Sunnis and impose its hegemony, or at least gain significant influence in these states.

The combination of Iran's success in fomenting a real Islamic Revolution, its capabilities as a regional power, its strategic aspirations and activity to spread Shi'ism in the region – make it a central enemy of the global jihad in the eyes of this stream's ideologues and its main competitor for influence in the Sunni sphere. It is clear to these ideologues that Iran, which is creating a unified Shi'ite-Iranian crescent based on local power centers, is a more difficult rival than the divided Arab regimes, each of which suffers from longstanding internal weaknesses.¹²

12 Muhammad Abu Raman – a Jordanian expert in extremist Islamic organizations – believes that al-Qaeda is in ideological crisis and that this is reflected in the words and examples of "repentance" among leaders and organizations identified with jihadi Salafism. He cites, for example, the latest book by al-Zawahiri (*at-tabra'a*), published in early 2008, in which he responds to the essay of the former leader of the Egyptian jihad, Sayed Imam Sharif, "Guiding Jihad Action" (*tarshid al-amal al-jihadi*), who "repented." Abu Raman states that the axis of resistance led by Iran and in collaboration with its allies in the region, both Shi'ites and Sunnis, has a more convincing and attractive strategic message than the ideological message of al-Qaeda and is likely to replace al-Qaeda as the leading axis of resistance in the region, *al-Hayat*, March 19, 2008.

Iran's buildup and aspirations in the region – in the view of Abu Basir

Abu Basir al-Tartusi is one of the most prolific ideologues, if not the most prolific, in the jihadi Salafist stream in analyzing the essence and trends of Shi'ism and Iran, and in preaching for their delegitimization. In his recent essay on Iran and its aspirations, published in late 2007, Abu Basir gives broad, exhaustive and in-depth expression to the structured perspective in jihadi Salafist ideology of Iran as "heretical, hostile and threatening."¹³ This essay interprets, in the spirit of jihadi Salafism, the policy of Iran, its intentions, regional aspirations and the connections it conducts with all states, entities and Shi'ite minorities that comprise its natural allies in the region. He analyzes the Iranian military and nuclear buildup and its ambitious and expansionary tendencies based on the regional variables. He identifies problematic points of connection (from the perspective of the global jihad) between Iran and the Arab regimes, as well as between Iran and the West. One can also learn about the proposed method of action vis-à-vis Iran, which is fundamentally different than the violent path against the Arab regimes and is mainly expressed by estranging Iran in the eyes of the Sunnis and creating a partition between Iran and the Muslim world, apparently in anticipation of deciding the fate of the Iranian regime in subsequent stages – that is, after al-Qaeda takes over the main Arab regimes.

Like jihadi Salafism, the author of the document regards Shi'ite Iran as an inseparable part of the array of enemies of Islam. Thus, in his view, whether separately or as part of this array, it constitutes a strategic threat to Sunni Islam. According to his analysis, Iran acts against Sunni Islam in collaboration with both of the two components of this array: the "heretical" Islamic regimes at home and the "Crusaders" abroad. Moreover, Iran fills an essential role of creating a bridge between the two parts of this array and making it into a global, hostile and belligerent camp against Sunni Islam. The author is aware that his colleagues in jihadi Salafism fail to clearly portray Iran as part of the array of heretical Islamic regimes or the "Crusader" array or both. And this is against the background of the tension that exists in practice between Iran and each of these two camps. For this reason, he places the emphasis in his essay on communicating the message that the Sunnis should not place their hopes on the West's action against Iran because this action will not succeed. And he warns against the trend of rapprochement with the "heretical" regimes vis-à-vis Iran because it will end up being an obstacle for the Sunnis and Iran will end up benefiting from it.

The Iranian strategic goal – the Shi'itization of the region

The author defines the supreme goal of Iran as imposing and spreading its political, economic and military influence throughout the Arab region and especially in the Gulf. He attributes to Iran an incremental strategy for realizing this goal. During the first stage, the strategy aims to make a cultural and religious incursion via a bridgehead in the form of Shi'ite minorities living in these states, "who are blindly loyal to the rule of the Iranian sage" (*waliyat faqih*). After completing the first stage, the second stage will be devoted to a political, economic and military invasion of the region. The main catalyst for this invasion will be the signing of cultural accords with one of the Arab states, which will pave the way for Iran to disseminate "the culture of accepting Shi'ism as a religious school and of the dissension that characterizes Shi'ism" (*thaqafat a-tashi'a war-rafd*). The significance of accepting this culture is the adoption of "a culture of destroying Islam and its foundations." Iran's military and nuclear arms race accompanies these two stages and serves as a catalyst for convincing the peoples of the region to liberate themselves from the oppression of their leaders and to cast their lot with Iran. The depiction of the strategy attributed to Iran is apparently intended to warn against signing agreements with it – agreements that Iran would exploit to accelerate the process of the Shi'itization of the region.

13 Abd al-Munim Mustafa Halima – Abu Basir al-Tartusi – "Iran and its Aspirations in the Region" (*iran watumuha fil mantiqa*), December 23, 2007 www.abubaseer.bizland.com

Iran's double role

Iran plays a double role whose two parts are ostensibly contradictory, but they actually complement each other. Its first role is expressed in the fact that it serves as an agent of the U.S. and the West. In the framework of this role, it aided the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the victims of this process were the Sunni Muslims. In its second role, it works to disseminate Shi'ite Islam in the region. It uses the U.S. and the latter's allies as a "minesweeper" to clear the territory of mines and obstacles and thus make it easier for the U.S. to realize its aspirations in the region with a minimum of losses. According to this method, Iran saves itself from heavy losses like those it suffered in its bloody war with Iraq.

The ambivalent relationship between Iran and the U.S./West

The author denies the existence of a basic conflict in the global arena between Iran and the U.S./West. He believes that it is an ambivalent relationship that simply has its ups and down. On one hand, the U.S. is concerned about the nuclear armament of Iran and its expansionist aspirations, which is leading the U.S. to consider a military attack against Iran. On the other hand, there is American hesitation about delivering a blow to Iran because Iran is a natural ally of the U.S. when the latter conquers an Arab state, as happened during the American conquest of Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁴ Based on this analysis, the author concludes that Iran will succeed, sooner or later, in producing a nuclear bomb because there is no strategic entity interested in confronting it and preventing it from continuing to advance its nuclear plan.

The Arab regimes' policy of rapprochement with Iran

The author argues that the Arab regimes are conducting a policy of rapprochement with Iran for several reasons: courting Iran so that it will not seek to subvert them and will be less inclined to carry out a military attack against the Gulf states if and when a war erupts between the U.S. and Iran. The invitation of Iran's President Ahmadinejad to the latest hajj ceremonies in Saudi Arabia is an expression of this policy.

On the other hand, Iran has no real interest in true rapprochement with the Arab states. It exploits the good will of the Arab states for closer relations with it in order to make new inroads for itself in disseminating the Shi'ite religion in the Arab arena without disruption. The author defines the goals of the Shi'ite religion in a negative way – turning Sunnis into Shi'ites (*tashi'a*), casting aspersions on others (*ta'an*), sowing destruction (*hadam*) and displaying dissension (*rafd*). This is because in Iran's view the Shi'itization of the region (*tashi'a al-mantiqa*) is a main preliminary step in gaining political, economic and military influence at a later stage.

The author later argues that the Arab regimes ignore the religious Shi'ite activity in Arab states and prevent Sunni sages from warning about this danger, while Iran provides full support for propagandists who engage in disseminating Shi'ism. Iraq's previous ruler, Saddam Hussein, erred when he prevented Sunni sages from conducting religious propaganda among Shi'ites in order to "save them from their ignorance and wandering, and to instill them with the faith in the unity of God." He paid for this with his life when he was executed by the Shi'ites. The author suggests that lessons should be learned from the mistakes of Saddam Hussein and action should be taken against Shi'ism by bringing the Shi'ites back into the fold of Sunni Islam. In summary, the author regards Shi'ism as a central danger to Sunni Islam, and he declares himself to be someone who is making efforts to warn against it, to thwart it, and to rescue the "remnants" of Sunni Islam. Despite his basic negative attitude toward the Arab rulers and regimes, who are also seen as heretical by jihadi Salafism, he sees them as the lesser

14 Al-Zawahiri, on the other hand, does not hesitate to note that "a real fight is being waged between the U. S. and Iran." He hopes that the two sides will exhaust each other and then the jihad movement will be the beneficiary. He adds that even if one of them emerges victorious from this confrontation, it will not be the only entity to determine the fate of the region, because it will face a resurgent jihad movement. The Open Dialogue with Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri – first series. (*al-liqaa al-maftuh ma'a a-Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri – al-halqa al-awla*), As-Sahab Media, April 2, 2008.

of two evils and prefers that they remain rather than be replaced by the leaders of the Shi'ite religion and the sages of "Qom and Tehran." In his view, consenting to the replacement of a Sunni government by a Shi'ite one is like "replacing a minor transgression with a major transgression." The bottom line is that Iran is the major beneficiary of the rapprochement of the Arab regimes toward it.

The Iranian nuclear plan

The author is primarily concerned about the development of the Iranian nuclear program. He warns the Sunni Muslim world and, by implication, the entire world that the production of a nuclear bomb by Iran is unacceptable. And this is because Muslim states – and first and foremost, the Gulf states including Mecca and Medina – are liable to be the first target of "an Iranian nuclear test" or "an Iranian nuclear attack."

The author does not attribute any credence to the reassuring declarations recently made by the leaders of Iran that the Gulf states would not be a target for Iranian missiles and bombs. He bases this judgment on three systems of "deviant" characteristics and behaviors that the jihadi Salafist literature attributes to the religion, tradition and culture of Shi'ism. He suggests that the leaders of Iran, who have internalized these characteristics, are not endowed with logical judgment and their behavior is predictable. They are liable to use nuclear weapons, if available to them, to embark on an unrestrained attack against the Muslims, in particular, and the world, in general. Thus, from his perspective, Iran is not only an enemy of the Muslims, but of the entire world due to these characteristics, combined with its expansionist aspirations, which know no bounds.

The first system of characteristics that jihadi Salafism attributes to the religion and culture of Shi'ism includes concealing the faith (*taqiya*), falsehood (*kizab*), deception (*khida'a*) and fraud (*ghadr*). As a result of these "characteristics" of the Shi'ites, the author contends, it is impossible to determine whether the leaders of Shi'ism in general and Iran in particular are speaking truth or falsehood. The second system is "the deep hatred that Shi'ism feels for Islam and the Islamic community" (that is, vis-à-vis the *sunna* and Sunnis). "This hatred is passed on from generation to generation among the Shi'ites. The old and new literature of Shi'ism allows for the shedding of Muslims' blood and the defiling of their holy places, and regards the Muslims as the primary enemy of Shi'ism." The third system is the deviant behavior expressed in the cult of tombs and self-flagellation in the religious ceremonies of Shi'ism. The author summarizes by noting "that it is impossible to ensure that the Iranian leaders, who behave in such a deviant way, will not use nuclear weapons to annihilate peoples and states, and even the entire universe." Thus, not only the Jews, but also most of the countries in the world are opposed to Iran having a nuclear bomb.

The jihadi Salafist position from a religious and political perspective – the view of Ayman al-Zawahiri

The deputy leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, does not usually initiate public criticism of Shi'ite Iran in the political reviews he disseminates via global jihad Internet sites.¹⁵ His public criticism of Iran is usually intended to refute information stemming from interviews with him about collaboration between Iran and al-Qaeda. This criticism focuses on the political and strategic aspect of Iran's policies and positions. On the other hand, he very rarely – in comparison to his colleagues in the jihadi camp – presents the "heretical" side of the Shi'ite religion and community. His position vis-à-vis Iran is important for understanding al-Qaeda's policy on this subject due to his very senior standing – second only to Bin Laden in al-Qaeda's hierarchy.¹⁶

15 See Note 2.

16 The Lebanese expert in extremist Islamic organizations, Dr. Dr. Radwan Shahin, notes that al-Zawahiri displays a cautious public stance vis-à-vis Iran and refrains from criticizing it directly because al-Zawahiri is situated in an area of Iranian influence. According to Shahin, the al-Qaeda organization has collaborated with Iran and Syria, and received weaponry and explosives from

In a public interview he gave in April 1995, al-Zawahiri denied the assertion that the Islamic movement receives assistance and guidance from Iran. He described Iran from two negative standpoints that make this assertion seem unreasonable and totally without foundation. The first standpoint focuses on the religious perspective of Shi'ism, which, in his view, clearly demonstrates that the leaders of Iran are heretics and that the religious gaps between Shi'ism and Sunnism are so wide that they are unbridgeable.¹⁷

According to al-Zawahiri, Shi'ism – the Twelver (*ithna ashariya*) stream – is one of the groups known as "innovators," which introduced forbidden elements (*firq mubtada'a*) into the faith (*bida'an 'aqaydiya*). These innovations were expressed in the following ways:

1. Curses and calumny directed against the caliphs Abu Bakr and 'Umar and the Muslim matriarchs, the Prophet's companions (*sahba*) and disciples (*taba'in*).
2. The contention put forward by their imams (with the exception of four of them) that the Quran is forged.
3. Attributing infallibility (*'isma*) to the twelve imams and regarding them as having reached a higher level than that of God's messenger.
4. Adopting the claim about the occultation (*ghabe*) of the twelfth imam and his future return (*raj'ah*)

Al-Zawahiri states that whoever shares these beliefs – despite the definitive counterproofs presented to him (the reference here is to the ruling and educated elite) – will be regarded as someone who has left the religion of Islam (*murtadun 'an din al-Islam*). On the other hand, a simple and uneducated person who innocently believes in worthless beliefs, based on ideas he thought to be correct, should not be accused of heresy due to his ignorance.

The second standpoint al-Zawahiri describes in the interview portrays Iran's policy as hostile to the global jihad movement and preferential toward Shi'ites, with positions based on its own clear interests. He presents several examples to support this contention:

1. The position of Iran toward the Islamic revolution in Syria: It supported the government of Hafez al-Assad, claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood served as agents of America and abandoned them to be slaughtered by al-Assad.
2. Its stance vis-à-vis the Afghani jihad: It only supported the Shi'ite parties before and after the fall of the communist regime.
3. Its stance vis-à-vis the expulsion of the Arab mujahidin from Pakistan: It completely ignored what was happening, failed to intervene and did not allow any Arabs into Iran.
4. Its stance vis-à-vis the jihad in Egypt and Algeria: It does not provide any assistance to the jihadi movements, abandoning them in their bloody struggle against the tyrants.
5. Its stance vis-à-vis the jihadi movements: It only provides assistance to those who follow its leadership.
6. Iran did not provide anything to the jihadi movement in Egypt, only because this movement refused to be its puppet.

In summary, al-Zawahiri warns the Islamic movements sponsored by Iran that they will not derive any benefit from this patronage. Because of the little they receive from Iran, they will be accused of serving as its agents and will lose the respect the Muslim public feels toward them.

them in return. Because of its extensive relations with Iran and Syria, and the fact that its activists are situated within their borders, al-Qaeda cannot openly oppose them. "Al-Qaeda, Palestine, Lebanon" – *Emirates Media*, June 16, 2008, www.amin.org/look/amin/press.htm

17 A response on this subject by Ayman al-Zawahiri was published in the *Al-Ansar* magazine, edition 6, 91 – April 1995. <http://www.abu-qatada.com/r?i=1867&PHPSESSID=5fa1d2751eb27723c5545857334935e1>

In December 2007, al-Zawahiri was cautious in a public media appearance not to disparage Iran from a religious perspective, but criticized its policy regarding the bloody struggles in Afghanistan and Iraq against the local authority and its U.S. ally – struggles in which al-Qaeda is still involved to this very day. Regarding Afghanistan, he argued that Iran aided the “Northern Alliance,” while the Taliban regime protected “its Muslim brethren” (that is, al-Qaeda personnel) prior to the American occupation of the state, and that Iran helped the Americans and their Afghani allies during the occupation itself. In regard to Iraq, he accused Iran of training the Iraqi Shi’ite militias prior to the American conquest of the state and of subsequently bringing them into the state and integrating them into the Shi’ite Iraqi government apparatuses in order to serve the Iranian interest¹⁸

The role of Iran vis-à-vis the superpowers and Middle East policy – in the view of al-Rifa’i

Abd al-Muhsan al-Rifa’i calls Iran “the patron of Shi’ism in the world (*ra’it a-shi’a fil ‘alem*). He portrays Iran as a country that has conducted strategic collaboration in the region with both of the superpowers – American and Russian, and has joined with Shi’ite communities in a number of states in the region to promote its expansionist aspirations and hegemony.¹⁹

The Iranian role in Afghanistan

Iran provided military and logistical assistance to the Crusader invasion forces in Afghanistan and even dispatched its army to fight alongside the invasion forces, especially in the “Northern Alliance” areas. It also opened its border to these forces. Iran provided assistance to the “al-Hazara” Shi’ite minority and the Shi’ite “al-Wahda” party and other “Northern Alliance” parties in order to overthrow the young Sunni state headed by the Taliban. Iran used the Hirat border district as a base for delivering logistical assistance to the Taliban’s enemies. It also opened an embassy in Kabul and thus accorded legal legitimacy to the new government.

The role of Iran in Iraq

Iran adopted the Shi’ite opposition manifested in political parties led by the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution, headed by Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, who was killed in Iraq after returning to it. Iran arrived in Iraq on American tanks in order to realize its old dream of ruling in Iraq with its co-religionist brethren – the Crusaders.

E. The Shi’ite – Russian Orthodox alliance

The author questions the meaning of the rapprochement between Iran, which is a religious Shi’ite state, and Russia, which is a Christian secular state, part of the Crusaders, and a hater of Muslims. Evidence of the latter can be seen in the oppression of the Chechens. Iran does not seek to protect it. The common denominator is the hatred of Muslims. Iran oppresses the Sunnis in its country. It is no surprise that there is Shi’ite-Russian collaboration in liquidating the jihad in Chechnya. The cooperation between the two sides is prominent in Central Asia, which is under Russian influence. Russia ignores Shi’ite activity conducted under Iran’s supervision, but suppresses the activity of Sunnis and regards it as terrorism, despite the fact that it is actually assistance. Russia built nuclear reactors in Iran, despite international opposition to this.

There are several reasons why atheist Russia supports Iran, which claims to be Muslim, and the world remains silent about this: the West has empowered Russia to arm Shi’ites at the expense of the Muslims and seeks to create a balance between Shi’ism and Sunnism after

18 Interview with al-Zawahiri in “As-Sahab,” *As-Sahab Media*, December 16, 2007

19 Abd al-Muhsan al-Rifa’i, “The Dimensions of the Dissenter-Crusader Alliance in Iraq and its Impact on the Region,” (*ab’ad a-tahaluf a-rafdi a-salibi fil ‘iraq wa itharihi ‘al al-mantiqa*), January 2005, Minbar a-Dawa wal-Jihad

Pakistan succeeded in developing nuclear weapons; the West fears that the Muslims in Pakistan will take over the state and constitute a threat to them and to the Shi’ites and the Indians; compensation to Iran for its assistance to the Crusaders against the Jews and Islam; to create a nuclear stranglehold on the Muslims. The opposition of America is illusory; in fact, the U.S. seeks to make Iran into the strongest state after Israel.

F. The Shi’ite-Indian alliance

There is direct coordination between the racist Indian government and Iran. They are partners in the war against Islam. The Indians are known for their enmity toward Muslims. Iran conspired against Kashmir, as it has done against other Sunni Muslims in the world. The Shi’ites in Pakistan are operating with the direct assistance of Iran to incite a civil war. These Shi’ites did not suffice with open activity against Muslims, but also conducted military action and killed Muslim leaders.

G. The Position Vis-à-Vis Shi’ism in Iraq

The aspirations of Shi’ism in Iraq

Since its conquest by the U.S. and its allies in March 2003, the political developments in Iraq have had an important influence on the formation of the views and policies of jihadi Salafism toward the Shi’ites in Iraq and elsewhere. This policy is examined against the background of what are seen as Shi’ite aspirations in Iraq in particular and in the region in general, as part of the Shi’ite sphere.

Abd al-Muhsan al-Rifa’i summarizes these aspirations as follows: First, he believes that Shi’ites harbor a centuries-old dream of taking over Iraq. Against this background, he states that the Shi’ites in Iraq have coordinated with “their brethren” in Iran to collaborate with the “Crusader forces” in order to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and conquer it.²⁰ Secondly, al-Rifa’i focuses on the current aspirations of Iraqi Shi’ites on two levels:

The aspiration in Iraq – to takeover the administrative government institutions in order to disseminate the ideology of the dissenters (*a-ruqafad*) and to eradicate the Sunnis (*ahl a-sunna*). The Shi’ites leave the military and economic control of Iraq to the Crusaders. There is Shi’ite-Crusader coordination between the invasion forces and the Shi’ite political parties such as the Dawa Party – the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution, currently led by Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim. “Al-Badr” is its militia, trained and financed by Iran. In coordination with the occupier, it persecutes the Sunnis under the pretext that the Sunnis are adopting Wahabism and Salafism.

The aspiration in the region – The next stage in the Shi’ite plan is to gain Shi’ite influence over Saudi Arabia, especially in eastern Saudi Arabia where a Shi’ite minority is located, and to transfer the actual rule over Saudi Arabia to the Crusaders, as in Iraq. The Shi’ite plan seeks to gain influence in other countries and establish a Shi’ite ring stretching from Iran and Iraq, through parts of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, to Syria and Lebanon, creating a noose around the Sunnis.

At the same time, the policy of jihadi Salafism is also examined from the perspective of two important interests: on the Islamic level – foiling the Shi’ite takeover of Iraq and the establishment of an Islamic Sunni state, in the spirit of jihadi Salafism, which would serve as a springboard for taking over other states in the Mashreq and Maghreb in preparation for the establishment of the Islamic caliphate; on the regional level – confronting the “Shi’ite ring,” of which Iraq comprises a vital part, and thwarting its coalescence and threats to the Sunni region.

20 “The Dimensions of Alliance between the Dissenters and the Crusaders in Iraq and its Impact on the Region,” (*ab’ad a-tahaluf a-rafdi a-salibi fil ‘iraq wa itharihi ‘al al-mantiqa*), Minbar a-Tawhid wal-Jihad, January 2005.

While the various positions expressed by spokesmen and ideologues of jihadi Salafism are identical to a large extent in their attitude toward Shi'ism from a religious, moral and historical standpoint, the test of practical experience of the jihad conducted by the al-Qaeda organization in Iraq has engendered different, and sometimes contradictory, approaches regarding the policy required on the ground vis-à-vis the Shi'ites. This disagreement is clearly expressed in a letter sent by the deputy leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri to the founder and leader of the al-Qaeda organization in Iraq up until his death in early July 2005, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The approach of al-Rifa'i

Abd al-Muhsan al-Rifa'i believes that the jihad that Sunnis conducted in Iraq, with the support of their brethren in other Muslim countries, saved Iraq from the clutches of "the Crusaders and their Shi'ite puppet allies" who entertained the notion of completely taking over Iraq after the fall of Saddam. The jihad put an end to the plans of the Shi'ites to conquer the land of the caliphate and establish Shi'ite rule under Crusader supervision. If it were not for the jihad, Iraq and Sunnis would have fallen like ripe fruit into the hands of the enemies and would have suffered humiliation. Those who follow this path of jihad, which is the path of Allah (*sunnat allah*), will be crowned with victory by Allah. Al-Rifa'i's words indicate that he sanctifies the use of jihad without commenting on the format of its use – whether or not it is too aggressive and brutal. In any case, he regards the use of jihad as a successful policy and that it alone can ensure the victory of the Sunnis in Iraq.

The approach of al-Zawahiri

On the theological level, al-Zawahiri does not disagree in his letter with most of al-Zarqawi's allegations of *tafkir* (heresy) directed against the establishment and leaders of Shi'ism in Iraq. Shi'ism is described in his letter as "the school of *rafda* [a disparaging term used by Sunnis to refer to Shi'ism] *al-ithna'ashariya*" (Twelver), based on "exaggeration and falsehood," which slanders the Prophet's companions and believes in the hidden, omnipotent and infallible (*'isma*) mahdi. They collaborated with the enemies of Islam in the past (during the Crusader period) and during the current invasion of Iraq. Ultimately, a confrontation between the Islamic state and Shi'ism is unavoidable. However, the letter directly criticizes the bloody struggle that al-Zarqawi conducted against Shi'ism and the Shi'ite holy places in particular and against the Muslims in general. The letter contends that this struggle is unnecessary and even detrimental to the true jihad battle for the following reasons:

- The masses, who are not aware of the aforementioned negative characteristics of Shi'ism, wonder about the reasons for the attack waged against Shi'ism (that is, by al-Zarqawi).
- The mujahidin believe that it is not correct to conduct this struggle against Shi'ism at this time, and seek to defer it until after the fighting movement is strengthened in Iraq.
- Opening an additional front against Shi'ism, alongside the front conducted against the Americans, plays into the hands of the Americans.
- The attack on the Shi'ite masses only strengthens the false believe of the Shi'ites, while we need to show them the truth.
- The attack on Shi'ism is liable to spur the Iranians into adopting countermeasures in a situation in which the Americans constitute a target. Mutual non-belligerence is needed vis-à-vis the Iranians.

Al-Zawahiri distinguishes between the leaders of Shi'ism and the "common people." The former bear responsibility for distorting Islam. The latter were led astray and are thus deserving of forgiveness for their ignorance and can be redeemed via preaching (*da'wa*).

Al-Zarqawi's approach and the criticism of it

Al-Zawahiri's criticism of the indiscriminate attacks against Shi'ites is not unique in al-Qaeda circles. More than a few Salafi *'ulama* have stated that the massacre of Muslims, including Shi'ite Muslims, is counterproductive to al-Qaeda's strategy of gaining mass Muslim support for its struggle. The older generation of al-Qaeda-linked Salafi *'ulama* is clearly growing uneasy. Included in this group are Abu Basir al-Tartusi, who took a stand against the London bombings on the basis of his interpretation of Islamic law on jihad; Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who criticized al-Zarqawi, his erstwhile disciple, in a public statement on the same basis; and Mohammed al-Masari, one of the fathers of the Saudi reform movement in London. These scholars hold undeniable jihadi Salafist credentials and are close to al-Zawahiri ideologically and organizationally. It is conceivable, therefore, that they influenced al-Zawahiri's decision to add his weight to their arguments.²¹

Al-Zarqawi defended his terrorist jihad policy in remarks published immediately after receiving al-Zawahiri's letter. He argued in his response that the jihad against the institutions of government and the army in Iraq is like the jihad against the atheist occupier in Iraq (that is, the U.S. and its allies) and there is no reason to distinguish between one jihad and another. From his standpoint, the Iraqi army is "an army of dissenters of Islam and an agent of the Crusaders, seeking to destroy Islam (that is, Sunnism) and fight the Muslims (that is, the Sunnis). Therefore, we are fighting against it just as the nation fought against the Tartars." He expressed regret about the appeals addressed to him from "people of knowledge," attempting to persuade him to refrain from conducting a jihad in Iraq, and rejects these calls out of hand.²²

H. The Jihadi Salafist Position towards Hezbollah

General

The global jihad movement regards the Hezbollah organization as a serious challenge for it. The movement views Hezbollah as a central branch of Iran in the heart of the Middle East, designed to promote Iran's religious and strategic aspirations at the expense of the Sunnis. Hezbollah's achievements at home and vis-à-vis Israel strengthen the appeal of the Shi'ite Islamic Revolution in the eyes of the Sunni public. Against this background, there is a salient effort by spokesmen for the global jihad movement to turn Hezbollah into a target of their anti-Shi'ite attacks. The supporters of the tough line of jihad tended to intensify their propaganda attacks against Hezbollah following the Second Lebanon War, after the Sunni Arab world adopted Hezbollah's version depicting the war as a clear victory over Israel, and after Ayman al-Zawahiri published a position that was not sufficiently clear vis-à-vis Hezbollah. In this attack, the following motifs stand out in particular: From a religious standpoint, Hezbollah is depicted as part of the Shi'ite system with its "anti-Islamic heretical" characteristic. From a military perspective, Hezbollah's achievements vis-à-vis Israel are downplayed. From a strategic perspective, Hezbollah is portrayed as part of the Iranian attack against the Sunnis, which works in tandem with the Crusader attack in the region.²³

21 "A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi" by Nibras Kazimi, Published on September 12, 2005, Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, Vol. 2, Hudson Institute

"The Zawahiri Letter and the Strategy of al-Qaeda" by Shmuel Bar, Yair Minzili, Published on February 16, 2006, Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, Vol. 3, Hudson Institute

22 The BBC in Arabic, July 6, 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/news/newsid_4655000/4655405.stm

23 Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri assumed a somewhat vague position towards Hezbollah. A speech he delivered was circulated in jihadi forums on July 26, 2006 and sparked a fierce debate among the Sunni jihadists, which continues to this day. The confusion created by al-Zawahiri came to an end by several analyses of his speech, published by known jihadi-Salafist scholars. The most important of these analyses, which was circulated on the Internet through the

The comparison between Hezbollah and Atatürk

Osama Shehadeh examines the balance of Hezbollah's achievements in the Second Lebanon War against the background of what was presented in the Arab media as a victory for Hezbollah against Israel in the war. The author rejects the approach that views the war as ending in a Hezbollah victory and argues that it was actually a new act of futility (*fitna*) by Hezbollah, similar to its imagined victory in 2000. From the author's perspective, the main question pertaining to this war is not the extent of its seriousness but whether it will ultimately benefit Islam, Arabism and the Palestinian cause. For Shehadeh, this war serves as a catalyst to portray what appears to him as Hezbollah's threat to the Sunnis in Lebanon and even beyond Lebanon.²⁴

The similarities between Hezbollah and Atatürk

Shehadeh compares Hezbollah to the regime of Atatürk. He states that from an external perspective, both appeared on the scene when the Muslim states were under occupation by the non-believers. Both advanced during the course of a war against occupiers. In terms of substance, they held a worldview that is different from that of the Muslim community and sought to gain power in order to realize this worldview during a period in which the Muslims suffered from weakness and a lack of stratagem.

Hezbollah poses a danger to the Islamic nation due to its positions and beliefs, on one hand, and its policies and allies, on the other hand. The author assesses this danger by examining Hezbollah's beliefs and policies:

Hezbollah's ideology and beliefs – Hezbollah belongs to the Twelver imamist Shi'ite school (*al-madhab a-shi'a al-imami al-ithna'ashari*) that regards the twelve imams from the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) as the rulers of the Muslims and believes that anyone who believes in another caliph is a heretic. In addition, Hezbollah considers the Prophet's companions (*as-sahba*) to be heretics, with a few exceptions. It also views the Quran as forged and deficient (*al-quran muhraf wankis*). Hezbollah expressed its loyalty to Khomeini, who disseminated these ideas, and did not disassociate itself from them. However, the organization did not express support for the Shi'ite leader in authority (*marji'ya*) Fadallah, who was subject to a harsh Shi'ite attack that even reached the point of declaring him a heretic.

Hezbollah's positions and policies – The positions and policies of Hezbollah serve the pure Shi'ite interest and not the general Islamic interest. The examples of this are: the organization's silence regarding Iran's connection with the Americans in Afghanistan and in Iraq; the fact that it ignored the treachery of the Shi'ites in Iraq and their collaboration with America, and ignored the crimes of the Shi'ites in Iraq against the Sunnis; and Hezbollah's demand for Syria to remain in Lebanon.

The Hezbollah's allies and supporters – Iran is not only an ally of Hezbollah, but also its habitat. All of its attention is devoted to fostering Shi'ites, including Hezbollah, even if this comes at the expense of Islam. Syria – the hands of the Ba'ath regime in Syria are tainted with the blood of Muslim victims in acts of massacre in Hama and Tel al-Za'atar. Any ally of this type of Ba'ath regime cannot bring benefit to Islam and the Muslims.

Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), was written by an Egyptian, Dr. Sayf al-Din al-Kinani, on July 28, 2006, under the title "The Puzzle of the Oppressed and the Red Lines." The bottom line of his interpretation of al-Zawahiri's speech was the necessity of the fight for Palestine and Lebanon by the Muslims, but... the only Muslims are the Sunnis. Shi'ites are not Muslims so their fight against Israel is not regarded as jihad and serves foreign interests. "Hotwiring the Apocalypse: Jihadist Salafi Attitude towards Hizballah and Iran." By Reuven Paz, The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (Prism), Occasional Papers Vol. 4 (2006), No. 4 (August 2006)

24 Osama Shehadeh, "Will Hezbollah Be Our Atatürk?" (*hal yakun hizballah ataturk fi 'asrina*), Miifkarat al-Islam Website, August 7, 2006

Summary of the dangers posed by Hezbollah

In short, if Hezbollah emerges strengthened from its futile action in the Second Lebanon War, it will exploit this to carry out its sectarian agenda and demand that Hamas and Islamic Jihad follow in its path and adopt its style of resistance (*muqawama*). It will also exploit its popularity to proselytize for accepting Shi'ism (*tashi'a*), as it has done in Palestine, Syria and other countries.

A danger is anticipated from a deal between the Hezbollah-Iran-Syria axis and the Israel-U.S. axis at the expense of the Sunni Arabs in Lebanon, the Gulf, Palestine and Iraq. The author raises the question of whether Hezbollah will adopt positions in favor of the Muslims ("something we hope it will do") or will instead be a new Atatürk, leading the Muslims astray in futile wars in order to serve Iran and Syria. From his overall analysis of Hezbollah's policy, one can understand that he expects Hezbollah to continue to follow the path of Atatürk.

The position of al-Zawahiri

Al-Zawahiri has also recently tried to downplay what was described in the Arab media as a Hezbollah victory in the Second Lebanon War. He also harshly criticizes Hezbollah's policy in two areas where Hezbollah acted, in his view, against the basic principles of jihadi Salafism: The first area is Hezbollah's attitude toward the liberation of the Shaba Farms in the framework of a nationalist worldview that is "foreign to Islam" rather than in the framework of the individual's duty to liberate Islamic land that is under occupation (*farad 'ayin*). The second area is Hezbollah's abandonment of the Islamic land of South Lebanon to the "Crusader" forces (UNIFIL) and its recognition of this "international Crusader presence" on Muslim territory in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701.²⁵

The role of Hezbollah – al-Rifa'i

Al-Rifa'i believes that Hezbollah uses the Palestinian card and rides the wave of Islamic resistance in an effort to deceive the Muslim public – as if Shi'ism were waging a battle against the occupier. He succeeds in portraying this erroneous image of Shi'ism among a public of weak faith, which is not familiar with Shi'ism's hostility toward Islam and the fact that it is an Iranian product. The goals of Hezbollah are:²⁶

1. Conducting a campaign of persuasion among the Sunnis throughout Lebanon in an effort to convert them to the Shi'ite religion by presenting Hezbollah as the supporter of the Palestinians' struggle and as the leader of the resistance.
2. Pushing the Sunnis to the sidelines and stripping them of any leadership role, and transferring the leadership into the hands of the Christians and Shi'ites.
3. Turning Lebanon into a launching pad for realizing the plan to establish a Shi'ite Crusade.

I. The Issue of Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shi'ism

The ideologues of jihadi Salafism show great concern about the initiatives aimed at encouraging rapprochement between the Sunni and Shi'ite communities. These initiatives – which mostly originate from the Sunni side, but also come from the Shi'ite side – seek to downplay the significant religious and historic gaps and contradictions that exist, in their view, between Sunnism and Shi'ism. Some of these initiatives even regard Shi'ism, with an emphasis on the Ja'fari imamist Twelver (*al-ithna 'ashariya*) stream that rules in Iran and Iraq,

25 The Open Dialogue with Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri – first series. (*al-liqaa al-maftuh ma'a a-Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri – al-halqa al-awla*), As-Sahab Media, April 2, 2008. An interview with al-Zawahiri with As-Sahab Media on December 16, 2007.

26 Abd al-Muhsan ar-Rifa'i, *The Dimensions of the Alliance between the Dissenters and the Crusaders in Iraq and its Effects on the Region (ab'ad al-tahaluf ar-rafdi as-salabi fi iraq wa-itharahu 'al al-mantiqa)*, Minbar a-Da'wa al-Jihad, January 2005.

as a school (*madhab*) of equal value to the four schools of Sunnism. These initiatives – which already appeared in the distant past – have been proposed in recent years at conferences and meetings aimed at promoting “rapprochement” between the two large communities and streams in Islam, as well as in books and articles and religious rulings (*fatwas*) issued by Sunni sages who advocate this rapprochement.²⁷ This push for rapprochement between the two communities is being led by the Arab regimes, which fear an outburst of violence and civil war (*fitna*) on a sectarian/religious background between the two communities – like those taking place in Iraq and Lebanon. In an effort to prevent the development of conditions that are conducive to sectarian outbursts, they are working to mobilize the religious establishment to grant religious legitimacy to Shi’ism.

In this context, the most important conference was the International Islamic Conference, which was organized in Jordan by the Ahl Al-Bayt Institute, opened by the king himself, and held under his sponsorship on July 4-6, 2005. The subject of the conference was “The Truthfulness of Islam and its Role in Modern Society.” It was attended by the heads of the religious establishment and many senior *‘ulama* from Muslim countries, both Sunni and Shi’ite. The final statement of the conference

27 Mustafa al-Faki warns against the destructive consequences of a civil war (*fitna*) between the Sunnis and Shi’ites in Iraq for the entire region. He believes that this “*fitna*” does not have its roots in Islamic belief and its spiritual dimension, but instead derives from historical political events. He sees the outbreak of sectarian disputes and divisions between the schools in the Arab system in our generation as echoing a worldwide trend expressed in the growing emphasis on nationalism and ethnic affiliation as opposed to the social theories that reigned in the 19th and 20th centuries, led by Marxism. Al-Faki calls on Shi’ite and Sunni religious leaders to do more to bring the two schools closer. He cites as an example for emulation the action of the sheikh of Al-Azhar in the early 1960s, Muhammad Shaltut, who issued a famous *fatwa* that recognized the legitimacy of the rituals of the Ja’fari and Zaydi schools. “The fights between the schools in the Arab region” (*a-sir’aat al-madhbiya fil mantiqa al-‘arabiya*) *Al-Hayat*, March 13, 2007 www.daralhayat/actions/print.php

In his book on the relations between Sunnis and Shi’ites, Dr. Muhammad Salim al-‘Awa confirms the existence of a real, historical dispute – profound and acute – between Shi’ism and Sunnism. But he believes that on the religious level this dispute does not center on fundamental principles, but rather on secondary issues of belief and religious law. Thus, for example, he states that the disagreement over the anticipated mahdi (*al-mahdi al-muntazaer*), the immunity of the twelve Shi’ite imams from error and sin (*‘isma*), and the *taqiya* – is a minor dispute. On the other hand, he cites leading sages, headed by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, to emphasize that there are common denominators such as the belief that the Quran is a heavenly book sent down by Allah. In any case, he places the responsibility on the Muslim sages (*‘ulama*) to act to unite Shi’ites and Sunnis, and to oppose tendencies of separatism and sectarian fanaticism. He also notes that new, contemporary Shi’ite interpretation has generated a significant change in the original philosophy of imamist Shi’ism. In his view, the political factor is responsible for the division between Shi’ism and Sunnism – in both the ancient period of the Prophet’s companions (*sahba*) and in our generation. He gave a lecture on his book on September 6, 2006 in Cairo, *Al-Jazeera*, February 22, 2007.

The Al-Azhar sheikh, Tantawi, says that the dispute between Sunnis and Shi’ites centers on secondary issues rather than the fundamentals of the faith. He also states that he supports any initiative for rapprochement between Sunnis and Shi’ites, and that Al-Azhar has led such an initiative in the past. An interview with the *al-Sharq al-Awsat* daily, November 2, 2006.

Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the chairman of the World Association of Muslim Sages, outlines in his book *Principles for Dialogue and Rapprochement between Sunnism and Shi’ism* ten such principles, including good thought, focusing on points of consensus, avoiding provocation. However, he points out some Shi’ite beliefs that he rejects – the infallibility of the imams and Shi’ism’s lack of recognition of the sources of the *sunna*, as well as the denial of the *sunna*’s status as a secondary source for legislation and the Shi’ite belief in the falsification of the Quran. In fact, al-Qaradawi identifies with a central part of the arguments of jihadi Salafism against the Shi’ites. But, unlike jihadi Salafism, he sees the need for rapprochement between the Sunnis and Shi’ites. *Al-Jazeera*, November 12, 2006.

was recognized as a collective *fatwa*, which is unprecedented in the history of the Muslim world. This *fatwa* called for order, overhaul, recognition, equality, and reconciliation between the recognized schools in the Islamic world, in the face of what was described as the tragic circumstances in which the Islamic world currently exists. From the statement, it can be understood that these circumstances include the spread of the radical ideology that accuses as apostates all those who do not respond to radical demands and expectations; the outbreak of a violent confrontation between the different schools (mainly between the Sunni and Shi’ite); and the fact that unskillful and unauthorized elements have taken upon themselves the right to issue *fatwas*. The statement explicitly argued that the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence – the Ja’fari, the Zaydi, the Ibadi and the Tahiri – are Muslim²⁸

Against this background, these ideologues launched an informational and religious counterattack designed to undermine this “rapprochement,” to refute the arguments about the lack of substantial, fundamental religious differences between the two communities, to present – without embellishment – what they see as the heretical beliefs of Shi’ism, and to warn against “the dangers Shi’ism poses to Sunnis.”

Below are prominent examples in which the ideologues of jihadi Salafism oppose initiatives for “rapprochement” between Sunnism and Shi’ism. These ideologues are led by Abu Basir al-Tartusi, who took upon himself the task of openly opposing the trend of rapprochement between Sunnism and Shi’ism.

Opposition to collaboration between Sunnis and Shi’ites in waging jihad against the enemies of Islam²⁹

One of the main and popular arguments in favor of rapprochement between Sunnis and Shi’ites is the need to unify all Islamic forces for “the struggle against the West and the Jews.” Abu Basir al-Tartusi tries to counter this argument in his response to the question of an Internet surfer regarding the position of Islamic legal law vis-à-vis the ruling that Muslims must cooperate with the Shi’ites against the Jews and Americans. As part of his response, Abu Basir says that unity of the ranks against the enemies of the nation is a demand of religious law (*shari’a*) and is logical, but this objective should be attained via proper means. Disregarding these means would lead to missing the objective and wasting the efforts made to achieve this goal. The essence of these means is addressed in a separate discussion.

In regard to unity with the Shi’ites and dissenters (*al-ruafad*) – this is an old slogan that did not materialize. Abu Basir decisively states that this unity is impossible to achieve and will not be achieved, and this is due to a number of reasons:

From the perspective of religion and faith

1. Their harmful belief in regard to the **Quran** – on one hand, their statement that the Quran is falsified (*muhraf*) and, on the other hand, their false interpretation (*al-batala*) of many verses (*ayat*) in the Quran and distorting the religious and linguistic meanings of these verses.
2. Casting aspersion on the traditional *sunna* and texts such as “Sahih al-Bukhari” and “Sahih Muslim,” while according priority to the words of their sheikhs and imams.
3. Accusing senior companions (*sahba*) of the Prophet, their community and followers, and all of nation’s *‘ulama* with

28 Shmuel Bachar, Shmuel Bar, Rachel Machtiger and Yair Minzili, “Establishment ‘Ulama and Radicalism in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan,” Series No 1, Paper No. 4, December 2006. Hudson Institute Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World

29 “Collaboration with Shi’ites in the Jihad Against the Enemies of Islam” (*a-ta’awun ma’a ar-rafida fil jihad did a’ida al-islam*), Website of Minbar at-Tawhid wal-Jihad <http://www.abu-qatada.com/r?i=696&PHPESSID=5fa1d2751eb27723c5545857334935e1>

heresy.

4. Accusing the Prophet's wives, and particularly his beloved wife in this world and in the next world – 'Aisha, the mother of the believers (*um al-muaminin*) – with heresy and slandering them.
5. Their belief in their imams, which has a heretical and polytheistic character. Elevating these imams to the level of the prophets and messengers, and even to a level of divinity.
6. Their outlook that considers heretical anyone who does not accept their polytheistic belief.

These beliefs constitute an obstacle to unity with them. It is impossible to reach a consensus with them on any issue unless they declare their integrity (*bara'a*) and repentance (*tawbatihum*) – in the sense of discarding these beliefs – and return to the Islamic fold.

From a political perspective

The Shi'ites, with all of their resources, stand alongside the Crusader enemies of the Islamic nation. This began with Ibn al-'Alki al-Shi'i, who conspired with the Tartar camp against the Abbasid caliphate and continues now with their current position vis-à-vis the Islamic jihad movements in the world. (That is, the ideologues of jihadi Salafism see them as enemies of the jihad movement.)

They forged an alliance with the Russian infidel (*mulhadun*) Crusaders against the Islamic peoples in Afghanistan and Chechnya because these peoples do not belong to their false polytheistic school. They preferred to stand alongside the Christian Ba'athist regime ruling Syria, in opposition to the jihad movement in Syria and against the Muslims – only because they are not affiliated with the false Shi'ite religion.

In regard to the position vis-à-vis the Shi'ite Hezbollah in Lebanon – they support it from all aspects and shower it with billions of dollars. And this is because Hezbollah is affiliated with their false polytheistic religion, in addition to the fact that it provides leverage for disseminating propaganda on behalf of Shi'ism in the region.

From the perspective of characteristics

The Shi'ites excel among all people in adopting falsehood and denying truth, especially when this entails causing damage to the community of Islam. They teach their children to hate the Prophet's companions (*sahba*) and Sunnis to the point that the killing of Sunnis takes precedence over waging jihad against the Jews. In short, their religion is based on two foundations: falsehood and denial, on one hand, and deep-seated hatred for Muslims, on the other hand.

For these reasons, we say that it is impossible to meet with them as long as they maintain these characteristics. Those who have tried to attain unity with them have suffered disappointment.

A letter to the Sheikh of Al-Azhar regarding the conference for rapprochement between the schools

In response to the announcement that the Center for Islamic Research (*majma'a a-dirasat al-islamiya*), headed by the sheikh of Al-Azhar, agreed to participate in a conference in Iran on rapprochement between the Islamic schools, al-Balushi writes in a letter to the sheikh of Al-Azhar that the rapprochement between Shi'ism and Sunnism must be built upon a proper scientific and ideological basis, and in accordance with the guidelines set by the Quran and the *sunna*.³⁰ In the author's view, Sheikh Shaltut fell victim to the deceit of the Shi'ites, granted it recognition and gave permission to follow the path of Shi'ism – for the first time in Islamic history. Al-Azhar subsequently began to teach

30 Abu Mitnaser al-Balushi – "A Letter to the Sheikh of Al-Azhar Regarding the Conference for Rapprochement between the Schools" (*risala ila sheikh al-azhar bihudud muatamar a-takrib bina al madhab*), April 24, 2000. Minbar at-Tawhid wal-Jihad

their religion, assuming that the religion of the Sunnis would be taught in Iran, but this did not happen. The Shi'ites in Iran exploited Al-Azhar and its reputation to realize its political ambitions. In practice, they did not begin to teach the *sunna*. Instead, they oppressed the Sunnis in every way – murdering their *'ulama*, closing their religious academies (*madaras*) and imposing Shi'ism (*tashi'a*) on them. Sunnis were prohibited from building mosques in cities that have a Shi'ite majority, despite the fact that this was permitted for members of other religions. Sunnis were also not allowed to participate in the government, despite the fact that they comprise a third of the state's population.

Al-Balushi states that despite the fact that unsuccessful attempts were made by Sunni sages (such as Sheikh Muhammad 'Arfa, al-Latif al-Sabki, Rashid Rida and Mustafa al-Saba'i) to draw the Shi'ites closer to the Muslims, their Shi'ite counterparts did not surrender their destructive and divisive principles because of considerations of material gain. In his view, after these actions, which are contrary to the spirit of humane Islam, Al-Azhar must not honor the Shi'ites with its participation because the Shi'ites exploit Al-Azhar's name to oppress, deceive and compel people to accept Shi'ism (*tashi'a*). Al-Azhar must not repeat the mistakes of the past and fall into the Shi'ite trap of "*taqiya*" and deception, because since the rapprochement initiative of fifty years ago the Shi'ites have exploited this initiative to camouflage the dissemination of their deceptions. Instead, Al-Azhar should raise its voice against the injustice inflicted on Sunnis, as perpetrated by Iran. How is it possible to achieve rapprochement between Sunnis and those [that is, Shi'ites] whose school challenges the book of Allah and the *sunna*, and openly curses the Prophet's companions (*sahba*)?

Unity between Sunnis and Shi'ites is impossible to achieve, unless the Shi'ites return to Islam

In another article, Abu Basir focuses on the call that is periodically made "for unity between Sunnis and Shi'ites" and the requisite conditions – which "are impossible, in practice" – for achieving this.³¹ In his view, this is an old-new slogan raised from time to time by people in one of the two communities. But their efforts to achieve this objective very quickly go for naught. He also explains in this article that the "longed for" unity between the two communities has not materialized, not even superficially, because of the beliefs of Shi'ism. These beliefs, in his view, contradict the Quran's command to Muslims to adhere to the Quran and the *sunna* as a single body. (The author learns this from the verse: "And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited" (Sura III, 103).

The author describes the Shi'ite beliefs that are contrary to this command and which do not allow for the realization of unity between Shi'ites and Sunnis, as the Shi'ites desire and call for:

1. Assigning a higher status to the imams of Shi'ism than to the prophets and messengers.
2. Regarding the words of the imams as equal to the words of the Quran in terms of their infallibility (*'isma*) and the need to obey them.
3. Attributing infallibility (*'isma*) to the imams, the power to control the universe and knowledge of the unknown, what has been and what will be.
4. The belief of the Shi'ites that they have a Quran that descended from heaven, called the "Fatima Quran," which does include a single verse from the Quran that came down to Muhammad.
5. The belief that the Quran in the hands of the Muslims is a falsified one.
6. The declaration that they do not believe in a God that did not assign the imamate to their twelfth imam.
7. Hatred and accusing the Prophet's companions with heresy

31 Mustafa Halima – Abu Basir al-Tartusi, "Unity Between Sunnis and Shi'ites" (*al-wahda bayn a-sunna wa-shi'a*), November 30, 2003, www.abubaseer.bizland.com

(*takfir*).

8. Accusing the Prophet's wives with heresy and obscene language (*fuhsh*) and inappropriate behavior.
9. The belief that the *sunna* is fundamentally exaggerated.
10. Worshipping their imams and dead sheikhs more than they worship Allah and pray to Him.
11. Treachery and enmity toward the Sunni Muslims.
12. Their devotion, heart and soul, to the enemies of the nation – heretics and invaders – throughout their history and to this very day. Their treacherous stance is expressed in the events in Afghanistan and Iraq and other countries.

The author states that if the Shi'ites indeed seek unity between Shi'ites and Sunnis, they must distance themselves from the heresy and hatred to which they adhere, and from all falsehood. If they do this, they will be an integral part of the nation, without the need for dialogues. But if they do not reform their ways, the dream of unity with the Sunnis will not be attainable. Those among the Sunnis who call for unity with the Shi'ites without demanding that they disassociate themselves from their beliefs are only fools who do not recognize the truth about Shi'ism. The calls by Shi'ites for unity are designed to win recognition for the justice of their path and beliefs in order to prove that their path is the real truth while falsehood is the lot of the Sunnis. The author concludes by warning that "whoever honors a proponent of innovation and deviation from the laws of religion contributes to the destruction of Islam." ("من وفر صاحب بدعة فقد أعلن على هدم الإسلام")

Warning against granting state recognition to the Shi'ite minority in Saudi Arabia

Sa'id al-Amri addresses the important issue of the status of a Shi'ite minority that is seeking to receive state recognition in an Islamic state with a Sunni majority and regime. He suggests that the political status of this Shi'ite minority should be judged according to the principles of Islamic law, which determines whether or not it is an Islamic community – and not according to the principles of nationalism, which are rejected by jihadi Salafism.³²

At the beginning of his article, he states that Sunnism's dispute with the "*ar-rafdā*" (dissenters – a disparaging term for the Shi'ites) is deep-rooted and conceptual. The enmity of the Shi'ites toward the Sunnis is clear and explicit. Throughout history, the Shi'ites have exploited their power to oppress the Sunnis. Against this background, he warns against the strengthening of the Shi'ite minority in eastern Saudi Arabia, its penetration to central positions in the establishment, and its aspiration to receive official recognition from the kingdom. In his view, this Shi'ite minority aspires to ultimately establish a Shi'ite state in Saudi Arabia. As tangible evidence, al-Amri cites a number of "severe" measures adopted by the Shi'ite minority that are aimed at promoting their ambitions in the kingdom: On the political level – the participation of Hasan al-Dafar on behalf of the Shi'ites at the first dialogue conference, which represented the start of a new era in which Shi'ism was recognized as a chosen community; exploitation of the improvement in relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the desire of the crown prince to foster rapprochement with the Shi'ites in order to raise new demands in the framework of a petition they submitted to the government. On the military level – the author claims that the Shi'ites are making efforts to stockpile weapons.

At the same time, al-Amri regards the Saudi government and the "*ar-rafdā*" (that is, the Shi'ites), in the spirit of jihadi Salafism, as two sides of the same coin – a forged coin. It is a coin of heresy (*kufri*), hypocrisy (*nafak*), promiscuity (*fususuk*), rebellion (*'adian*) and treachery (*khiana*). They compete for winning the affection of America. The attack (*ghazwa*) against Manhattan led America to lose trust in its friends. It now needs more and more guarantees, which the Shi'ites (as opposed to Saudi Arabia) offer it. The government of Saudi Arabia knows that it cannot remain in power unless it deceives people (*iltabis 'ala nas*), hides

behind Islam, claims it is implementing Islam and showers money on the people in order to lull them to sleep. Today, as there is less money, the Saudi government has no alternative but to deceive the people in the name of Islam – something that the U.S. is not happy about. Will the Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula fulfill their historic duty at this stage and collectively mobilize to fight for Allah? If they do this, they will be rewarded in this world and in the next world, and if they fail to do this they will not be part of this truth:

"Unless ye go forth [to war], He will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place; but Him ye would not harm in the least. For Allah hath power over all things" (Sura IX, 39).

J. The Strategy of Global Jihad Vis-à-Vis Shi'ism

From a religious perspective, the jihad leaders define Shi'ism as heretical and as the sworn enemy of Sunni Islam. There can be no co-existence between Shi'ism and Sunnism because the two sides challenge each other's sources of religious authority and legitimacy. While the leaders of global jihad adopt more or less the same strategy toward "heretical" Sunni Islamic regimes – which necessitates waging jihad against them in order to uproot and replace them with a "true Islamic" government – they disagree on the concrete strategic method that should be adopted vis-à-vis the Shi'ite world, led by Iran.

We will focus here on the operative policy proposed and implemented in practice vis-à-vis Shi'ism:

Preferring the "heretical" Islamic regimes to a Shi'ite takeover

The ideologues are clearly in a dilemma about the priorities in the struggle against the enemy from within (the "heretical" Sunni regimes), on one hand, and the Shi'ite enemy (Iran), on the other hand. They are aware that giving priority to weakening the "heretical" Sunni regimes (by waging a policy of systematic terror against them and undermining their internal political and social fabric) is likely to play into the hands of Iran, which is growing stronger, and make it easier for Iran to penetrate Muslim states and ultimately take control of these regimes with the help of its "fifth column" – the Shi'ite minorities. Abu Basir believes that Iranian rule over the states of Islam is a worse option than the current rule by the "heretical" Sunni rulers. It seems that this dilemma leads the ideologues of jihadi Salafism to the operative conclusion that it is necessary to simultaneously pursue two parallel tracks: to continue to fight via the violent jihad against the Arab regimes, with the aim of toppling them and replacing them with "true Islamic" rule, while simultaneously waging a propaganda and ideological campaign against Iran, portraying it as an enemy of Islam and an ally of the Crusader enemy in order to neutralize its religious and cultural impact on the Arab and Islamic system and stymie initiatives of rapprochement between Iran and the Arab states, which is liable to generate a process of Shi'itization in the region.

Al-Qaeda's reluctance to conduct terror against Iran

In practice, global jihad organizations, led by al-Qaeda – the leadership in Pakistan/Afghanistan and al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq – refrain from waging terror activity against Iran itself and suffice with conducting open and harsh propaganda against Iran, challenging its religious and political legitimacy. On the other hand, local jihad operatives affiliated with al-Qaeda conduct terror activity against the Syrian regime (which is seen as Alawite and thus identified with Shi'ism) and particularly against the Shi'ite regime and population in Iraq.

In a letter al-Zawahiri sent to the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in July 2005, he tries to dissuade him from attacking the Shi'ite masses and warns that the continuation of aggressive attacks against the Shi'ites is liable to encourage the Iranians to take countermeasures. He states that al-Qaeda's interest requires creating a situation of mutual non-belligerence between the organization and Iran.³³ Perhaps global jihad organizations also refrain from attacking

32 "The Dissenters" (*ar-rafdā*) - Sa'id al-Amri – Ma'skar al-Batar, Vol. 6, January 1425

33 The U.S. exposed the letter after intercepting it in July 2005. It was The Eleventh Annual Herzliya Conference

Iran because they fear losing the assistance they reportedly receive from Iran.³⁴ In addition, this reluctance derives from a fear of a violent, systemic, Iranian countermeasure against global jihad organizations on various fronts – in Iraq, Afghanistan/Pakistan and Lebanon – a response that would severely erode its accomplishments.

The religious status of the 'ignorant and illiterate' Shi'ite masses and the policy toward them

An important issue in the religious literature of jihadi Salafism pertains to the religious status of Shi'ites and the possibility of their repentance. The premise is that in the same way that they left Islam they can return to it as long as they fully repent. There is indeed a consensus that the Iranian regime is heretical from the standpoint of religion and faith according to the principles of Sunnism³⁵ and is a political/strategic enemy due to its expansionist tendencies and aspirations. But the question arises of whether the heretical religious status of the Iranian establishment also applies to the Shi'ite masses in this country and in other countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Azerbaijan. Al-Zawahiri, who recently discussed this issue, accuses the leaders of Shi'ism with crimes against Islam and against the Muslims. On the other hand, he presents a tolerant and pragmatic stance vis-à-vis the Shi'ite masses. He states that due to the ignorance and illiteracy of the Shi'ite masses on religious matters, it is possible to forgive them and not accuse them of deliberate heresy. In his judgment, a distinction should be made between two camps within the Shi'ite masses: The first camp is comprised of Shi'ites who refrain from fighting against "the Muslims" (that is, Sunnis) under the flag of the Crusaders. He says that a policy of religious exhortation (*da'wa*) should be pursued vis-à-vis this camp, exposing them to "the crimes of Shi'ite leaders against the Muslims," encouraging them to repent and bringing them closer to the *sunna*.³⁶ The second camp is comprised of Shi'ites who collaborate with "the Crusaders" in harming the Muslims. The law applying to this camp is the law of "communities that refrain from following the laws of Islam."³⁷

published on various Websites.

34 Ayman al-Zawahiri – the deputy leader of al-Qaeda – systematically refrained from addressing Iran in his public messages to the media via jihad Internet sites, though he often harshly attacks other enemies of the global jihad, headed by the Arab regimes and the West. He recently evaded giving a public response to the question of a Internet surfer about whether al-Qaeda is exploiting Iran, in the framework of its relations with it, to orchestrate terror activity outside of Iran and whether Saif al-Adl, one of the senior members of the organization who fled from Afghanistan to Iran, is responsible for coordinating this activity. Instead, he referred the surfer to an interview he gave to As-Sahab Media. See: The Open Dialogue with Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri – first series. (*al-liqaa al-maftuh ma'a a-Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri – al-halqa al-awla*), As-Sahab Media, April 2, 2008. However, in the second series of this Open Dialogue, he made an exception to his usual practice of refraining from publicly attacking Iran, and accused it of conspiring with the U.S. in occupying Afghanistan and Iraq – a charge that appears in the messages of his colleagues in al-Qaeda – *Al-Hayat*, April 23, 2008. It should be noted that in an interview he gave to the *Al-Ansar* magazine (Vol. 91, 1415 Hijra) al-Zawahiri denies any collaboration between the jihadi Salafist movement and Iran. <http://www.abu-qatada.com/r?i=1867&PHPSESSID=5fa1d2751eb27723c5545857334935e1>

35 Ayman al-Zawahiri states that whoever believes in these beliefs after being presented with decisive proofs will be regarded as someone who has left the religion of Islam (*murtadun 'an din al-islam*). *Al-Ansar* magazine, Vol. 91, 1415 Hijra.

36 Even prior to this, al-Zawahiri supported the approach of teaching the Shi'ites in Iraq the path of truth in order to bring them back to "the true" Islam in advance of the conquest of Iraq by the local al-Qaeda organization. See al-Zawahiri's letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, exposed by the U.S. in July 2005 and published on various Websites.

37 The Open Dialogue with Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, April 2008; *Al-Ansar* magazine, April 1995. In both of these sources, al-Zawahiri uses the concept of *أنهم معذرون بجهلهم* (*anhum ma'azirun bilahlilhum*) to argue that they should not be blamed and should be forgiven due to their ignorance. Ibn Timiya offers a more lenient position vis-à-vis Shi'ism (*ar-rafda*). He states that whoever believes in the message of the Prophet Muhammad is better than someone who does not believe in it, even if his belief includes innovation that is prohibited by Islam (*bid'a*) such as the Khawarij and Shi'ites. If they are in agreement with Muhammad, then they are not unbelievers. However, he warns that the Shi'ites are liable to lapse and join the apostates (*ahl az-zandaka*). Collection of religious rulings (*majmu'a al-fatawi*) C18/R122 – Minbar at-Tahid wal-Jihad.

Abu Basir presents a more rigid religious approach toward the Shi'ites, conscious of the attempts being made to promote rapprochement between the Sunnis and Shi'ites from both sides. He does not absolve the Shi'ite masses from the charge of heresy due to ignorance, but definitely sees a way to return them to the fold of Islam. The required method of action is to conduct religious propaganda among the Shi'ites in order "to save them from their ignorance and deviance, and to instill in them the belief in the oneness of God." He turns to the Shi'ite masses (*amam a-shi'a wa-ruafad*), who were led astray by their religious sages and leaders, and says to them: Return to Allah, return to your true religion, which you left and attacked, return to your senses and the straight path, return to the nation that you left and attacked."³⁸ Abu Basir states that if the Shi'ites do not reform their ways, the dream of unity with the Sunnis, which they desire, will be unattainable. "It will only be possible to reach an agreement with the Shi'ites after they declare their integrity and repentance, and re-enter the Islamic fold."³⁹

Al-Alwan praises the Internet site "Defense Network of the Sunna" which works to open the eyes of the ignorant Shi'ite masses and to show them the heresy and treachery of their religious sages.⁴⁰

The disagreement regarding policy toward the Shi'ites in Iraq in the struggle for power in the country

Iraq – after the conquest by the allied forces – became the primary arena in which the global jihad movement's anti-Shi'ite political and theological stance was actually translated into an operative policy against the Shi'ites. The leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was the initiator and instigator of the aggressive and bloody policy of terror against the Shi'ites, without discriminating between government and security targets, on one hand, and mosques and holy places and innocent citizens, on the other hand. He viewed the waging of an all-out war against the Shi'ites in Iraq as a means for unifying the Sunnis around his leadership in the fateful struggle for the future and shape of Iraq's government – not only against the "American occupier" but also against its "protégé," "the Shi'ite enemy from within." His successors followed and are following his path. They have gone quite a bit further and have established what is called "The Islamic State of Iraq," which combines anti-Shi'ite theology with practical policy: On one hand, this "entity" symbolizes the aspiration to abolish the reality of "heretical Shi'ism" in a country that served in the past as the capital of the Sunni Abbasid caliphate. On the other hand, it lays the cornerstone for the establishment of an Islamic state in all of Iraqi territory.

However, al-Zarqawi's policy aroused resentment among the leaders of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, to whom al-Zarqawi swore allegiance. In his letter to al-Zarqawi (July 2005), al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's deputy, expressed reservations about what he regarded as an overly aggressive policy toward the Shi'ites, and explained the policy's shortcomings and deficiencies in a gentle and collegial way. First, he stated that the acts of slaughter against Shi'ites only make al-Zarqawi's fight to liberate Iraq more difficult because they open an additional front against him by the Shi'ites and are liable to implicitly generate a threat from Iran. Secondly, he proposed an alternative path, pragmatic but effective: to bring the Shi'ites into the Sunni Islamic camp not through counterproductive violence but rather through exhortation and calls for repentance. He grants religious justification to this process by stating that the Shi'ites are not knowingly heretics, but only heretics due to ignorance and illiteracy. Therefore, they can be reformed and returned to the fold of Islam by proselytizing and inculcating the values of the true Islam.

In speeches and messages disseminated by the leader of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and his deputy, al-Zawahiri, in late 2007 and early 2008 via Internet sites associated with their organization, they again addressed the question of the operative policy and steps they believe

38 See above.

39 See above.

40 Suleiman bin Nasir bin Abdallah al-'Alwan, "The Imams of the Dissension" (*al-az-zandaka*), November 18, 2002, Minbar at-Tawhid wal-Jihad.

are required in Iraq, which they consider al-Qaeda's central battlefield from two perspectives: First, the organization's accomplishments in Iraq surpass any achievement in any other arena since the terror attack of September 11, 2001. Thus, it is important to preserve these accomplishments. Secondly, Iraq is regarded as the arena that is slated to serve as the launching pad (after Islamic/jihadist rule is established in it) from which holy warriors (*mujahidin*) will embark to conquer other adjacent arenas, including Palestine, en route to re-establishing the Islamic caliphate. Their messages reflect the dissatisfaction of al-Qaeda's leadership with the patterns of behavior of the local organization in Iraq, led by al-Zarqawi's successors. The two call on the *mujahidin* in Iraq – including the local al-Qaeda organization and other jihad organizations operating separately from it – to resolve their differences, to unify the ranks and wage a united jihad, while faithfully adhering to the al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan/Afghanistan. However, they reconcile themselves to the reality of establishing the "Islamic State of Iraq" and even reject critics who argue that the establishment of this entity is not at all necessary because there is no firm basis for its existence. It is clear that these two al-Qaeda leaders were obliged to accept the establishment of this "entity" as a *fait accompli* because there was no other alternative in light of the strong independence of the local al-Qaeda organization in Iraq.⁴¹

Summary

The leaders of the global jihad – both the ideologues and officials – concur that Shi'ism is both heretical from a religious perspective and an active enemy, which is growing stronger and aspires to gradually uproot Sunnism from its leadership positions. It seeks to accomplish this by first spreading Shi'ite influence and striking roots in the Sunni arena, utilizing the existing Shi'ite minorities, and later by actually taking over the rule in Sunni states. They are also unified in their view that any initiative for rapprochement between Sunnism and Shi'ism should be promptly thwarted because, if allowed to proceed, it would play into the hands of Shi'ism and help it to accelerate the realization of its ambitions as described above. In addition, they are very concerned about the growing strength of Iran, particularly its efforts to establish a strategic axis that would encircle the Sunnis and to attain a nuclear capability that would establish its military superiority. Every Shi'ite achievement in the region, even if it comes at the expense of other enemies of the global jihad – such as the accomplishments of Hezbollah in the Second Lebanon War – serves to strengthen the Shi'ite threat against the Sunnis.

However, they find it difficult to formulate a uniform and decisive strategy of action vis-à-vis the Shi'ites, led by Iran. Al-Zarqawi had no qualms. He acted against the Shi'ites in the framework of an uncompromising and indiscriminate policy of violent terror, similar to the classic jihad attacks conducted by al-Qaeda and its branches and affiliates against American, Arab and Islamic targets. He made sure to first obtain (and later publicize) "religious justification" for his violent actions. Al-Zarqawi was successful in instilling his policy in his successors, and they are indeed continuing it and even "enhancing" the terror campaign by using women and children as suicide bombers. However, the leaders of al-Qaeda saw a need to adopt a pragmatic and cautious policy toward the Shi'ites, if only for tactical reasons. First, they refrained from declaring and actually waging a jihad against Iran because, in their view, the assets and advantages derived from Iran outweigh the harm Iran causes. Secondly, they are reluctant to alienate the Shi'ite masses and found a religious path for bringing them over to the Sunni side. In this way, the war effort in Iraq can be focused against the more sensitive and problematic targets – the Shi'ite ruling establishment and the American forces in Iraq.

⁴¹ Audio tape of Osama bin Laden. Disseminated on Internet sites on December 29, 2007, summary of Osama bin Laden audio tape on March 21, 2008 on *Al-Jazeera*.

The question is whether in light of the intensified offensive by the American and Iraqi forces against al-Qaeda in Iraq during the past year we will witness sharper differences of opinions between the leadership of al-Qaeda and the al-Qaeda organization in Iraq – which operates independently to a large extent – in regard to the preferred policy of al-Qaeda in this country.

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