

INTRODUCTION: THE CALL TO JIHAD

Abandoning Jihad is the cause of the humiliation and division in which Muslims live today.

Muhammad Abd-al-Salam al-Farag, *The Neglected Duty*

VIOLENT CONFRONTATION between Islamic radicalism and the West has been one of the defining features of the first decade of the twenty-first century.¹ The tragic events of September 11, 2001, in the United States and subsequent attacks in Madrid and London, combined with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have shown how the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism has fostered among some Muslims the belief that a religious war (*jihad*) is required to fight against infidels, who are thought to be invading holy places or working against the Islamic faith as a result of Christian beliefs.² *Jihad* means “to strive” or “to struggle” in Arabic. The term has a dual religious connotation, involving an outwardly directed struggle against oppression and tyranny and an inwardly directed personal struggle for holiness. The terrorism that has resulted from the fusion of Islamic radicalism and violent jihad has led to intense debate over whether the West and the Islamic world are engaged in a clash between civilizations; it has also led to regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq, electoral defeats of conservative governments allied with the United States in Spain and Italy, conflict over the balance between civil liberties and security, abuses of human rights, and the deaths of thousands of people.³ Originally, the conflict was perceived to be a battle against a specific group, al-Qa’ida. However, with the passage of time it has become increasingly apparent that the battle has evolved into an ongoing struggle against an amorphous and seldom understood network of religious extremists who believe they are engaged in a holy war against enemies of Islam. Although this book focuses on violence committed and justified in the name of Islam, it is important for readers to recognize the lack of convincing evidence that the religion itself makes its adherents violent.

The nexus between the global jihad and Islamic radicalism, including the use of terrorism as the basis for restoring the caliphate, is the subject of

this book. The term *caliphate*—*al-Khilafah* in Arabic—refers to a unified system of temporal authority exercised by a successor to the Prophet Muhammad over the community of believers.⁴ During his lifetime, Muhammad was not only the Muslim political and military leader, but also the source of religious revelation as the Muslim prophet. All law and spiritual practice proceeded from Muhammad. Most academic scholars agree that Muhammad had not explicitly established how the Muslim community was to be governed after his death in 632.

The caliphate was created in response to the two critical questions his followers faced: (1) who was to succeed Muhammad? and (2) what political, military, legal, and/or religious authority could he exercise? The answer was to follow standard Arab practice at the time and use a *shura* (Arabic for consultation), in which his leading followers selected one of Muhammad's relatives to be *caliph* with full temporal authority but no authority over religious doctrine. Historically, the caliph—frequently called the *Amir al-Mu'minin*, which in Arabic means “Commander of the Faithful”—ruled over the territory called *Dar al-Islam* (Land of Islam), which was controlled by the caliphate and subject to Islamic law. The caliphate was created after Muhammad's death when Abu Bakr, his close companion and kinsman, became the first of the *Rashidun* (righteously guided) caliphs. Sunnis recognize all four of the patriarchal caliphs who were Muhammad's kinsmen—Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib—as the *Rashidun*, but Shi'ites consider Ali to be the first caliph. After Ali's death, a series of dynasties—sometimes competing as rivals for primacy—assumed control over the caliphate. The title was claimed by the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and the Ottomans, as well as by other competing lineages in Spain, North Africa, and Egypt, primarily as a result of their successful use of military power. At its zenith under the Ottomans, the caliphate encompassed the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans, and extended into portions of Central Europe. The historical caliphate was abolished in 1924 as a part of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reforms.⁵

The current jihadist view of the caliphate differs significantly from historical experience and traditional understanding. The concept of the caliphate, as used by al-Qa'ida and others, is not based on leadership or territory. Instead, it symbolizes the ultimate goal to be achieved by a successful global jihad. It represents the final point of victory in which Muslims live under God's authority without interference by corrupt elements. The lack of well-delineated geographical limits for the caliphate helps

foster the underlying universalism of jihadist ideology, since it supports assertions that the caliphate should be restored wherever Muslims live so that they can flourish under Islamic law.⁶

Prior to September 11, the threat posed by Islamic terrorism was most often viewed as a local or regional phenomenon, even when media coverage brought vivid images such as the carnage at the 1972 Munich Olympics or the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania onto the global stage. Mirroring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, the actual risks of terrorism remained primarily confined to the Middle East. Starting in the 1980s, three key factors linked to the emergence of Islamic radicalism contributed to the transformation of modern terrorism. Mass movements such as Hizballah and Hamas explicitly grounded their political objectives in Islamist rhetoric with calls to jihad while remaining focused on local or regional goals. The defeat of the Red Army by the mujahidin and the former Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 after ten years of brutal war was heralded widely as proof that Islam had triumphed over a superpower. At the same time, al-Qa'ida emerged as an explicitly jihadist-oriented organization espousing even more expansive political objectives: removal of existing Muslim governments and borders along with restoration of the caliphate throughout the Islamic world. In fiery public statements, Usama bin Laden placed the Western world squarely in the crosshairs, both for its support to Israel and for what was considered to be an intolerable Western presence and influence in Muslim lands, as well as for its perceived opposition to the goals of jihad. In the aftermath of September 11, the transformation of the underlying dynamics of terrorism became a reality once the jihadist movement targeted the United States and friendly nations' interests on a worldwide basis. Terrorism is a deliberate tactic adopted by the jihadist movement. It is also an extremely efficient way to impact the political and social climate of the West because of its sensitivity to casualties. The jihadists have quite clearly identified their enemies as legitimate targets of violence, and we make no apology for characterizing their actions as terrorist in this work.

We recognize that far too many experts on terrorism draw sweeping generalizations, based on selectively assembling isolated facts, in order to advocate an a priori position. We also recognize that possessing Arabic language skills is not synonymous with being a terrorism expert. In the chapters that follow, we have avoided falling prey to either pitfall by linking understanding of the language and knowledge about terrorism. Our

analysis of terrorism and the global jihad is evidence-based and grounded in the application of scientific method. We systematically examine the doctrine, strategy, and tactics of the jihadists, especially al-Qa'ida, in order to draw conclusions. We draw heavily on our own experience with counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and intelligence combined with analysis that incorporates Arabic language statements made by the jihadists themselves in their writings, chat rooms, websites, and blogs. Blogs as we know them in the United States have not proliferated widely in the Arabic-speaking jihadist community. The vast majority, if not all, of the jihadist sources we rely on were posted originally to website forums. Chat rooms generally do not have the volume or quality of literature and discussion that website forums do. Being able to understand the language is an essential tool in order to rely on original sources rather than secondary analysis of translations. As a result, we are able to make heavy use of published material that is not commonly available to non-Arabic speakers. We also draw on statistical analysis of open-source data and the scholarly insights of other observers of terrorism and counterinsurgency. Our hope is that our analysis and conclusions will stimulate ongoing dialogue among both specialists in terrorism and the broader public about the implications for international security of this nexus between terrorism and the global jihad.

ELEMENTS OF JIHADIST IDEOLOGY

The jihadist movement evokes imagery of a holy war promising, after victory, that everything will be vastly improved and that engagement in the noble cause gives meaning to life. For the jihadists, a mythic struggle is raging and through their actions they are able to affect its outcome.⁷ Those who point out the inconsistencies between jihadist ideology and Islamic law are automatically considered apostates for their sympathy for the infidel or the killer of Muslims and are therefore also targeted. The need to be accepted as a full-fledged member of the group and not to be considered an outsider can heighten the drive to please one's comrades-in-arms in this religious struggle. Moreover, by stressing the mythic aspects of the undertaking and limiting combat roles to terrorism and sporadic insurgency, the jihadist organizations have essentially lengthened the fighting lifespan of their mujahidin.⁸

The jihadist movement grows out of and is sustained by a pervasive ideology that is constantly evolving. For purposes of this book, *ideology* is defined as a set of structured cognitive and affective attitudes that form a belief system for an individual or group. The elements of that belief system provide a philosophical foundation or mental framework for interpreting and explaining both observable and nonobservable phenomena. In addition to ethical or moral guidance, goals and means to attain those goals also are subsumed under a belief system. As such, a belief system provides a basis for determining the “good,” long-term end points, and proper actions to attain those end points. Perhaps ironically, its ongoing evolution has been a key factor in making the jihadist ideology’s appeal so pervasive, creating recruits and sympathizers while simultaneously fostering doctrinal strife within the movement, especially over tactics. Analysts of al-Qa’ida and its associated groups must take into account their differences and how those differences affect relations with other groups and the movement as a whole.

This book examines major elements in the ideology of the jihadist movement led by al-Qa’ida in order to identify and explain instances of disagreement and dissent, and to understand how the movement’s ideology has evolved over time. Significant attention is devoted to jihadist strategic and tactical ideology, in which much variation in approach and emphasis is evident. We readily concede that most jihadists are not philosophers or strategic thinkers, but strategy and tactics are often presented in connection with the movement’s underlying philosophical foundations, both political and religious. In some cases, such as Abu-Mus’ab al-Suri’s theories on decentralization, strategy and tactics actually rely completely on ideology. We also assess how the movement has been transformed into a symbolic guide for a new generation of jihadists who may operate independently, following and adapting the al-Qa’ida ideal into the basis for self-directed local action. This new trend towards idea-based, autonomous action may actually prove to be the biggest security threat yet. The jihadist movement’s evolution may hold the key to decreasing its lethality and effectiveness. The easiest way to identify and understand these changes is to pay attention to what they say and what they do. Unless we understand their doctrine, strategy, and tactics, we are inevitably doomed to failure in our attempts to understand and thwart the logic driving their rhetoric and behavior.⁹

It is worth noting that religion per se is not the exclusive focal point for all of jihadist ideology. Some parts of the ideology are quite political.

And, in some senses, elements of the jihadist ideology are even secular in orientation. Taken as a whole, however, even its less overtly theological elements typically are presented in the context of religious goals.

Jihadist ideology can be evaluated on three distinct levels. First, it is grounded in a set of broad philosophical foundations that provide the underlying rationale for the movement. Those philosophical foundations comprise the ideology's core religious, moral, and ethical justifications for action, including terrorism. They are essentially universal in scope with a few common themes articulated across the broad spectrum of jihadist groups. Those shared values play a central role in holding together the global jihad as a nonhierarchical social movement, and one subscribes to these values when declaring: "I am a jihadist." As such, the macro-level philosophical component changes very little from group to group and is the most prevalent component in propaganda. Because it has mass appeal, a shared philosophy allows jihadist cooperation across borders and oceans, playing as well in London or Madrid as it does in Karachi. The philosophical foundations bind the jihadist movement together and foster cooperation between jihadist groups with strategic and tactical differences.

The second level offers insights into the movement's long-term strategic goals and vision for the future. Many strategic aspects of jihadist action, such as shifting between targeting the Near Enemy and focusing on the Far Enemy, are increasingly important in defining the overall worldview of the movement. For the jihadists, the Near Enemy consists of secular "apostate" regimes in Muslim countries, such as Egypt or Syria, that the jihadists oppose, while the Far Enemy is the Western governments such as the United States and the United Kingdom that support those local regimes. However, because strategic doctrine inescapably reflects changing circumstances and provides insights into an individual's or group's short-term and long-term goals, it typically is more fluid than the underlying philosophical foundations of jihadist ideology. Inevitably, in order to be successful, strategy must reflect situational reality and change as the jihadists adapt to new challenges, threats, or opportunities. Consequently, jihadist strategic ideology is more likely to be specific to certain elements of the movement. It is likely to have more local coloration as the larger philosophy gets interpreted regionally or nationally into on-the-ground actions. Although globalizing the jihad has taken the spotlight off of the core al-Qa'ida leadership somewhat, its two most visible leaders—Usama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri—still

hold great importance in the movement, especially in articulating a strategic vision for guiding, inspiring, and justifying the jihad.

The third level consists of tactical guidance for organizing and executing actions to advance the jihadist cause. The word *tactics* refers to specific organizational and operational forms of guidance that are elements of the ideology. For example, discussions of suicide or martyrdom tactics or assassination in a particular manner such as beheading have ideological significance and meaning. The choice of tactics for jihadist operations is greatly impacted by the philosophy of the movement and changes in strategy. Tactical ideology frequently is presented in a precise, phase-oriented way and is often the most logical and pragmatic part of jihadist ideology. Moreover, tactical thought is even more variable and specific to individual jihadist leaders, usually revolving around targeting doctrine. Not surprisingly, the fluctuations in tactics over time that are evident when one examines the operations of jihadist groups reflect ongoing changes in the resources of the various groups and the security environments in which they operate.¹⁰ As a result, the tactical program that has been adopted by the jihadist movement is generally leader-specific and changes over time. Hence, when these programs change, the changes are quite significant and often involve a shift or refocusing in targeting doctrine. For example, although the public has been horrified and repulsed by images of extreme violence and destruction carried out by religious-based terrorists, ideology plays a large part in many targeting practices by legitimizing them theologically. It has functioned as an essential element in the emergence and evolution of al-Qa'ida, which currently is the preeminent terrorist organization seeking to advance a global jihad.

Because ideas bind individuals to the movement, a coherent ideology is important, something that jihadist organizations such as al-Qa'ida consciously strive to maintain.¹¹ Although a common ideology does not create common interests, it makes such interests much easier to be discovered and exploited to mutual benefit.¹² The fact that the al-Qa'ida ideology is so broad-based, malleable, and able to be applied to a number of countries and regions is a major reason that it is able to resonate with militants across boundaries of class and education. This reflects the fact that the global jihadist movement is based on a shared ideology that imparts to its adherents a philosophical certainty that violent actions must be carried out to further divinely inspired edicts. Al-Qa'ida and bin Laden's embrace of terrorism, coupled with their effective use of history, religious thought, and philosophical tenets, have allowed them to successfully carry out a

series of terrorist attacks against the United States. Those attacks have elevated them to near mythological status in the jihadist movement; this in turn has resulted in al-Qa'ida being an ideal that Islamic militants around the world now wish to emulate. This underscores the importance of examining its political dimensions in order to illuminate what is frequently referred to as the root causes of Islamic terrorism.

THE ASCENDANCY OF RADICAL ISLAM

Islam, since its earliest days in the seventh century, has had a political valence. The teachings of Islam, especially the Qur'an, provide much of the vocabulary for expressing political ideas, since politics and religion are seen as part of the same sphere, unlike the secular and religious dichotomy that dominates contemporary Western political theory. Islamist groups—both violent and nonviolent—are able to use this vocabulary to their advantage in order to make the case for reform, justice, and social change.¹³ Political Islamist groups, primarily led by individuals who are not ulemas, advocate structuring Muslim society according to their interpretations of an integrated cultural-political framework that embodies their perceptions of the core tenets of Islam.¹⁴ This is not surprising because Islam functions as a social force to very powerfully reinforce the self-identity of Muslims, especially in states with intense religious and ethnic conflicts over Muslim community rights and aspirations for autonomy.¹⁵ As a result, Islamist thought shapes much of the political landscape throughout the contemporary Muslim world by default, since no other ideology is generally seen as offering solutions to everyday problems while maintaining Muslim values.

The shortcomings, including rampant corruption and official venality, of secular regimes in the Middle East have contributed to support for Islamist opposition groups. These groups routinely have the largest number of supporters in political movements and seek to challenge the authority of existing rule in hopes of influencing political and social change.¹⁶ Unrest in Algeria, Egypt, and Syria and the fall of the Shah's regime in Iran are examples. Each of those countries has severely limited popular participation in governance. Moreover, each has been characterized as being plagued with institutional corruption. Moreover, each has limited or excluded Islamist groups from wielding political power. As a result, the Islamists have been able to avoid sharing any of the blame for the

shortcomings of those regimes. Instead, they offer themselves as opposition forces that would benefit the masses while grounding their appeals in the rhetoric of a presumably pristine Islam. The lack of confidence in secular institutions and their ability to meet the needs of impoverished people can cause individuals in search of support to turn to a religious or quasi-religious institution. In the domestic sphere, Islamist organizations frequently act as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and provide social services, often exceeding the state's own services, which give Islamist organizations still another avenue of support. For example, social services are regularly provided by groups like Hizballah and Hamas. Al-Qa'ida, interestingly, has opted not to provide social services and specifically states in its bylaws that its ideology is to "fight a holy war and not be distracted by relief and aid operations or anything similar."¹⁷ Thus, it has chosen to focus solely on the sword to advance the agenda of Islamic radicals.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, several trends coalesced to link political Islam and the global jihad. The arms market was saturated, and many arms found their way from the Soviet Union to the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.¹⁸ The porousness of borders made it easier for people and ideas to cross boundaries. Perhaps most significantly, the great collapse of faith in communist and socialist ideologies was paralleled by the resurgence of ethnically and religiously based organizations and ideologies throughout the 1990s. Moreover, the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan gave widespread credence to the belief within both radical Islamist circles and the wider Muslim world that the mujahidin's faith brought down a superpower. The widespread availability of weapons, mass-produced during the cold war, further provided the means for armed activity. Finally, the globalization of information technology—especially the widespread availability of the Internet, e-mail, satellite phones, and text messaging—and ubiquitous media coverage provided a previously unknown capacity for Islamist groups to publicize their messages and garner new recruits to their cause.

Although each of those factors has contributed to the emergence of global jihad, religious fundamentalism forms its cornerstone.¹⁹ As one of the five pillars of Islam, meeting the obligation to pray brings a great number of Muslims to mosques on a daily basis.²⁰ It is reasonable to assume that those individuals for whom religion is a defining feature of their identity will be more likely to expend the time and effort necessary to participate in prayers at a mosque. Similarly, believers who embrace a

literal interpretation of the Qur'an as a guide to both attitudes and behavior (such as following Islam's ban on alcohol and prescriptions on modesty and premarital sex) are most likely to find that fundamentalism at the mosque helps spur networking with those who embrace the same values and ideas—the first step in creating a coherent ideology capable of making an impact. Thus, the mosque becomes a convenient place to meet others who share a common Muslim religious bond, whether one is a native of the country or an immigrant.²¹ The tendency to gravitate towards the familiar is recognizable to all expatriates. So, it should come as no surprise that, particularly for devout Muslims, religious centers are places where many immigrants and their children or grandchildren find a comforting connection to their original culture or community.

This phenomenon is not threatening per se. The problem is that some mosques are centers of radical fundamentalist teaching. They attract like-minded people and persuade still others. For example, during the 1990s, the North Central London Mosque in Finsbury Park became infamous as the “Finsbury Park Mosque” due to the fact that a variety of militants, including individuals associated with al-Qa'ida such as Richard Reid, attended services there led by its radical imam, Abu-Hamza al-Mazri. However, after a 2003 British antiterrorism police raid found weapons and passports, the mosque was taken over by a new board of more moderate Muslims who replaced al-Mazri as imam and who sought to have a positive relationship with the non-Muslim community. This example provides a cautionary note: the fact that mosques attract devout Muslims and homesick immigrants is not necessarily nefarious. It only becomes dangerous if a specific mosque actively engages in attracting extremists and promoting violence.

This is the true danger when radicalization and religious faith become intertwined. Violence legitimated by religion becomes self-sustaining because the actions themselves are seen as the true path that has been divinely sanctioned. When framed this way, the jihad represents an apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil. Not surprisingly, victory in such a struggle is worth any cost, thereby removing the normal ethical restraints on savagery.²² This is a central theme of the jihadist organizations. In their propaganda, they increasingly refer to *Jabilyah*, a term used most often to reference the pagan time before the rise of Islam—literally “ignorance”—to signify the modern era. This application of the term *Jabilyah* to modern government and situations was made popular by Sayyid Qutb, a key ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, who was

executed by the Egyptian government in 1967. This concept has been his legacy to the world of political Islam. Qutb asserted that the entire world, even “Muslims” holding power, is living in a state of Jahiliyah. Only through practicing Islam uncorrupted by modernity can Jahiliyah be escaped and the *umma* be set on the right course. This reflects the Salafi conviction that it is imperative to return to the path of righteousness by following the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

In the ideology of many of the most visible violent jihadist elements active today—especially al-Qa’ida and al-Qa’ida-like groups—reenergizing religious fervor to bring an end to the state of jahiliyya can be done only through terrorism, guerrilla insurgency, and aggressive preaching.²³ The anti-Western, extremely violent rhetoric of al-Qa’ida—and of the increasing number of groups modeled after bin Laden’s strategy and approach—assigns blame to the West, either because of Western values or because of an alleged sinister conspiracy between Western Christianity and Judaism, for the current state of jahiliyya. Three themes are emphasized by these organizations and individuals: (1) the West is implacably hostile to Islam; (2) the only way to address this threat (and the only language that the West understands) is through the rhetoric of violence; and (3) jihad is the only option.

Although the jihadists are interested in forming an Islamic state in place of these *jahili* regimes, it is not a state conceived as a government administering Islamic policy. According to their doctrine, any government organized by humans is viewed as heretical because it asserts its rules upon the population. From an ideological perspective, this makes those regimes inherently illegitimate, since the jihadists claim that rule-making is solely the province of God, not man. As a result, they maintain that the state will be comprised of the *umma*, the community of believers, and will simply live according to Islamic principles because it is the right thing to do. They envision a sort of utopian Islamic nation without borders or government and with God as the head of state. Violent jihad is viewed as essential to restore “authentic” Islam.

Sayyid Qutb’s call for action against *jahili* targets was pushed to the extreme by Muhammad Abd-Al-Salam al-Farag, an Egyptian electrician who wrote what is arguably the most important and influential book for groups like al-Qa’ida. In *The Neglected Duty*, Farag stated that jihad is a duty for Muslims worldwide and that it should be considered the “6th Pillar of Islam,” thereby making it a requirement of the faithful. He argues that jihad has been neglected, and that this neglect is entirely unjustified.

The long-standing tradition of undertaking jihad (as a military action) only when there is an *Amir*, leader, to rally behind is meaningless to Farag, who states that the appropriate leadership would spring from the faithful in times of need.

For adherents of the jihad, the struggle against alleged Western-perpetrated Jahiliyah is monolithic and apocalyptic, and it gives rise to terrorist action and guerrilla insurgency when pursued through violent means to convey a clear message to the target audience. Because the ultimate objective is changing the minds and policies of the enemy's political leadership, the intermediate objectives are essentially milestones in shifting the opinion and actions of the various target audiences. Operations, therefore, are all about the message being sent. In terms of psychological impact, an operation's message is made more dramatic by enhancing the terrorist event's size, scope, and audacity. Whether it be by crashing a plane into a building, car-bombing an embassy, hijacking, or kidnapping and beheading, every operation, legitimized by the ideology, aims to send a message to the enemy in hopes of influencing a policy change or simply destroying morale; such operations also aim to send a message to the supporters, ranging from those who sympathize with the group to those who actively participate in operations, whether by contributing monetarily or by being involved in the planning and execution of an operation. Characteristically, the audience of operations is not a single, unified entity, but rather a fragmented field of "interest groups that shift sides depending on how a campaign affects their issues."²⁴ If the message is ignored, the support base for action dwindles, making it harder to legitimize terrorist action in the eyes of the public—in this case, the Islamic community—and thus making it harder for insurgencies to operate in such areas as Chechnya, Afghanistan, and now, Iraq. For example, because such a large number of al-Qa'ida fighters have been caught or killed since September 11, the group has increasingly needed to rely on nonhierarchical structures to remain relevant and, to some extent, to remain operationally capable. Al-Qa'ida has turned to using previously established networks for attacks and logistical support where possible, in addition to relying on existing infrastructure to promote the jihad as a social movement, thereby involving thousands of anonymous jihadist supporters through propaganda on the Internet and recruitment via personal contacts.

The unifying effect of religion is very useful to groups such as al-Qa'ida, who attempt to establish a worldwide network, capable of reaching anywhere. Sunni Muslims, especially Wahhabis, have traditionally

been hostile toward Shi'ite Muslims, as seen historically in Saudi Arabia or by the current internecine struggle between Sunnis and Shi'ites in Iraq. But, when united under the banner of God, terrorist groups from these two opposing sects can cooperate in opposing what they view as the Greater Evil, provided hard-line Wahhabis can get over their long-standing prejudice against Shi'ite Muslims. There is, however, no evidence of ideological shifts on either side that could signal long-term, full cooperation between these organizations and others like them. Given the deep-seated enmity between Sunni jihadists and the Shi'ites, any accommodation is likely to be short-term rather than enduring.²⁵

THE RISE OF THE AL-QA'IDA ORGANIZATION

The origins of al-Qa'ida are grounded firmly in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. In 1979, when the Soviet Union launched its invasion of Afghanistan to support that country's new communist government, many Afghans took up arms to resist Soviet forces, initiating a conflict that would rage for the next decade. Although the majority of the Afghan resistance movement was composed of Afghan nationals, Muslims from around the world rallied to the call for an anti-Soviet jihad.

Palestinian cleric Abdullah Azzam and Usama bin Laden, the son of a wealthy businessman with close ties to the Saudi royal family, were among those who came from the Middle East to participate in the jihad. Azzam and bin Laden quickly established a wide facilitation network for providing foreign fighters for the jihad. Their organization became known as the Services Bureau, or Maktab al-Khidmat (MAK). The MAK created a global network of financiers and recruiters to bring fighters from around the world, especially Arabs from the Middle East, to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Once there, the foreign fighters were often hosted in MAK guesthouses before traveling to the front. Azzam's fatwa characterizing jihad in Afghanistan as an individual duty—*fard ayn*—aided the MAK's efforts. The MAK brought fighters from around the world, especially Arabs from the Middle East. For example, a contingent of Egyptians—including Ayman al-Zawahiri, who at the time was the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad group—joined Azzam and bin Laden. However, unlike Azzam, the Egyptians saw the jihad in Afghanistan as temporary and hoped to use the campaign to promote bringing the jihad back to Egypt.

After Moscow's April 1988 announcement that Soviet forces would withdraw from Afghanistan over the next nine months, Azzam and bin Laden started planning the MAK's future. It was during this time period that al-Qa'ida—the *base*—was formally created by Azzam and bin Laden. Although both of them wanted to preserve the MAK's facilitation network and bring its resources to bear in future jihadist campaigns, they had two very different visions for the future. Azzam, who was firmly committed to solidifying Islamist control of Afghanistan, preferred to continue the MAK's support to the Afghan resistance. He also wanted potentially to move on to organizing a similar resistance movement against Israel on behalf of the Palestinians. Bin Laden, on the other hand, seems to have shared the viewpoint of the Egyptian contingent, which wanted to use al-Qa'ida to prepare fighters for conflicts elsewhere—in bin Laden's view, worldwide. This dispute over the strategic direction of al-Qa'ida, in addition to disagreements over which Afghan fighters to support and bin Laden's wishes to become the unchallenged leader of al-Qa'ida, drove bin Laden and Azzam apart. Bin Laden was, at this time, already the amir of al-Qa'ida. However, Azzam remained an influential figure among foreign fighters.

This schism within al-Qa'ida and the struggle over its leadership and future direction were resolved while bin Laden was back in his native Saudi Arabia. Azzam and his son were killed by a car bomb in Peshawar, Pakistan, on November 24, 1989. Azzam's assassination remains unsolved, but many suspect that the Egyptian mujahidin were involved, given their desire to see al-Qa'ida pursue a global strategy.

Back in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden received considerable attention as a result of his exploits in Afghanistan. However, he quickly began to lose favor with the Saudi royals after Iraq's 1990 invasion. Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, bin Laden approached the Saudi royal family with a proposal to defend Saudi Arabia and use his organization to repel Iraq. Instead, the Saudi government rejected bin Laden's proposal in favor of American assistance and opted to bring thousands of American and other Western troops into the Kingdom. Furious with this turn of events, bin Laden and a number of other Saudi radicals denounced the Saudi royal family's decision to welcome non-Muslim military forces into the Kingdom. As a result, bin Laden was placed under surveillance and subjected to increased pressure by the Saudi government.

In response to the Saudi government's actions, bin Laden accepted the offer of Sudanese political leader Hassan al-Turabi, who urged him to

move his organization to Sudan. Bin Laden was assured that he could freely prepare for future jihads and manage the group's various business interests. So, instead of returning to Saudi Arabia after a 1991 trip to Pakistan, bin Laden moved to Sudan. Once in Sudan, bin Laden invested heavily in construction projects in the country and also continued—along with al-Zawahiri and his inner circle—to prepare for jihadist operations. Al-Qa'ida expanded contacts with and support of jihadists worldwide, especially by providing training and other assistance to a number of new jihadist groups in South East Asia. During his stay in Sudan, bin Laden built up his vast network of militant contacts, which formed the foundation for the al-Qa'ida global network.²⁶ From its base in Sudan, al-Qa'ida continued to denounce the Saudi government and urged the eviction of Western forces from Saudi Arabia. It also became involved in the conflict in Somalia in 1992, began to prepare for attacks inside Saudi Arabia, and established cells in East Africa. The group and its Sudanese hosts, however, began to suffer from financial difficulties. Its financial problems made Sudan vulnerable to significant pressure from Saudi Arabia and other countries to cease acting as a host country and expel bin Laden and his al-Qa'ida followers.

In May 1996, bin Laden and around 150 supporters and their families fled Sudan for Afghanistan. They took refuge with the Taliban and recognized Mullah Omar as the *amir al-mu'minin*—the Commander of the Believers. Although promising the Taliban that he would keep a low profile while in Afghanistan, bin Laden issued a 1996 fatwa declaring war against Westerners in Saudi Arabia. Recovering from the financial difficulties and other restrictions from which al-Qa'ida suffered in Sudan, bin Laden and his followers were given extraordinary protection and autonomy by Mullah Omar and the Taliban. The Taliban allowed thousands of foreigners to enter Afghanistan to train at bin Laden-sponsored training camps. Most of these trainees did not become al-Qa'ida members and returned to their countries of origin. Others who passed through those camps, however, were recruited and joined al-Qa'ida. While in Afghanistan, bin Laden was able to assert more control over al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad group. As a number of sources, including the *9/11 Commission Report*, have noted, it was during this period that al-Qa'ida organized itself around individuals with varying levels of commitment.²⁷

In February 1998, bin Laden issued another statement in which he declared that “to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country

in which it is possible to do it.”²⁸ Less than six months later, two car bombs were detonated outside of the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Both bombings were the work of al-Qa’ida East African cells. Al-Qa’ida attack planning continued. In January 2000, al-Qa’ida operatives attempted an unsuccessful attack against the *USS Sullivans* while it was anchored in Yemen. A subsequent al-Qa’ida attack planned and supervised by bin Laden, utilizing an explosives-laden boat detonated by a suicide bomber, succeeded in heavily damaging the *USS Cole* and killing seventeen of its crew during a port call in Yemen ten months later, on October 12, 2000.

At the same time, planning for the September 11 attacks was well under way, and al-Zawahiri formally merged the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization with al-Qa’ida after internal EIJ turmoil and financial problems in June 2001. After the September 11 attacks and the subsequent U.S.-led campaign against al-Qa’ida and the Taliban, al-Qa’ida’s central leadership dispersed and continued to operate from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The launch of the Iraq war in March 2003 breathed new life into al-Qa’ida’s global movement. In October 2004 the group merged with the Tawhid wa al-Jihad group, a largely foreign fighter group run by Jordanian al-Qa’ida associate Abu-Mus’ab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zarqawi’s group had already established itself in Iraq, enabling bin Laden and al-Qa’ida Central to become part of a major insurgency against Western forces. In essence, and consistent with its underlying doctrine, al-Qa’ida has moved aggressively to institutionalize the strategic and tactical use of terrorism to advance its cause.

Unlike early analyses that attributed terrorism to psychiatric pathologies, more recent studies underscore the rationality of political violence.²⁹ The actions of the jihadists are not grounded in individual psychopathology or mass antisocial behavior. Instead, they are rooted in purposeful albeit savage actions in pursuit of rather clearly defined goals. Moreover, the movement is growing as a result of the power of its ideas. Its power, therefore, can only be neutralized by making those ideas unappealing to potential adherents, while persuading or preventing the current generation of jihadists from acting violently to advance its beliefs.