Sources of Islamist Strategic Thought

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Contents

Executive Summary

Because of three factors—the close affinity between the religious and the political in Islam, the religious motivation of Islamist movements, and the prevalence of apocalyptic rhetoric—it is difficult to distinguish the political and military strategies of such movements from their religious convictions. There is no doubt, however, that Islamist organizations do act on the basis of perceived strategic priorities. This study attempts to glean from these movements' writings a coherent picture of their strategic thought on key issues relating to the conflict with the West.

The strategic writings of the different movements reveal three levels of agreement and diversity:

1. The sources of their strategic vision are basically common to all radical Islamist movements—Sunni and Shiite alike. All use Islamic sources to provide guidelines in social, political and strategic matters.

2. The strategies for implementing their goals differ from one movement to another and from one theater to another.

3. Tactical local responses demonstrate that specific circumstances often have the upper hand in dictating modes of action and thinking.

In this literature, Islamist strategic thinking is based on six "pillars": the religious or "legalistic" pillar that focuses on Allah's commandments to Muslims regarding "infidels" and jihad; the apocalyptic pillar that addresses the belief in the link between jihad and the impending "end of days"; the political pillar that analyzes, in quasi-secular terms, the political balance of power between Muslims and their enemies, and provides the basis for setting strategic and operative priorities; the military pillar that assesses targets and opportunities; the pillar of jihad; and the pillar of martyrdom. The religious pillar is predominant in Islamist strategic writings. The strategies of the Islamist movements have a broad common denominator in the unambiguous insistence that all decisions—religious, political and military—be directly derived from the Quran, the Hadith and *sharia* rulings. This shared assumption that every modern situation can be judged by analogy to the rulings and behavior of the Prophet creates a basis for debate among all the different Islamist movements—a debate that can be found, either overtly or between the lines, in their writings.

The apocalyptic pillar of Islamist strategy plays a growing role and, while not discounting the emphasis on the shifting tactical situation, recognizes that Islam may suffer setbacks. Since September 11, 2001, apocalyptic interpretations of current world events have exploded. The "glorious raids" of September 11 and the American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq have been subsequently viewed as "signs" of the imminent apocalypse (*ashrat al-sa'a*). In this context, the jihadi movement identifies itself with the elected group that merits the grace of Allah (*al-ta'ifa al-mansura*). According to Muslim eschatology, this group is destined to achieve military victory over its enemies and implement the ideal of Islam on earth. Statements and actions by the

incumbent president of Iran, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, indicate that at least he and his close affiliates are motivated by a Mahdivist vision of the world being on the threshold of the "end of days"—and by a desire to expedite the reappearance of the Hidden Imam. Guided by this vision, such people may not be deterred from actions that might even precipitate a nuclear war. This strand of thought, however, is the exception rather than the rule in Shiite religious history and is actually foreign to the Khomeini doctrine that currently rules Iran.

The political pillar of Islamist strategy is evident in both Sunni and Shiite writings, which show a strong sense of realpolitik and an understanding of the current balance of power. Sunni and Shiite (mainly Iranian) strategists offer detailed analyses of the "enemy" and the enemy's alliances, strengths and weaknesses. These analyses form the basis for the Islamist discussion concerning appropriate targets for attack, terrorism, and overall policy toward different parties. The military pillar is evident in the fact that Islamist writings are replete with assessments and debate over the pros and cons of various military courses of action.

The pillar of jihad is a key element of consensus in the strategic discourse of the different Islamist movements. Ideologues of all camps distinguish between a "defensive jihad" (*jihad al-difa'i*) for liberating Muslims from the threat or occupation of infidels, and an "initiated jihad" (*jihad al-talab wa-al-ibtida'i*) that may operate "until religion [in the world] is Allah's." The existing Sunni consensus is that the former is now in effect, whereas the latter can be revived only after the re-establishment of an Islamic regime (a Caliphate), which will lead the Muslims in jihad. Jihad is not viewed as a "necessary evil," however, but as an aim in itself. Because the definition of defense has been extended in Islamist thought to include, not only actual military occupation of a Muslim land, but also "spiritual" or economic occupation—in the form of Western clothing, businesses, media and so on—the concept of the defensive jihad is also expanding. It no longer seems restricted to a war that comes to an end once the "infidel" military occupation comes to an end.

In Shiite doctrine, as manifested in Iran and its proxies (Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iraqi Shiite movements), jihad is not simply a means of obtaining a political objective. It is a pillar of faith, a means of testing the belief of a Muslim by putting him through trials and tribulations that emulate those of the imams Ali and Hussein. It is the path toward achieving unity with Allah's will; it serves the interests of the believers and, in doing so, fulfills the Islamic obligation to serve the community (over and above the individual); and it "pays," as it will be rewarded in this world by Allah, who will give the believers victory. Because Shiite thought holds that "initiated jihad" must await the reappearance of the Hidden Imam, any current military jihad is defined as defensive and seen as a duty for all Muslims when they face aggression. This defensive jihad is not spontaneous, however, but the result of a decision that can only be made by the "ruler-jurisprudent" (*vali faqih*). He alone has the ability to weigh all considerations and the authority to decide whether or not the jihad should proceed. The *vali faqih* may also "suspend" jihad (for example, Iran's jihad against Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war) on the basis of realpolitik and the "public interest" (*maslaha*) of the (Iranian) people.

Finally, the salafi-jihadi movement has inherited from the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) the pillar of martyrdom (*shahada*), not as a necessary evil but as "a consummation devoutly to be wished." This belief, a key development in Islamist strategy, undermines the classic military obligation of a commander to restrict his own casualties. Shiite ideological texts also stress the essence of jihad as a "doctrine and a program of action" through which a Muslim may "sacrifice his life for the sake of Allah and attain paradise." The greatest reward accorded to a *mujahidin* is "martyrdom for Allah's sake." Hezbollah's role models are the imams Ali and

Hussein, who went into battle knowing they were heavily outnumbered and that they were going to become martyred.

The perception and definition of "the enemy," the laws governing war against the enemy, and the rationale—be it defensive, deterrent or initiated—for that war are pivotal components of Islamist strategy. The growing salafi-jihadi tendency to include Shiites in the category of "enemy," in both theory and operational behavior, make it difficult to draw a common picture for Sunni and Shiite movements. In general, however, all Islamist movements hold that the enemy is comprised of both local and external entities that are either overtly or secretly allied with one another.

In Sunni jihadist thought, there are two concentric and interrelated enemy circles. The local, inner circle consists of the Arab and Islamic regimes, "the apostates who have abandoned Islam" (*murtaddun*), and the Shiites (the "turncoats" or *rafidi*). The outer circle is the domain of the "infidels" (*kuffar*), the "Crusaders" (i.e., the West) and the Jews (Zionists).

Like Sunni radicalism, the Shiite brand defines the enemy first and foremost by its link to the West. The United States, Britain and Israel form an "axis of evil" intent on toppling Iran's Islamic regime—in collaboration with many of its Arab neighbors. The Iranian regime sees this struggle as an existential Manichean clash between forces of light and forces of darkness.

The Islamist movements' differing strategic visions can be discerned in the different paradigms they present for the structure of a future Islamic order. Five main paradigms are evident: (1) that of the "mainstream" Muslim Brotherhood, (2) that of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, (3) the Caliphate idea advocated by salafi-jihadi groups and by Hizb ut-Tahrir, (4) the model of the Iranian revolution, and (5) that of nationalist Islamic movements in Central Asia.

The strategic vision of the mainstream of the Muslim Brotherhood represents a "lowest common denominator" to which most of the other movements would agree, though they would add elements of their own. The Islamic regime of the Muslim Brotherhood clearly incorporates *sharia*, however, and is not fundamentally different from that proposed by the salafi-jihadi groups. The only significant exception to this vision comes from the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which emphasizes the "intentions" of *sharia* and the need to adapt it to "human experience." It speaks as well of pluralism being the intention of Allah.

Hizb ut-Tahrir has for decades declared that the Caliphate concept is the goal of its struggle. It offers a comprehensive view of the Caliphate that would rule the Muslim world—and, ultimately, the entire world. After the re-establishment of the Caliphate, all non-Muslims would be obliged to render tribute (*jizya*) to the Caliphate and, in exchange, would enjoy its protection. But a refusal to pay *jizya* would warrant a jihad.

The Caliphate model has now become a central tenet of al-Qaeda's ideology as well, and it is being increasingly accepted by other "mainstream" Islamist movements. This is noteworthy because, until recently, these movements made no serious attempt to define any paradigmatic concept of leadership. They preferred to avoid the pitfalls inherent in the Caliphate model—i.e., who would be the Caliph, appropriate attitudes vis-à-vis non-Muslims, the duty of offensive jihad—and to focus instead on the principles of Islamic governance rather than on the specific forms such rule might take (sultanate, kingship, tribal inheritance, etc.). While the restoration of the Caliphate is not yet the common goal of all these movements, it is no longer the idiosyncrasy of one marginal group. And any sense of potential victory leads the various organizations to consider more seriously the question of the Caliphate.

The Iranian paradigm stands alone. The doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (the rule or the guardianship of

the Islamic jurists) was never meant to be restricted to the Shiite world. Uniting this concept of government by the jurists with religious and nationalist principles, Khomeini established a regime that had a manifest destiny to promote the national interests of Iran—which he saw as being identical to those of the Muslim Umma—and to liberate Muslims from the yoke of Western imperialism. At the core of this outlook is the idea that pan-Islamism will destroy the existing international system and be, in Khomeini's oft-repeated words, "neither East [the Soviet Union and communist ideology] nor West [the United States and capitalism]."

Finally, the nationalist movements of the former Soviet Union can be seen more as "Islamist nationalism" than "national Islamist" movements. Their goals tend to emphasize the local and the nationalistic, and while some of them have gone through a process of "globalization" due to the preponderance of Arab *mujahidin* in their ranks, for the most part they remain vague regarding the "pan-Islamic" facet of their ideology.

Most Islamist movements tend to focus on the "here and now" in their day-to-day strategic writings. This can be attributed to the fact that, except for the jihad in Iraq, none see themselves as on the verge of taking power, and they are embroiled in a daily struggle with incumbent regimes. Areas of operational tactics widely discussed in Islamist writings include:

1. Priority of targets: i.e., which Western powers are more susceptible to pressure and, if hit by terror, will withdraw from Islamic lands.

2. Classification of targets: i.e., the Islamic legality of attacking the economic infrastructure of Muslim countries (particularly oil). This was widely considered a red line that Islamist organizations did not cross, even in the bloody jihad in Algeria. They have, however, recently crossed it in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Another actively discussed issue involves attacking Iraqi Shiites.

3. Classification of weapons: i.e., analysis of rulings that concern types of weapons and tactics—such as suicide bombing, hijacking of aircraft (e.g., do the rules relating to prisoners of war in jihad apply also to the passengers?), and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Very little has been written on this last issue.

In contrast to the "gradualist" and relatively pragmatic strategy of the MB and its affiliates and to the Iranian regime's need to consider its national interests, salafi-jihadi groups espouse a more aggressive and opportunistic strategy. Their guiding principles, compiled from various texts, are:

• All the Western countries are defined as *bilad al-harb* (enemy lands)—a category that sanctions complete freedom of action and justifies the use of any possible means to inflict damage. The enemy's "people, blood, money and women's honor *(a'raduhum)* are permitted to Muslims, as they were to the Prophet Mohammed in his wars against his enemies."

• Striking against the enemy's centers of economic and military power and symbols, not only attacks the enemy's arrogance, but also inflicts tremendous material damage and hastens collapse. The obligation is to bring about change by using force, rather than relying solely on political influence.

• Extending military actions to the heart of enemy territory advances the goal of bringing about the enemy's collapse. Al-Qaeda's aim is to attack American targets throughout the world, and it has executed actions on several continents, thus demonstrating its commitment to engaging the enemy on its own territory.

• Using propaganda and psychological warfare as a complement to military action.

• Threatening force can be effective, as when Bin Laden asserted his right to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. His plans' focus, however, is on the actual use of weapons against his enemies. Armed violence and military force—the "life of killing and battle"—are the principal, and almost only, means of influence that he considers worthwhile.

• Decentralization is the way that al-Qaeda and its allies conduct and execute jihad. Each acts independently in its own theater and in accordance with prevailing circumstances.

A compilation of different salafi-jihadi discussions regarding the stages of the jihad reveals the following phases:

• *Awakening the masses* began in earnest on September 11, 2001 and continues with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The goal is to broaden the ranks of the jihadi movement and generate local opposition to the "apostate regimes."

• *Attrition* focuses on bleeding the West economically, militarily, and politically until it disengages from Muslim lands altogether and severs its alliances with the "apostate regimes." (In this context, some texts mention the abandonment of South Vietnam and the overthrow of the Shah's regime as cases in point.)

• *Control of Iraq* or the battle for Iraq is perceived by the salafi-jihadi thinkers as a historic, not-to-be-missed opportunity to establish a stepping-stone that can be used to expand jihad to adjacent theaters, to occupy those theaters, and to unify them under an Islamic Caliphate.

• *Toppling "apostate regimes"* focuses first on the "inner circle" of susceptible regimes, such as Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The revolutionary nature of the jihadi strategy—in contrast with the more gradualist Muslim Brotherhood approach—is based on the conviction that it is impossible to adequately reform a "Muslim" country led by "apostate rulers" or to adapt it to the Islamist model. What is needed is a general revolution and the reestablishment of the Islamic state, from top to bottom.

• *Taking control of the formerly "apostate" lands* is considered to be one of the most sensitive stages, as the breakdown of the old regimes will probably result in a breakdown of law and order.

• *Establishing sharia law* as the basis of the new regimes is crucial, though initially these regimes may not be identical in form. Only at a later stage will unity be achieved.

• *Purging all Western influences from the Muslim world* requires the total liberation of all Muslim lands—including Palestine, Kashmir, and al-Andalus (Spain)—ruled by "infidels."

• *Reestablishment of the Caliphate* is viewed as the last phase in organizing the Muslim world. This will then allow for the final confrontation with the West.

• *Final conflict* is the stage that, in many jihadi texts, is intertwined with eschatological allusions.

Since its inception, Iran's Islamic regime has been committed to jihad and to the "export of revolution" (*sudur inqilab*) or the "propagation of Islam" (*tablighi eslami*). Iran's support of terrorist organizations serves a number of its goals:

1. To maintain its commitment to Khomeini's doctrine of jihad and the "export of revolution."

2. To pose a threat to Israel, both for ideological reasons and to deter Israel from acting against it.

3. To further Iran's national objectives of hegemony in the Gulf and the Sunni Arab world by promoting Islamist opposition to the pro-Western regimes in those countries.

4. To serve as a strategic deterrent against the United States, as long as Iran lacks a nuclear deterrent, by posing the threat of widespread terrorism in retaliation for any hostile acts toward Iran. The military asymmetry that exists between Iran and its enemies, combined with the regime's conviction that these enemies remain committed to toppling its government, have led it to conclude that Iran must rely on "sub-conventional" warfare—i.e., terrorism. This includes attacking Israel from Lebanon, taking Israeli hostages, supporting Palestinian terrorism, and occasionally using international terror to demonstrate a "long-arm" capability commensurate (*mutatis mutandis*) with that of its enemies to hit Iran.

5. To enhance Iran's standing in the eyes of radical Sunni Islamist organizations as the only state willing to challenge Israel and the United States, and thus to draw them into its orbit and accord it a foothold in the heart of the Arab Middle East.

6. To serve as a bargaining chip that can eventually be traded for concessions on other issues important to its interests. This helps explain Iran's links with al-Qaeda, despite that organization's Wahhabi and anti-Shiite ideology.

A small number of salafi-jihadi intellectuals have addressed the question of weapons of mass destruction, focusing on whether their use is legally permitted (given that they may kill Muslims as well as infidels, etc.). The Saudi Sunni scholar Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al-Fahd issued a *fatwa* justifying the permissibility of WMD primarily on the basis of reciprocity—that is, the behavior of the United States against Muslims warrants the use of WMD. Arguments favoring the acquisition of nuclear weapons are not unique to the radical margins of the Islamist movement, however. Many more mainstream Muslim voices express the view that, as long as nuclear weapons are held by the enemies of the Muslims (the United States, Israel, or any other nation), it is the Islamic duty of all Muslim countries to acquire such weapons. A Muslim regime that does not fulfill this duty is a sinner and may be guilty of "corruption (*fasad*) on earth."

Introduction

The close affinity between the religious and the political in Islam, combined with the religious motivation that drives radical Islamic organizations, makes it difficult to discern the lines between these organizations' political and military strategies and their religious convictions. The leaders' use of apocalyptic rhetoric to motivate their followers also tends to obscure their real expectations and practical plans. There is no doubt, however, that these organizations do act on the basis perceived strategic priorities. In other words, "t'is madness but there is a method in it."

This study focuses on the main radical Islamist movements and ideological trends—both Sunni and Shiite. The strategic thinking of Islamist movements is revealed in numerous essays and books, many of which are distributed over the Internet. These movements do not form a monolithic ideological church, and there is a degree of diversity even within those that avow the same final goals. It is frequently difficult to define the borders between them, however. One clear division does exist: the Sunni movements are non-state movements, while radical Shiite ideology and strategy is essentially an extension of the Iranian state and must be examined within the context of Iranian national strategy.

Much of the underlying ideology of the more radical Sunni movements can be traced to the tenets of such "political Islamist" movements as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The inherent logic of MB literature leads almost inexorably, in fact, to the conclusions drawn by these radical movements. But their ideology and strategy are not static; they change with the ebb and flow of the fortunes of the struggle they represent. Different currents diverge and converge with the emergence of new ideas that take root in both their intended and actual constituencies.

The questions posed in this study relate to a wide spectrum of strategic, operational and tactical issues connected to Islamist thought and planning: Are there long-term strategies that transcend the goal of "defending Muslim lands" and aim at the Islamization of the world? Are there comprehensive concepts of a future Islamic order? If so, what would be the status of minority Muslim sects and non-Muslims in such an order? What will be the relations between Islam and the West after the triumph of the former? How do these movements view the stages toward strategic goals and interim goals? Is there evidence of operational thinking for managing the conflict with the "infidel" West that draws on strategic perceptions? How does such thinking affect the prioritization of theaters and targets, the willingness to enter into coalitions, and the choice of weapons (particularly WMD)? Finally, is there evidence that these various strategies are converging into a common Islamist strategy accepted by a wide range of the radical movements?

This project involved a large number of experts in Israel and the United States who participated in a series of round tables and discussions (see Appendix A). This summary—which is, of necessity, limited in its scope and the material it deals with—draws on these discussions and the papers that were submitted. It does not, however, necessarily reflect the views of all the participants, and the final conclusions are the responsibility of the project leader alone.

Sources of Islamist Strategic Thought
The "Pillars" of Islamist Strategy

Radical Islamist literature discusses important strategic issues and plays a key role in crystallizing the strategies of radical organizations that share its ideology. Strategic thought is not easy to identify, however, as it is often embedded in religious and philosophical discourse that seems to have little to do with practical strategic planning. Given that the texts, both Sunni and Shiite, are written by senior religious authorities rather than by military strategists, it is not surprising that separating the theological and political sources of Islamist strategy is nearly impossible. In the eyes of the Islamist, of course, such a distinction is artificial in any case, as political action merely reflects the will of Allah and provides divinely sanctioned "tests" for His believers.

In the strategic writings of the different movements, one may distinguish three levels of agreement and diversity:

1. The sources of their strategic vision are basically common to all Islamist movements—Sunni and Shiite alike. All (including the "mainstream" Muslim Brotherhood movements) rely exclusively on Islamic sources to provide guidelines in social, political and strategic matters; all reject Western values and cultural innovations; and all view the West as a contaminating force that must be opposed.

2. The strategies for implementing their goals differ greatly. Despite the consensus regarding the primacy of Islamic sources in determining political matters, the interpretation of those sources varies.

Thus the Muslim Brotherhood has turned to political activism, Hizb ut-Tahrir focuses on the restoration of the Caliphate, and traditional Salafi-Wahhabi groups emphasize the back-channel influence of clerics over the regime. Meanwhile, the same vision of political Islamization led Khomeini to invent a system based on handing over total temporal power to Shiite clerics.

3. Tactical local responses demonstrate that specific circumstances often have the upper hand in dictating modes of action and thinking. Such diversity becomes even more pronounced among different geographic regions.

The common ideological *Weltanschauung* does not reduce the political flexibility of the Islamist movements in different theaters. While the shared Islamic tradition gives rise to similar phenomena in different countries and regions, other factors—leadership, local traditions and collective identities, the identity and strength of the enemy, means available for the Islamists, and targets—foster variations in strategy. This diversity hampers organizational uniformity. Islamist organizations have not yet been able to form an "Islamist International," do not even aspire to do so, and do not debate the issue seriously. Even the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, the MB's long-standing forum that purports to represent the "world movement" of the Brotherhood, has little or no influence on the policies of the national MB movements.

One conclusion from reading the texts of the var-

ious movements is that the more "conservative" and less "radical" a movement is, the greater diversity there is among its branches and ideologues. The radical worldview tends, conversely, to be much more uniform and less adaptable. The diversity that characterizes the MB and its offshoots, for instance, seems to derive primarily from its core self-image: The Brotherhood views itself as a political-social movement with a strong survival instinct; this dictates that each branch adopt a realpolitik attitude and adapt to its particular social and political environment. The salafi-jihadi movements, on the other hand, tend to be more similar to one another in their reading of the strategic situation and their practical conclusions regarding the struggle. This may be attributed to the powerful influence of a limited number of strategic thinkers—most coming, either by birth or education, from Saudi Arabia or Egypt—on the rank and file of the jihadi movement.

An analysis of the literature leads to the identification of six "pillars" of strategic thinking that appear, to some degree, in most Islamist writing: the religious-"legalistic" pillar that focuses on Allah's commandments to Muslims regarding "infidels" and jihad; the apocalyptic pillar that addresses the belief in the link between jihad and the impending "end of days"; the political pillar that analyzes, in quasi-secular terms, the political balance of power between Muslims and their enemies, and provides the basis for setting strategic and operative priorities; the military pillar that assesses targets and opportunities; the pillar of jihad; and the pillar of martyrdom.

The Religious Pillar

The strategies of the Islamist movements have a broad common denominator in the unambiguous insistence that all decisions—religious, political and military—be directly derived from the sources of the Quran, the Hadith and *sharia* rulings. This shared assumption that every modern situation can be judged by analogy to the rulings and behavior of the Prophet creates a basis for debate among all the different Islamist movements—a debate that can be found, either overtly or between the lines, in their writings.

These writings reflect identical concerns with the conditions under which a defensive jihad is in force and the implications regarding the duty of Muslims to take part in it. Most never question the legitimacy or relevance of the foundational Islamic texts to the modern struggle; rather, they focus on the hermeneutics of those texts and the courses of action that should be derived from them. Sunni and Shiite Islamists alike subordinate their strategic planning to the legal rulings of the scholars/clerics who either lead the organizations or support the leaders. The issues brought before these scholars for final judgment include, among others: the very definition, current implementation, and area of application of the state of jihad; who must participate in jihad, and how; the jihad's rules of engagement; how jihad should be funded; and the behavior of a Muslim toward the *kuffar* (infidel).

All Sunni and Shiite Islamist movements hold that, because of the divine nature of their sources of thought, the room for independent interpretation and adaptation to modern reality is narrow and marginal. Where it does exist, moreover, it must be derived from the way of life and customs of the Islamic patriarchs (*al-salaf al-salih*). The Sunnis also turn to the Prophet's "companions" (*al-Sahaba*) for guidance, while the Shiites (who reject some of the companions) look to the imams descended from Ali ibn Abu-Talib. By basing all ideas, concepts and religious rulings on citations from the Quran or the Hadith, this literature contends that its judgments are sanctified—in essence the word of the living God—and therefore binding in individual, social and political spheres. Applying its rulings is a sacred duty, and deviating from them may bring about a declaration that the deviate individual or regime is

apostate, having abandoned the Muslim community, and is therefore deserving of death. This inflexible and uncompromising religious approach has won many adherents, totally loyal people who obey any order or religious ruling, especially one calling for jihad and self-sacrifice in the service of jihad.

Sunni Movements

The Sunni movements are all inspired by the same religious commentators: medieval authorities, such as Ibn Taymiyya, and more recent intellectuals and leaders who have written since the early 1980s. Their principles are, in essence, well expressed by the original slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood—*"Al-Islam huwa al-hall"* ("Islam is the solution"). This slogan was first formulated to help mobilize the masses for revolution within Arab countries, but it broadened into a concept that included the political struggle with the West, both within and outside of Muslim lands.

The struggle of the "Afghan Arabs" to liberate their country from Soviet occupation in the 1980s, for instance, was not seen as merely a military struggle. It was viewed as a divinely ordained crucible in which the Muslim *mujahidin* forged the jihad movement and enriched the doctrine of jihad. God's apparent hand in the victory had wide-ranging implications for Islamists. The strategy that developed in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was based first and foremost on religious grounds.

The same outlook continues today in the battle over the fate of Iraq, which fuels jihad strategy. The theater of the Iraqi jihad has even greater significance, however, because—in the parlance of the jihadist movements—it takes place in the "heart of the Muslim world," in the land of the Caliphs, and in close proximity to the holy land of the Hijaz. This location means that the jihad is nearing the fulfillment of its primary objective: liberation of the holy land from infidel control. This fires the imag-

ination of potential *mujahidin* and reinforces the religious dimension of the struggle.

Shiite Radicalism

The forging of the strategy of modern Shiite radicalism bears some similarities to the evolution of Sunni strategy. The crucible of Shiite radicalism was not Afghanistan and the USSR, however, but rather the Islamic revolution that overthrew the Shah's regime—and, by extension, achieved victory over the United States as well. The sense of intoxication felt by the Afghani *mujahidin* when they defeated the Soviets is analogous to the sense of immunity that Khomeini expressed when he said, after the revolution, "America cannot do a damn thing." In Iran, though, this sense of immunity was tempered by the burden of preserving the nation's interests and by the suffering incurred during the Iran-Iraq war.

The differences in religious principles between Sunnis and Shiites affected the development of the two movements. Whereas Sunni doctrines draw on a tradition of supremacy, Shiite doctrines reflect the status of the Shiites as the "oppressed upon earth" and an ingrained need to incorporate realistic and pragmatic considerations of "public interest" (*maslaha*) in their political and strategic thought. The guiding principles of the radical Shiite movements are also much clearer than those of their Sunni counterparts because they all stem from the work of Ayatollah Khomeini and accept his doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the Islamic jurists). The national strategic interests of Iran are projected, by extension, into the strategic thought of almost all Shiite radical movements—from Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Mahdi Army in Iraq.

The Iranian ideology of *sudur inqilab* (export of revolution) promotes pan-Islamism. The Iranian revolution did not portray itself to the Muslim world as a "Shiite" revolution, but as an Islamic revolution for Muslims throughout the world. This

inclusive attitude was a feature of Khomeini's thought even before the revolution and was evident in countless documents and speeches. Khomeini did not restrict his revolutionary vision to a re-Islamization of the Muslim Umma, but saw in Iran's Islamic regime a means of spearheading the spread of Islam to the "oppressed peoples" around the world.

The regime's general Islamic frame of reference underscores its belief in the universalism of its revolutionary mission. This ideology has motivated various arms of the state to forge alliances against the "world arrogance" of the United States, not only with groups and states most ideologically compatible with Iran, but also with any entity that considers the United States to be a nemesis. The "Islam" that the Iranian regime markets to Sunnis in Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa, consequently, is a "neo-Shiite," ecumenical Islam ('Shia-lite') designed to be palatable to all Muslims—Arabs and non-Arabs, Sunnis and Shiites—and through which even such heterodox sects as the Alawites are to be brought back into the fold. This Islamic model highlights the Shiite self-image as being the "faith of the oppressed" as opposed to the corrupted Islam of the Gulf Arabs who are linked to the "oppressor."

The Apocalyptic Pillar

Sunni Movements

Since September 11, apocalyptic interpretations of current world events have exploded. The "glorious raids" of September 11 and the subsequent American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq have been subsequently viewed as "signs" of the imminent apocalypse (*ashrat al-sa'a*). These join other omens that had previously foretold—such as the spread and increase of licentiousness, prostitution, alcohol consumption and killing. According to this view, the world is now in the last of a series of stages that the Umma had to endure and about which the Prophet spoke. Though Muslims currently live in conspicuous inferiority to the infidels, the triumph of Islam is ultimately assured. Islam will triumph both through spiritual ascendancy over all that is "un-Islam" and through military victory (by jihad) over the entire world, which will then become *dar al-Islam* (land of Islam). Because the "end of days" is conditional on these victories, jihad cannot be open to any compromise and will continue until the "day of judgment."

According to jihadi writings, the clash between Islam and the "crusading West" is not limited to the present dimension; it began between the two sides with the birth of Islam and is destined to continue until the eschatological events at the "end of days." This apocalyptic pillar of Islamist strategy is not as evident or prevalent as the religious-juristic pillar, but it has played a major role in Islamic movements as far back as the nineteenth-century campaign of the self-proclaimed Mahdi (the "rightly guided one," the Muslim savior) in Sudan. It was also a prominent feature of the 1979 attack on the great mosque in Mecca by Juhayman al-Utaybi and the self-styled Mahdi Muhammad bin Abdallah al-Qahtani. More recently, jihadi doctrines have tended to incorporate eschatological elements by citing signs relating to the "last day" (*al-yawm al-akhir* or *yawm al-qiyama*) and linking them to contemporary events.

In this context, the jihadi movement identifies itself with the elected group that merits the grace of Allah (*al-ta'ifa al-mansura*). The extensive literature on *al-ta'ifa al-mansura* creates a mystical aura around it: this group begins with the *Sahaba* and continues to exist—explicitly at times, implicitly at others—until the "day of resurrection" (*yawm al-qiyama*). It possesses superior qualities and is immune to evil. The fact that this vanguard has now surfaced and is being identified with jihadi and *mujahidin* groups indicates that we are now living in a period of omens presaging the "day of judg-

While apocalyptic ideas are more prevalent in the jihadi literature, they can also be found in "mainstream" Islamist movements such as the MB. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, for example, wrote that "the signs of salvation are absolute, numerous, and as plain as day, indicating that the future belongs to Islam and that Allah's religion will defeat all other religions."

ment" at the "end of days." *Al-ta'ifa al-mansura* is expected, according to eschatological predictions, to achieve military victory over its enemies and implement the ideal of Islam on earth. The main theater in which *al-ta'ifa al-mansura* will operate is *al-Sham* (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and the Sinai), later moving on to the Arabian Peninsula and continuing to operate until it fulfills its role. The Mahdi will join forces with *al-ta'ifa al-mansura* to conquer the land of Sham (Syria-Lebanon-Palestine) and then, together with Jesus, will fight the anti-Christ (*al-masih al-dajjal*). In some writings, this stage of the apocalypse is followed by a cataclysm—which resembles a nuclear holocaust in some descriptions—after which chaos will prevail and usher in the era of the Quran's cosmic verses (Sura 41). Cosmic phenomena will occur. On the same day the "beast" (*al-dabba*) will depart from the land (Sura 27:82) and the "day of resurrection" will soon follow.

This apocalyptic vision might appear to be in some tension with the strategic emphasis on the constant shifts and temporary setbacks in Islam's tactical situation. In fact, however, the two approaches complement each other. The salafi-jihadi intellectuals are clearly interested in focusing on the current dimension of the clash, both to reinforce the ranks of their followers and to encourage their attacks on the West. At the same time, the apocalyptic message plays an important role in bolstering the morale of the *mujahidin* by assuring them that, ultimately, victory is guaranteed.

While apocalyptic ideas are more prevalent in the jihadi literature, they can also be found in "mainstream" Islamist movements such as the MB. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, for example, wrote that "the signs of salvation are absolute, numerous, and as plain as day, indicating that the future belongs to Islam and that Allah's religion will defeat all other religions... the conquest of Rome and the spread of Islam till it includes all that is in night and day... prelude to the return of the Caliphate."[1] The West, the

United States, and Israel are likened to the ancient tribes of Ad and Thamud, which rejected Mohammed's message and were therefore annihilated, and to Pharaoh's Egypt, to which Allah sent a series of plagues, finally drowning its troops in the sea.[2]

Shiite Radicalism

Much attention has lately focused on the apocalyptic dimension of Shiite radicalism. Since Khomeini's death, Iran has witnessed a revival of interest in, and an eagerness for the return of, the Mahdi. Statements and actions by the incumbent president of Iran, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, indicate that at least he and his close affiliates are motivated by a Mahdivist vision of the world as being on the threshold of the "end of days"—and by a desire to expedite the reappearance of the Hidden Imam. Guided by this vision, such people may not be deterred from actions that might even precipitate a nuclear war.

This strand of thought is the exception rather than the rule in Shiite religious history, however, and is foreign to the Khomeini doctrine that rules Iran. This doctrine holds that the Hidden Imam (who has, according to tradition, been in occultation since 873) will not return until the end of history, which effectively neutralizes apocalyptic Mahdivism. Historically, Shiite leaders have been among the most *anti-messianic* of Muslims and have consistently ostracized messianic movements. From the burning of medieval *gullets* to the execution of nineteenth-century Babis and the persecution of the Bahais, Shiite orthodoxy has been extremely effective in putting down Mahdist movements. It should be noted, however, that all these cases concerned those claiming to be intermediaries between the community and the Imam—and thus also claiming the mantle of Prophecy. Unaffected by such purges has been an abiding undercurrent of belief that the Imam is not totally incommunicado and that it might be possible for his devotees to "hasten" his reappearance. Today

this belief surfaces in writings associated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRG), though it is unclear to what extent or in what ways it informs IRG strategy.

Acting as a countervailing force, the jurists of Shiite Islam continue to play a pivotal role in discouraging messianic enthusiasm, which they have done since becoming an anchor of religious stability in the Middle Ages. This Shiite clerical establishment based its authority on the occultation of the Imam and the absence of any person who could claim to serve as a conduit for communication with him. Over the centuries these clerics (*ulama*) succeeded in suppressing any who dared call for "hastening" the reappearance of the Imam or claimed direct communication with him. Traditional Shiite doctrine based itself, not on direct revelation, but on inferences drawn about the will of the Imam through erudite readings and regulated exegesis of sacred texts by only highly initiated mujahidin. Even Khomeini himself did not claim to have direct communication with the Hidden Imam. The power of the *ulama* eventually paved the way for the 1979 Islamic revolution, and at least its "old guard" believes that the revolution's future is contingent on keeping the Imam in total occultation. In this light, Ahmadinejad's emphasis on the imminent reappearance of the Mahdi is quite foreign, even to the radical doctrines of revolutionary Iran.

All in all, it is not clear how strong the Mahdivist doctrine that Ahmadinejad represents is and particularly what hold it has over the Revolutionary Guard or the most influential schools in Qom. But even without an apocalyptic component, the "romance" of martyrdom may threaten Iranian pragmatism. In Shiite lore, martyrdom tends to be identified with the Imam Hussein, the "prince of martyrs." His death is perceived as the antithesis of realpolitik and the triumph of moral values over the egotistic wish for life. This belief, in addition to the belief in Mahdivism, has a real destabilizing potential in case of a nuclear impasse.

The Political Pillar

The political pillar of Islamist strategy is evident in both Sunni and Shiite writings, which show a strong sense of realpolitik and an understanding of the current balance of power. Sunni and Shiite (mainly Iranian) strategists offer detailed analyses of the "enemy" and the enemy's alliances, strengths and weaknesses. These analyses form the basis for the Islamist discussion of appropriate targets for attack, terrorism and general policy toward different parties.

The priority given to concentrating the military and cultural effort against one enemy or another varies according to global circumstances and existing opportunities, and results from both strategic calculations and existing opportunities. The September 11 terror attacks against the World Trade Center, for example, were carried out after operational difficulties in waging war against the "internal enemy" i.e., (…) forced a shift in focus to the "external enemy," i.e., (…) which was perceived as an attractive and unprepared target. At the same time, evidence suggests another contributing factor—the assessment that such an attack would help precipitate wide support for the jihad movement within the Muslim world.

The Military Pillar

Islamist writings are replete with military analyses of the pros and cons of various courses of action. This can be clearly seen in discussions about the acquisition of WMD and the advantages and disadvantages of suicide attacks. (This aspect is addressed in the subsequent section on operational thinking.)

The distinction between the "gradualist" MB movements and the salafi-jihadi groups is particularly apparent in their attitudes toward the military pillar. The debate about the religious legitimacy and political wisdom of suicide attacks, which took place some time before and after 9/11, was won by those who favored them. But the different movements, and even elements within each movement, continue to debate three main issues: the legitimacy of killing other Muslims in the course of a jihad (*tatarrus*); the legitimacy of killing non-Muslims in Muslim countries outside of the theater of jihad (the issue of a "protected alien" or *musta'min*) and justification of terrorist attacks in the West proper. While much of the debate over these issues is couched in juristic terms, pragmatic military calculation deeply informs religious arguments.

The Pillar of Jihad

A key element of consensus in the strategic discourse of the different Islamist movements is the role of jihad, which is similar in both its Sunni and Shiite manifestations. The *casus belli* and leadership of jihad, however, are different.

Sunni Movements

The salafi-jihadi strategic thinking that focuses on jihad and martyrdom as the primary means of achieving Islamist goals can be found in the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. Ideologues of all camps distinguish between a "defensive jihad" (*jihad al-daf'* or *jihad al-difa'*) for liberating Muslims from the threat or occupation of infidels, and an "initiated jihad" (*jihad al-talab wa-al-ibtida*) "until religion [in the world] is Allah's" (Sura 2:193). The former is incumbent on every able Muslim man, woman and even child of the country under occupation, and it has precedence over other duties (*fara'id*). The latter, on the other hand, is deferred until the Muslim Umma is unified under a leader and is, in essence, a collective rather than individual duty. It is noteworthy that there is no

clear reference to this distinction in classical sources, and its modern usage is generally attributed to the writings of Sheikh Abdallah Azzam in light of the Afghan jihad. Even classical Wahhabi ideology does not distinguish between these two forms of jihad, and today's jihadists clearly deviate from the original Wahhabi doctrine, which gives the imam (the king) rather than religious clerics the power to call for jihad. All Islamist movements—Sunni and Shiite alike—agree that, under the current circumstances, the defensive military jihad (jihad for the sake of Allah or *jihad fi sabil Allah*) is a personal duty (*fard 'ayn*).

Few movements, however, have dealt with the issue of offensive jihad in depth. Azzam, the prophet of the jihad doctrine, and intellectuals that followed him have pointed out that jihad will ultimately continue until the rule of Islam is achieved over *dar al-harb,* the Islamic Caliphate is reestablished, and the word of Allah is supreme throughout the world. Lately, some al-Qaeda-oriented books have reiterated that the final goal is the Islamization of the entire world. Most Islamist movements, however, shy away from this subject—though a sense of victory in Iraq might fuel a desire to widen the scope of the goals to include an initiated or offensive jihad.

The current MB position is that, while defensive jihad to liberate occupied Muslim lands is an individual religious duty, offensive jihad is not currently in effect. Sheikh al-Qaradawi stated clearly after 9/11 that "we" are not in the stage of *jihad al-talab*, but in a defensive jihad. *Jihad al-talab,* he said, can take place only when there is an Islamic Caliphate. Similarly, the eminent Tunisian Sheikh Rashid al-Ghannushi has asserted that jihad is designed only to repulse aggression against the Umma and not, at this stage, as a means of forcing Islam on mankind. Ghannushi also rejects the legal argument used by al-Qaeda to justify attacks on civilians in Western countries—namely, the principle of reciprocity (*al-mu'amala bi-al-mithl*) for what Western govern-

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ments do to Muslim peoples. He argues that this contradicts the Islamic principles of punishment, which forbid punishing a person for a wrong committed by another.

In the parlance of the jihadist movement, then, jihad at the present stage of the conflict is primarily a means of defense against the enemies of Islam, but it will eventually evolve into a strategy for attack. Jihad is not merely a "necessary evil," however; it is also an aim in itself. Prominent in Islamist literature is the elevation of jihad to the status of an obligation, with only the principle of faith in God held as being loftier.

The ideological and practical debate among the different Islamist movements on this subject seems to be over what conditions "trigger" jihad and whether or not conditions exist that may bring it to an end (or to a "ceasefire" or *hudna*). Because the definition of defense has been extended in Islamist thought (as far back as Sayyid Qutb) to include, not only actual military occupation of a Muslim land (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Palestine), but also "spiritual" or economic occupation—in the form of Western clothing, businesses, media and so on—the concept of defensive jihad is also expanding. It no longer seems restricted to a war that comes to an end once the "infidel" military occupation comes to an end. Many salafi-jihadi groups consider such Muslim regimes as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to be "apostate" or "heretic" (*takfir*) and, therefore, equivalent to being "occupied"—a state that necessitates defensive jihad in those countries. This is where salafi-jihadi groups ostensibly part company with the Muslim Brotherhood, which does not accept the ruling of *takfir* against incumbent regimes (and therefore does not consider them as a legitimate target of jihad). The MB does, however, accept the principle that jihad is an individual duty when Muslims come under attack, which is a guiding concept in salafi-jihadi strategic thinking. However, by accepting the principle that Muslims under attack or occupation

causes the jihad to become an individual duty for Muslims, the MB endorses the underlying principles that guide the strategic view of the salafi-jihadi movement. Since the Muslims of the above-mentioned "occupied" lands (not to mention the occupation of Spain—"Andalus") have not repelled the "infidel occupiers," the MB interpretation leads to the same conclusion of al-Qaeda: that jihad has become a personal obligation for all Muslims throughout the world.

Distinctions between defensive and initiated jihad within Islamist strategic thinking are further blurred by the fact that both types employ the same weapons and means. The texts dealing with defensive jihad debate whether to regard all citizens of the "occupying power" as "combatants" (*ahl al-qital*) and whether attacks ("raids" or *ghazawat*) outside the borders of the "invaded" Muslim country are religiously justified. The Egyptian MB's differing positions on the terrorist attacks in Sinai are illustrative, as the attacks could be seen as directed against Israel, Westerners, or the Egyptian regime and were carried out by the *takfiri* group Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad. The MB did not condemn the attack on Taba (October 2004). Noting that it was directed against Israelis ("tourist occupiers"), the MB called it a defensive jihad because it was responding to the "atrocities" of Israel in Palestine and of the United States in Iraq. In his reaction to the next attack, on Sharm al-Sheikh (July 23, 2005), the Egyptian MB General Guide, Muhammad Mahdi Akif, remarked that the aggression and wars perpetrated by global imperialism against the world's peoples gave birth to the culture of violence and terrorism, but he also condemned the attack, saying that it contradicted religion and religious law. Akif's response to the April 24, 2006 attack on Dhahab repeated this condemnation but without any expression of sympathy for the terrorists' motivation, probably because most of the victims were Egyptians and it was clearly directed at the state. Unlike Taba, the Sharm al-Sheikh and Dhahab

bombings were called "terrorist operations" (*'amaliat irhabiyya*) in MB publications.

Shiite Radicalism

The Shiite concept of jihad differs from the Sunni salafi-jihadi concept in two main areas: the causes and goals of jihad—the "threats" toward Islam that warrant jihad—and the leadership of jihad.

In Shiite doctrine, as manifested in Iran and its proxies (Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iraqi Shiite movements), jihad is not simply a means of obtaining a political objective. It is a pillar of faith, a means of testing the belief of a Muslim by putting him through trials and tribulations similar to those endured by the imams Ali and Hussein. It is the path toward achieving unity with Allah's will; it serves the interests of the believers and, in doing so, fulfills the Islamic obligation to serve the community (over and above the individual); and it "pays," as it will be rewarded in this world by Allah, who will give the believers victory.[3] Because Shiite thought holds that initiated jihad must await the reappearance of the Hidden Imam, any current military jihad is defined as defensive and seen as a duty. On this last point, the Shiite concept corresponds to the Sunni salafi-jihadi one.

In contrast to the Sunni salafi-jihadi view, however, Shiite Islamists do not sanction jihad that is a spontaneous defense of the homeland. Defensive jihad requires a decision that can be made only by the "ruler-jurisprudent"(*vali faqih*). He alone has the ability to weigh all the considerations and the authority to decide whether or not the jihad should proceed. The *vali faqih* may also "suspend" jihad (for example, Iran's jihad against Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war) on the basis of realpolitik and the "public interest" (*maslaha*) of the (Iranian) people. The leaders of Iran's proxy organizations, moreover, are subordinate to the *vali faqih*, who is Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei; they must turn to and defer to him, as they do not have the authority

themselves to determine the public good.[4] Khamenei's understanding of the public interest is not, of course, necessarily congruent with the interests of Lebanon, or Iraq in general, or the Shiites of Lebanon or Iraq, or even of Hezbollah or the Mahdi's Army as organizations. He takes into account the wider context of the conflict between Islam (or at least Shiite Islam) and the West—and implicitly gives primacy to Iran's interests over all others.[5] The proxy movements are expected to be willing to risk losses of their own for the greater good as defined by Iran. This principle may be relevant at a time when Hezbollah sees itself as waging a war in the framework of a larger confrontation between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran and Muslims on the other.

The fact that the Shiite jihad requires state leadership does not prevent maneuvers that might encourage a declaration of jihad, nor does it prevent preparations for future jihad while actual fighting is in abeyance. Such preparations include "patience and steadfastness" (*sabr wa-sumud*), training (*tadrib*), self-education and the "jihad of construction" (*jihad al-binaa'*)—building the infrastructure necessary for the future jihad. Jihad is also described as playing a societal role because its very nature—i.e., the willingness of the individual to sacrifice himself—demonstrates dedication to the preeminent needs of society: religious piety, independence and protection of the homeland against the avarice of the infidel imperialists, and the struggle to abolish oppression.[6]

The Pillar of Martyrdom

Sunni Movements

Salafi-jihadi beliefs sanctify self-sacrifice for Allah (*istishhad*) and perceive it as deriving from the duty of jihad. Such self-sacrifice brings with it a significant reward: the assurance of reaching the next

world, or paradise. Only the Islamic faith itself is loftier than jihad and self-sacrifice, and fulfilling these two commandments earns the greatest reward possible. Though state-run Muslim religious establishments refute al-Qaeda's idea of *istishhad,* al-Qaeda is nonetheless attempting to globalize its version. Today this idea has become al-Qaeda's principal weapon in the battle for Iraq, and more recently it began using it in the Maghreb.

The salafi-jihadi movement has inherited from the MB the ideal of martyrdom (*shahada*), not as a necessary evil but as "a consummation devoutly to be wished." Hassan al-Banna even argued that jihad was the second pillar of faith after the testimony of faith that "there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger." Banna also quoted the Hadith, "He who dies and has not fought, and was not resolved to fight, has died a *jahiliyya* (ignorant) death."[7] Martyrdom is central to jihad. Allah grants a "noble life" only to a nation that "knows how to die a noble death."[8] Death is an art (*al-mawt fann*), and Muslims are obliged to prefer it over life if they desire victory.[9] This tenet of the MB makes it difficult to draw a sharp distinction between it and salafi-jihadi beliefs regarding such issues as suicide attacks.

Shiite Radicalism

Radical Shiite ideological texts (mainly Hezbollah texts written in Iran) attest to the centrality of jihad as a "doctrine and a program of action" through which a Muslim may "sacrifice his life for the sake of Allah and attain paradise." Martyrdom "for Allah's sake" (*shahada*) is not a necessary evil but the greatest reward accorded to a *mujahid* and is the pinnacle of jihad. Hezbollah documents quote a saying attributed to Imam Ali (the fourth Caliph and founder of the Shi'a): "Jihad is one of the gateways to paradise, which Allah has opened unto His most loyal believers [only]." Hezbollah's role models are the imams Ali and Hussein, who went into

battle knowing they were heavily outnumbered and that they were going to become martyred. Hezbollah itself is dedicated to that principle, therefore, and portrays itself as embodying self-sacrifice and a willingness to ignore all "pragmatic" considerations out of commitment to Allah.[10] The *mujahid* derives his power from his "revolutionary sentiment"; he challenges rather than succumbs to deprivation. This is the secret of Islam's victories throughout the ages.[11] Hezbollah's slogan—"For verily Hezbollah [the Party of Allah] will overcome"[12]—relates specifically to the organization's dauntlessness in its waging of jihad.

Key Movements and Thinkers

Sunni Ideologues

The Sunni Islamist movements all base their ideology on that of the Muslim Brotherhood and/or the Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula. This ideology interprets Muslim history as a process of deterioration, particularly since the beginning of the twentieth century and after the abolition of the Caliphate. The infiltration of Western mores and culture is largely to blame for this situation.

The literary sources of Islamist strategic thinking are readily available on the Internet and in bookstores across the Muslim world. The discussion of strategic issues is most evident in the writings of "mainstream" Islamist movements, which have "research centers" that perform strategic research (such as those affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt). The Muslim Brotherhood is an ideological movement that encompasses a number of organizations in different Arab countries (mainly Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Sudan and Palestine, where it is known as Hamas) with offshoots in other coun-

tries, including ones in the West. The principal authors of these strategic writings are such prominent clerics as Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Egypt/Qatar), Hasan al-Turabi (Sudan), Sheikh Rashid Ghannushi (Tunisia/London) and Tariq Ramadan.

The world jihad movement led by al-Qaeda has been particularly prolific in developing a corpus of strategic thinking. While this corpus is not contained in any one consensual document, remaining hidden instead in different treatises, it advances many common ideas. The literature focuses on the definition and nature of the enemy, the relations between Islam and the outside world, the movement's ultimate aims, and the ways and means of attaining those aims. It also discusses apocalyptic ideas, implying or even explicitly stating that the present era is approaching the end of days—the pre-ordained time of redemption and victory over Islam's enemies. In any event, it calls on Muslims to spurn indifference and take the destiny of the Umma into their own hands by fulfilling the divine mission of local and global jihad in which Allah has promised victory.

Some of the prominent strategists in this arena are Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Musab al-Suri, Abu Musab al-Najdi, Abu Basir al-Tartusi, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Fares Ahmad al-Shuwayl al-Zahrani (Abu Jandal al-Azdi), Nasser bin Hamad al-Fahd, Ali al-Hamid, and the late Yusuf al-Ayiri. Their writing focuses on methods for re-Islamizing the Muslim world (the jihad against "apostate" regimes), the milestones toward victory over the "infidel" West, and the strategic goals of the Islamist movement—including the model for the future order of the Islamic world after this victory (e.g., the Caliphate model). Other authors affiliated with al-Qaeda in Iraq (such as Abu Abdallah Ahmad al-Imran al-Najdi and Abu Muhammad al-Hilali) deal directly with the strategy in Iraq. Arguably the most authoritative, if not the best-formulated strategy can be found in the writings of al-Qaeda's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Another Sunni movement with prolific writings on strategic goals, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) in Central Asia, adds another element to the Muslim Brotherhood and salafi-jihadi strains of thought. HT strategic writing is far more detailed and elaborate than that produced by either MB or salafi-jihadi thinkers in its description of the envisioned Islamic regime. The movement's founder, Taqi al-Din al-Nabahani, created a "constitution" for the Caliphate as far back as the 1950s, and the party continues to present a comprehensive world view and strategy.[13]

Shiite Ideologues

As noted above, Shiite strategy—the Iranian doctrine of "export of the revolution"—stems primarily from the writings and statements of the Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini. Many years before the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Tehran, Khomeini expounded his main views in his book *Hukumat-I Islami va Velayat-i Faqih* (*Islamic Governance*). This book called on the clergy to take upon themselves, not only spiritual authority, but also political power—the basis of the principle of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the Islamic jurists).

The "Mahdist" doctrine can be found in much-less-definitive texts: sermons of certain clerics, some writings of a scattering of ayatollahs, and the ramblings of the present Iranian president, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, who is neither an ideologue nor a scholar. Some apocalyptic writings that focus on hastening the reappearance of the Hidden Imam are associated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Identification of the Enemy

The perception and definition of the enemy, the laws governing war against the enemy, and the rationale—be it defensive, deterrent or initiated—for that war are pivotal components of Islamist strategy. The growing salafi-jihadi tendency to

include Shiites in the category of "enemy," in both theory and operational behavior, makes it difficult to draw a common picture for Sunni and Shiite movements. In general, however, all Islamist movements hold that the enemy is comprised of both local and external entities that are either overtly or secretly allied with one another.

Sunni Movements

In Sunni jihadist thought, there are two concentric and interrelated enemy circles. The local, inner circle consists of the Arab and Islamic regimes, "the apostates who have abandoned Islam" (*murtaddun*), and the Shiites (the "turncoats" or *rafidi*). The outer circle is the domain of the "infidels" (*kuffar*)—the "Crusaders" (i.e., the West) and the Jews (Zionists).

The two circles are, as noted, inexorably linked. The former are the "agents" of the latter in the Muslim Umma, and the latter are the strategic hinterland of the former. The enemy is assessed in religious terms and presented as analogous to the enemy fought by the Prophet Mohammed. The enemies are not new, therefore, but the same as those the Prophet confronted since the inception of Islam: the infidels without and the apostate traitors within. These latter may be "natural apostates" (*murtadd fitri,* a born Muslim who has left Islam) or "local apostates" (*murtadd milli,* a Muslim convert who has recanted and abandoned Islam). The enemy is amorphous but persistent—in its worldview, its nature as "corrupter of the faith," its hatred of true Islam that follows the path of *al-salaf al-salih*, and its cohesion into a single camp.

In the jihadist worldview, Islam's war against these internal and external enemies is an ancient one and central to Islamic military history. This confrontation was at the root of the Prophet's wars against the original apostates and the tribes that abandoned Islam (the "*ridda*" wars). However, the conflict is not restricted to the purge of Islam from these "apostates" who are perceived as a "fifth column," in the body politic of the Ummah; it arises from a concept of the clash of civilizations that will continue until the end of days. This concept grants no recognition to a world order built on international bodies, treaties, agreements and conventions. All these are worthless because civilizations are, by their very existence, doomed to constant warfare until Islam is ultimately victorious. Success in this existential war will uphold, not only the physical existence of Muslims, but also belief in the unity of God and its rule in the world. This *Weltanschauung* is tied to yet another concept: *al-wala' wa-al-bara'a*, which weds an absolute belief in God with a disavowal of anything representing apostasy—be it idolatry or such concepts as nationalism, democracy and socialism that have been assimilated into Islamic society from the outside world. Hence, Islam's war is not only directed against a physical, concrete enemy, but against an ideological enemy in the form of apostasy and imported ideas.

The "enemy" in the eyes of all Sunni Islamist movements is composed of four main groups: (1) the West, led by the United States, which embodies and spreads an anti-Muslim Judeo-Christian political culture; (2) the Jews, Zionists and Israel, which promote Western concepts, anti-Muslim/anti-Arab attitudes, and conflicts initiated by the "Crusaders"; (3) "apostate" Muslim regimes and rulers; and (4) heterodox and secular or "atheistic" Muslims in general. This last group includes Shiites (*al-Murji'a* and *al-Rafida*), Alawites and Kurds, and has become more central in salafi-jihadi strategy discussions since the war in Iraq. The strategic writings of the different Sunni movements deal with the different goals toward each of these "enemy" groups.

The goal as regards the West is an integrated military-economic defeat. Numerous jihadi texts attribute the power of the West, and particularly of the United States, to its economic domination. The way to end this domination is to execute attacks designed to severely damage the Western economy,

to drain the West's resources by compelling it to continue its war on terror, and to drag the United States into a series of military "quagmires." Such quagmires will generate stronger anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world and increase recruitment for the jihad and opposition to pro-American regimes. Within the jihadi camp, however, there is debate about the legitimacy and practical benefits of terrorist attacks in Western countries. Some thinkers, such as Abu Basir al-Tartusi, consider such attacks to be both illegal and ill-conceived, while others see them as an essential component of the strategy of jihad.

Regarding Israel, the goal is total eradication—which sometimes includes the eradication of all Jews, because certain Quranic verses and Hadiths suggest that the Jews are servants of Satan (the *Dajjal* or Anti-Christ) and their destruction would hasten the "last day" and the final victory of Islam.[14] Most jihadi texts do not focus on the conflict with Israel, however, and tend to see Iraq as more pivotal. This lack of an Israeli focus is evident in the absence of a real effort (except on the part of Hamas and other Palestinian and Lebanese movements) to attack Israeli targets. During the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s, Abdallah Azzam himself wrote a justification for downgrading the strategic importance of the Palestinian problem.

The strategy toward Muslim "apostate" rulers is more contentious. On this subject, MB and salafi-jihadi thinkers are in true ideological disagreement. The former rejects the idea of declaring *takfir* on such rulers and sees conflict with strong incumbent regimes as counterproductive. But even within the salafi camp, there are differences of opinion. Some of the salafi Sheikhs in Saudi Arabia denounced the attacks inside the Kingdom, for example, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's 2005 attacks in Jordan generated a heated debate and seem to have significantly split the Islamist camp. The MB in general (with the exception of the Syrian and Lebanese branches) do declare *takfir* against the Shiites and Alawites. And

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many within the jihadi camp and al-Qaeda itself question the wisdom of acting against the Shiites at this juncture.

Shiite Radicalism

Like Sunni radicalism, the Shiite brand defines the enemy first and foremost by its link to the West. The United States, Britain and Israel form an "axis of evil" intent on toppling the Islamic regime—in collaboration with many of its Arab neighbors. The Iranian regime sees this struggle as an existential Manichean clash between forces of light and forces of darkness. It attributes the enmity of these countries, not to Iran's own political behavior, but to their desire to prevent Iran from achieving its rightful status as a regional power and to block the path of the Islamic revolution. Ideology, rather than mere political or strategic concerns, motivates the United States to try to destroy the Islamic regime. The United States is a demonic "Great Satan," unhampered by moral or international constraints, whereas Iran is the main challenger to its hegemony in the Gulf and the Middle East and the foremost threat to Israel. This situation makes Iran America's prime target, and no American administration would accept a settlement that precluded actions against it. Any agreement with America's European proxies (the U.K. or Germany) would, therefore, be a deception.

The Iranian (and radical Shiite) definition of the "internal enemy" is more complicated. The Iranian regime identifies this element with domestic opposition and with the Mujahidin e-Khalq Organization (MKO), which has been branded as *munafiqun* ("hypocrites" who claimed to be Muslims in the time of the Prophet but who then betrayed the Muslims and are hence damned to the lowest level of hell). Iran's tendency to downplay its Shiite identity has become particularly significant in light of the Sunni-Shiite civil war in Iraq and the growing anti-Shiite sentiment in fundamentalist Sunni circles. Despite such burgeoning anti-Shiite attitudes (particularly in the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia), Iran has not resorted to sectarian anti-Sunni rhetoric. This was true as well during and after the Israel-Lebanon fighting in the summer of 2006, which exacerbated—or at least exposed—the Sunni-Shiite rift. Rather than opening an anti-Sunni front, Iran has instead launched a counterattack against those who are raising the anti-Shiite hysteria. This fact underscores both Iran's ambition to play a leadership role for the entire Muslim world (including Sunnis and Arabs) and the overriding importance its leaders accord to Iran's national interests.[15]

Strategic Visions

The underlying worldview that informs most Islamist strategic thought holds that the Umma has been humiliated by a Western political, cultural and intellectual invasion. Its religion has been corrupted, its political body weakened and its social structure destroyed. The Umma must therefore be restored to true, pure Islam by defeating the West—the immediate enemy—both as a foreign entity and as an internal "fifth column" within Muslim lands.

This goal cannot be achieved merely by individual or collective spiritual repentance. All Islamist movements believe in the integral nature of Islam in which religion and the state are inseparable (*din wa-dawla*), and all have a vision of how to reinstate Islam in its rightful place.

Though it would seem likely that a paradigmatic concept of leadership (Caliph, Imam) would accompany discussions of such long-term goals, this has usually not been the case. One may speculate that modern Islamist movements have preferred to avoid the political pitfalls inherent in the Caliphate model: Who would be the Caliph and how would he be elected and deposed? (Islamic traditions do not provide a clear answer.) How would the Caliphate handle international relations? Would the Caliph be

obliged to support an automatic state of jihad? How would heterodox Muslims (including Shiites) and non-Muslims be treated? Would the former be considered apostates according to neo-Wahhabi doctrine and the latter *dhimmi?* What would be the policy toward absolute polytheists? These issues can be treated with more latitude in a model that does not have a clear Islamic tradition to guide it. Thus, the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia opted for the historic paradigm of a "Kingdom" and the Taliban in Afghanistan founded an "Emirate." The Islamic revolution in Iran never considered the Caliphate or the Emirate paradigm because Shiite doctrine rejects usurpation of the functions of the Imam, and *velayat-e faqih* represents an interim substitute until his return.

Most of the Islamist movements' have refrained, therefore, from presenting one unique legitimate form of government for a future Islamic regime. They have preferred to focus on the principles of Islamic governance, allowing for different forms of rule (sultanate, kingship, tribal inheritance, etc.) as long as the rulers govern according to those principles.

The Islamist movements differing strategic visions can be discerned in the different paradigms they present for the sturcture of the future Islamic order. Five main paradigms are evident: (1) that of the "mainstream" Muslim Brotherhood, (2) that of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, (3) that of the Caliphate idea advocated by salafi-jihadi groups and by Hibz ut-Tahrir, (4) that of the model of the Iranian revolution, and (5) that of the nationalist Islamic movements in Central Asia.

The Mainstream Muslim Brotherhood

The vision of the Muslim Brotherhood was originally put forth by its founder, Hassan al-Banna: "We want the Muslim individual, the Muslim home, the Muslim people, the Muslim government and the Muslim state which will lead the Islamic states, to bring together the scattered Muslims and their ravished lands, then carry the banner of jihad and the flag of the call to Allah until the world will be blessed by Islam's teachings."[16] This statement continues to be posted today on the Egyptian MB's website. All Islamist movements can easily subscribe to this strategic goal, but they develop practical agendas as well to achieve their political aims. The writings of jihad movements include political analysis that, within the general religious frame of reference, indicates an acute awareness of practical political factors.

The vision of the mainstream of the Muslim Brotherhood represents a "lowest common denominator" to which most of the other movements can agree, though they would add elements of their own. In its essence, MB doctrine is gradualist; so as not "to put the cart before the horse," it eschews proposing a detailed prescription for a regime until the stage of *dawa*, or wide-spread ideological propagation and recruitment, has been achieved. While the Brotherhood condemns the abolition of the Caliphate, it holds that the implementation of *sharia* is what defines the Islamic order—not the establishment of a Caliphate.[17] The Islamic state should be bound by three principles. (1) Its fundamental constitution is the Quran. In the Brotherhood's vision, the Islamic regime reinterprets *sharia* and denies the "jurisprudents" (*fuqaha*) and their "legal rulings" (*fiqh*) any sanctity; rejects slavish worship of tradition, opens the door of *ijtihad* for Muslims to be able to meet their present-day needs, and adds to the traditional legal principles of "analogy" (*qiyas*) and "consensus" (*ijma*) the power of the Muslim ruler to legislate for the general welfare. (2) Its government operates on the concept of "consultation" (*shura*) through the institution of *ahl al-shura* or *ahl al-hall wa-al-'aqd*—though parties are to be abolished as they create disunity and are incompatible with Islam.[18] (3) Its ruler is bound by the teachings of Islam and by the will of the people

for whom he serves as a trustee or agent. The ruler must be a Muslim male, he has no hereditary rights, and—unless removed for legal, moral or physical reasons—his tenure may be for life. He may be called Caliph, Imam, King or any other term used in the Quran to designate leadership.

As to a long-term plan of action, timetables and intermediary objectives, the branches and ideologues of the MB differ greatly in their assessments of their struggle—its circumstances, the identity of the enemy, and the current stage of the conflict within the different theaters. These disagreements are particularly evident in the varying attitudes toward armed struggle. Both the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980s and Hamas more recently have used armed struggle against incumbent Muslim regimes, while the Egyptian and Jordanian movements have totally rejected such action. The Syrian MB and Hamas justified their approach by identifying their enemies—the Syrian regime and Israel respectively—as totally non-Muslim. Similarly, the movements disagree about whether to participate in elections organized by the regime, form alliances with other political forces, and accept the principles of liberal democracy. In respect to the question of armed struggle, however, there does seem to have been an incremental shift in the attitude of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood as a result of its close affiliation with Hamas.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood

While the position of the Brotherhood's mainstream regarding modern principles of democracy remains perhaps intentionally cloudy, in December 2004 the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood published a clear, detailed vision in *Al-Mashru' al-Hadhari li-Suriya al Mustaqbal* ("Cultural Project for Syria of the Future") that arguably presents the most "progressive" MB vision in the Arab world. Although this document's progressive embrace of democracy is undoubtedly shaped by the MB's perception that the Syrian regime may indeed fall due to its alliance to non-Islamic forces, this document offers a striking departure from traditional MB ideology. Whether it represents a true evolution of thought—or, as skeptics suspect, a dissimulation in order to gain power—is unknown. It emphasizes the intentions (*maqasid*) of *sharia* and the need to adapt it to "human experience" by taking into account the "jurisprudence of priorities" (*fiqh al-awlawiyyat*) and the "jurisprudence that balances advantages and disadvantages" (*fiqh al-muwazanat*). In an apparent contradiction to the Brotherhood's goal of Islamizing the world, the Syrian document speaks of pluralism (*ta'addudiyya*) as the intention of Allah.[19] It accepts the idea of equality of all citizens, moreover, on the basis of the Medina Pact that the Prophet made with the Jews and Christians of that city—a pact that traditional Islam sees as annulled.

The Caliphate Camp–Hizb ut-Tahrir

For decades Hizb ut-Tahrir has declared that the Caliphate concept is the goal of its struggle. While the MB bemoans the traumatic abolition of the Caliphate, the emphasis on its restoration has until recently been identified mainly with the ideology of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (HT) and its offshoots (such as the Muhajirun). HT offers a comprehensive view of the Caliphate that would rule the Muslim world—and, ultimately, the entire world. This Caliphate is based on the constitution formulated by the movement's founder, Taqiuddin al-Nabahani, in the 1950s. HT is probably the only movement, other than Iran's Islamic regime, that has prepared such a detailed outline of a future regime—though today its spokesmen, mostly in Central Asia, tend to present a vaguely utopian picture. They speak of the disappearance of such social problems as poverty and cor-

ruption in a Caliphate that applies Islamic law, but fail to address how this will be achieved or the problems inherent in political Islam. They simply point out that, after the establishment of the Caliphate, all non-Muslims would be obliged to render tribute (*jizya*) to the Muslim Caliphate and, in exchange, would enjoy its protection. But a refusal to pay *jizya* would warrant a jihad.

The Salafi-Jihadi Caliphate

Over the past few years, various salafi-jihadi scholars have also developed and proposed a Caliphate paradigm, apparently in anticipation of a victory in Iraq that would soon force the jihadi movement to deal with the issue of governance on a practical level.[20] The Iraq war has revived the idea of the ultimate restoration of the Caliphate, which would take place after the post-victory "Emirate" established in Iraq would expand to include additional countries.

Though radical Islamic movements have tended not to formulate political, economic and social programs for the Islamic state or Islamic Caliphate, there are now some signs of increased thinking about the image and foundations of the Caliphate. This is due to the fact that al'Qaeda's leaders no longer see their organization as only a jihadist military group with terror as an objective in itself. Rather, they see it as having grown into a political movement that is battling for the establishment of an independent Islamic entity, which will ultimately be the core of the future Caliphate.

The Shiite Velayat-e Faqih

The Iranian paradigm stands alone. The doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* was never meant to be restricted to the Shiite world. Uniting his concept of governance by those learned in jurisprudence with religious and

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nationalist principles, Khomeini established a regime that had a "manifest destiny" to promote the national interests of Iran—which he saw as being identical to those of the Muslim Umma—and to liberate Muslims from the yoke of Western imperialism. At the core of this outlook is the idea that pan-Islamism will destroy the existing international system and be, in Khomeini's oft-repeated words, "neither East [the Soviet Union and communist ideology] nor West [the United States and capitalism]." According to this view, the super-powers are illegitimate players. Khomeini argued that true Islam had been on the defensive for centuries, and that it must now defend itself through force and war and must expand its borders.

The opportunity to translate Khomeini's ideas into practice emerged following the Iranian revolution of 1979. The doctrine of the "export of revolution" (*sudur inqilab*), which was adopted in Iran as official government policy, promotes a universal vision of revolution to all oppressed peoples, particularly those in the Third World. It holds up the overthrow of the Shah's regime as a successful model for changing human society as a whole and liberating it from enslavement and exploitation. This policy emphasizes the social and political aspects of revolution more than the Shiite religious-ideological aspects—though it was, in theory, supposed to turn Islam in general and Iran in particular into the dominant force in the world. As a practical expression of this outlook, revolutionary Iran developed links and even assisted non-Muslim guerilla groups, including separatist and Marxist organizations in Greece, Northern Ireland, and Spain. But such activities were tempered by realpolitik considerations. Accepting its limitations, Tehran focused its efforts on seizing opportunities and taking advantage of circumstances in the Muslim world. Exporting the revolution to Shiite communities became its first goal.

To succeed in advancing its broader revolutionary policy in the Muslim world, Iran had to bridge two significant divisions. Regarding the Sunni-Shiite split, it had to appeal to Sunnis by obfuscating the differences between the two groups to facilitate its status as a leader acting on behalf of all Muslims. However, it also had to present itself as a model for its Shiite brothers in suffering—the downtrodden (*mostazifan*) who had been dominated and oppressed by the Sunnis—and as the antithesis of Arab Sunni regimes that discriminated against Islamic minorities. Regarding the Iranian-Arab division, revolutionary Iran sought to enhance its self-sufficiency from foreign powers and expand its regional influence—to fulfill its age-old belief in its destiny to become the region's dominant power—while maintaining cordial relations with the Arab world. Only such good relations would allow Iran to implement its "export of revolution" strategy.

ISLAMIST NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

The nationalist movements of the former Soviet Union can be seen more as expressions of "Islamist nationalism" or as "national-Islamist" movements. Their goals tend to emphasize the local and the nationalistic, and they remain vague regarding the "pan-Islamic" facet of their ideology. These movements generally do not even set clear mid-term goals. They describe, instead, a vision in which they "free Muslim lands from Russian occupation and then establish a Muslim state" in which "every person, who defines himself as a Muslim and wishes to … live by the laws of *sharia* in freedom and justice, may join."[21]

They offer no description of what this state would look like, however, except for the fact that it will implement the *sharia*. And these Wahhabi-oriented movements skirt the issue of how such a state would be able to implement the laws of *sharia* on a traditionally Sufi-oriented population.

Operational Thinking

Most Islamist movements tend to focus on the "here and now" in their day-to-day strategic writings. This can be attributed to the fact that, except for the jihad in Iraq, none see themselves as on the verge of taking power, and they are embroiled in a daily struggle with the incumbent regimes. The diversity that exists in the different movements' strategic goals, therefore, is greater in respect to interim goals and tactics. On an operational level, radical Islamic movements have proved to be quite pragmatic and adaptive.

Probably the most immediate and contentious strategic issue for the various Islamist movements concerns the appropriate methods to employ at the current stage of the struggle—and what that stage is. This issue brings into play basic positions on *takfir,* religious principles that prohibit or permit the killing of other Muslims, religious-ideological questions regarding the legitimacy of using various weapons, Islamic rulings about the treatment of prisoners and hostages, and other issues of Islamic law. This subject also forces the organizations involved to assess how far they can go in different theaters without incurring an unsustainable backlash.

Areas of operational tactics widely discussed in Islamist writings include:

1. Priority of targets: which Western powers are more susceptible to pressure and, if hit by terror, will withdraw from Islamic lands. Such an assessment was developed and published, apparently by Sheikh Yusuf al-Ayiri in early 2003, before the attacks in Madrid and seemed to indicate the wisdom of hitting Spain.

2. Classification of targets: the Islamic legality of attacking the economic infrastructure of Muslim countries (particularly oil). This was widely considered a red line that Islamist organizations did not cross, even in the bloody jihad in Algeria. They have, however, recently crossed it in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Another actively discussed issue involves attacking Shiites in Iraq.

3. Classification of weapons: analysis of rulings that concern types of weapons and tactics—such as suicide bombing, hijacking of aircraft (for example, do the rules relating to prisoners of war in jihad apply to the passengers as well?), and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Very little has been written on this last issue.

THE GRADUALIST STRATEGY OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The most obviously pragmatic of the Islamist movements is the Muslim Brotherhood. The movement's strategic gradualism is evident from various historic and contemporary texts, which define the MB as a "comprehensive Islamic body working to establish Allah's religion on earth; to convey Islam's call to all the people in general and to the Muslims in particular; to liberate the Muslim homeland from any non-Islamic rule; to assist Muslim minorities everywhere; to seek to unite all Muslims in one nation; to erect the Islamic state which will implement Islam's rules … to prepare the nation for jihad so that it stands as one front against the invaders and the enemies of Allah, facilitating the foundation of the Rightly Guided Islamic state,"[22] and spreading Islam, a universal religion, all over the world ("mastership of the world," or *ustadhiyyat al-'alam*).[23]

According to its own strategy, the Muslim Brotherhood has reached only the first of the three stages of its struggle. In many countries it has succeeded in "reforming" Muslims and in generating a movement that advocates a return to an Islamic lifestyle—for both individuals and society in general.

The Brotherhood has relegated jihad against regimes within the Muslim world to a later stage, largely for practical reasons rather than from principle (e.g., Islam's prohibition against civil strife [*fitna*] or the duty to obey "he who Allah has placed above you"). Most MB movements simply do not consider the time as ripe for taking over government. Sudan's National Islamic Front (NIF) has been chastened by its period in power during the 1990s and is cautious not to call for an imminent takeover.[24] The experience of unsuccessful jihad against the Tunisian regime also changed the position of the Tunisian Nahda, which had previously espoused violent jihad against the regime but now rejects it.[25] The Jordanian movement, influenced by more extreme voices and its close affiliation with Hamas, has radicalized its agenda over the last decade but still does not see itself as ready to take over the regime. Even Hamas, having won the Palestinian elections in February 2006, is acutely aware of the opposition to its rule and did not wish to assume full power immediately, seeking instead to strike a power-sharing agreement with its secular opponents. The Syrian Brotherhood is the only MB movement that declares its immediate goal to be a takeover of the regime.

The Salafi-Jihadi
Operational Strategy

Even the ostensibly more "ideological" and radical Sunni salafi-jihadi movement has given some theaters priority over others, and chosen targets on the basis of practical considerations rather than dogma. This can be attributed to the fact that most Islamist groups are embroiled in day-to-day conflict that focuses their attention on short and medium-term tactics. As long as the political realities of their countries do not come close to allowing an Islamist takeover, most do not develop a clear long-term Islamic ideological strategy. In each coun-

try, the movements tend to display quite a wide range of opinion.

Terrorist acts outside of Muslim countries generate much discussion. Some radical sheikhs, such as Abu Basir al-Tartusi, oppose these attacks. But most radical Islamists are preoccupied with responding to the West under the banner of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (*al-mu'amala bi-al-mithl*), which to them means that Muslims everywhere must help their brethren whenever and wherever the latter are attacked by American or Zionist "infidels."

In contrast to the "gradualist" and relatively pragmatic strategy of the MB and its affiliates and to the Iranian regime's need to consider its national interests, salafi-jihadi groups espouse a more proactive and dynamic strategy. Its guiding principles, compiled from various texts, include:

• All Western countries are defined as *bilad al-harb* (enemy lands), which permit Muslims freedom of action in waging war and in the use of any possible means to inflict damage and to spill the enemy's blood (*istihlal*). The enemy's "people, blood, money and women's honor (*a'raduham*)" are permitted to Muslims, as they were to the Prophet Mohammed in his wars against Quraysh, Bani Uqayl, Bani Nasir and al-Ta'if.

• Striking against the enemy's centers of economic and military power and symbols not only strikes at the enemy's arrogance, but also inflicts tremendous material damage and causes collapse. The obligation is to bring about change by using force rather than relying on political influence.

• Extending military actions into the heart of enemy territory (*'aqr darihi*) advances the goal of bringing about the enemy's collapse. Al-Qaeda's aim is to attack American targets throughout the world, and it has executed actions on several continents, thus demonstrating its commitment to engaging the enemy on its own territory.

• Using propaganda and psychological warfare complements the use of military force.

• Threatening force can be effective, as when Bin Laden asserted his right to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. His plans' focus, however, is on the actual use of weapons against his enemies. Armed violence and military force—the "life of killing and battle"—are the principal, and almost only, means of influence that he considers worthwhile.

• Decentralization is the way that al-Qaeda and its allies conduct and execute jihad. Each acts independently in its own theater in accordance with prevailing circumstances.[26]

On the eve of the occupation of Iraq, Abu Umar al-Sayf used the following rationale in calling for jihad in the form of long-term guerilla warfare:[27]

• Prolonged guerilla warfare is the Achilles heel of modern armies and their weaponry. Israel suffered heavy casualties in guerilla warfare in Palestine and Lebanon.

• The U.S. entanglement in two simultaneous guerilla wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, will accelerate its defeat.

• Iraq's size and great quantity of weapons will facilitate guerilla warfare, cause the enemy to disintegrate, and make it impossible for the enemy to control the country.

• Defending Iraq is equivalent to defending the Umma and Muslim countries that the Americans are likely to target in the future. Also, fighting and defeating Americans is the same as fighting and defeating the Jews.

A compilation of different salafi-jihadi discussions

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regarding the stages of the jihad reveals the following phases:

• *Awakening the masses* began in earnest on September 11, 2001 and continues with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The goal is to broaden the ranks of the jihadi movement and generate local opposition to the "apostate regimes."

• *Attrition* (*harb istinzaf*) focuses on bleeding the West economically, militarily, and politically until it disengages from Muslim lands altogether and severs its alliances with the "apostate regimes" (In this context, some texts mention the abandonment of South Vietnam and the Shah's regime as cases in point.)

• *Control of Iraq* or the battle for Iraq is perceived by the salafi-jihadi thinkers as a historic, not-to-be-missed opportunity to establish a stepping-stone that can be used to expand jihad to adjacent theaters, to occupy those theaters, and to unify them under an Islamic Caliphate.

• *Toppling "apostate regimes"* focuses first on the "inner circle" of susceptible regimes, such as Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. This stage is sometimes referred to as *tasfiyyat hisabat* " (settling accounts). The revolutionary nature of the jihadi strategy—in contrast with the more gradualist Muslim Brotherhood approach—is based on the conviction that it is impossible to adequately reform a "Muslim" country led by "apostate rulers" or to adapt it to the Islamist model. What is needed is a general revolution and the reestablishment of the Islamic state, from top to bottom.

• *Taking control of the formerly "apostate" lands* is considered to be one of the most sensitive stages, as the breakdown of the old regimes will most result in a breakdown of law and order.[28]

• *Establishing sharia law* as the basis of the new

regimes is crucial, though these regimes may not be identical in form initially. Only at a later stage will unity be achieved.

• *Purging all Western influences from the Muslim world* requires the total liberation of all Muslim lands—including Palestine, Kashmir, and al-Andalus (Spain)—that are currently ruled by "infidels."

• *Reestablishment of the Caliphate* is viewed as the last phase in organizing the Muslim world. This will then allow for the final confrontation with the West.

• *Final conflict* is the stage that, in many jihadi texts, is intertwined with eschatological allusions.
It would be difficult to overstate the importance that salafi-jihadi thinkers have attached to the fate of Iraq. Although al-Qaeda's declaration establishing the Islamic State of Iraq may seem premature, it symbolizes the central role that Iraq plays in the movement's larger plans. In the last year there has been some initial thinking in jihadi circles regarding the lessons that should be learned from their failures in Iraq; these are occasionally attributed to lack of leadership and to a gap between the *mujahidin* and the population.

Iranian Revolutionary Pragmatism

While tactical pragmatism is a hallmark of the Sunni movements, it is an even more pronounced characteristic of Iran's Islamic regime, which pursues its radical agenda by continually adapting to actual conditions on the ground. Since its inception, the regime has been committed to jihad and to the "export of revolution" (*sudur inqilab*) or the "propagation of Islam" (*tablighi eslami*). The regime sees the former as a fundamental Islamic duty and the latter as a prime tenet of its own ideology,

enshrined in the constitution and the works of Khomeini. Jihad must be waged against Israel and the West, and the Iranian revolution must be exported to fellow Muslims.

Terrorism, as commonly defined in the West, has played both a tactical and strategic role in this context. It has been used as a tactical weapon against the Iranian opposition, against the American presence in the Middle East and Israel, and as a means of increasing Iran's influence in both the Arab world and the wider Muslim world. On the strategic level, it strengthens Iran's deterrent posture vis-à-vis its enemies by enhancing Iran's image as a state with a formidable terrorist capability that it is willing to employ. Iran fosters this image by justifying (while denying involvement in) acts of terrorism against Israel and the United States, supporting Islamic terrorist organizations in all parts of the globe, and "predicting" massive Muslim reactions to American and Israeli policies.

Iran's support of terrorist organizations serves a number of its goals:

1. To maintain its commitment to Khomeini's doctrines of jihad and the "export of revolution."

2. To pose a threat to Israel, both for ideological reasons and to deter Israel from acting against it.

3. To further Iran's national objectives of hegemony in the Gulf and the Sunni Arab world by promoting Islamist opposition to the pro-Western regimes in those countries.

4. To serve as a strategic deterrent against the United States, as long as Iran lacks a nuclear deterrent, by posing the threat of widespread terrorism in retaliation for any hostile acts toward Iran. The military asymmetry that exists between Iran and its enemies, combined with the regime's conviction that these enemies remain committed to toppling its government, have led it to conclude that Iran must rely on

"sub-conventional" warfare—(i.e., terrorism). This includes attacking Israel from Lebanon, taking Israeli hostages, supporting Palestinian terrorism, and occasionally using international terror to demonstrate a "long-arm" capability commensurate (*mutatis mutandis*) with that of its enemies to hit Iran.

5. To enhance Iran's standing in the eyes of radical Sunni Islamist organizations as the only state willing to challenge Israel and the United States, and thus to draw them into its orbit and accord Iran a foothold in the heart of the Arab Middle East.

6. To serve as a bargaining chip that can eventually be traded for concessions on other issues important to its interests. This helps explain Iran's links with al-Qaeda, despite that organization's Wahhabi and anti-Shiite ideology.

Acquisition and Use of WMD

A small number of salafi-jihadi intellectuals have addressed the question of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), focusing on whether their use is legally permissible (given that they may kill Muslims as well as infidels, etc.). A key Sunni scholar who has published an elaborate treatise on the subject is the Saudi Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al-Fahd. In May 2003 Fahd issued a long *fatwa* justifying the use of WMD even if it causes the death of children and other Muslims, and reached the conclusion that using such weapons against the United States is obligatory. Fahd based his argument on the notion of reciprocity—that is, the behavior of the United States against Muslims warrants the use of WMD.[29]

Typical MB reasoning on the subject of nuclear weapons takes its cue from the Islamic laws of *al-mu'amala bi-al-mithl* (*lex talionis*): "In case these nuclear weapons are used against Muslims, it

becomes permissible for Muslims to defend themselves using the same weapon, based on the Quran (Sura 16:126): 'If you punish, then punish with the like of that by which you were afflicted.'"[30] Sheikh al-Qaradawi, on the other hand, went on record in favor of Muslims acquiring nuclear weapons but only for the purpose of deterrence; he ruled that their actual use is *haram* (forbidden).[31]

A rare reference to the question can be found in Hizb ut-Tahrir literature as well. Writing in the HT journal *Al-Wa'i,* Imran Wahed, the leader of the London-based HT, stated:

> According to the *Shari'a*, a Muslim is allowed to use all means and methods against the *kuffar* (infidels) if he intends to destroy them. When a Muslim blows himself up, this act is considered as a Jihadic act in the name of Allah. If a [non-Muslim] woman is considered a fighter, a Muslim has the right (according to the *Shari'a*) to kill her. If the enemy uses WMD as it happens nowadays in Palestine, we will definitely use these kinds of weapons too.[32]

Imran Wahed indicates in the article that HT *ulama* (religious scholars) support the use of WMD in theory and, in the future, possibly in practice—though they see no need to use them now.

Arguments favoring the acquisition of nuclear weapons are not confined to the radical margins of the Islamist movement, however. Even the Fatwa Committee of al-Azhar (an orthodox Egyptian state body) maintains that, as long as nuclear weapons are held by the enemies of the Muslims—the United States, Israel, or any other nation—it is the Islamic duty of all Muslim countries to acquire such weapons. A Muslim regime that does not fulfill this duty is a sinner and may be guilty of "corruption (*fasad*) on earth." The aim of having these weapons is, first and foremost, deterrence: to "make the enemies of the Umma tremble."[33] The Sheikh of al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, drew an analogy from the ruling of the Caliph Abu Bakr "to fight the enemy with a sword if he fights with a sword and … with a spear if he fights with a spear." Tantawi contended that, had Abu Bakr lived today, he would have similarly declared that Muslims have a duty to fight the enemy with a nuclear bomb if the enemy uses a nuclear bomb.[34]

There does not, however, seem to be a serious strategic discussion of the implications of using such weapons. And the discussion of WMD per se is mainly focused on nuclear weapons. Chemical and radiological weapons are generally perceived to be legitimate and not requiring a special dispensation, at least when they are used against infidels.

The Islamic legality of nuclear weapons became an issue in Shiite Iran as far back as the early 1980s.[35] When he acceded to power in 1979, Khomeini ordered the suspension of the Shah's nuclear program and is said to have issued a *fatwa* declaring that nuclear weapons are "from Satan." While there is no indication that Khomeini issued a subsequent *fatwa* rescinding his decision, the nuclear program was nonetheless revived while he was still alive. But Khomeini's 1979 position remains in force among many of the traditional "quietist" clerics, who claim that there is a consensus (*ijma'*) among the senior clerics that the prohibition on nuclear weapons (or WMD in general) is "self-evident in Islam" and an "eternal law" that cannot be reversed because a basic function of these weapons is to kill innocent people.[36] This principle was behind Iran's decision not to use chemical weapons against Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war.[37] In September 2003 the scholars of Qom issued an addition *fatwa* stating that "nuclear weapons are un-Islamic because they are inhumane."[38] During the negotiations between Iran and the three European nations (the U.K., France, and Germany) over Iran's nuclear program, the Iranians also claimed that the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had issued a *fatwa* prohibiting nuclear weapons—though, in fact, no such *fatwa* had been issued. ■

Appendix A

Participants in Round Tables and studies:

Dr. Muhammad al-Atawna (BGU)

Mr. Shmuel Bachar (IPS Herzliya)

Dr. Shmuel Bar (IPS Herzliya)

Mr. Eric Brown (Hudson Institute)

Mr. Glenn Carle (Deputy NIO for Trans-national threats/ DNI/NIC)

Ms. Moria Cohen (IPS, Herzliya)

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Dr. Israel Elad-Altman (IPS, Herzliya)

Dr. Giora Eliraz (HUJ)

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Dr. Hillel Fradkin (Hudson Institute)

Prof. Moshe Gammer (TAU)

Prof. Isaac Hasson (HUJ)

Mr. Pinchas Inbari (JCPA)

Mr. Michael Kahanov (TAU)

Dr. Mordechai Kedar (BIU)

Dr. Yoram Kehati (CSS)

Prof. Martin Kramer (TAU)

Prof. Ella Landau-Tasseron (HUJ)

Prof. Bernard Lewis (Princeton U)

Ms. Dina Lisnyansky (HUJ)

Dr. Liora Lukits (Truman Institute)

Ms. Rachel Machtiger (IPS Herzliya)

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Dr. Josh Teitelbaum (TAU)

Kenneth Weinstein (Hudson Institute)

Mr. James Woolsey (Former DCI)

Mr. David Wurmser (Advisor OVP)

Mrs. Meyrav Wurmser (Hudson Institute)

NOTES

1. *Fatwa:* Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Muesharat fi Intisar al-Islam" ("Portents for the Victory of Islam"), 1 April 2002, http://www.islomonline.net/fatwa/arabit/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=2042.

2. *Fatwa:* Sheikh al-Khudhayr, 21 September 2001, quoted in *MEMRI, Special Report* 25 (2004), http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sr&ID=SR2504#_edn12; http://saaid.net/Warathah/khudier/k5.htm.

3. See Na'im Qassem, *Hizbullah, The Story from Within* (London: Saqi Books, 2005), pp. 34–39.

4. Ibid., p. 39.

5. This is not seen as a capricious or cynical preference. Khomeini himself ruled that the continued existence of the Islamic regime in Iran takes precedence over all other duties and considerations. This is because it is the only regime that can protect Islam, and its destruction would threaten Islam in general.

6. Various pamphlets found in south Lebanon.

7. "Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun wa-'Awdat al-Sahwa al-Islamiyyah" ("The Muslim Brotherhood and the Reawakening of Islam"), www.ikhwanonline.com, 10 July 2005.

8. Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 206-207.

9. Ibid.

10. *Al-Jihad* (pamphlet found in south Lebanon), Imam Khomeini Cultural Center, Harat Huriek, Beirut.

11. Ibid., p. 34.

12. Surat al-Ma'ida (5:56). The verse also warns against "taking Jews and Christians as friends" and contains the prophecy that Allah will choose those who "love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, wage jihad for Allah's sake and do not fear censure" to be victorious.

13. It does so in such books as *Minhaj*, which deals with how the party intends to found a Caliphate, and *Nizal al-Islam*, which describes the Islamic regime in great detail.

14. "The [last] hour will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them. A Jew will hide behind a rock or a tree, and the rock or tree will call upon the Muslim: 'O Muslim, O Slave of Allah! There is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.' " *Sahih Muslim,* Book 041, No. 6985.

15. See Khamenei: http://www.leader.ir/langs/EN/index.php.

16. "Ahdaf al-Ikhwan al Muslimin" ("The Goals of the Muslim Brotherhood"), www.ikhwanonline.com/Target.asp.

17. The traditional Muslim Brotherhood view of the reinstatement of the Caliphate is that such a regime is to be created only after the final reunification of the Muslims under one political umbrella. Mitchell, pp. 232-235; Amir Weissbrod, *Turabi: Spokesman of Radical Islam* (Tel-Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, 1999), in Hebrew, p. 97.

18. Mitchell, p. 261.

19. Quoting verses of the Quran: "Had your God wished so, every one on earth would have become a believer" (Sura 10:99); "I created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you know each other" (Sura 49:13), and "Had your God so wished, he could have made all mankind one nation" (Sura 16:93).

20. See, for example, Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi. http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2007/03/31/50294.shtml

22. An updated version of the stages of the MB strategy can be found in the "Mustaqbal al-Tanzim al-Duwali li-Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin," *Wikalat al-Ahram lil-Sahafi*, www.diwanalarab.com, 29 January 2006

23. Mitchell, p.308.

24. Hasan Turabi, leader of the National Islamic Front of Sudan, played a leading role in the June 1989 military coup d'état. At that time, he argued that it was impossible to reach power by peaceful means because "the Crusader and Imperialist forces preclude the arrival of Islam to power." In fact, he had been preparing for a coup using the military for years and wrote that the Islamists should create the option to take power by force, and to do so they should mobilize the support of the military through political participation and gradual penetration of state institutions. When he was in power, he said that in the first stage of the Islamic experiment, the state should be given absolute authority in every field, and that the vision of an Islamic civil society running its affairs independently of the government would materialize only at a much later stage. After his downfall in the late 1990s, Turabi returned to the position he had held much earlier, when he had rejected military means for reaching power. But even after the Hamas victory and the Egyptian MB's gains in national elections, he expressed deep skepticism about the ability of Islamist movements to reach power through democratic means because of the West's commitment to preserving its civilization in the face of Islam.

25. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the movement was involved in violent activities against the government. Its leader Ghannushi, particularly embittered by what he considered to be the regime's denial of the movement's electoral achievements, concluded that nonviolent political means would not take the Islamists very far. He then sought to eliminate the rulers, whom he called apostates. "Facing a terrible fate," he wrote, "our nation has only jihad against the regimes of heresy, tyranny, tribalism, particularism and loyalty to the foreigner." A decade later, however, he wrote that the results of the jihad against unjust and tyrannical governments were poor and in some cases catastrophic. He did not call this kind of jihad illegitimate, but endorsed the alternative of seeking change through peaceful means.

26. Diya' Rashwan (ed.), *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyya fi al-'Alam* (World Islamic Movements) (**Add City:** Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies, 2006) , pp. 259-263, 265.

27. Abu Umar al-Sayf, *Maqasid al-Jihad wa-Anwa'uhu* (*The Objectives and Types of Jihad*), Minbar al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad.

28. See Abu Bakr Naji, "*Idarat al-Tawahush:* The Most Dangerous Phase That The Islamic Nation Will Go Through," Center for Islamic Studies and Research, as posted on the al-Firdaws website, October 2005.

29. Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al-Fahd, *Risalah fi HukmIstikhdam Aslihat al-Damar al-Shamil didd al-Kuffar* (*A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Infidels*), n.p., 1 May 2003.

30. *Fatwa:* Sheikh Faysal Mawlawi, "Using WMD in War: Islamic View," 16 December 2002, http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=52398.

31. Qaradawi to Qatari TV, 18 October 2002.

31. *Al-Wa'i,* no. 170 (June 2001).

32. *Fatwa:* Sheikh Ala' al-Shanawihi, "Imtilak al-Asliha al Naawawiyya Wajib" ("Possessing Nuclear Weapons Is Mandatory"), fax text in handwriting, no source, http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/news/2002-12/23/article06.shtml.

33. http://www.islamonline.net/iol-arabic/dowalia/alhadath-17-11/alhadath2.asp, 17 November 1999.

34. Shmuel Bar, *Iranian Defense Doctrine and Decision Making*, (Herzliya: Institute for Policy and Strategy, 2004), p. 51.

35. Ayatollah Montazeri, interview with *Die Welt*, 9 November 2003.

36. Ayatollah Saanei interviewed by Robert Collier, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 31 October 2003: A1.

37. Mustafa al-Labbad, "Pressuring Tehran," *Al-Ahram Weekly* 656 (2003).

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