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The Origins of al Qaeda's Ideology: Implications for US Strategy

CHRISTOPHER HENZEL

“The fight against the enemy nearest to you has precedence over the fight against the enemy farther away. . . . In all Muslim countries the enemy has the reins of power. The enemy is the present rulers.”

— Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj,
tried and hanged in connection with the
1981 assassination of Anwar al-Sadat¹

“Victory for the Islamic movements . . . cannot be attained unless these movements possess an Islamic base in the heart of the Arab region.”

— Ayman al-Zawahiri,
Bin Laden deputy, 2001²

“We do not want stability in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and even Saudi Arabia. . . . The real issue is not whether, but how to destabilize. We have to ensure the fulfillment of the democratic revolution.”

— Michael Ledeen,
American Enterprise Institute, 2002³

The leader of Sadat's assassins, Bin Laden's chief ideologue, and a leading American neoconservative supporter of Israel all call for a revolutionary transformation of the Middle East. However, the United States, the existing Arab regimes, and the traditional Sunni clerical establishments all share an interest in avoiding instability and revolution. This shared interest makes the establishments in the Sunni world America's natural partners in the struggle against al Qaeda and similar movements. If American strategists fail to understand and exploit the divide between the establishments and the revolutionaries within Sunni Islam, the United States will play into the radicals' hands, and turn fence-sitting Sunnis into enemies.

Outsiders of the Sunni World

Sunni Islam is a very big tent, and there always have been insiders and outsiders within Sunnism playing out their rivalries with clashing philosophies.⁴ Throughout the past century, the most important of these clashes have occurred between Sunni reformers and the traditional Sunni clerical establishment. The ideology espoused today by al Qaeda and similar groups can be traced directly from the 19th-century founders of modernist reform in Sunnism. Al Qaeda's leading thinkers are steeped in these reformers' long struggle against the establishment. The teaching of the reformers has been heterodox and revolutionary from the beginning; that is, the reformers and their intellectual descendants in al Qaeda are the outsiders of today's Sunni world.

For the most part this struggle has been waged in Egypt, Sunni Islam's center of gravity. On one side of the debate, there is Cairo's Al-Azhar, a seminary and university that has been the center of Sunni orthodoxy for a thousand years. On the other side, al Qaeda's ideology has its origins in late-19th-century efforts in Egypt to reform and modernize faith and society. As the 20th century progressed, the Sunni establishment centered on Al-Azhar came to view the modernist reform movement as more and more heterodox. It became known as Salafism, for the supposedly uncorrupted early Muslim predecessors (*salaf*, plural *aslaf*) of today's Islam. The more revolutionary tendencies in this Salafist reform movement constitute the core of today's challenge to the Sunni establishment, and are the chief font of al Qaeda's ideology.

A Century of Reformation

In contemporary Western discussions of the Muslim world, it is common to hear calls for a "reformation in Islam" as an antidote to al Qaeda.⁵ These calls often betray a misunderstanding of both Sunni Islam and of the early modern debate between Catholics and Protestants. In fact, a Sunni "reformation" has been under way for more than a century, and it works against Western security interests. The Catholic-Protestant struggle in Europe weakened traditional religious authorities' control over the definition of doctrine, emphasized scripture over tradition, idealized an allegedly uncorrupted primitive religious community, and simplified theology and rites. The Salafist movement in the Sunni Muslim world has been pursuing these same reforms for a century.

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More important, the contemporary pundits' calls for "a reformation in Islam" carry with them an implication that the traditional Sunni clerical elite is the ideological basis for al Qaeda, and that weakening the traditional clerical establishment's hold on the minds of pious Sunnis would promote stability. In fact, the opposite is clearly the case in most of the Sunni world. The mutual condemnations that the establishment and Salafist camps have exchanged over the past century, not to mention the blood shed by both sides, make this clear.

Even in Saudi Arabia, which is exceptional because the religious establishment there is itself Salafist, there is a split between a pro-establishment Salafist camp and the revolutionary Salafists. The Saudi regime and its establishment Salafist allies have asserted themselves against revolutionary Salafist tendencies repeatedly since the 1920s, and are belatedly doing so again now.

The revolutionary Salafists are outsiders. Their movement, from its origins a century ago until today, has been at odds with the Sunni establishment. By tracing the movement's ideological development over the past century, it becomes clear why al Qaeda's leaders have chosen their present strategy: the experience of their movement drives them to view their opponents within Sunni Islam—"the near enemy"—as a more important target than non-Muslims—"the far enemy."

Theology and Politics: Ibn Taymiyya

The medieval Sunni scholar Taqi ad-Din Ahmed ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) is an important reference for today's revolutionary Salafists. Ibn Taymiyya needed an argument that would rally Muslims behind the Mamluke rulers of Egypt in their struggle against the advancing Mongols from 1294 to 1303. Some objected that there could be no jihad against the Mongols because they and their king had recently converted to Islam. Ibn Taymiyya reasoned that because the Mongol ruler permitted some aspects of Mongol tribal law to persist alongside the Islamic *sharia* code, the Mongols were apostates to Islam and therefore legitimate targets of jihad. Today's revolutionary Salafists cite Ibn Taymiyya as an authority for their argument that contemporary Muslim rulers are apostates if they fail to impose *sharia* exclusively, and that jihad should be waged against them.

Although Ibn Taymiyya's medieval theology is important to the contemporary Salafists, Salafism had its true origins in modern times, in the reform movement at Sunni Islam's Egyptian core in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This reform movement arose out of the reaction of Muslims in the Ottoman Empire to the growing dominance of the West in international politics, in science, and in culture. Napoleon's occupation of Egypt, the French colonization of North Africa, and Britain's domination of Muslims in India

and later Egypt all dealt profound shocks to a Muslim world that had, until the 18th century, confidently regarded itself as superior to the West.

Muslim Rationalist: Al-Afghani

Jamal ad-Din Al-Afghani (1839-1897) launched this modernizing reform movement in Islam, one strain of which developed later into the revolutionary Salafism the United States confronts today. Chiefly through his preaching and pupils in Cairo, Al-Afghani spread the idea that Muslim defeats at the hands of the West were due to the corruption of Islam. Al-Afghani admired Western rationalism, and saw it as the source of the West's material strength. Rather than advocating secularization, however, Al-Afghani taught that rationalism was the core of an uncorrupted "true" Islam, the Islam supposedly practiced during the golden age of Muhammad and his first few successors. Al-Afghani believed that if this spiritual revival of Muslim society were accomplished, the Muslim world would soon develop the intellectual equipment it needed to redress the West's technological and military advantages.⁶

Al-Afghani's teachings flew in the face of conventional wisdom in both the Muslim world and the West. Most Ottoman reformers who contemplated the disparities between Western and Eastern power concluded that the Ottoman Empire needed to adopt the science of the West, and set aside much of the thought of the East, a tendency that culminated in Attaturk's radical secularism.

Al-Afghani, on the other hand, diagnosed the Muslim world's problem as theological at root, and prescribed as an antidote religious revival. Al-Afghani also taught that political struggle, even revolt, was sometimes justified.

Al-Afghani's attempts to identify Western rationalism with primitive Islam, as well as his teaching on rebellion, brought condemnation from the Sunni clerical establishment. He failed to win a popular following for his ideas, and he was deported from Egypt by the pro-British regime of the Khedive Tawfiq.⁷ But Al-Afghani's students had a lasting impact on the next generation of Muslim thinkers.

Sunni Reformers: 'Abduh and Ridha

Al-Afghani's leading student was Muhammed 'Abduh (1849-1905.) He rose to become Grand Mufti of Egypt, making him the only prominent Salafist to have made a career among the clerical elite. 'Abduh was a modernist: like Al-Afghani, he contended that Islam, properly understood, was compatible with the rationalism of modern Europe. This proper understanding could be found in the supposedly pure religion practiced during the first few generations of Islam. 'Abduh coined the term "salafiah" to describe his teachings. Importantly, 'Abduh also taught that private judgment (*ijtihad*) was a

valid means by which contemporary believers could understand “true” Islam in a modern light.⁸

‘Abduh’s followers took his ideas in two divergent directions after his death. Some used his teachings to advocate secularization in the Muslim world. They had much impact over the next 50 years, blunting Muslim resistance to Arab socialism and nationalism, but the logic of their views led many of them into outright secularism, taking them out of the debate among Sunni believers.⁹

The other current of ‘Abduh’s followers used many of his reforming ideas to move down the path that led to today’s al Qaeda. ‘Abduh’s pupil and biographer, Mohammed Rashid Ridha (1865-1935) emphasized his master’s teachings on the idea of a pure Islam of the *aslaf*, and on the idea that individuals and societies that adhere to “true” Islam will prosper in this world.

This was an especially attractive promise to Muslims living under European occupations. Ridha’s circle viewed the early Muslims’ conquests as God’s reward for their pious obedience. If only Islam could be cleansed of its medieval encroachments and (in Ridha’s version) the errors of both modern Westernizing philosophers and of Shias, then political success would follow. Ridha believed the establishment clergy incapable of leading the reform movement he desired.¹⁰

Al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers

The Egyptian Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949) studied with Ridha’s circle as a young man, and in 1928 he launched in Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood, the first modern Islamic political movement. Al-Banna sought to unite and mobilize Muslims against the cultural and political domination of the West. However, the Brotherhood eventually reached an understanding with the regime of King Faruq, which saw the Brothers as a useful counter to nationalist movements. As a result, revolutionaries among the Salafists began to feel less and less comfortable with the Brotherhood.

Just as these differences within the Brotherhood were coming to the surface, Gamal Abdel Nasser and other military officers overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in 1952. The new socialist and nationalist military regime suppressed the Brotherhood in 1954, claiming it had plotted to assassinate Nasser.

Reform Movements beyond Sunnism’s Core

Meanwhile, other Sunni Muslim reform movements beyond Sunnism’s Egyptian core were maturing independently of the Salafists. Wahabism, a puritanical Sunni sect, first arose in the 1700s, but remained confined to the sparsely populated deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. In 1816, Sunnism’s orthodox core, in the form of an Egyptian army acting in the name of the Ottoman

Sultan, reached out to Arabia to destroy the first Wahabi state. Ridha, early in his career, condemned the Wahabis as heretical, as did all mainstream Sunnis. But Ridha gradually came to sympathize with the Arabian dissenters.¹¹ Wahabi influence throughout the Sunni world grew as oil wealth fed Saudi power in the 1960s and 1970s.

Like Wahabism, the Deobandi and Barelvi movements of South Asia developed independently of the reformers at Sunnism's Egyptian core. The Deobandis and Barelvis attempted to address the problems of South Asian Sunni Muslims who went from being the ruling minority of the Mughal Empire to living after 1857 under direct British rule as a minority among South Asia's Hindus. Their solution was to call on believers to exclude non-Muslim influences from their lives, build purely Muslim institutions, and strive to live a wholly Islamic life, as understood by the movements' scholars. It was not until the 1960s that these South Asian currents influenced the revolutionary Salafists, through the writings of Pakistani cleric Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979)¹² and their impact on another Egyptian outsider, Sayyed Qutb.

Sayyid Qutb

Qutb (1906-1966), the next bearer of the revolutionary Salafist flame, was an educator and member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qutb warned against the Westernizing influences that continued to permeate the Muslim world during the 1940s and 1950s. He had no formal theological training, but, hearkening back to 'Abduh and Ridha, believed it the duty of the ordinary believer to seek out the supposedly pure Islam of the *aslaf*.¹³ Expanding on Ibn Taymiyya's teaching on jihad against apostate rulers, Qutb argued for struggle against the secular regimes of the Muslim world, even if this meant killing Muslims. Qutb was also influenced by Mawdudi's call on individual Muslims to exclude non-Muslim influences from their lives and institutions. Qutb's endorsement of Mawdudi began a convergence between the revolutionary Salafists and the South Asian movements.¹⁴ The Nasser regime hanged Qutb in 1966.¹⁵

Nasser's secular agenda, his socialism, and his spectacular defeat in the 1967 war generated opposition to his regime and disillusionment with secularism in general. Some of this opposition flowed into the ranks of the underground Islamic political movements. The Muslim Brotherhood had by this time split with the revolutionary Salafist movements over the Salafists' calls for overturning Muslim states and societies. The Brotherhood became the most significant Islamic political opposition to Nasserism. However, the revolutionary Salafists, who viewed Qutb as a visionary martyr, gained adherents as well. Thousands from both movements languished in Egyptian prisons.

After Nasser's death in 1970, his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, attempted to co-opt both traditional Islam and political Islam as counters to the

political left. The Sadat regime at first tolerated the growth of a Salafist campus movement calling itself Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya (the Islamic Group), but the Jamaa began to turn on Sadat when he backed away from his earlier promise to impose *sharia* law. Around the same time, a more radical faction splintered from the Jamaa, calling itself simply Jihad. Sadat suppressed both groups in the late 1970s.

During the 1970s, one of those who spread Qutb's message and updated his strategy was Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj, an electrician and self-taught theologian for the underground Jihad in Egypt. Tried as a leader of the conspiracy that assassinated Sadat in 1981, Faraj used the proceedings to present his manifesto, *The Neglected Duty*. Along with theological arguments justifying violence, *The Neglected Duty* echoes Qutb on the need for a strategy that attacks the "near enemy"—apostate Muslim regimes—before the "far enemy"—meaning Israel, the United States, and other Western powers interfering in the Muslim world.¹⁶ Faraj also accused the Muslim Brothers and the establishment Egyptian clergy of collaborating with the secular Egyptian regime. *The Neglected Duty* was widely read throughout Egypt and the Muslim world.

Mustafa, Zawahiri, and Bin Laden

After Sadat's assassination and the ensuing crackdown on both the Muslim Brothers and the revolutionary Salafists in Egypt, some Salafists gravitated to a sect headed by an engineer named Shukri Mustafa. Mustafa's group, building on Qutb's writings, preached the "denunciation as unbelievers" (*takfir*) of almost all of society, and separation from it. The traditional religious establishment of Al-Azhar denounced these "takfiris" as heretics. Mustafa was hanged in 1977 for the kidnapping and murder of a senior Al-Azhar cleric.¹⁷

The guerilla war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 was the incubator for the contemporary stage in the development of revolutionary Salafist doctrine and strategy. Many Arab volunteers in Afghanistan coalesced around revolutionary Salafists who remained outsiders to the Sunni clerical establishment, even as some of the Arab regimes, and the United States, funded them. Many Arabs in Afghanistan came under the influence of the Egyptian physician Ayman al-Zawahiri, a prolific writer whom many found persuasive, but who, like all the revolutionary Salafists, was condemned by the Al-Azhar clerical establishment.

Zawahiri claims to have known Faraj personally; the doctor eventually became a leader of one of the Egyptian Jihad groups.¹⁸ Zawahiri met Osama bin Laden in Peshawar, Pakistan, during the guerilla campaign against the Soviets. The two collaborated closely, Zawahiri contributing his skills as an ideologist, Bin Laden his organizational talents and financial resources. The

two publicly announced the merger of their groups in 1998, completing al Qaeda's development into the group that challenges the United States today.

Al Qaeda Strategy Today

Zawahiri remains Bin Laden's deputy as leader of al Qaeda, and the Egyptian doctor's writings provide the best insight into the terrorist organization's current strategic thinking. In his 2001 book *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, Zawahiri identifies and prioritizes the goals of what he calls the "the revolutionary fundamentalist movement": first, achievement of ideological coherence and organization, then struggle against the existing regimes of the Muslim world, followed by the establishment of a "genuinely" Muslim state "at the heart of Arab world."¹⁹ Zawahiri views the current stage of the jihad as one of worldwide, revolutionary struggle, to be waged by means of violence, political action, and propaganda against the secular Muslim regimes and secularized Muslim elites.²⁰ Zawahiri argues that because the terrain in the key Arab countries is not suitable for guerilla war, Islamists need to conduct political action among the masses, combined with an urban terrorist campaign against the secular regimes, supplemented with attacks on "the external enemy"—i.e., the United States and Israel—as a means of propaganda that will strengthen the jihad's popular support.

Zawahiri wants his Salafist readers to keep in mind that the Arab establishments are the real targets, even if "confining the battle to the domestic enemy . . . will not be feasible in this stage of the battle."²¹ Highly visible attacks against external enemies, and the inevitable retaliation, Zawahiri explains, will rally ordinary Muslims to the radicals' cause, strengthening the main struggle, the one against the current regimes of the Muslim world. As Zawahiri writes in *Knights*:

The jihad movement must . . . make room for the Muslim nation to participate with it in the jihad for the sake of empowerment. The Muslim nation will not participate with [the jihad movement] unless the slogans of the mujahidin are understood by the masses. . . . The one slogan that has been well understood by the nation and to which it has been responding for the past 50 years is the call for jihad against Israel. In addition to this slogan, the [Muslim] nation in [the 1990s] is geared against the US presence. [The Muslim nation] has responded favorably to the call for the jihad against the Americans. . . . [T]he jihad movement moved to the center of the leadership of the [Muslim] nation when it adopted the slogan of liberating the nation from its external enemies. . . . [Striking at the United States would force the Americans to] personally wage the battle against the Muslims, which means that the battle will turn into a clear-cut jihad against infidels.²²

This passage shows that the revolutionary Salafists do not expect to actually defeat America or its allies (whatever al Qaeda propaganda may

claim). Instead, spectacular terrorist attacks are a means toward the end of changing the character of the conflict, changing it from a campaign waged by a small faction of extremists against the regimes of Muslim world, into “a clear-cut jihad against infidels,” which would, the Salafists hope, attract wide support among the Muslim masses.²³

Zawahiri views the current phase of the jihad as a revolutionary war, and the ideological component of the struggle is thus very important. Like Mao²⁴ and the North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap,²⁵ Zawahiri considers political and propaganda action to be just as important at some stages as military efforts are. “The jihad must dedicate one of its wings to work with the masses, preach, provide services. . . . [T]he people will not love us unless they feel that we love them, care about them, and are ready to defend them.”²⁶ This last point—convincing the people that the revolutionary Salafists are “ready to defend them”—again illustrates how Zawahiri sees high-profile terrorist strikes against the external enemy as a means of making propaganda for the Muslim masses. He calls on his followers, at this stage of the struggle, to “launch a battle for orienting the [Muslim] nation” by striking at the United States and Israel.²⁷ Thus, al Qaeda’s immediate goal is not to destroy Israel or even drive the United States out of the Middle East; rather, it is to “orient the nation.”

Overcoming Class Conflicts

For all the importance that Zawahiri attaches to political action and organization among the masses, the revolutionary Salafists have aroused, at least up until the US invasion of Iraq, little popular response to their efforts.

In his 2002 book *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Gilles Kepel argues convincingly that contemporary political Islamist movements can succeed only when they are able to mobilize, and maintain an alliance between, the masses and the pious middle classes. Natural tensions between the two constituencies are inherently difficult to control and are repeatedly the downfall of contemporary political Islamist movements, most notably in Algeria. Kepel points out that the Ayatollah Khomeini was the only really successful leader of a movement that harnessed both lower- and middle-class energies long enough to achieve power. This may have had much to do with factors unique to Shia Islam (such as the believer’s obligation to choose and support financially a spiritual mentor) that are not available to would-be Sunni revolutionaries.

Kepel goes on to argue that the closest thing so far to a Khomeini-style success in the Sunni Arab world was the rise and fall of the Algerian Front Islamique du Salut (FIS). The FIS convinced the pious middle classes that it was nonviolent and did not threaten stability, while showing a sufficiently revolutionary face to Algeria’s masses of alienated young men to mobilize them.

The result was a series of FIS electoral successes that would have resulted in a democratically elected FIS regime had the Algerian military not intervened in 1992. When the FIS was unable to control the rage of its underclass supporters over the coup, and violence erupted, the pious middle classes largely deserted the movement, leading to its collapse.²⁸

Similarly, Egypt's revolutionary Salafists have been discredited by their violence, especially the Luxor massacre of 1997, when the Jamaa slaughtered 60 foreign tourists. This and other outrages sickened many Egyptians who might otherwise have given the Islamists a hearing. This revulsion, as much as the regime's ruthless crackdown, so weakened the Jamaa that by 1999 its imprisoned leaders had publicly declared a unilateral cease-fire.²⁹

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is exceptional, as mentioned earlier, because Salafism there is a doctrine of the insiders, the clerical establishment. However, even in Saudi Arabia, the centuries-old partnership between the Al-Saud dynasty and the Wahabi clerical establishment gives the establishment Salafist clerics an important interest in suppressing the revolutionary strain of Salafism. Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner describe this split between violent and nonviolent Salafists, noting the prominence in the latter group of leaders with Ph.D.'s from Saudi universities.³⁰

Both the establishment Wahabi clerics and the Al-Saud have sometimes failed in their efforts to keep the revolutionary Salafists out of Saudi Arabia's establishment clergy, and until 2001 actually connived in establishing them outside the kingdom. Since 11 September 2001 and the May 2003 bombings in Riyadh, the Saudi regime has worked, with mixed success, to suppress its revolutionary Salafists.

Strategic Implications for the United States

Almost all of the thinkers who shaped al Qaeda's ideology were outsiders. Al-Afghani, Ridha, Al-Banna, Qutb, Faraj, and Zawahiri all battled the clerical and government establishments of their time. Only 'Abduh penetrated the clerical establishment (and he probably would condemn the violent factions of today's Salafists). Like their intellectual forbears, al Qaeda and today's other Salafist revolutionaries remain outsiders, locked in a century-long philosophical struggle with the traditional Sunni clerical elite, and engaged in political struggle with Arab regimes. The revolutionary Salafists fight because they want power, and because they hate the secularism and corruption they associate with the current Sunni Muslim regimes. (The regimes' undemocratic nature has not been an important motive for the Salafists over the years.)

The revolutionaries have failed so far to mobilize and unite the masses and pious middle classes of most Arab countries. They no longer enjoy the overt support of any government on the planet, having lost their state in Afghanistan, been defeated in Algeria, and fallen out of favor with their erstwhile allies in Sudan's military regime.

The Salafists' current strategy, as Zawahiri described, is to provoke, on an international scale, a cycle of violence and repression that will mobilize the Sunni masses. The American invasion of Afghanistan failed to bring about this mobilization. However, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, combined with US support of Israel's policies in the occupied territories, may at last be triggering the radicalization of the masses and middle classes of the Arab world that al Qaeda has hoped for.

Sunni Islam's most active reformers over the past century have been its outsiders, the Salafists. It is the insiders of Sunni Islam who are America's natural allies. Western advocates of "reformation" understandably want to see the existing secular, Westernized classes in Muslim countries gain the upper hand. But these politically weak classes are small elites viewed with suspicion by both the masses and the regimes. Any American effort to strengthen these elites must be a project for several decades, to be carried out quietly and with the greatest caution. The United States would gain little if more among the Muslim masses came to regard Muslim liberals as agents of the global hegemon, bent on depriving Islam of its capacity to resist a Western culture that most view as morally depraved.

The United States should instead exploit its ties to the existing regimes of the Sunni world in order to combat jointly the revolutionary Salafists. The US struggle against al Qaeda and similar groups will be chiefly a matter of intelligence and police work, with perhaps a role for special forces working with local partners in ungoverned areas. Only the existing Muslim regimes, in coordination with American investigators and spies, can defeat the cells of al Qaeda and similar groups moving among the Sunni world's masses. The United States needs to support and to engage with these undemocratic regimes even more closely if US security services are to be granted the liaison relationships with local authorities that are essential to the real war against terrorism. Washington should set aside, for now, its ambitions for democratic revolution in the region, at least until the Salafist revolution is contained.

Similarly, the United States must avoid positioning itself as the foe of the traditional Sunni clerical establishments, or provoking some of them into sympathy with their erstwhile foes, the revolutionary Salafists. If mainstream Sunnis come to view the United States as bent on a campaign to weaken or remake traditional Muslim culture, then more and more mainstream Sunni believers will conclude that the revolutionary Salafists they

once reviled were right all along. At that point the world really would see the clash of civilizations sought by both al Qaeda and some US pundits.

NOTES

1. Muhammad Abd Al-Salam Faraj, *The Neglected Duty*, sections 68-70, trans. in Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 192. The title of Faraj's book is also sometimes translated as "The Forgotten Obligation."

2. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, serialized in *Al-Sharq al Awsat* (London) 2-10 December 2001, trans. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, document FBIS-NES-2001-1202, maintained on-line by the Federation of American Scientists, http://fas.org/irp/world/para/aymanh_bk.html.

3. Michael Ledeen, *The War against the Terror Masters* (New York: St. Martin's, 2002, 2003), pp. 172, 216.

4. The Sunni-Shia split had its origins in the seventh century. Shiism is at least as diverse as Sunnism, but is beyond the scope of this essay because al Qaeda is a militantly Sunni movement with no appeal in the Shia world.

5. For example, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said "We need an Islamic reformation, and I think there is real hope for one." Quoted in David Ignatius, "The Read on Wolfowitz," *The Washington Post*, 17 January 2003, p. A23.

6. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 115-17.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

8. M. A. Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 35-95.

9. Hourani, p. 170. Secularizing disciples of 'Abduh included Lutfi Al-Sayyid (1872-1968), Qasim Amin (1865-1908), and the brothers Mustafa (d. 1947) and Ali (1888-1963) Abdul Raziq.

10. Hourani, p. 228. For a mainstream Sunni criticism of Ridha, see *Answer to an Enemy of Islam* (Istanbul: Waqf Ikhlas Publications, 1993).

11. Perhaps this was because Ridha realized that he himself was moving outside the Sunni mainstream, or perhaps he was impressed by the political success of the Wahabis' patron, Ibn Saud, who reestablished the Saudi state in 1902 and conquered Mecca and Medina in 1924-25.

12. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), 23.

13. *In the Shade of the Quran* is Qutb's exegesis on the Quran, written while in prison.

14. One Salafist admirer of Qutb, the Palestinian-born, Egyptian-educated Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989), obtained a professorship at a Saudi university in the 1970s, where his students included Osama bin Laden. Azzam played an important role in the convergence of Egypt-based revolutionary Salafism and Saudi revolutionary Wahabism.

15. Robert Siegel, "Sayyid Qutb's America," National Public Radio, 6 May 2003, http://www.npr.org/display_pages/features/feature_1253796.html. Like many of the revolutionary Salafists to follow him, Qutb appears to have been radicalized partly by a direct encounter with the West. Sent to study at the University of Northern Colorado in the 1940s by the government of King Faruq, Qutb wrote later of the sexual decadence and secularized religion of the United States.

16. Faraj (in Jansen), sections 68-70.

17. Kepel, p. 85. The establishment compared the Takfiris to the Kharijites of the seventh century, who are universally reviled by mainstream Sunnis for failing to respect the consensus of believers and for denouncing fellow Muslims as unbelievers.

18. Zawahiri, p. 74.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 80. "Egypt particularly."

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 71

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 78.

23. It is a strategy analogous to the failed attempts of European leftist terrorists in the 1970s to set off a revolution with terrorist attacks aimed at provoking indiscriminate government crackdowns.

24. Ilana Kass and Bard O'Neill, *The Deadly Embrace* (Lanham, Md., and London: University Press of America, 1996), p. 13.

25. Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).

26. Zawahiri, p. 75.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

28. Kepel, pp. 254-75.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

30. Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11," *Middle East Policy*, 10 (Summer 2003), 76.