

## STRATEGIC IDEOLOGY OF AL QAEDA

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### Abstract

This paper examines the use of ideology as a strategic tool by al Qaeda, arguing that even though the entity may be militarily weakened, it still is ideologically ascendant and is thus capable of leading global Jihadism even in a militarily weakened form. The author examines four ideological imperatives of the entity viz-a-viz military might, narratives, economic Jihad, and territoriality, arguing that merely an augmentation of fire power will not be effective against the organization's ideological prowess.

**Key Words:** Strategic Ideology, al Qaeda, Global, Jihad.

There has long been a tendency to underestimate al Qaeda's ideological appeal as opposed to its military prowess, an assumption which is just recently starting to be questioned. It was projected that a militarily weakened al Qaeda, under extreme duress from the barrage of counter terrorism measures from the West, would start to succumb,<sup>1</sup> as evidence of which the increasing number of failed terrorist attempts were put forward. There also seemed to be an escalating backlash of public opinion amongst Muslims against the organization, as evidenced by the Sunni rebellion in Iraq, and the denunciation of al Qaeda by high-profile former Salafist ideologues such as Sayyid Imam.<sup>2</sup> These assumptions underestimated the ideological prowess of the organization, which gravitated to the internet and the thousands of Jihadist forums it would help foster.

It is remarkable how little understood the organization is in its ever evolving forms; the American counterterrorism community continues to

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Chris Preble of the Cato Institute and Peter Beinart writing in *Time*. See Chris Preble, *Countering Terrorism: The Cato Handbook for Policymakers* (Washington DC: Cato Institute, 2009); Peter Beinart, "Amid the Hysteria, a Look at what al Qaeda Can't Do," *Time*, January 18, 2010. Even Fareed Zakaria declared that the greatest threat is our overreaction to al Qaeda: see Fareed Zakaria, "Don't Panic," *Newsweek*, January 9, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> A Salafist ideologue who was a hero for the global Jihadist movement. He later recanted his pro Jihadist exhortations under pressure from the Saudi government, which caused significant consternation in the Jihadist world due to his stature amongst them. He was labeled as a traitor by many.

engage in the debate whether al Qaeda still retains intact its command structures, or as Sageman<sup>3</sup> asserts, that a phenomenon of “leaderless Jihad” has taken primacy. This is the process wherein individuals and groups become radicalized and commit terrorism with no al Qaeda guidance. Other analysts champion the intact structure hypothesis, such as Bruce Hoffman.<sup>4</sup> Then there are others who maintain that even though the death of Bin Laden has terminated his appearances, these very statements and the ideology behind them have grown in importance.

This has spawned a new term in counterterrorism studies, what Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer have referred to as “Jihadist Strategic Studies.”<sup>5</sup> This is a combination of ideology and strategy, wherein divine sanctions are used as exhortations for articulation of focused strategies, pertaining to military or strategic tactics. Western strategic thought is readily assimilated within this ideologically inspired strategy as long as it can be used against the enemy. This symbiosis of ideology and tactics is driven by al Qaeda ideologues at the forefront of Global Jihadism, and has, arguably, become an even greater danger than al Qaeda's military potential.

### **Effectiveness of Ideology**

It now seems logical to assume that al Qaeda is operationally degraded but ideologically ascendant, with “al Qaeda Central” continuing to exert a dominant appeal for that diffuse community of “Jihobbyists,” people who may never commit an act of terror, but are mesmerized by al Qaeda's messages spread primarily through the internet. Al Qaeda may not possess the organizational strength it had eight years ago, but its ideology has perhaps gained more strength, as its “propaganda by deed” philosophy inspires new recruits, many outside the Arab world. This is supported by the incremental risks of Islamist terror attacks in places such as the Philippines, Russia, Somalia and Pakistan.

Al Qaeda's ideology has inspired the Wahabist Salafism strain of Jihadism in places where Islamist violence was previously unknown, such as Chechnya, and to a lesser extent, neighbouring Dagestan. Here Islam was again always influenced by the Sufism brand of Islam which came to Caucasus in the 18th century; it also seems pertinent that the Soviet totalitarian regimes never allowed any radical forms of Islam to flourish in

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<sup>3</sup> For a succinct reading of the controversy between Hoffman and Sageman, see Marc Sageman, “Does Osama Still Call the Shots?, Debating the Containment of al Qaeda's Leadership,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hegghammer and Brynjar Lia, “Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged Al Qaeda Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 27, 5 (September/October 2004): 355-375.

these regions. Even during the 1991 Dudayev coup, and Aslan Maskhadov's propensity of embracing Islam as a state ideology, the Caucasian brand of Islam never really resembled Salafism. The Beslan school massacre of 156 children brought the reality home of how much al Qaeda had managed to gain ideological inroads through Chechen Mujahideen, who have since become regular players in Jihadist theaters worldwide.

Similarly, in Somalia in Africa, the traditional Muslim faith is based upon the mysticism of the nomadic *Wadad*, or holy man, which survived genocide and international Islamic revivalist movement of the 1960s and 1970s; it appears, however, that it may not survive al Qaeda's ideological indoctrination. Al Shabab and its predecessor, the Islamic Courts Union, were led by Aden Hashi Ayro, an al Qaeda trained ideologue. The Somalian diaspora has already been indoctrinated into the al Qaeda ideology, as evidenced by the arrests of a Somali terrorist cell in Australia,<sup>6</sup> and al-Shabaab's declaration – that it wishes to become an al Qaeda affiliate, which indicates the strong transnational organizational linkages the organization continues to inculcate. On the other hand, the case of Faisal Shehzad, the failed Times Square bomber, continues to demonstrate the ideological appeal of Jihadism on erstwhile “normal” individuals. Thus, al Qaeda continues to inspire radicalization of *both* kinds as espoused by Hoffman and Sageman,

It is intriguing how al Qaeda has continued to survive, even thrive, in the face of the onslaught of a global war against it, where the might of billions of dollars and massive infrastructure of military force are arrayed against it. The key here is ideology; the organization may be weakened, but it has rallied countless young, impressionable Muslims to its ideological cause. How does this ideology work? It begins by articulating a set of grievances by one population against another, in this case the woes of the Muslim world brought on by the West and its Jewish allies, who al Qaeda declares are engaged in a global conspiracy to destroy Islam. This conspiracy has been extensively documented by many al Qaeda ideologues, Bin Laden of course being the foremost, but many others as well. These grievances are reduced by al Qaeda ideologues into recurring themes of oppression, alienation and victimization, which ultimately filter down cognitive dissonance into binary oppositions, wherein the grey areas are spliced out to leave only a reductionist dualism, a struggle between good and evil, between the evil and the oppressed.<sup>7</sup> Since this becomes a conflict between good and bad, the good has to necessarily triumph over the bad, as without an alternative vision for the future, no ideology can hope to succeed. The faithful are implored to shun inertia and spring into

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<sup>6</sup> Rory Callinan, “The Somali Connection: A Terrorism Crackdown in Australia,” *Time*, August 5, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1914644,00.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Jarret M. Brechtman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

action, since only from action can that alternative vision for future be achieved.<sup>8</sup> The vision that inspires al Qaeda is the ouster of foreign occupiers from Muslim lands, removal of all vestiges of cultural pollution that violate the laws of Allah, and the enforcement of laws that are informed solely by the Quran. The US is the main antagonist, against which al Qaeda ideologues have laid out an ideological strategy. This can be divided into four broad categories, which are discussed below.

### **Military Might Alone is Ineffective**

As a typical example, Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi<sup>9</sup> has tended to argue in his works that the United States is weakening, while the Jihadist movement led by al Qaeda is on the rise around the world. For example, in a 2002 article “A Lesson in War,” he conducts a nuanced distillation of Carl von Clausewitz.<sup>10</sup> Qurashi postulates that Americans are too entrenched in Clausewitz’s “centre of gravity”<sup>11</sup> doctrine, which emphasizes on fighting a centralized hostile adversary with a unified command structure that becomes redundant when fighting a fluid organization like al Qaeda. Qurashi argues that Americans are totally inept when trying to comprehend al Qaeda tactics, and deconstructs Ray Cline’s arguments about power.<sup>12</sup>

Qurashi interpolates variables that Cline argues are vital for any entity to acquire power, within which territoriality, economic capability, military ability, strategic purpose and a will to accomplish that purpose are essential elements. Qurashi argues that al Qaeda has a significant amount of potential power,<sup>13</sup> and has territorial bases in different parts of the world. It has the will, though territory itself will be hugely helpful for acquiring economic capability. Qurashi interpolates research by another American military strategist T.N. Dupuy, who identifies fighting power (P) as being constituted of the number of troops (N) multiplied by variable factors (V) multiplied by the quality (Q) of those troops, or  $P = NVQ$ .<sup>14</sup> Qurashi argues that even though the US may have a central pool of troops, Jihadists can recruit Muslims from all over the world, offsetting the numerical strength of American troops. He also

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Next to nothing is known about this ideologue, who many suspect, is a nom de guerre for a composite of Jihadists writing under a pen name. Notwithstanding, he has a towering ideological status amongst Jihadists. The same goes for Abu Bakr Naji, who is also cited in the paper.

<sup>10</sup> Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi, “A Lesson in War,” *Majallat al-Ansar*, December 19, 2002, 10-16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi, “Strategic Equations,” *Majallat al-Ansar*, September 22, 2002, 10-16.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

postulates that the qualities of Islamist warrior (Jihadists) are undeniably higher, since they fight out of conviction, not monetary gains, and live hard lives and thus are inherently conditioned for war.<sup>15</sup>

Abu Musab al-Suri also stresses on Islam being under attack by the establishment of a “New World Order” of Jews and Crusaders, spearheaded by America, and France and Britain, and then NATO and the apostate Arab regimes.<sup>16</sup> Suri has also equated Islamic scholars who denounce Jihadism as the enemies within, who lead Muslims astray under the guise of Islamic injunctions. The need for edifying action is also demonstrable in his “Call to Islamic Global Resistance” of December 2004.<sup>17</sup> Suri has laid out a “battle doctrine” against primarily America, which stipulates that only words will not save the Ummah in the face of enemy’s “machine guns, flogging, rape and defamation.” Suri’s emphasis at all times is on the fact that Jihad against the US cannot be waged through words and non-violent means, and only this philosophy is the way forward.<sup>18</sup>

The asymmetric warfare aspect does not bother Qurashi who thinks that the asymmetrical confabulation of Jihadist versus American forces is not such a bad thing, since the fluid nature of Jihadism makes it more flexible, creative and resilient, besides making good propaganda material.<sup>19</sup> This aspect has been effectively utilized particularly by al Qaeda to project itself as a small but dedicated populist force seeking to defend the freedom of the oppressed and downtrodden from an American Goliath. Qurashi points out various asymmetrical trajectories which, he argues can be effectively utilized. America's superiority in force strength, he argues, has not defended it against the weaker side's intelligence and will-power.<sup>20</sup> The superiority of the American information technology has not defended it against the economic aftermath of the 9/11 phenomenon, since images of the subsequent stock exchange crashes were transmitted by the enemy's own media centers.<sup>21</sup> Qurashi then posits the largest fissure in the American armour; America is seeking to protect the narrow ideal of a state while al Qaeda is fighting for the people; America is trying to uphold democracy while al Qaeda espouses a higher divine cause that gives it the leverage to operate throughout the world, while the US is limited by its territorial imperatives. Qurashi tries to show that America is still reliving the Cold War military doctrines when engaging al Qaeda, which is ineffective

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<sup>15</sup> Jarret M. Brechtman, *Global Jihadism*.

<sup>16</sup> Abu Musab al Suri, “A Call to Global Islamic Resistance,”  
<http://www.mjotd.com/Library/books.rar>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi, “Al Qaida and the Art of War,” June 13, 2002,  
<http://www.alneda.com>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

against the entity's cell-based, fluid, and constantly morphing tactics.<sup>22</sup> For al Qaeda, the scatter of forces created by engaging in Iraq simultaneously with Afghanistan shows the lack of creativity of American thinking. On the other hand, jihadists gain their strength from the same troop diffusion process by opening up too many fronts for the Americans to handle at one time. This "too much everywhere — too little effectiveness"<sup>23</sup> theme is also resonated by another top al Qaeda strategist and ideologue, Abu Bakr Naji, who argues that even though the US has the capability to crush Jihadism and al Qaeda with it, only hegemony will not be enough.<sup>24</sup> Remote countries will become graveyards for the Americans till America legitimizes itself to people in those countries, which means a reversal of its foreign policy in some cases. Reliance on proxy regimes like Arabs, Naji argues, will not work since they in turn lose legitimacy by allying with the "Great Satan."

Naji argues that America has become so complacent about its military might, that it has started believing it can crush Jihadism with military tactics, which is a fallacy. Muhammad Khalil al-Hakaymah, another strategist, also explains in his work "The Myth of Delusion" that this myth is overblown.<sup>25</sup> Naji, echoing Paul Kennedy says, when a state submits — whatever the extent of its ability — to the illusion of deceptive power and behaves on this basis, that is when its downfall begins. Qurashi describes the use of media and psychological warfare as well as various kinds of distortion of facts by the United States to advance its interests and cites the example of American President, Theodore Roosevelt, who played up the sinking of the battleship Maine in the Cuban port of Havana as an excuse for starting the Spanish-American War.<sup>26</sup> He documents how the American people were dragged into the First World War and how the Vietnam war occurred because of the Gulf of Tonkin episode. Qurashi argues that the Jihadist who know this history will not be taken in by the American propaganda.<sup>27</sup>

Qurashi maintains that America's purely military tactics without a counter ideological umbrella cannot be effective against al Qaeda which is intimately involved in local scenarios. Qurashi examines "fourth generation warfare" which he regards as a strategy closely resembling Jihadism.<sup>28</sup> Jihadists, he maintains, fight "guerrilla wars of attrition," since they perform are

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Jarret M. Brechtman, *Global Jihadism*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Khalil al-Hakaymah, "The Myth of Delusion Exposing the American Intelligence," originally available on the now-defunct Islamic Renewal Organization's website.

<sup>26</sup> Jarret M. Brechtman, *Global Jihadism*.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi, "The Fourth Generation of Wars," *Majallat al-Ansar*, February 28, 2002, 15-21.

undermanned, underequipped and outnumbered.<sup>29</sup> Suicide attacks, though held un-Islamic by mainstream religious authorities, are a tactic which has evolved out of this circumstantial constraint on Jihadism. Qurashi calls it a strategic “landmark” for Jihadism. Sniper attacks have similarly evolved from this constraining environment.<sup>30</sup> Qurashi relates the story of Assili Aitsev, the Soviet sniper hero during the Second World War at the battle of Stalingrad, who stymied the German advance by killing 40 German officers in ten days. This “revived the will of resistance among the Russians, particularly at the entrance to Stalingrad.”<sup>31</sup> He also relates the American experience during the battle of Kwajalein in 1944 when Japanese sharpshooters stopped the advance of the US 7th Infantry.<sup>32</sup> The same thing happened repeatedly during the Vietnam War. Qurashi emphasizes how, throughout recent history, single individuals through the use of the most viable tactical weapon have successfully engaged in asymmetric warfare.

### Narratives and Counter Narratives

On September 10, 2007, top al Qaeda ideologue Shaikh Abu Yahya al-Libi, in a sarcastic discourse offered the US unsolicited tips for fighting “against al Qaeda.”<sup>33</sup> It was a gimmick he employed to project al Qaeda's ideological superiority over American thinking and to show it had little to fear in the foreseeable future from the US.<sup>34</sup> Libi highlighted America's counter-ideology propaganda which amplified the messages of ex-Jihadists who had renounced violence and recanted their ideological commitments. Libi noted that the West knew little about these reformed jihadists whom the Saudis and Egyptians had used for decades. In 2007, for instance, a legendary Egyptian Jihadist thinker, Sayyid Imam, released his book renouncing violent Jihadism.<sup>35</sup> This created huge ripples in the Jihadist world, and made front-page news across the Arab world. But the book made a two-line mention in the English press, which Libi said demonstrated how little the West knew about counter narratives. Libi advises the West to launch a media barrage about these reformed scholars. He also recommends that the US should exploit the mistakes of Jihadist groups by blowing them up and fabricating new ones. The killing of innocent civilians

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi, “A Sniper: An Overlooked Weapon,” *Majallat al-Ansar*, October 22, 2002, 9-14.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> This and subsequent Abu Yahya al-Libi quotes from his video message, September 10, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> See Michael Scheuer, “Al Qaida's Theological Enforcer,” *Terrorism Monitor* 4, 25 (July 31, 2007); for an in-depth examination of Abu Yahya's recent statements.

<sup>35</sup> Rationalizations on Jihad in Egypt and the World, serialized in al-Masry al-Youm, November-December 2007.

may be presented as part of the jihadist philosophy and irresponsible activities of fringe elements also portrayed al Qaeda work. Libi gives the example of Saudi Arabia and Algeria where attacks by al Qaeda against the establishment were described by the state as attacks against innocent civilians. He cites the Egyptian government's strategy of prompting mainstream Muslim clerics to issue Fatwas against Jihadis and using special committees of scholars to "deprogram" Jihadis in prison. These rehabilitation programmes have become important counter radicalization initiatives in Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.<sup>36</sup>

Elaborating his taunt Libi suggests state patronage of moderate Islamic movements to take on the hardliners which will unleash a "torrential flood of ideas and methodologies which find backing, empowerment, and publicity from numerous (interested) parties."<sup>37</sup> It is significant to note that al Qaeda finds its most formidable competition from groups which draw upon the same doctrinal sources, but interpret them differently from al Qaeda. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, as well as mainstream Salafists are the al Qaeda's stiffest competitors. It is also significant that groups like the Muslim Brotherhood are now much more palatable than al Qaeda.<sup>38</sup> Libi goes on further in this extended mimicry and recommends that aggressive campaigns should be launched to discredit leading ideologues like Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada and (formerly) Sayyid Imam, commanders like Khattab, Yousef al-Ayiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi etc<sup>39</sup> who, he argues, have come to exercise more clout than they deserve.

### **Territoriality**

Abu Bakr Naji stresses territorial control as a means of consolidating Jihadist strength, and affording sanctuary to embattled forces.<sup>40</sup> The Afghanistan model is projected as the model Islamic emirate by many ideologues, Ayiri foremost amongst them. As a jihadist staging ground, it became a symbol of jihad export the world over providing support to Jihadi movements in disparate Chechnya, Kashmir and Burma.<sup>41</sup> The Iraqi occupation provides proof to potential Jihadists that the invasion of the holy city of Baghdad was part of the global conspiracy of the West against Islam, which would be replicated in other Muslim lands. Al Qaeda thus springs to the forefront as a greatly outnumbered, outgunned organization, willing to die to defend Muslim

<sup>36</sup> See Christopher Boucek, "Extremist Reeducation and Rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, 16 (August 16, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Abu Musab al Suri, "A Call to Global Islamic Resistance."

<sup>38</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of these dynamics, see <http://ctc.usma.edu/atlas/>.

<sup>39</sup> See *Supra* note vii.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

lands against the occupation of infidels. This perception is always driven by the main engine propelling al Qaeda's ideology and movement, the ideologues.

Above all, territorial control provides a Shariah template which can be physically attempted, and an opportunity to win over Muslim constituencies. Naji maintains that territory is imperative for carrying out “vexation and exhaustion”<sup>42</sup> operations against critical infrastructure and key economic targets like as oil pipelines, key installations, tourists, bridges and other infrastructure, against which recurring and unpredictable strikes are to be made. This, Naji argues, will force the US to pull out of peripheral areas in order to protect vulnerable targets; the targets will always keep increasing spreading the enemy's force thinly over the ground. This creates security deficit zones, particularly in peripheries of urban centres, which will cause chaos. Ideologues such as Naji are even prepared for the aftermath of anarchy in these peripheral areas, as they maintain that Jihadis will have to crush any opposing forces which spring up with an iron hand.

In 2007, Jihadist ideologue, Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, published “Informing the People of the Birth of the Islamic State,” wherein the arguments for the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) were made.<sup>43</sup> As an answer to the anarchy prevailing in Iraq, Tamimi explains that it will take time and, that Islamic sovereignty was not complete in the first Islamic state, Medina for some time after its inception. Thus, for Jihad to flourish, it first needs a territorial base which must be wrested out of unwilling hands by action, Tamimi argues.

In fact, the American military presence in Iraq is a blessing for many al Qaeda ideologues, who can portray it as a proof of American hegemony. Al Qaeda ideologues argue — that the invasion was made for Iraq's oil, as well as capitalizing on Iraq's important strategic position within the Muslim world. Thus it would become a staging point for the American military forces in order to help buffer Israel from her Arab neighbours. Iraq is just the beginning, they argue, and the worst is yet to come. The only way out is stiff resistance and resistance in Iraq will stem further advances in the Arab world. The strategy they support is the establishment of Shariah law; reviving the spirit of Jihad, and uniting with Muslims from around the world in order to drive the US from Iraq.

Al Qaeda always stresses upon protraction by extending the duration of the war, thus drawing the United States deeper into a protracted conflict. Jihadist strategists believe that America's military occupation of Iraq has led to several benefits for their cause. Shaikh Atiyatallah<sup>44</sup> considers the Iraqi occupation as providing signs that “the armies of the libertine nation, the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> To be distinguished from Louis Atiyatallah.

leader of the cross, America<sup>45</sup> are facing certain defeat, and warns Jihadists that this transition phase will be characterized by craftiness, scheming and deception to “divide the believers, create strife, distort facts, and divide [their ranks].”<sup>46</sup> Atiyatallah exhorts the Muslims in Iraq to publicly prove that they are “the most righteous, the most meritorious, the most deserving, and most entitled in religion and politics”<sup>47</sup> in all walks of life including physical attributes, so that they can inherit the earth. He also advises against the hasty application of Takfir (excommunication) to other Muslims, since indiscriminate use of this device by anyone other than men learned in Islamic jurisprudence (Ulema) may alienate the society. He advocates an ink spot strategy, wherein Jihadists would spread from entrenched areas like al-Anbar and Diyala to surrounding areas.<sup>48</sup> He also exhorts the Sunni population in Iraq to overwhelm the Shias, another marker of al Qaeda's virulently sectarian tendencies.

### **Economic Jihad**

Al Qaeda recognizes that targeting economic targets can hurt the enemy as much, or may be more than targeting civilians or military personnel. Abu Bakr Naji, for instance, endorses this economic targeting as even superior to military targets. This is, however, a controversial issue even within al Qaeda, as some ideologues consider this tantamount to spilling the lifeblood of Islamic states; even then there are vociferous proponents of this idea. The Saudi Shaikh Abd-al-Aziz Bin Raishid al-Anzi takes Naji's thinking to new heights in his treatise “The Religious Rule on Targeting Oil Interests.”<sup>49</sup> Anzi examines Islamic jurisprudence pertinent to targeting oil installations, particularly in respect to Jihad with respect to subverting one's own resources, and prescriptions and proscriptions for waging attacks on oil facilities. While the concept of destroying one's home in order to save it may present an intractable paradox, he discusses the fate of the Islamic city of Acre in 1191 as an analogy.<sup>50</sup> Then, the crew of a vessel preferred to drown themselves when surrounded by the army, and the possibility that their provisions may fall into enemy hands. He also quotes Saladin as destroying Asqalan (Ashkelon), a great Islamic city, rather than allowing it to fall into enemy hands. “The demolition

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<sup>45</sup> Sheikh Atiyatallah, Slander from the imperfect evil is testimony for the righteous heroes, posted on the now de-funct World News Network website.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Downloadable at <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/896913/The-Military-Strategy-of-Global-Jihad>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

of city,” Anzi quotes the general as saying, “will be tolerable if it is in favor of the Muslims.”<sup>51</sup>

Anzi argues that by striking oil installations, Jihadists will trigger a cycle of events which will catalyze economic depression for United States and its allies. Oil prices will increase, putting pressure on industrialized nations, which are mostly from the West; production would decrease, causing global oil panic and sellouts, affecting oil prices. More extensive security will entail more investment into installations, will also exacerbate this increase. However, even al Qaeda is split in its exhortations to strike at oil. In his message “Declaration of Jihad against the American Occupiers of the Country of the Two Mosques,” Osama Bin Laden himself warned against targeting oil wells. However, Anzi differentiates between a country's oil supplies as opposed to its oil facilities; the latter are a western inspired tool of the West to harvest and plunder Muslims. Anzi does recognize the possibility of many companies leaving the area, causing economic hardships and unemployment for many Muslims. However, that is a price Anzi argues that Muslims must be prepared to pay, in order to expel the invaders.

Adib al-Bassam, in his treatise “Bin Laden and the Oil Weapon,”<sup>52</sup> relates the history of this tactic which began by al Qaeda's attack on the French oil tanker M.V. Limburg in October 2002, and continued with a Saudi al Qaeda group's assaults on the al-Khubar facility and the Buqaiq refinery. Bassam describes the Buqaiq attack as the template for future global Jihadist ventures, because the magnitude of oil passing through it was huge and it was a perfect example of a night raid during which attackers escaped, which makes for good propaganda. Bassam argues that if Muslim wealth benefits the US, they should destroy it. He even goes as far as to argue that all materials made from oil as a raw product should be destroyed, so that it becomes a necessity to strike oil installations in regions from which the United States imports petroleum.

## Conclusions

Zawahiri has set down a vision for an al Qaeda of the future, which he says would survive even after Bin Laden. For Zawahiri, patience is the prime virtue for al Qaeda, since he argues that it is engaging America in a war of the flea, which will be a retracted campaign and militants must be patient; he does not foresee success or defeat in his own lifetime.<sup>53</sup> He has also started stressing

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> *Sawt al-Jihad*, February 2, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> This theme is embedded in his various messages. See Ayman al-Zawahiri's reaction to the French headscarf ban, audio tape released on al-Arabiva, February 24, 2004, Ayman al-Zawahiri's criticism of US-Middle East plans, audio tape released on *al-Arabiya*, June 11, 2004, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, “The Emancipation of Mankind

upon al Qaeda activists to start winning popular sympathy for the movement's arguments and grievances. However, results demand widespread mobilization and action, which can come only through terrorism, violent coup, mass popular uprisings, guerrilla warfare and armed political resistance. He exhorts al Qaeda to be at the vanguard of this movement to oust what he sees as the corrupt and moribund regimes. For this, he directs al Qaeda to be alive to changing realities on ground, and also be ever prepared to take advantage of them. He thus envisages the entity as a populist movement that could rapidly deploy Muslims to different theatres needing attention. The Jew and Christian crusader enemy, he argues, must be stymied wherever they threaten a Muslim interest, which has the dual advantage of allowing breathing space to al Qaeda to prepare for further military preparation. That is why, he argues, victory in Iraq is essential. Zawahiri has also stressed upon expanding the skill-set of movement activists, widening the recruitment base of potential new participants, promoting education and awareness, and emphasizing global connectedness.

Against this sophisticated ideological evolution of strategy, pure military might by the United States as a counter measure may not be adequate in the medium to longer term. ■