Prologue

The Far Enemy, or al-Adou al-Baeed, is a term used by jihadis to refer to the United States and its Western allies. This book tells the story of the internationalization of jihad (armed struggle) and how and why in the late 1990s jihadis – who since the 1970s had focused their fight against the "near enemy," or al-Adou al-Qareeb (Muslim regimes) – shifted gears and called for a new global jihad against the far enemy. Jihadis (they invented the term and refer to themselves as such) are militant activists who feel estranged from the secular social and political order at home and intrinsically threatened by globalization and westernization.[1] Unlike mainstream Islamists who have given up on the use of force, since the 1970s jihadis have utilized violence in the name of religion and have sought to seize power and Islamize society by autocratic fiat from the top down. But their revolt is directed not only against the secular status quo, which they perceive as morally abhorrent, but also against the religious authority and the established canon of Islamic jurisprudence, scholarship, and history that they view as being subverted by corrupting Western influences.[2] In a sense, jihadis are practicing taqleed (emulating tradition) and are engaged in ijtihad (an effort of interpretation of the sacred texts) at the same time.

My study focuses on doctrinaire jihadis who have used violence against both their own governments (the near enemy) and Western targets (the far enemy); the most important of these jihadis are the Egyptian al-Jama'a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group) and Tanzim al-Jihad (Islamic Jihad); the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which now seems to be defunct and replaced by the Salafist Group for Dawa and Combat; Al Qaeda; al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, led by the

militant Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi; and other smaller fringe groups.[3]

But I do not examine the so-called irredentist jihadis, who struggle to redeem land considered to be part of dar al-islam (House of Islam) from non-Muslim rule or occupation, like Palestinian Hamas and Jihad, Lebanon's Hizbollah or Party of God, and other groups in Kashmir, Chechnya, Mindanao, and elsewhere. Irredentist jihadism is sometimes the object of rivalry between nationalist forces, who may not conceive of it as jihad, and Islamists, and, within the latter, between local and global elements, as between the Afghan mujahedeen (Islamic fighters) and the "Afghan Arabs" who joined their struggle in the 1980s; similar nuances have been discernible in other irredentist conflicts, notably in Bosnia from 1992 to 1996, in Mindanao, and now in Iraq. There exist major differences among these three distinct strands of jihadism – internal, global, and irredentist – in terms of diversity of objectives, strategy, and tactics. For example, an important distinction is between the resort to armed struggle that is primarily determined by the context (foreign rule or military occupation) and that which arises primarily out of a radical doctrine expressing a preference for violence over nonviolent strategies despite the possibility of engaging in the latter: "Irredentist struggles are not as a rule the work of doctrinaire jihadis, whereas both internal and global jihads typically are."[4]

Another critical distinction is that my book does not deal with mainstream Islamists, that is, with Muslim Brothers and other politically independent activists who now accept the rules of the political game and emphatically embrace democratic principles and elements of a modernist outlook, although many observers still question their real commitment to democracy.[5] In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s elements of the Muslim Brotherhood flirted with violence and established the so-called al-Jihaz al-Sirri, or secret apparatus (an underground paramilitary unit within the political organization), which led Egyptian authorities to brutally suppress and persecute its rank and file.[6] But since the early 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood – the most powerfully organized Islamist movement in the world of Islam, with local branches in the Arab Middle East and central, south, and southeast Asia – has moved more and more to the political mainstream, and now it aims to Islamize state and society through peaceful means.

Although Muslim Brothers are often targeted and excluded from politics by ruling autocrats, they no longer use force or the threat of force to attain their goals. Mainstream Islamists represent the overwhelming majority within the Islamist political spectrum, whereas jihadis, the focal point of this book, are a tiny – but critical – minority.

The New Definition of Jihad

Nowhere is jihadis' revolutionary challenge more evident than in their systemic effort to elevate the status of jihad in Muslim consciousness and make it equal with the five pillars of Islam (profession of faith, prayer, fasting, alms-giving, and pilgrimage). Since the time of the Prophet there has existed a consensus among Muslim ulema (religious scholars) on the status of jihad as a collective duty (fard kifaya), one that is determined by the whole community, not by individuals. They also agree that there are five pillars in Islam. Pious Muslims, and even mainstream Islamists, accept the existing consensus and may even take it for granted.

In contrast, jihadis of all colors consider jihad a permanent and personal obligation (fard 'ayn) and a vital pillar, though now absent, of Islam.[7] Osama bin Laden, the chief of Al Qaeda, subscribes to this definition of jihad as an "individual duty" for every Muslim who is capable of going to war.[8] As he put it, "jihad is part of our religion and no Muslim may say that he does not want to do jihad in the cause of God. . . . These are the tenets of our religion."[9] Bin Laden went further: "No other priority, except faith, could be considered before [jihad]."[10]

Among the five pillars, bin Laden ranked jihad second only to iman (belief), an astonishing judgment coming from a nonreligious authority. But we should not be surprised by that because the new ideologues of jihad contest the very foundation of the classical school, which laid more stress on the "defensive" and "collective" nature of jihad. The new ideologues claim that the old rules and regulations do not apply because Muslim lands are "occupied," by either local "apostates" or their American masters.[11] Under such conditions, jihad becomes obligatory to all Muslims, to defend their religion and its sanctuaries.[12] Thus the lines become blurred between "defensive" and "offensive" jihad as well

as between "collective" and "individual" duty. The new ideologues portray jihad as an all-encompassing struggle that requires full and permanent mobilization of Muslim society against real and imagined enemies at home and abroad. In this context, bin Laden warns fellow Muslims against complacency and dereliction of duty:

> Fighting is part of our religion and our Shariah. Those who love God and the prophet and this religion may not deny a part of that religion. This is a very serious matter. Whoever denies even a very minor tenet of religion would have committed the gravest sin in Islam. Such persons must renew their faith and rededicate themselves to their religion.[13]

Jihad as a Permanent Revolution

More than anyone else, Sayyid Qutb, hanged by Egyptian authorities in 1966 for his alleged subversive preaching and plotting against the nationalist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser, inspired generations of jihadis, including Al Qaeda's senior leaders, Osama bin Laden and his deputies – the two late military commanders, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri and Mohammed Atef (known as Abu Hafs al-Masri), theoretician Ayman al-Zawahiri, and thousands of others – to wage perpetual jihad to "abolish injustice from the earth, to bring people to the worship of God alone, and to bring them out of servitude to others into the servants of the Lord."[14] Far from viewing jihad as a collective duty governed by strict rules and regulations (similar to just war theory in Christianity, international law, and classical Islamic jurisprudence, or fiqh), jihad, for Qutb, was a permanent revolution against internal and external enemies who usurped God's sovereignty.[15] He attacked Muslim scholars and clerics with "defeatist and apologetic mentalities" for confining jihad to "defensive war." There is no such thing as a defensive, limited war in Islam, only an offensive, total war, Qutb asserted: "The Islamic Jihaad has no relationship to modern warfare, either in its causes or in the way in which it is conducted. The cause of Islamic Jihaad should be sought in the very nature of Islam, and its [universal] role in the world."[16]

Qutb was the first contemporary radical thinker who revolutionarized the concept of jihad and invested it with a new meaning – waging

an "eternal" armed struggle "against every obstacle that comes into the way of worshipping God and the implementation of the divine authority on earth, hakimiya, and returning this authority to God and taking it away from the rebellious usurpers [rulers]."[17] In his legal summation in his own defense during the trial for the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, former emir (prince) of al-Jama'a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group), indirectly utilized Qutb's idea of God's sovereignty to rationalize Sadat's murder: "God made hakimiya a matter of kufr [disbelief] or iman [belief] or kufr and Islam or jahiliya [ignorance of divine authority]. There is no middle way in this command and no solh [truce]. Believers govern according to God's laws and do not change or replace a single letter or word of them; kufar [infidels] are those who do not govern according to God's laws," a direct reference to Sadat.[18] That is a crime punishable by death, Abdel Rahman implied. In his closing arguments, he challenged the definition offered by the ruling and religious establishment regarding the defensive nature of jihad; Islam does not put any limits on jihad in the cause of God because it is a continous struggle against internal and external enemies. Like Qutb, Abdel Rahman sarcastically debunked this official heresy and asked the judges if the imperial expansion of the Islamic empire was "defensive"?[19]

In Zawahiri's memoir, which he began to write in 2000 and which he published immediately after September 11, he writes that Qutb's powerful ideas, particularly the sovereignty of God, along with his violent death, comprised the first spark that lit the jihadist fire.[20] Zawahiri credits Qutb with giving rise to the contemporary jihadist movement and dramatically and strategically changing its direction and focus. According to Zawahiri, Qutb convinced young activists that the internal enemy is as dangerous as, if not more dangerous than, the external one because it serves as a tool for the latter to wage a hidden war against Islam and Muslims. As a result, Zawahiri adds, the Islamic vanguard, who used to consider the external enemy as the enemy of Islam, began to fight local regimes, which he said are the real enemy of Islam.[21] Zawahiri does not appear to be aware of the irony and contradiction of his position. In his memoir, he heaps praise on Qutb for reminding jihadis of the urgent need to attack the near enemy as opposed to the far enemy. Yet it does not occur to Zawahiri that by targeting the United States, he

and his Al Qaeda associates took their jihadist movement in a dramatically opposite direction from that recommended by Qutb, threatening its very existence. But he rationalized this pronounced dichotomy between his rhetoric and his action by saying the "battle today cannot be fought on just a regional level without taking into account global hostility," a reference to America's direct intervention against the Islamist movement.[22]

Adding a personal touch to his narrative of Qutb's contribution to the jihadist movement, Zawahiri, who was in his teens when Qutb was executed, said that Qutb personally inspired him to establish the first underground cell (composed of a few high school friends) of Egyptian "Jihad" in 1967.[23] Indeed, Zawahiri's radicalism is deeply influenced by Qutb's writings, and all his publications borrowed intellectually from Qutb's, particularly his commentary on the Qur'an, *In the Shades of the Qur'an*, considered by some jihadis to be his best for its accessibility and human dimension.[24] Qutb's *Milestones* targeted Zawahiri's generation – "this vanguard" – who, Qutb noted, should know the landmarks on the road toward their destination, which is to rid Muslim society and politics of jahiliya and to restore hakimiya to earth. As he said in the introduction, "I have written *Milestones* for this vanguard, which I consider to be a waiting reality about to be materialized."[25] Those fateful words, written in a prison cell before he was hanged, led thousands of young men on a violent journey to exact revenge on jahili rulers and jahili society in general.

Thus Zawahiri was not the only young jihadi to adopt Qutb's expansive definition of jihad as a perpetual war and a personal obligation. In the eyes of the new ideologues, jihad ceases to be a collective endeavor and is transformed into an individual journey and a path to self-realization and purification. In his trial, Abdel Rahman, a radical cleric who acted as the spiritual guide to Egyptian jihadis from the 1970s until the early 1990s, publicly lectured the judges that Sadat's killers had a duty, not just a right, to take matters into their own hands: "Any Muslim who observes his society not to be governed by the Shariah [Islamic law] must struggle hard [pursue jihad] to apply it, and he is not required to be a scholar."[26] Disputing the government's assertion, Abdel Rahman reminded his audience that there is no church and no hierarchy in Islam and that believers can directly interpret the texts with no recourse

to the established authority; jihad is very much an individual obligation and does not need blessing by the clerical community.[27]

It would not be an exaggeration to say that jihadis look up to Qutb as a founding, spiritual father, if not the mufti, or theoretician, of their contemporary movement. Qutb's *Milestones* provided the religious justification for jihadist groups, like Egyptian al-Takfeer wal-Hijira (Excommunication and Hegira, or the Society of Muslims, led by Shukri Mustafa, an agronomist), Tanzim al-Jihad and Jama'a al-Islamiya, and Algerian Armed Islamic Group, which appropriated his concepts of hakimiya and jahiliya and used them as ammunition in their ideological and political struggle against Muslim rulers. In the eyes of Islamic activists, *Milestones* is symbolically powerful because it was the last book written by Qutb before his execution and so is seen as his final "will" to future generations. Ironically, Qutb's Arab biographers agree that of all his texts, *Milestones* is the weakest and the least rigorous intellectually, and that it includes one old idea, jahili society, which he rehashes in a long literary monologue form. But that is part of the strength and appeal of *Milestones* to young activists who hunger for radical, simplistic notions that challenge classical interpretations of the Islamic canon and allow them to go directly to the sacred texts without mediation or intervention by the religious authority. As one Arab writer said, Qutb's importance to jihadis lies in "daring" to neutralize the fiqh and providing jihadis with direct access to the original texts, which they utilized as absolute weapons against "impious regimes."[28]

Jihadis whom I interviewed in several countries said they were inspired by Qutb, who showed them the way forward and whom they referred to as a shahid, or martyr. They talked about the torture he endured at the hands of the Nasserist security apparatus and the dignity and courage he showed under duress. Zawahiri says that Qutb's words acquired a deeper resonance because of his defiance and refusal to appeal to President Nasser to spare his life, which provided activists with an example of steadfastness and sacrifice. For example, he cites the case of Salah Sirriya, a Palestinian Islamist who in the early 1970s assembled a group of young Egyptian college students to carry out a coup d'etat and kill President Sadat by seizing control of the Military Academy in Heliopolis in the Cairo suburbs. The coup failed, and Sirriya and his top aide were sentenced to death for leading what came to be known

as the "Military Academy" group. Zawahiri heaped praise on Sirriya for his courage and not faltering in the face of death; when a group of political prisoners gathered around Sirriya and begged him to petition Sadat for leniency, he retorted with the conviction of a believer: "What powers does Sadat have to prolong and control my destiny? Look at this melancholic prison, and this awful food, and these clogged toilets in which we empty this food. This is the harsh reality of prison life, so why do we hold on to it?"[29] For dramatic effect, Zawahiri describes the last meeting in prison between Sirriya and his wife and nine children before his execution, in which he unequivocally told her: "If you petition for amnesty, consider yourself divorced."[30] The moral of the story, Zawahiri concludes, is that although Sirriya was killed and his group dismantled, other jihadis have carried the banner forward, including his own group – the Jihad organization – and have brought Sadat to justice by assassinating him.

In jihadis' eyes, Qutb appears bigger than life, a model to live up to and an example to be imitated. According to Zawahiri, Sirriya was one of the first jihadis to follow in Qutb's footsteps, and he, too, motivated other activists to travel the same road. Jihadism has gradually evolved into a living experience, not only an intellectual discourse. Although the senior echelon of the movement are versed with theory and doctrine, on the whole the foot soldiers are driven by the suffering of Muslim communities or specific individuals. In a strikingly revealing interview with the Arabic-language newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat*, the Moroccan widow of an Al Qaeda operative, Abd al-Karim al-Majati, who was killed in 2004 in a shootout with the Saudi security forces and who is accused of planning the Madrid train bombings, said her husband's baptism into jihad was purely natural and emotional, not doctrinal and intellectual. Asked about al-Majati's alleged disagreement with radical clerics, she answered: "I stress that educationally my husband was a simple man because he did not attend university and did not take lessons in the Shariah, and he even had problems with the Arabic language [more fluent with French]. . . . Sometimes we received texts from the Internet, but my husband did not read them, his relationship to jihad was instinctual."[31] Al-Majati is the norm, not the exception.

After listening to jihadis' tales about Qutb and other martyrs, I realize that their movement is nourished on a diet of political

persecution and suffering and that they are socialized into a siege mentality and driven by a powerful force to exact revenge against their ruling tormentors. The bloody history of official torture and persecution perpetuates a culture of victimhood and a desire for revenge and enables the movement to mobilize young recruits and constantly renew itself. Arab/Muslim prisons, particularly their torture chambers, have served as incubators for generations of jihadis. For example, Montasser al-Zayat – who in the early 1980s served time with Zawahiri in prison in the Sadat assassination case and who has since become the best-known attorney defending jihadis and Islamists in Egyptian trials – published two memoirs in Arabic titled *Ayman al-Zawahiri as I Knew Him* and *Islamic Groups: An Inside-Out View* that show that jihadis are terribly influenced by their experience of persecution and suffering and a deep-seated desire to seek revenge.[32] Qutb's Arab biographers also wondered if his words would not have been calmer had he not been mistreated in prison.[33] As long as Muslim governments violate the human rights of their citizens and sanction abuse, they will continue to breed radicalism and militancy. To summarize, Qutb popularized and legitimized the idea of making jihad a personal and permanent endeavor to confront "jahili leadership" and "jahili society" alike.[34]

Jihad Against the Near Enemy

If Qutb provided an overarching intellectual architecture for the contemporary jihadist movement, Mohammed Abd al-Salam Faraj (who coordinated the 1981 assassination of President Sadat and was the ideologue of the Jihad Group, which later evolved into Tanzim al-Jihad (widely known as Egyptian Islamic Jihad) translated the meanings of jihad into operational terms. While Qutb produced an ideological manifesto, Faraj was an activist who preached jihad in local mosques, recruited jihadis, and plotted underground to overthrow the regime along lines similar to those of the Islamic revolution in Iran. Faraj, whose colleagues describe him as a fiery and charismatic orator, defined jihad in a small booklet titled "al-Faridah al-Ghaibah," or "Absent (or Forgotten) Duty," which became the bible and operational manual of all Egyptian jihadis in the 1980s and 1990s, including the

two leading organizations – Jihad and its much bigger sister, al-Jama'a al-Islamiya.[35]

Several points are worth highlighting about this critical document. To begin, the title of Faraj's booklet refers to the jihad duty, which is no longer observed and is even contested and denied by some ulema. He aimed at reviving jihad by reminding Muslims of the significance of this concept to the establishment of an Islamic government, to which all Muslims are obliged to strive. Here Faraj presented a new idea: that jihad was the way to establish an Islamic state, while the classical conception of jihad required the existence of an Islamic authority to do so. Next, Faraj makes the case for jihad as a personal, not just collective, duty because now the near enemy (Muslim rulers) occupies the country. Historically, the classical view held that jihad was a collective duty that could be activated only if outside enemies threatened or invaded Muslim lands. But Faraj turned the classical view on its head and asserted that present-day Muslim rulers, particularly Egyptians, forsake their religion by not applying the Shariah and by taking unbelievers as their allies: "The rulers of these days are apostate. They have been brought up at the tables of colonialism, no matter whether of the crusading, the communist, or the Zionist variety. They are Muslim only in name, even if they pray, fast, and pretend that they are Muslims."[36] Therefore, waging jihad against these apostates is a personal duty of every Muslim who is capable of fighting, until the former repent or get killed.

The importance of Faraj's operational dictum does not lie in defining jihad as an individual and permanent obligation and refuting the classical view regarding the collective and defensive nature of jihad. Qutb and others had already made that argument very eloquently and powerfully. Rather, Faraj posited a new paradigm, assigning a much higher priority to jihad against the near enemy than against the far enemy. According to Faraj, a young activist who came from a middle-class family and who graduated from Cairo University with a degree in electrical engineering, not even liberating Jerusalem (the occupied Palestinian capital and the most important place for Muslims after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia) takes precedence over the struggle against local infidels. Why? Faraj advances three arguments in support of his position. First, "fighting the near enemy must take priority over that of the far

enemy." Second, liberating Jerusalem must be waged under the banner of Islam, not the internal impious leadership, lest the impious leaders be the main beneficiary of such a victory. And finally, the colonial presence in Muslim lands is the fault of these Muslim rulers. Faraj concludes by saying that jihad's first and foremost priority must be to replace these infidel rulers with a comprehensive Islamic system. Any other external agenda would be a waste of time, Faraj said.[37]

According to an associate of Faraj, who knew him personally and listened to his sermons, Faraj was anxious that the liberation of Jerusalem would strengthen and consolidate impious Muslim rulers; he would rather that Jerusalem remain occupied by the Zionists than be liberated by apostate Arab states. "This shows the extent of flaw in Faraj's case," Zayat, the Islamist attorney adds, "even though this thinking resonated with us and expressed our psychological predicament."[38]

Faraj's call to jihad against the near enemy resonated with most jihadis and informed their rhetoric and action throughout the 1980s and 1990s. For lack of a better term, these jihadis, whom I will refer to as "religious nationalists," believed that seizing power at home by armed struggle was the swiftest and most effective way to Islamize state and society.[39] Pursuing jihad against the far enemy must and should await internal liberation and emancipation. For the next fifteen years, the bulk of the jihadist movement accepted Faraj's definition of the enemy as being the local regimes, and they waged an all-out war against them. Faraj left a deep imprint on leading contemporary jihadis, including familiar names like Karam Zuhdi of the Islamic Group and Zawahiri of Jihad. Zawahiri, who knew Faraj well and befriended him, bought into his notion that confronting the Egyptian regime superseded everything else, including confronting Israel and the United States. Until the late 1990s, when he joined bin Laden's World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders, Zawahiri faithfully adhered to the strategic principle of making jihad against the near enemy and kept his focus on the big prize – overthrowing the Egyptian government. His former associates well remember Zawahiri's famous dictum that the road to Jerusalem goes first through Cairo.[40]

One of the distinctive characteristics of the contemporary jihadist movement is its stress on the centrality of jihad against internal enemies. The new ideologues of jihad, including Qutb, Sirriya, Shukri

Mustafa, Abdel Rahman, Faraj, Zawahiri, and Zuhdi, were first and foremost religious nationalists whose key priority was to dismantle the secular social and political order at home and Islamize it. From the 1970s until the mid-1990s the jihadist movement, with few exceptions, did not pay much attention to the far enemy and kept the heat on the near enemy. The war in Afghanistan was not an exception to this rule.

Jihad Against the Far Enemy?

Although the Afghan jihad against Russian military occupation ultimately bred a new generation of what I call transnationalist jihadis (who were emboldened by the Russian defeat and who decided to fully internationalize jihad and export the Islamist revolution worldwide), it did not constitute a shift by jihadis away from localism to globalism. The latter went to Afghanistan to find a "secure base" to train and conduct military operations against renegade rulers back at home, not to wage jihad globally. The fight against the foreign enemy was not as important as the existential struggle against "the corrupt, apostatic regime" in Kabul, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.[41] Zawahiri (a leader of Jihad Group in Egypt, who arrived in Afghanistan in the 1980s and who organized and transformed a collection of desperate cells into a formidable organization – Tanzim al-Jihad) expressed the sentiments of many jihadis by saying he went to Afghanistan to establish a safe haven for "jihadist action" from which to launch attacks against the Egyptian regime: "A jihadist movement needs an arena that would act like an incubator where its seeds would grow and where it can acquire practical experience in combat, politics, and organizational matters."[42]

Similarly, throughout the 1980s jihadis from Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, and central and East Asia joined the Afghan jihad to acquire military skills that would assist them in their struggle against infidel regimes back at home. In the eyes of many jihadis, Afghanistan served as a military training camp and a fertile ground for new young recruits. It prepared them for the coming wars on their home fronts. My critical point here is that localism, not globalism, informed the thinking and action of jihadis who had initially fought in Afghanistan. The extent of their international ambition

was to assist in expelling the Russian invaders from Afghanistan and in bringing about an Islamic government there. Well after the end of the Afghan war, jihadis developed no expansive vision or paradigm to internationalize jihad and "Islamize the world," notwithstanding spurious claims to the contrary.

For example, in his memoir released after the September 11 attacks on the United States, Zawahiri superimposed the present on the past to rationalize and justify his dramatically radical shift away from targeting the near enemy to targeting the far enemy. He makes it appear that the change in the definition of the enemy was natural and logical and that all along he and his associates had been training in Afghanistan for the final battle against the United States: "The jihad was a training course of the utmost importance to prepare Muslim mujahedeen to wage their awaited battle against the superpower that now has sole dominance over the globe, namely, the United States."[43]

Zawahiri does not seem to be aware of the flagrant contradictions in his position given in his memoir. On the one hand, he says he went to Afghanistan to find "a secure base for jihad activity in Egypt." Yet later in the same chapter, he claims that Afghanistan was no more than a training exercise for the "awaited battle" against America and Americans. Surely, Zawahiri could not take on the Egyptian "apostate" regime and the "leader of the criminals," the United States, simultaneously. A closer look at his rhetoric and action from the 1970s through the late 1990s shows clearly that the overthrow of the Egyptian government was his first strategic priority. More than any of his cohorts, Zawahiri was emphatic about the need to keep the fight focused on the near enemy and to avoid being distracted by external adventures, including helping the Palestinians. Like most jihadis, Zawahiri was bred on anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism, although the latter were not on his radar screen until the late 1990s. His words and deeds speak louder than his postmortem rationalization.

Likewise, neither bin Laden nor his spiritual guru, Abdullah Azzam, who initiated him into the jihad business and influenced his fateful decision to fully dedicate himself to the Afghan war, saw the struggle against the Russian occupiers as a way station to wage a total war against the West, particularly the United States.[44] At that stage jihadis possessed no such ambitious international agenda. In retrospect, it is

easy to forget that throughout the 1980s the United States was not very high on jihadis' lists of targets. Jihadis found themselves in the same trenches with American foreign policy, a policy that was bent on turning Afghanistan into Russia's Vietnam. Despite subsequent denials by both jihadis and American officials, the two camps were in a marriage of convenience, united in opposition to godless Communism. They had a common enemy and a vested interest in joint coordination and collaboration, at least until the Russians folded their military tents and hurried back home in disgrace.[45]

I do not mean to imply that jihadis were not intrinsically opposed to the American military, political, and cultural presence in Muslim lands. Their rhetoric and discourse were highly inflammatory and hostile. But from the early 1970s until the mid-1990s, the far enemy, as represented by America and Israel, was not an operational priority for Sunni-oriented jihadis. The shift to globalism occurred much later, long after the end of the Afghan war around the mid-1990s, and reflected monstrous mutations within the jihadist movement itself. However, since the mid-1990s, a small minority of jihadis, transnationalists led by Al Qaeda, a network composed of several tiny militant groups, launched a systemic onslaught to hijack the whole jihadist movement and strategically change its direction and destination.

Now the very same jihadis, who had made the fight against the near enemy a key operational priority, shifted gears and called for a new "jihad" against the far enemy, particularly the United States and its Western allies. The road to Jerusalem no longer passed directly through Cairo, Algiers, Amman, or Riyadh but rather through a double-lane highway, including stops in Washington, New York, Madrid, London, and other Western capitals. The same arguments marshalled in support of jihad against the near enemy were dusted off and remade to fit that against the far enemy. In other words, the definition of jihad did not change; what did change was the definition of the enemy. The jihadist caravan took a new sharp and dangerous turn that would bring it into a total confrontation with the world community. Although transnationalist jihadis, like Al Qaeda, were a tiny minority within the jihadist movement, their actions plunged the whole movement into an existential crisis.

Since the late 1990s an intense struggle for the soul of the jihadist movement has unfolded and has largely escaped the attention of American commentators. With the exception of a few critical treatments by European and Arab scholars and analysts, the war raging within the jihadist movement has not received the scrutiny it deserves.[46] This book will remedy this shortcoming by delving deeper into the jihadist universe and highlighting the internal debates, critiques, tensions, and contradictions among jihadis. The goal is to understand how the events of September 11 occurred and the weight and importance of the social base, future prospects, and durability of transnationalist jihadis and religious nationalists alike.

One of the key questions addressed in this book revolves around the hows and whys behind the jihadis' fateful decision to internationalize "jihad" and dramatically shift their tactics and strategy. What explains this revolutionary change from localism to globalism? How and why did jihadis arrive at this critical juncture on their rocky journey? What does this radical metamorphosis say about the sociology of jihadis and new possibilities for a further radical transformation? Is this just a new cycle of jihadist activism, or does it signal a total rupture with historical patterns? Where do jihadis go from here, and how can they survive the raging two-pronged wars – the war within and the war without that is led by the United States and the international community?

Introduction

The Road to September 11 and After

The Semiofficial Narrative of September 11

The final report of the U.S. commission investigating the September 11 attacks offered a vivid portrait and dramatic details of how Osama bin Laden, leader of a transnationalist jihadist group, and a few of his close lieutenants painstakingly plotted and coordinated the multiple, spectacular suicide bombings on New York and Washington.[1] The independent commission presented a riveting account of the various phases of the menacing plot, the leading characters and villains who led it, the ups and downs of operational planning, and the last horrific moments of its execution. Bin Laden emerges as the indisputable leader and mastermind who gave Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a terrorist operator-entrepreneur, the green light for the September 11 operation in the late 1990s. In mid-1996 the latter reportedly met with bin Laden in Tora Bora, a mountainous redoubt from the Afghan war days, and presented a proposal for an operation that would train pilots to crash planes into buildings in the United States. The proposal would eventually become the September 11 operation.

Bin Laden is portrayed as playing the most vital role in all stages of the plot, from selecting individuals to serve as suicide bombers to developing an initial list of targets. He reportedly wanted to destroy the White House and the Pentagon, and he was very anxious to strike hard inside the United States. According to Sheikh Mohammed, at various points bin Laden urged him to advance the date of the attack, even if that meant the hijackers simply downed the planes rather than crashed them into specific targets. Bin Laden was a driven man on a mission who

wanted to see it through as soon as possible. One of his close associates reportedly heard him remark, "I will make it happen even if I do it by myself."[2]

The 9/11 report paints a picture of bin Laden as being blindly obsessed with attacking the United States, possessing a vendetta and an irrational, intrinsic loathing of America and Americans. His "grievance with the United States may have started in reaction to specific U.S. policies but it quickly became far deeper," the report said.[3] Although the report is footnoted and sprinkled with references to bigger and broader concerns and intentions, the underlying theme revolves around a driven man – bin Laden – who ran the show from its early inception through to its conclusion. Once or twice bin Laden's associates are quoted recalling bin Laden arguing that attacks against the United States needed to be carried out immediately to support the Palestinian armed intifada as well as to protest the American military presence in Saudi Arabia, his homeland. But these appeals are given no weight and are dismissed as "rhetorical."

The 9/11 report stresses the pivotal role of personality and religious-ideological factors over history, politics, and foreign policy. Everything revolves around the persona of bin Laden, his whims, predilections, and charisma, and nothing happens without his explicit orders and blessing. Thus the story of September 11 is reduced to that of an anti-Christ–hero – bin Laden – who saw himself as called "'to follow in the footsteps of the Messenger and to communicate his message to all nations,' and to serve as the rallying point and organizer of a new kind of war to destroy America and bring the world to Islam."[4]

The importance of the 9/11 report is that it fleshes out the technical and operational details of the plot and the top field commanders responsible for the planning and execution of the operation. These include bin Laden's military commander, Abu Hafs al-Masri, also known as Mohammed Atef, a close confidant; Sheikh Mohammed, the chief manager of the "planes operation"; Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, the mastermind of the 2000 bombing on the USS *Cole* in Yemen and the eventual head of Al Qaeda operations in the Arabian Peninsula; and Ramzi Binalshibh, a middleman between bin Laden and the hijackers.

Two clarifications are in order. First, all these men, with the exception of Abu Hafs, were field lieutenants with little knowledge of the internal workings of Al Qaeda and its political-strategic thinking. They belonged to the Al Qaeda military committee but did not sit on the Shura (consultative) Council, which constituted bin Laden's inner circle. Abu Hafs did, and he was unquestionably very close to and trusted by bin Laden (he was related to bin Laden by marriage) and the two, along with Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri (who drowned in Lake Victoria in 1996 while on a mission with Abu Hafs to obtain basic materials to produce a dirty bomb), were founders of Al Qaeda. But the 9/11 report has very little to say about Abu Hafs's role in the conspiracy because it says he was killed by an American air strike in Afghanistan in November 2001. In fact, the report's silence on Abu Hafs is due to the lack of information provided about him by the few captured Al Qaeda operatives on whose extracted interrogations the independent commission relied excessively.

Although the 9/11 report introduces the origins of the plot and the mechanics of putting it in operation, it sheds little light on the Al Qaeda decision-making process or the leading actors in the militant network, like bin Laden's right-hand man Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of Egyptian Tanzim al-Jihad, or Islamic Jihad. Zawahiri is mentioned just three or four times in the report, mainly in the footnotes, and the captured operatives contradict one another regarding his stance on attacking the American homeland. Thus the reader of the 9/11 report gets the mistaken idea that Sheikh Mohammed, who coordinated and managed the plot, played a more prominent role within Al Qaeda than did Abu Hafs or Zawahiri. Yet Zawahiri has served as the conceptualizer and theoretician of Al Qaeda and has shaped and deepened bin Laden's ideological-religious education. With the exception of the late sheikh Abdullah Azzam, who was considered the spiritual father of the so-called Afghan Arabs and who discovered bin Laden and inspired him to devote his time, energy, and resources to the Afghan jihad, Zawahiri has influenced the Saudi dissident the most.

But there is very little mention of Zawahiri in the 9/11 report because the plot is narrated mainly through the lenses of the few captured operatives – Binalshibh, Abu Zubaydah, and Sheikh Mohammed – who deceptively come across as primary drivers behind the conspiracy. One

searches in vain for the names and roles of Zawahiri and the other pivotal political players in the militant network. The 9/11 report devotes more time and space to the technical and operational details than to the brains and captains steering the Al Qaeda ship and directing its strategic destination. The goal of the 9/11 report seems to be less to gain an understanding of Al Qaeda's inner circle and broader strategic goals and more to figure out what really happened on September 11, who the actors involved were, how the operation was planned, who made the preparations, and who executed those plans from a tactical point of view. For example, according to testimony secretly obtained from Sheikh Mohammed, when finally informed about the major attack against the United States, most senior members of the Al Qaeda Shura Council reportedly objected on religious and strategic grounds; bin Laden overrode the majority's decision, and the attacks went forward. We still simply do not know what transpired in the Shura Council or who said what because the only existing evidence is that of Sheikh Mohammed – who was neither a member of the council nor present at the meeting. However, although recent evidence does not contradict the 9/11 report, it does show intense struggles between the "hawks" and "doves" within the Shura Council and the organization as a whole. For example, the Arabic-language newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat* published a rare critical document titled "The Story of the Afghan Arabs: From the Entry to Afghanistan to the Final Exodus with the Taliban" written by Abu al-Walid al-Masri, a senior member of the Al Qaeda Shura Council who is considered a leading theoretician in the organization and who has participated in the most important moments of the drama. Abu al-Walid's memoir, coupled with other primary sources, reveals a network riven by ethnic, regional, and ideological rivalries (more on this point later).[5]

This leads to my second point: the 9/11 report is based largely on a series of interrogations conducted in secret locations by U.S. intelligence officers of two of the plot managers, Sheikh Mohammed and Binalshibh, who were captured in 2002 and 2003, respectively. The two lieutenants provided the most detailed account yet of the origins of the September attacks and the internal dynamics and challenges that they and the hijackers faced and had to overcome. In particular, the 9/11 Commission relied heavily on Sheikh Mohammed's testimony

and confessions. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the plot described in the report is seen through the eyes of Sheikh Mohammed. Two problems arise.

The first has to do with the credibility and reliability of the accounts supplied by incarcerated Al Qaeda operatives. Senior American officials acknowledged that high-level Al Qaeda detainees – including Sheikh Mohammed, Binalshibh, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, and Abu Zubaydah – have been the subjects of "highly coercive interrogation methods [inhumane torture?] authorized by the Bush administration. . . ."[6] Some 9/11 commissioners themselves wondered about how "trustworthy" Sheikh Mohammed's information was and raised serious questions about the nature and substance of his testimony. For example, counterterrorism officials suspect that captured Al Qaeda operatives have exaggerated the input of bin Laden in commanding the September 11 plot in order to downplay their own roles in the conspiracy. Their analysis of communication traffic between the September 11 hijackers and their confederates, like Sheikh Mohammed, failed to show a close collaboration between them in the months before the attacks – and virtually no communication with bin Laden.[7]

We should not be surprised if the incarcerated lieutenants have been feeding their interrogators and torturers disinformation and lies; they would not be the first suspects to do so. Information gotten through coercion and torture is not necessarily useful or truthful. According to American and European intelligence officials, under harsh interrogation methods, Sheikh Mohammed and Binalshibh appeared to have been willing to provide elaborate accounts of past events but less eager to describe potential future operations. It is no wonder these officials raised serious questions about the truthfulness of some or all of their statements.[8]

Intelligence officials are not alone in questioning the credibility and reliability of the narratives forced out of the captured Al Qaeda field lieutenants. In a released staff report on the plot against the United States, the commission staff members wrote that they did not have direct access to any Al Qaeda detainee and had based their account on intelligence reports drawn from the interrogations. "Some of this material is inconsistent," one report said. *The New York Times* quoted officials as saying that much of the information cited in the

reports as fact is actually "uncorroborated or nearly impossible to confirm."[9]

In light of the credibility problem of information obtained under duress, what are we to make of the story told by the 9/11 report? How seriously should we take its findings, and what useful lessons, if any, can be drawn from its conclusions? To what extent does the focus on the operational details of the plot obscure and cloud our vision of the Al Qaeda network? Does the investigation of the plot itself limit or distort the scope of analyzing and making sense of the new jihadis who finally decided to "move the battle to American soil."[10] In other words, does the report help us to understand the internal dynamics and forces within the jihadist movement that culminated in the September attacks? Does it shed light on leading jihadi actors, not just bin Laden, who played a pivotal role in the globalization of jihad?

These questions are not academic, but they address another critical shortcoming in the 9/11 report: it stops short of illuminating the big, historical-sociological questions of how and why jihadis decided to attack the United States. It does not mention, let alone examine, the revolutionary conceptual and operational shift that occurred among important jihadist elements in the late 1990s regarding the primacy and urgency of targeting the "far enemy" (al-Adou al-Baeed), the United States, as opposed to continuing the fight against the "near enemy" (al-Adou al-Qareeb), local Muslim rulers.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s jihadis launched an all-out frontal assault on the near enemy (such detested pro-Western regimes as Hosni Mubarak's Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria) rather than the far enemy (the West in general and the United States in particular). But by the end of the 1990s, a critical mass of jihadis, including Al Qaeda, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and smaller shadowy groups, shifted focus and turned their guns against what they labeled "the Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators" – the United States and its Western allies. Why did they do so, and what explains this dramatic shift in their thinking and action? Did all jihadis follow suit and declare war on the United States, or did they split into two competing camps – religious nationalists and religious transnationalists – and part ways?[11] Does fleshing out the internal tensions and contradictions within the jihadist movement illuminate significant milestones on the road to September 11 and the

current nature of the threat facing the United States and the international community?

The 9/11 report hardly touches on these substantive questions and concerns and instead focuses solely on the origins of the plot against the United States and its alleged masterminds. The actual plot could have originated with Sheikh Mohammed and been approved by bin Laden and Abu Hafs, but the road to carrying it out was much more complex than that, and unraveling it requires a deeper understanding of the jihadist universe. Unmasking the hideous conspiracy is a noble task that matters greatly to the families of the victims and the nation at large. Of course, Americans want to know the identity and character of the killers who visited death and horror on their shores on September 11, 2001. But they also want to know why they were brutally attacked and why their security institutions failed to forewarn them.

The 9/11 report approaches the September attacks like a criminal investigation, trying to piece together the various threads of the plot, such as when the orders were given, who gave them, who were the leading conspirators behind the plot, if Al Qaeda operatives received advice and assistance from neighboring states, and the challenges faced by the group's top lieutenants. These questions represent an important chapter in the September 11 narrative, but they are technical and narrow and miss the big picture: internal mutations within the jihadist movement and the splitting up of jihadis into religious transnationalists on one side and religious nationalists on the other. The story of September 11 cannot be fully comprehended without untangling the layers of these internal mutations whose violent reverberations reached the American homeland.

At the outset of their investigation, the commissioners promised to look "backward in order to look forward" and to make an earnest effort to examine the foundation of the new terrorism and the rise of bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Had the commissioners done so by fully examining the context behind the rise of religious transnationalists and the consequent shifts in their operational thinking, they would have unraveled the Al Qaeda phenomenon, not just the September 11 plot, significant as it is. But the report makes only a halfhearted effort at delving deep into the structure of the new global jihad. Instead, it devoted a great deal of time and space to the criminal investigation of

the conspirators, including the thoughts and motivations of the hijackers, which are nearly impossible to confirm.[12] Acting like prosecutors, the commissioners delineated the plot's top leaders, particularly Sheikh Mohammed and Binalshibh, and tried to reconstruct the crime scene and the steps and actions taken to execute the planes operation.

This approach suffers from three shortcomings: (1) the accounts are built largely on information obtained from Sheikh Mohammed and Binalshibh under extreme circumstances; (2) the broader context of jihadism is glossed over; and (3) the scope and focus of the inquiry are too narrow to warrant the sweeping policy generalizations arrived at. It is one thing to define and specify the enemy as the "Al Qaeda network, its affiliates, and its ideology," as the 9/11 report does, but it is another thing to delineate the new threat in broad ideological terms:

> Our enemy is two fold: al Qaeda, a stateless network of terrorists that struck us on 9/11; and a radical ideological movement in the Islamic world, inspired in part by al Qaeda, which spawned terrorist groups and violence across the globe. The first enemy is weakened, but continues to pose a grave threat. The second enemy is gathering, and will menace Americans and American interests long after Usama Bin Ladin and his cohorts are killed or captured. Thus our strategy must match our means to two ends: dismantling the al Qaeda network and prevailing in the longer term over the ideology that gives rise to Islamist terrorism.[13]

The 9/11 report seems to imply that all Islamists, not just transnationalist jihadis like bin Laden, Abu Hafs, Zawahiri, and the militant Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, are potential enemies of the United States, and thus they all need to be confronted and defeated. The commissioners call on the United States to wage an all-out war measured in "decades," not "years" to defeat the very ideology of "Islamist terrorism." If by "Islamist terrorism" is meant the Al Qaeda network and its affiliates, that is understandable and legitimate. But if it is an open-ended war to restructure Arab and Muslim societies and politics, it could backfire. Moreover, the commissioners' forensic-like investigation of the complex Islamist phenomenon does not warrant such sweeping generalizations. There is a disconnect between the 9/11 report's narrow analysis and its ambitious conclusions. There exists an urgent need to revisit and reexamine the September 11 story within

the broader context of the evolution, fragmentation, and mutation of the jihadist movement as a whole.

The War Within the Jihadist Movement

This book will argue that the globalization of jihadist tendencies and the road to September 11 were directly related to the internal upheaval within the jihadist movement as well as to changing regional and international conditions. Al Qaeda emerged as a direct result of the entropy of the jihadist movement in the late 1990s and as a desperate effort to alter the movement's route, if not its final destination, and to reverse its decline. It represented a monstrous mutation, an implosion from within, not just another historical phase in the movement's evolution.

In the last few decades a bloody power struggle for the soul of Islam has roiled the Muslim world. This struggle was – and is – being fought on multiple levels. On the one hand, jihadis have battled local regimes along with their secular allies. On the other, an internal struggle existed between jihadis and mainstream Islamists, both of whom used religion as a source of mobilization and recruitment. Finally in the late 1990s, another upheaval broke out among jihadis themselves over tactics and strategy, the nature of the enemy, and the most effective ways and means to target their imagined or real enemies.

Of all these fault lines, the tug-of-war among jihadis themselves has received the least attention and has escaped serious analytical scrutiny. This book will rectify this shortcoming by examining the tensions, contradictions, and dissensions among various jihadist leaders and groups.

My main argument is that the September 11 attacks were not just a product of the civil war within the House of Islam[14] but a direct result of the civil war within the jihadist movement itself. In this sense, the United States was a secondary, not a primary, target of jihadis' military escalation, and the bulk of jihadis (religious nationalists) remained on the sidelines and did not join the onslaught by their transnationalist counterparts. If my thesis holds, then Al Qaeda represents more of a national security problem to the United States than a strategic threat, as the conventional wisdom in the American foreign policy establishment has it.[15]

Therefore, it is critical to highlight the internal turmoil among jihadis because it brought about dramatic shifts in their thinking and action and caused further splits in their ranks. From the 1970s until the mid-1990s militant Islamists or jihadis launched an all-out frontal assault to dismantle the secular social and political order and replace it with a theocratic one. By the mid-1990s their insurrection lost momentum, and they were dealt mortal blows by Muslim government security services. But as jihadis met their waterloo on homefront battlefields in Egypt, Algeria, and elsewhere, they split up into two main factions: (1) transnationalist jihadis, like bin Laden, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, Abu Hafs, Zawahiri, and others, who were emboldened by the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan and wanted to fully internationalize jihad and export the Islamist revolution worldwide; and (2) religious nationalists, whose chief goal was to make sure that the Islamic revolution succeeded at home.

Military defeat at the hands of detested local regimes (the Algerian military junta and Hosni Mubarak) left transnationalist jihadis with few bitter options. They could have closed the jihadist shop, as many of their counterparts did, and tried to rejoin society and live by its rules. Instead, bin Laden and his cohorts rethought their business after the Afghan war and turned their guns against the West in an effort to stop the revolutionary ship from sinking. Frustrated in their attempts to topple "impious" Muslim rulers and incapable of sustaining their costly confrontation with the near enemy, transnationalists wrongly and naively reckoned that confronting the United States militarily would reverse their declining fortune and bring about the destruction of local apostates. For example, in his memoir released immediately after September 11, Zawahiri said that one of the lessons learned from his confrontation with the Egyptian regime over three decades is that the jihadist movement cannot isolate itself from the ummah (the Muslim community worldwide) and turn into an elite pitted against authority. The jihadist vanguard, he said, must be fully integrated into Muslim society's social fabric and must be attentive to its aspirations and concerns. The implication is that jihadis lost the struggle against the near enemy because they had isolated themselves from the ummah and failed to mobilize it. Therefore, Zawahiri offers an alternative solution: taking the war global against Islam's enemies. He says that the slogan

understood by the ummah and to which it responds is waging jihad against Israel and the American military presence in the region: "The jihadist movement finally assumed leadership of the ummah after it adopted the slogan of liberating the ummah of its foreign enemies and portrayed it as a battle between Islam and kufr [impiety] and kufar [infidels]."[16]

A few months after the 1998 announcement establishing the so-called World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders, Zawahiri sent a confidential letter to the Islamic Group's imprisoned leaders in which he said that the Front had expanded the fight against "the biggest of the criminals, 'the Americans,' to drag them for an open battle with the nation's masses . . ."[17]

These transnationalist jihadis internationalized an essentially internal conflict and set the world on fire. By doing so, they transformed the nature of their confrontation against local rulers and hoped to reenergize and invigorate the rank and file of their followers. Transnationalists led by bin Laden, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, Abu Hafs, and Zawahiri embarked on a dangerous long-term adventure to expel American influence from Muslim lands.

Ironically, until the end of the 1990s, Zawahiri was a staunch advocate of revolution first at home, and he rejected all calls from his associates to regionalize, let alone internationalize, jihad. Throughout the 1980s and most of the 1990s he held fast to the idea that overthrowing the near enemy (Mubarak's Egypt) took priority over the far enemy. But in his memoir published after September 11, Zawahiri says that by the end of the 1990s, he came to the inevitable conclusion that "we must take the battle to the enemy to burn the hands of those who ignite fire in our countries." It was no longer possible, writes Zawahiri, to keep the fight focused on the near enemy because "the Zionist-Crusader alliance," led by the United States, will not allow Islamists to reach power anywhere in the Muslim world.[18]

Zawahiri's tirade leaves many questions unanswered. Why did he and his globalist associates finally and unexpectedly turn their guns against the United States after two decades of waging war at home? What fueled their anger and rage "to make jihad against the criminal nation" – the United States? What explains the operational shift by jihadis away from targeting the near enemy to attacking the far enemy?

Or was this revolutionary shift natural given their blindly entrenched anti-Westernism? Providing convincing answers to these vital questions will help us to fully understand the context of September 11 and the road to war as well as to assess the future prospects of jihadis.

One of the most neglected aspects of the September 11 story and its aftermath is the position and role played by religious nationalists, who represented the overwhelming majority of jihadis (see the distinctions described later). Understandably, since the September attacks, all eyes have focused on Al Qaeda, its ideology, and its operational tactics. But it is misleading and counterproductive to lump all jihadis under the rubric of Al Qaeda and its affiliates, because they account for only a tiny minority within the jihadist movement (I will provide evidence of this in subsequent chapters). To say this is not to underestimate the lethal nature of Al Qaeda and its destructiveness. As they have recently shown, a few thousand Al Qaeda members, who are blindly committed to waging global jihad, can wreck international peace and threaten the world community. The number of Al Qaeda members is not as important as their asabiya (group or tribal solidarity) and willingness to die for the global jihad cause. No one doubts the asabiya ties that bind the Al Qaeda rank and file.

All of this is true. But the fact remains that religious nationalists – a huge block within the jihadist movement – vehemently rejected Al Qaeda's strategy and methods and broke with their transnationalist counterparts for good. Religious nationalists opposed both the globalization and expansion of jihad outside of Afghanistan and the waging of war on Western nations. They also are in the process of questioning the very usefulness and efficacy of their own strategy, that of fighting the near enemy. For a short while, Al Qaeda's attacks on the United States diverted attention from existing fissures and divisions among jihadis. But long before September 11, a tug-of-war ensued between transnationalist jihadis and religious nationalists over the future of the jihadist movement. Since then, the rivalry has intensified, and the divide between the two camps has grown wider. It can no longer be swept under the carpet and kept under control.

The subsequent reverberations and military developments unleashed a storm of protest by the old jihadist guard, who publicly criticized and condemned Al Qaeda's recklessness and shortsightedness. The

dominant narrative among the majority of jihadis was that opening a second front against the United States endangered the very survival of the whole movement and harmed the ummah's vital interests. Bin Laden and his chief theoretician, Zawahiri, are portrayed as irresponsible, reckless adventurers who risked bringing the temple down on their followers' heads and the heads of other jihadis.[19]

Old simmering and hidden disagreements among militant jihadis burst into the open with a vengeance. For the first time, jihadis publicly criticized one another and engaged in a heated debate and public relations campaign to sway Muslim public opinion in their favor. They have written books and pamphlets and given media interviews to advance their viewpoints and discredit their rivals. The media war among jihadis is important in that it sheds light on their states of mind and the nuanced differences in their tactics regarding the use of force, terrorism, and political strategies.

A full-fledged struggle for the leadership of jihadism is unfolding in the world of Islam. Yet media and academic commentary continue to treat jihadis as one undifferentiated constituency with no substantive differences in rhetoric and action. Critics may ask, where are the religious nationalists, and why are they silent while Al Qaeda monopolizes jihadist actions and the airwaves? Do they offer a nonviolent path that has defined and scarred the jihadist movement since birth? Does their opposition to Al Qaeda make a difference in reducing the flow of new recruits to its ranks? What does their denial of revolutionary legitimacy to Al Qaeda mean to the latter's long-term survival and prospects? These are not just theoretical questions or a policy formula to draw distinctions between "bad jihadis" and "good jihadis"; I do not subscribe to such a simplistic dichotomy. Rather, delineating operational and conceptual differences between the two schools of thought is essential to understanding how September 11 occurred as well as the future direction of the jihadist movement as a whole, not just Al Qaeda. The book will address these questions and emphasize the internal dynamics, development, and evolution of leading jihadist groups in the last three decades. The goal is not just to tell the story of September 11 in all of its complexities but also to throw light on the emerging trends and patterns among jihadis. In other words, to determine whether the jihadist movement has a future.

Since the late 1990s I have interviewed jihadis of all colors and stripes, and I have formed a fairly critical idea of the kinds of tensions, second thoughts, and self-criticism that have been taking place within various elements of the movement. These interviews, coupled with access to jihadis' primary documents and their unpublished manifestos, will inform and enrich my analysis throughout the book.

In particular, I will flesh out the subtle and dramatic shifts in jihadis' rhetoric and action and discuss how they perceived and interacted with the secular, pro-Western regimes at home (the near enemy) and the great powers, particularly the United States (the far enemy). I will revisit key documents put out by jihadis since the 1970s and compare and contrast their positions across time and space, particularly Egyptian al-Jama'a al-Islamiya and Tanzim al-Jihad, Al Qaeda, and other small fringe groups. The goal is to show the complexity and diversity of the jihadist phenomenon and to highlight salient features that brought about the September 11 attack. In addition to reconstructing how September 11 occurred, I will examine its aftermath. I will analytically review responses and critiques by religious nationalists and transnationalists alike; by mainstream Islamists, clerics, and scholars; and I will assess the balance of power between religious nationalists and transnationalists. Special emphasis will be given to the war within the jihadist movement, or what remains of it.

Splitting Up of Jihadis: Religious Nationalists versus Transnationalists

Since the burst of jihadism onto the scene in the 1970s, the overwhelming majority of jihadis have been religious nationalists whose fundamental goal was to effect revolutionary change in their own society. Their overriding goal revolved around confronting the secular, pro-Western Arab rulers as a first strategic step before engaging Israel and the United States. Fighting the near enemy took priority over fighting the far enemy, including the Zionist enemy, because young militants wanted to establish an Islamic base or a safe haven at home. In fact, there existed very little operational thinking, let alone conceptualizing, about the primacy of engaging the far enemy. At this early revolutionary stage, unlike leftists and Marxists who dreamt and theorized about

world revolution and systemic transformation, jihadism was a local, not a global, phenomenon.

Religious nationalists aimed at violently overthrowing the secular state at home and Islamizing politics and society from the top down as opposed to from the bottom up. They believed that by capturing the state, they could transform society and build a utopian moral order. The very raison d'etre of religious nationalists revolved around the near enemy and ways and means to bring about its downfall. In their eyes, all politics are local. Even the establishment of the caliphate (centralized Islamic authority) or the liberation of Palestine, dear to all jihadis' hearts, had to await the destruction of "apostate" local rulers. Islamic revolution starts first and foremost at home, with no delineated program or vision for the morning after. Ironically, mainstream Islamists (the Muslim Brotherhood) possess a much more developed transnational apparatus and consciousness than that of religious nationalists, and their powerful branches in many Muslim countries testify to their global reach and ambition.

Like their secular nationalist counterparts before them, religious nationalists hoped to either climb on the shoulders of the military or use brute force to seize power and install themselves at the helm. Separated from their moralizing zeal, the ideas and tools utilized by religious nationalists were similar to those of junior army officers who, in the second half of the twentieth century, destroyed the old regime and replaced it with bloated bureaucratic authoritarianism. They were statist and disposed to use violence and shock tactics, not political struggle, to gain power. In this sense, religious nationalists, like other revolutionary liberation movements, had a limited objective and were not antisystem. They just wanted to capture the state and remake it in their own Islamist image. Their armed onslaught against the secular Muslim state was not aimed at state institutions per se but rather against its secularism, moral corruption, and subservience to the West.

However, by the end of the 1990s, a dramatic change had occurred within the jihadist movement: from localism to globalism. The underlying context behind this momentous change included: (1) the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union; (2) the 1991 Gulf war and the permanent stationing of American forces in Saudi Arabia; and (3) the defeat of religious

nationalists on their home turf by the end of the 1990s. A paradigmatic shift among a tiny segment of jihadis gave birth to a new breed of transnationalist jihadis led by Al Qaeda.

This book utilizes a nuanced approach informed by historical sociology, which locates the causes and sources of the rise of transnationalist jihadis within the volatile jihadist soil and the changing regional and international conditions. Although the intellectual genealogy of globalist jihadis is deeply rooted in the movement's traditional discourse, their birth culminated in a dramatic conceptual shift away from localism and toward globalism and marked a striking departure from the movement's dominant wing. The operational shift by transnationalist jihadis had implications for the way they viewed the world as well as for the effect it had on their tactics and strategies.

For example, transnationalists broke away from their religious nationalist counterparts and stated that the most effective means to create an Islamic polity and to defeat the near enemy would be to attack its superpower patron, the United States. More than anyone else, bin Laden and Zawahiri articulated the new globalist paradigm.

In his 1996 "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," bin Laden called on Muslims "to hit the main [far] enemy who divided the ummah into small and little countries and pushed it, for the last few decades, into a state of confusion. The Zionist-Crusader alliance moves quickly to contain and abort any 'corrective movement' appearing in the Islamic countries." Therefore, expelling the American enemy – "the greatest kufr" – out of Muslim lands is much more important than engaging the "lesser kufr" (Saudi and other Arab regimes), according to bin Laden. He advised fellow Muslims: "Utmost effort should be made to prepare and instigate the ummah against the enemy, the American-Israeli alliance, occupying [Saudi Arabia and Palestine]."[20]

After the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, bin Laden reiterated his conviction that the fight against world infidels – "the biggest enemy" – should take priority over the fight against pro-Western Muslim rulers: "Our enemy is the crusader alliance led by America, Britain, and Israel."[21]

As to tactics and strategy, bin Laden counseled young Muslims, who, in his words, long for martyrdom to redeem the honor of the ummah and

to liberate its "occupied sanctities" not in a conventional war against Americans "due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces. . . ." Rather, the goal, according to bin Laden, is "to initiate a guerrilla warfare, where the sons of the nation, and not the military forces, take part in it."[22] Surprisingly, bin Laden also envisions an active role for women, which revolves around "boycotting" American goods and supporting jihadis, to expedite the defeat of the enemy. His is a total war that mobilizes all Muslims (men and women), particularly in his homeland, Saudi Arabia.[23]

In his memoir, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, Zawahiri echoed bin Laden's call to arms against the far enemy:

> The struggle to establish the Islamic state cannot just be fought on a regional level.
>
> It is clear from the above that the Jewish-crusader alliance, led by the United States, will not allow any Islamic force to reach power in any of the Muslim countries. It will mobilize all its power to hit it and remove it from power. Toward that end, it will open a battlefront against it that includes the entire world. It will impose sanctions on whoever helps it, if it does not declare war against them altogether. Therefore, to adjust to this new reality we must prepare ourselves for a battle that is not confined to a single region, one that includes the apostate domestic enemy and the Jewish-crusader external enemy. It is no longer possible to postpone the struggle against the external enemy . . . because the Jewish-crusader alliance will not give us time to defeat the domestic enemy . . .[24]

Like bin Laden, Zawahiri freely dispenses minute and detailed operational advice to the sons of the ummah on how to wage an effective jihad against the far enemy:

> Tracking down the Americans and the Jews is not impossible. Killing them with a single bullet, a stab, or a device made up of explosives or killing them with an iron rod is not impossible. Burning down their property with Molotov cocktails is not difficult. With the available means, small groups could prove to be a frightening horror for the Americans and the Jews. . . .[25]

Yet in 1995, the very same Zawahiri dismissed Muslim critics who called on jihadis to shift their focus away from targeting the near enemy at home to targeting the far enemy, Israel, and assisting their besieged

Palestinian counterparts, Palestinian Hamas and Jihad. Zawahiri wrote an essay titled "The Road to Jerusalem Goes Through Cairo," that appeared in *Al-Mujahidun* (26 April 1995), a newsletter published by Egyptian Tanzim al-Jihad, in which he clearly stated that "Jerusalem will not be liberated unless the battle for Egypt and Algeria is won and unless Egypt is liberated." In jihadis' eyes, the real enemy was the apostate political system at home that is not governed by the Shariah (Islamic law).[26]

In 1987 Tanzim al-Jihad in Upper Egypt distributed an important internal document, "The Inevitability of Confrontation," which listed four tasks (in order of priority) that were "religiously sanctioned" and must be accomplished:

(1) toppling the impious ruler who has forsaken Islam;
(2) fighting any Muslim community that deserts Islam;
(3) reestablishing the caliphate and installing a caliph (pan-Islamic ruler); and
(4) liberating the homeland, freeing the captives, and spreading religion.[27]

Notice that the Jihad Group's priority list focused primarily on internal, not regional or international, enemies. There is hardly any mention of the need to fight the far enemy, whether it is considered Israel or the United States.

This book will address a set of critical questions in order to explain what propelled some jihadis, particularly Zawahiri and his cohorts, to alter their operational priorities at this late stage of the struggle. Did they succeed in hijacking the jihadist movement, one that had been in business for more than four decades and whose history is written in blood? How did they accomplish this feat – taking the war global – against the wishes of the movement's rank and file? By the late 1990s, to what extent was the movement in tatters, ready to be hijacked by new strong-willed and charismatic leaders like bin Laden, Abu Hafs, and Zawahiri? Or was the change from localism to globalism natural in light of the Afghan jihad against the Russians and jihadis' deeply entrenched anti-Westernism?

Another set of critical questions will deal with the response by religious nationalists to the secession engineered by some of their

counterparts and the declaration of war on the West, particularly on the United States. Do religious nationalists blame transnationalists for their current predicament? Is there any critical thinking or soul searching taking place among the old guard (religious nationalists)? What remedies and solutions do they prescribe to overcome their crisis? What is the likelihood of another paradigmatic shift by nationalist jihadis toward embracing human rights and the rule of law? Could the putsch by Al Qaeda serve as a catalyst, a wake-up call for the majority of jihadis to rejoin Muslim civil society as law-abiding citizens?

Many people do not realize that for almost a decade transnationalist jihadis and religious nationalists have been engaged in a bitter struggle for control of the jihadist movement. Thus, at the risk of redundancy, one of the book's central theses is that the establishment of Al Qaeda reflected internal mutation and fragmentation of the jihadist movement. It was not just an indication of weakness, decline, and decay, as several analysts have clearly shown, but it also reflected the war within the jihadist movement. Jihadis did not just wake up one day and decide to take on the only surviving superpower after they expelled Russian troops from Afghanistan. They did so when they reached the end of their rope and could no longer battle the security services at home, after they had splintered into rival factions. The root causes of September 11 lie deep in the internal turmoil pulling and pushing jihadis in different directions.

Understanding the tensions, differences, and shifts among jihadis will shed light on how September 11 occurred as well as on the relative weight of transnationalist jihadis and religious nationalists. It will also illuminate the rise of Al Qaeda, its influence within the jihadist movement, and its potential long-term durability.

The Primacy of Charismatic Personalities

In my conversations with former jihadis, one of the critical lessons I have learned is that personalities, not ideas or organizations, are the drivers behind the movement. It is a personality-driven animal that devours idealistic and alienated young Muslims.

The most lethal and violent jihadist factions and cells were led by highly charismatic, aggressive, and daring personalities who captivated

and inspired followers to unquestionably do their bidding. Loyalty to the emir (prince) supersedes everything else, including young jihadis' own families. In fact, the emir assumes the role of the father and the big brother that young jihadis look up to and aspire to please. Many of these young jihadis, including the September 11 hijackers, rebelled against their own families, only to find religious-ideological nourishment, sustenance, and comradeship by joining underground paramilitary groups and cells.

For example, according to Abdelgahni Mzoudi, a close friend of Mohammed Atta, the leader of the September 11 suicide bombers, who was acquitted of charges linking him to an Al Qaeda cell in Hamburg, Germany, Atta told him he did not belong to any organizations because his father prohibited him from joining any political or paramilitary group.[28] Atta was not unique. We have a great deal of testimony from jihadis and their families that indicates that the families are often kept in the dark about their sons' journeys underground. In a rare interview with *Asharq al-Awsat*, the Moroccan widow of an Al Qaeda operative, Abd al-Karim al-Majati, who in 2004 was killed in a shootout with the Saudi security forces, said her husband never told his parents he traveled to Afghanistan to join Al Qaeda and had concealed his secret from them. Although she would have liked to let them know, she conceded she could not tell them.[29] In his diaries, recently published in the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdullah al-Bahri (known as Abu Jandal), bin Laden's senior "bodyguard" and lieutenant, who held dual Saudi-Yemeni citizenship, described his first journey of jihad at the age of 21: "I traveled from Saudi Arabia to Yemen in October 1994. I ran away from home without the permission of my family . . . I then started to plan my trip to Bosnia. I stayed in Yemen around one year, until the battles in Bosnia escalated in the summer of 1995, so I left for Bosnia. My goal was to win martyrdom and to win what God has in store for me. This was my strong motivation for going to jihad there, and that was my first jihad station."[30] One year later, al-Bahri ended up in one of bin Laden's Afghan training camps and was subsequently promoted to be part of bin Laden's personal security entourage.

Atta, al-Majati, and al-Bahri all were captivated by bin Laden's charisma and admired his austerity and courage – for turning his back

on a life of wealth and comfort. Those traits, which bin Laden nourished, resonated with young Muslim men, mostly Arabs, who reviled the political and moral decadence and corruption of the Arab ruling elite; they found in bin Laden a heroic, fatherly figure who inspired them to sacrifice their lives for a worthy cause. Al-Majati's widow describes her disappointment when her husband did not get to meet bin Laden immediately after their arrival in Afghanistan a few days before September 11; they went to great trouble to see him before they settled in Kabul but it was not to be, she said, because bin Laden had just left Qandahar in anticipation of the September 11 attacks.[31] According to al-Bahri, the more time he spent with his boss, the more he fell in love with him: "I loved sheikh Osama deeply and, indeed, after a while I stopped calling him sheikh and started calling him 'Uncle.'"[32]

In my interviews with former jihadis, I was often told of the fundamental role played by charismatic figures in influencing and shaping the conduct and action of the movement or parts of it. The jihadist movement is pregnant with the memories of these celebrity figures that continue to retain their hold on the imagination of former and current jihadis. Bin Laden and Zawahiri are the latest embodiments of a long line of revered (mostly martyred) heroes like Egyptian pioneer Sayyid Qutb and his disciples Mohammed Abdel Salam Faraj, Aboud al-Zumar, Essam al-Qamari, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, Abu Hafs, and many others. If and when they are killed, they will likely join this venerated list of shuhada' (martyrs) and will provide inspiration to future generations of jihadis.

The 9/11 Commission Report describes the inner core of Al Qaeda as a "hierarchical top-down group with defined positions, tasks, and salaries. Most but not all in this core swore fealty (baiya) to bin Laden."[33] In his memoir al-Bahri, whose unit was composed of dozens of Saudis and Yemenis who agreed to join the Al Qaeda network, writes that each of them swore fealty to bin Laden secretly: "Sheikh Osama met with each of us separately, and many of us swore allegiance to him immediately. Of course, the swearing of allegiance was very secret. No one knew who swore allegiance to him and who did not."[34] Asked if everyone who stayed with bin Laden or worked with him was a member of Al Qaeda, al-Bahri said that not all the people who were around bin Laden were members of his organization. The requirement for formal

membership, he added, was a secret ceremony of swearing fealty to bin Laden: "Sometimes we used to hear that one of the young men [around bin Laden] had carried out a martyrdom operation. It was only then that we were sure he had sworn allegiance to Al Qaeda. The execution of martyrdom operations was a kind of proof that enabled us to identify those who had sworn allegiance to Al Qaeda."[35]

Although the 9/11 report correctly stresses the paramount role of bin Laden as the driver behind Al Qaeda, it significantly underestimates the input of other strong members, like Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, Abu Hafs, and Zawahiri, all of whom are "hawks" who were powerful actors in the militant network. In his book, Abu al-Walid, a senior member of the Al Qaeda Shura Council, relates the secret details of the internal struggle between the "doves" and "hawks" in the organization regarding weapons of mass destruction and expanding the war beyond national borders. Although this first-hand account shows bin Laden to be the final arbiter, he had to balance the demands of the two camps and keep internal peace. According to Abu al-Walid, who witnessed and participated in Al Qaeda's most important moments, Abu Hafs, then bin Laden's defense minister and leader of the hardliners, had tried to resign from his position on several occasions in protest against bin Laden's delaying and accommodationist methods; Abu Hafs compared bin Laden's conduct to that of autocratic Arab rulers who promise to be responsive to the aspirations of the young people only to gradually empty them of their substance and move in a completely different direction. In Abu Hafs's opinion, bin Laden was not radical enough or daring enough and acted more like a politician than a revolutionary. Yet ironically, bin Laden sided with the hawks against the doves, even ignoring the warnings that once provoked the United States would not show mercy on its enemy. Abu al-Walid's conclusion is very damning of bin Laden, whose autocratic style of leadership proved to be "catastrophic" and brought Al Qaeda to the brink of the abyss.[36] It is only by fleshing out these internal debates and struggles that we gain a real portrait, not just a sketch, of Al Qaeda and its fateful decisions like the September 11 attacks.

My argument is that personalities in jihadist circles are more important than organization in instilling a sense of comradeship, esprit de corps, and asabiya. Al Qaeda is no exception to this rule. From the

outset, bin Laden and his senior confidants, particularly Abu Hafs and Zawahiri, impressed on their followers the need to blindly trust the leadership and be loyal. Loyalty and obedience took precedence over institutional transparency and democratic decision making. "Trust us to lead because we know what is better for you and the ummah," is a line of thinking used by the jihadist movement, including Al Qaeda. In his best-selling post–September 11 memoir, Zawahiri dispenses free advice to the rank and file of Al Qaeda and young Muslims in general about the importance of loyalty and gratitude to the jihadist leadership, meaning himself and bin Laden, without investing it with any holiness and sacredness.[37]

In the case of Al Qaeda's decision making, blind loyalty to "sheikh" bin Laden not only stifled free debate but also encouraged fatal hubris. Abu al-Walid, a leading theoretician of the organization, draws a comical picture of the organization whereby junior operatives sought to please bin Laden and fed him stories that reinforced his perceptions or misperceptions; for example, bin Laden thought that the United States was a paper tiger and that it "would not be able to sustain more than two or three of his painful blows." To flatter bin Laden and confirm his "illusions," Abu al-Walid adds, young Saudis who had visited America told bin Laden that the United States could be taken down with a few blows and would be forced to leave Arab lands. Senior members of the Shura Council, including Abu al-Walid himself, knew that whatever bin Laden wanted, he got; accordingly, they decided not to swim against this powerful current and learned the art of pleasing and flattery. For example, after heated discussions in which the results were already known, according to Abu al-Walid, a senior member of the Shura Council would smile despondently and say in summation, "'you are the emir' and then everyone bends to his will and takes his orders, knowing full well they are catastrophic errors."[38]

Notwithstanding this belated post-mortem, almost everyone around bin Laden, including Abu al-Walid, acted their part and paid homage to the undisputed leader, sheikh Osama, or Abu Abdullah, as they fondly addressed him. But bin Laden's genius does not just lie in stamping his imprint on recruits and followers but in establishing and financing an organizational umbrella that provided tiny jihadist factions with a base (Al Qaeda is an Arabic term that means the base or foundation) to

pursue jihad. Asked about the goals behind his 1998 launching of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders (referred to hereafter as the World Islamic Front), bin Laden said "this front has been established as the first step to pool together the energies and concentrate efforts against the infidels represented in the Jewish-crusader alliance, thus replacing splinter and subsidiary fronts."[39]

But the statement announcing the establishment of the World Islamic Front was signed by leaders of fringe militant factions who were beholden to and dependent on bin Laden for financial support and could not bring the rank and file of their organizations into the new alliance. In addition to bin Laden, the signatories included Zawahiri of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad; Rifa'i Ahmad Taha (alias Abu Yasir) of the Egyptian Islamic Group (al-Jama'a al-Islamiya); sheikh Mir Hamzah of the Jamiat ul Ulema e Pakistan; and Fazul Rahman of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh.[40]

Of all these factions, the Egyptian Islamic Group was the largest. But Taha, a hardliner who was present at the creation of the World Islamic Front, did not speak for the incarcerated senior leadership of his group and was subsequently forced to disclaim being part of the World Islamic Front. After the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Taha released an official statement in which he denied that al-Jama'a al-Islamiya was a founding member of bin Laden's World Islamic Front: "We are not a party in any front that confronts Americans."[41] By fully joining bin Laden, Zawahiri even precipitated a rupture within his own organization, Islamic Jihad. The rank and file of Islamic Jihad outside Afghanistan expressed their shock at Zawahiri's reckless move and kept their distance. Several members whom I interviewed in Egypt (in 1999 and 2000) said they could not understand how and why Zawahiri would take on the United States, the sole surviving superpower, and open a second front after suffering major military and operational setbacks at the hands of Egyptian authorities. "It was like Zawahiri committed political suicide," a former senior associate of Islamic Jihad told me.[42]

In the end, Al Qaeda was – and still to a lesser extent is – synonymous with bin Laden and his close confidants, with no independent institutional anchor. It is not a transnational version of the Muslim Brotherhood's defunct al-Jihaz al-Sirri, or secret service, and it has no

parallel supporting social, political, or educational institutions. In comparison with the Brotherhood, Al Qaeda is a skeleton of an organization. Now it has been reduced to an ideological label, a state of mind, and a mobilizational outreach program to incite attacks worldwide.

Al Qaeda operatives swore baiya to bin Laden – not to Al Qaeda – and developed no institutional links with the organization itself. As an organization, Al Qaeda did not exist apart from its creator, and it is unlikely to survive his demise, even though since September 11 bin Laden and his associates have succeeded in branding Al Qaeda as a revolutionary idea to new recruits. But even if Al Qaeda as a revolutionary idea and a brand takes off, it will retain no centralized organizational infrastructure of any effective global reach. It is critical to make distinctions between the existence of desperate, local affiliates and cells, which have proliferated since 2003, and a global organization with a centralized leadership and decision making and an ambitious agenda. The latter appears to have suffered major strategic blows and is being gradually and systemically dismantled. Al Qaeda has become more decentralized, amorphous, diffuse, and difficult to locate; it no longer represents as big a threat as it once did, and its global reach has diminished considerably. Although Al Qaeda–inspired or –directed cells can still wreak havoc in London, Madrid, and Sharm el Sheik, Egypt, their ability to carry out spectacular operations like on September 11 has been weakened. We should not lose sight of the important distinction between the nature of the threat represented by local jihadist affiliates and networks and the threat posed by a centralized global network, which since September 11 has been degraded. But one point must be made clear: personalities will continue to drive the new brand, as seems to be the case with Zarqawi in Iraq and Al Qaeda operatives in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. To say so is not to write the obituary of Al Qaeda as a centralized global paramilitary organization or to discount its ability to recover in the long term if appropriate conditions arise, as the case seems in Iraq today.

However, we must be careful not to exaggerate Al Qaeda's organizational attributes just because it succeeded in carrying out audacious attacks and hiding its two top leaders – bin Laden and Zawahiri – so far. A close reading of the testimony of key captured Al Qaeda operatives shows that the September 11 plot was troubled and improvised

and could have easily gone awry. Its success was not due to complex organizational skills but rather to individual tenacity, commitment, and luck. Yes, luck. Several hijackers first assigned to the plot lost their nerve and dropped out, and other volunteers had to be recruited to take their place. The lineup of suicide bombers changed throughout the two years (1999–2001) of preparation, and there was reportedly infighting between Mohammed Atta, the mission leader, and another pilot, Ziad al-Jarrah. According to the plot's manager, Sheikh Mohammed, bin Laden became very restless and impatient with the preparations and wanted the planes operation to proceed as soon as possible regardless of its efficacy. In 2000, for instance, amid the controversy after then–Israeli Likud opposition party leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammed claimed that bin Laden told him "it would be enough for the hijackers simply to down planes rather than crash them into specific targets."[43]

All this petty squabbling and amateurism and the obsession with revenge have more in common with criminal mafias than with structured and complex organizations. Thus it is very surprising that the bombings were carried out successfully. The malfunctioning of American institutions partially explains the success of Al Qaeda's audacious and spectacular attack. Thus it is misleading to view Al Qaeda through the prism of its September 11 feat and endow it with a complex organizational structure.

One of the major failings of all jihadis, not just Al Qaeda, is their inability or unwillingness to construct formal institutions and organizations, as opposed to informal committees and networks, that could survive the incarceration of their founding charismatic emirs. Like their ruling tormentors, jihadis are addicted to the cult of personality. But unlike ruling autocrats, jihadis possess neither the resources nor the bureaucracies to keep them afloat. They remain deeply dependent on a narrow core of charismatic leaders who have mastered the art of blunders, to navigate their loyal followers through stormy seas.

This structural handicap does not bode well for jihadis' future prospects because of the lack of institutional continuity and renewal and the difficulty of nourishing a broad social base. The problem lies in their paramilitary and underground character and their overwhelming reliance on armed means and shock, as opposed to a more

comprehensive strategy, to attain their goals. In such a secretive and self-enclosed environment, powerful personalities dominate the jihadis' decision-making process at the expense of institution building. All jihadist groups fall into this personality trap and become self-imposed prisoners.[44]

This book will highlight the role of jihadist leaders within both the transnationalist and the religious-nationalist camps who served as the drivers behind their groups. For example, the rise of transnationalist jihadis cannot be understood without contextualizing the alliance between bin Laden and Zawahiri and the merging of their assets – Al Qaeda and Zawahiri's loyal contingent within Tanzim al-Jihad. The coming together of these two men, who were estranged from their countries and without an anchor, played a decisive role in the formation of the World Islamic Front. In June 2001 they cemented their marriage by merging their two groups – Al Qaeda and elements of the Tanzim – into one, Qaeda al-Jihad. The experience and character of the two complemented each other and fueled their unholy alliance with missionary zeal.

I will discuss the development and evolution of their relationship and their interaction with associates within their own organizations as well as with religious nationalists. In particular, I will flesh out the power struggle and personality clashes between the leaders of the two camps, particularly bin Laden and Zawahiri on the one hand, and their religious-nationalist rivals, on the other.

To summarize, the book will not just tell the story of the rise of transnationalist jihadis; it will also delve deeper into the structure of the jihadist movement as a whole. For example, why did jihadis neglect and disregard low politics in favor of high (and international) politics? Why the obsession with the use of force to capture the state? What went wrong with the jihadist movement? How deep has entropy settled in its body politic? Where does it go from here? Does it have a future? Could it overcome its existential crisis and transform itself into a nonviolent religious and social-political movement?

ONE

Religious Nationalists and the Near Enemy

Throughout the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s jihadis devoted most of their resources to dislodging the near enemy and establishing theocratic states governed by Shariah (Islamic law). A review of their documents, manifestos, and actions indicates a preoccupation with the internal conditions of Muslims in disparate countries compared to those of the ummah as a whole. Little attention was paid to the need to confront the far enemy, particularly the United States. Since September 11, the received wisdom in the United States and the West generally has it that jihadis had always possessed an ambitious and expansive global agenda and had patiently waited for an opportune moment to execute it. Ironically, transnationalist jihadis, including Zawahiri, bin Laden, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, would also like us to believe this. The weight of evidence indicates otherwise, however, and the situation is much more complex than that.

Jihad Goes Local

Clearly, jihadis deeply mistrusted international arrangements that, in their eyes, discriminated against Muslims and kept them militarily impotent and politically and economically dependent. They also suspected the United States and the Soviet Union of being intrinsically hostile to dar al-islam, or the House of Islam, and more specifically to their revolutionary Islamist project. But throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and the first half of the 1990s the dominant thinking among leading jihadis was that the ability of the international system, dar al-harb, or the House of War, to dominate and subjugate dar al-islam depended on

the collusion and submissiveness of local ruling "renegades."[1] As one influential jihadist manifesto put it in 1986, the latter are a "fifth column that gnaws the bones of Muslim society at the behest of foreign powers. They lost their will and sold their honor and dignity. . . . They paved the way for colonialism and exploitation."[2]

During this period, almost all the documents written or distributed by jihadis stressed the treacherous, destructive role played by the near enemy in facilitating the penetration of the Muslim ummah by the far enemy as well as the elimination of Islam from public life. They also called for a total mobilization and confrontation against jahili society and rule rather than taking jihad global. At that time fighting the far enemy was neither a priority nor even a goal for the overwhelming majority of jihadis. Until the mid-1990s jihadist theory and practice focused almost exclusively on the domestic agenda and the need to replace the state of kufr (disbelief or rejection of divine guidance) with God's governance or sovereignty. The war against Islam and Muslims was considered to be as much perpetrated by secular rulers and their intellectual and religious allies at home as it was by the West or the East. Thus the first priority was to create Islamic polities as the first step to reinstall the caliphate that would make the Shariah the law of the lands. However, to achieve this worthy goal, according to jihadis, the overthrow of Muslim leaders, the guardians of the corrupt status quo, was required.[3]

In particular, two important jihadist documents deserve special mention. The first is "The Absent Duty," written in the late 1970s by Mohammed Abd al-Salam Faraj (who played a vital role in the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Sadat and was subsequently executed by Egyptian authorities).[4] As noted in the Prologue, Faraj coined the terms "near enemy" and "far enemy" and assigned the highest priority to militarily confronting the former. According to Faraj, everything else, including liberating occupied Jerusalem, took a back seat to the fight against local apostates. Faraj's former associates whom I interviewed said that "The Absent Duty" became the operational manual of the jihadist movement in the 1980s and remained so through the first half of the 1990s, influencing the general direction of senior leaders, like Zawahiri, who for 15 years employed Faraj's hierarchy of enemies.

A decade later another pamphlet widely circulated by the Jihad Group in Upper Egypt, "The Inevitability of Confrontation," ranked four vital tasks that were considered "religiously sanctioned" in terms of importance:

(1) toppling the impious ruler who has abandoned religion;
(2) fighting any Muslim community that deserts Islam;
(3) reestablishing the caliphate and installing a caliph (pan-Islamic ruler); and
(4) liberating the homeland, freeing the captives (prisoners), and spreading religion.[5]

Notice that this list of priorities given by the Jihad Group centered primarily on internal, not regional or international, goals and concerns. There was hardly any mention of the need to fight the Zionists or the Americans. In the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, jihadis did not articulate, let alone entertain, a paradigm of taking jihad global. Their politics were decidedly domestic. They were religious nationalists par excellence.

A close reading of jihadis' writings, unlike that of other social and political activists, shows an overwhelming emphasis on local affairs at the expense of foreign policy and the Arab-Israeli conflict, a highly emotive issue in Arab and Muslim politics. Activists of differing ideological colors and persuasions often use the Palestinian predicament to mobilize the masses and garner public support. Not so initially with doctrinaire jihadis, as opposed to irredendist ones in Palestine and Lebanon, who hardly invested any practical resources in assisting their Palestinian brethren. Jihadis' apparent lack of operational interest in the Palestinian trauma, framed mainly in terms of a nationalist, not religious, identity, reflected a set of domestic priorities as opposed to regional and international ones.[6]

In my conversations with scores of former jihadis, they said they were driven by a religious fervor to institute divine authority on earth and to rid their countries of ruling apostates. Regardless of their real motivations for rising up against the ruling elite, which are very complex, they all come across as religious nationalists with no global blueprint transcending their individual countries.[7] At the heart of their grievances lie

a repulsion for and rejection of the moral decadence that is prevalent in society, not concern for foreign policy. It was fascinating and enlightening to listen to Egyptian jihadis, who were directly or indirectly involved in the assassination plot against Sadat, explain why they turned against the "pious president" (Sadat referred to himself as such). The most common response I heard from jihadis was that Sadat did not deliver on his promise to apply the Shariah, and that he insulted clerics who sympathized with their revolutionary project. Time and again jihadis expressed their rage over Sadat's wife's "immoral conduct," such as her frequent public appearances with no headscarf or headcover and a widely seen televised image of her dancing with President Jimmy Carter at a White House reception. They did not accept the explanation given by Sadat's men: that it was Carter who took Jihan Sadat's hand and led her to the dance floor and she could not refuse. In jihadis' opinion, the moral symbolism and lesson of the story was that Sadat and his "influential" wife violated deeply held Islamic values and the prescribed code of conduct for Muslim leaders.

Although all jihadis I interviewed said they vehemently opposed Sadat's signing of the 1978 Camp David peace accords with Israel and his offering a refuge for the deposed Shah of Iran, they reserved their harshest criticism for his supposed "deception" and "lies" about applying the Shariah and his mistreatment and incarceration of radical Islamic figures. I got the impression that jihadis could have quietly tolerated Sadat's peace treaty with Israel and his opening up to the West, particularly to the United States, had he delivered on his pledge to symbolically Islamize the state and played the part of the "pious president," that is, if he had kept his alliance with Islamists and showed humility and religiosity in public pronouncements.

In their eyes, the "pious president" became a "pharaoh" marked for assassination after he violated what they considered to be the moral compass of an Islamic polity. At the risk of simplification and exaggeration, jihadis were particularly enraged by Sadat's not honoring his promise to make the Shariah the only source of legislation and his distancing of his administration from Islamists. It was this, not his foreign policy, that drove jihadis to think the unthinkable: that they should kill Sadat, who had released the Islamist genie and who portrayed himself as a patron of Islamists, and make a move to seize power.

I do not mean to suggest that regional and foreign policies did not matter to jihadis. That would be misleading because their documents and publications were littered with references to external threats and regrets about the recolonization of Muslim countries by Western powers, particularly the United States. Two points are worth mentioning. Until the mid-1990s the dominant thinking among jihadis was that Muslim rulers' subservience to and collusion with Western powers enabled the latter to dominate the world of Islam. Therefore, jihadis argued that the most effective means to terminate Western hegemony over their societies was by replacing the secular local order with an Islamic one. They also correctly reckoned, as many subsequently acknowledged, that they did not have the resources to militarily confront Western states.[8]

For example, in the early 1980s an important document written by Egyptian Jihad entitled "America, Egypt, and the Islamist [Jihadist] Movement" ranked the United States as number one on its list of enemies. It listed three reasons for that. The first lies in the unholy strategic alliance between America and Arab states, which led to the latter's loss of "political, economic, and military independence." The second has to do with the special relationship the United States shares with Israel, which was built at the expense of Muslim interests and rights. Finally, the Jihad document asserts that American global hegemony represents a direct threat to the jihadist and Islamist movements.[9]

Even at this early stage jihadis defined their struggle with the United States not just in political and economic terms but also as a zero-sum game. The document claims that all American citizens, not just politicians, are socialized into an anti-Muslim mind-set and tend to bless their government's war against Muslims and to support and incite minorities in Muslim countries. By not making distinctions between the American people and their government and by holding both equally accountable for injustices perpetrated against Muslims, jihadis could easily justify targeting American civilians.

Although it was written by a small Egyptian jihadist faction, the importance of this internal document stems from its shedding light on jihadis' thinking and worldview toward the far enemy, the United States. Two decades later, jihadis, like bin Laden and Zawahiri, used similar references to sell their war, not just their enmity and hostility, against America and Americans. Therefore, the political and moral

rationalization of the September 11 attacks was laid long before Al Qaeda was officially born in the late 1990s. Jihadis of all political persuasions possessed a dangerously distorted and antagonistic view of American civil society, even though they held different opinions on how to deal with it. There is a historical and philosophical continuity to jihadis' hostile perceptions of America, which has proved to be durable thanks to the simmering regional conflicts and the political and social turbulence sweeping through Arab and Muslim societies.

Over the years I have interviewed scores of former jihadis or militant Islamists and I am yet to meet a single jihadi – or read an account by one – who has anything positive to say about America and Americans or even the West generally. Unlike their secular pan-nationalist, leftist, and enlightened Islamist counterparts who, while being highly critical of U.S. foreign policies, are fascinated with and attracted to American society and culture, jihadis are as much opposed to Western liberal ideas as to Western foreign policies. Their antipathy toward everything Western is an extreme form of Orientalism, which misrepresents and distorts the complex reality and humanity of the other – the East. There is no space here to delve deeper into the intellectual and philosophical genealogy behind jihadis' anti-Westernism.[10] Suffice it to say that anticolonialism, coupled with absolute raw religious moralism, lies at the heart of their antipathy to the West. This deeply embedded anti-Western genealogy facilitated and paved the way to September 11. The doctrinal seeds had been planted long before.

"America … and the Islamist Movement" advanced a two-pronged explanation for America's hostile stance toward Islamists and jihadis. First, American foreign policy is driven and informed by religious and ideological considerations: "crusading hatred is the real source behind all American positions toward the Islamist [jihadist] movement." Egyptian Jihad also criticizes those Muslims who see the struggle between Islam and the Christian West as being one of interests and politics, rather than of culture and religion. Second, the document asserts that America views the growing strength of the jihadist movement as a threat to its presence in the region and, as such, the United States is determined to attack and weaken the Islamic revival.

Although this critical document is loaded with anti-Americanism and explicitly calls for expelling corrupting Western influences from

the world of Islam, it did not advocate a direct armed clash with the United States, at least not yet. There was no call to war against the far enemy. Rather, Egyptian Jihad urged Muslims to attack America's secular Arab and Muslim clients – those "traitors" who serve its interests in the region and are apostates and thus must be destroyed. Accordingly, the most effective means to deter this "crusading enemy" (the United States) is "to shed more blood and to offer more martyrs and to carry the banner of Islam in order to restore the caliphate or face martyrdom."[11] The fight against America could be thus won by overthrowing its ruling Muslim allies that do its bidding. But overthrowing local apostates was the only intended end; it was not merely a first step, a way station to attacking the far enemy.

The document clearly placed much higher priority on attacking the near enemy (pro-Western Muslim rulers) and establishing an Islamic polity ruled by a caliph than on attacking the far enemy. This leads to the second point. From the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s, jihadis' key fundamental goal was to capture the state and Islamize it – along with society – from the top down. Unlike mainstream Islamists (Muslim Brothers, for example), who belatedly discovered the importance of Islamizing society from the bottom up, jihadis had no patience or faith in al-da'wa (call). They also considered democracy to be nizam al-kufr (a deviant system) and, unlike mainstream Islamists, they eschewed participation in electoral politics because they view democracy as a rival religion supplanting the rule of God with that of a popular majority. Jihadis were literally obsessed with controlling state bureaucracies and using them to advance their Islamic project, which was not fully developed. Their view of the state as a strategic tool to restructure society and politics put them squarely in the religious nationalist (statist) camp alongside their secular nationalist opponents, and it highlighted their poverty of ideas – the absence of a new radical social contract. At this stage jihadis put everything on the back burner, including regional and foreign policy questions, until they completed infiltrating and seizing the state. They were faithful disciples of Faraj's dictum regarding the primacy of the near enemy as opposed to the far enemy.

It could also be argued that there existed no tidy distinction in the minds of jihadis' leaders between confronting the near enemy and confronting the far enemy. The fight was one and the same because the

end result would be to construct an Islamic state and expel Western influence. But most jihadis of the religious nationalist camp whom I interviewed said that assigning operational priority to the near enemy stemmed from practical, commonsensical reasons: "Why should we take high risks by militarily attacking the United States, the unrivaled superpower, if we can achieve our goal by targeting ruling Muslim apostates?" They viewed the matter less in ideological and religious terms and more in terms of material capability and necessity.

For example, Zawahiri, whose views on the importance of the near enemy reflected those of most jihadis, firmly believed that the road to Arab Jerusalem must pass through Cairo, and that priority should be given to overthrowing the pro-Western "renegade" regimes in such Arab countries as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. In 1995, Muslim ulema (religious scholars) feared that the new emphasis on Afghanistan could come at the expense of Palestine and criticized jihadis for not assisting their Palestinian counterparts (Hamas and Jihad) and for squandering Muslim strength in internal squabbles and strife. For example, sheikh Yusuf al-Qardawi, an influential Egyptian-born cleric who works in Qatar, warned against the tendency to place Afghanistan ahead of even Palestine: "Palestine remains the first Islamic issue, and it is not true that the movement has forgotten Palestine for the sake of Afghanistan."[12] Zawahiri had already made up his mind and wrote a rebuttal in which he stated that "Jerusalem will not be liberated until the battle for Egypt and Algeria is won and until Egypt itself is liberated."[13]

Thus as late as 1995 there existed no ambiguity about Zawahiri's prioritizing the fight against the near enemy. Islamic Jihad's spectacular military operations against the Egyptian regime testified to the high value Zawahiri placed on targeting the near enemy over the far enemy. He sent waves of militants to Egypt to destabilize its government and soften its defenses. His words and actions were consistent. He and his religious nationalist cohorts had no second thoughts about the character and nature of the real enemy being the secular order at home that was not governed by the Shariah.[14]

Yet in his 2001 memoir, Zawahiri tried to portray and package himself as having been a transnationalist jihadi long before he established his unholy alliance with Osama bin Laden in the late 1990s. He claims that in the 1980s the Afghan "jihad was a training course of the utmost

importance to prepare Muslim mujahedeen to wage their awaited battle against the superpower that now has sole dominance over the globe, namely, the United States."[15] This is very difficult to believe because Zawahiri is imposing the present on the past in an attempt to justify his recent change of heart regarding the importance of attacking the far enemy. This rationalization does not hold up because Zawahiri cannot erase historical memory and empirical evidence by sleight of hand. The rise of transnationalist jihadis must be understood as a product of the internal social upheavals and mutations that occurred within the jihadist movements in the 1990s. Although transnationalist jihadis grew out of the wombs of religious nationalists and sought to inherit their slogans and legacy, they underwent a dramatic metamorphosis and further radicalization, which marked a critical rupture in the movement. The divide between the two camps (religious nationalists and transnationalists) became wider and deeper.

Zawahiri's Tanzim al-Jihad or Islamic Jihad, one of the most aggressive and violent jihadist organizations, was the norm, not the exception to the rule. Jihadis everywhere limited their attacks to the near enemy and avoided targeting Western powers. To be more precise, until the mid-1990s the modern jihadist movements had not developed a transnationalist paradigm or a corresponding operational armada or network capable of initiating qualitative attacks abroad. It is true that in the early 1990s Egyptian and Algerian jihadis attacked soft Western targets at home, including the tourist industry and foreigners. But a heated internal debate among jihadis exposed critical fault lines in their thinking and stance. For example, although Egyptian Islamic Group, the largest jihadist organizations in the Arab world, sanctioned and initiated assaults against soft Western targets in Egypt, its sister group, Tanzim al-Jihad (led by Zawahiri), considered them politically, as opposed to morally, counterproductive because they would play into the hands of the regime, which they did.[16]

Similarly, the terrorist attacks carried out during the 1990s by Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in France did not represent a qualitative or quantitative shift from its strategy of targeting the near enemy (Algerian regime) to targeting the far enemy (France, the leading ally of the Algerian government). The GIA aimed at punishing Paris for its logistical and political support of the military junta in Algiers and at deterring France from any further active intervention in the Algerian

civil war. But brutal and deadly as they were, these terrorist attacks had a limited goal and did not signal an expansion of jihad outside Muslim frontiers. It is also worth mentioning that leaders of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and its armed wing, AIS, the largest paramilitary organization confronting the Algerian regime, publicly denounced the GIA's "excesses" against Algerian and Western civilians as well as the increasing manipulation and penetration of militant factions by the security services.

By the mid-1990s a further splintering and radicalization of the GIA, coupled with the complicity of the Algerian security and military apparatus, caused a violent rupture and costly civil war within the Algerian Islamist movement. The assassination of several heavyweights of the FIS in Algeria and France was a case in point. As Francois Burgat, a leading French scholar on Islamist movements in North Africa, noted, the FIS and Algerians in general were caught between "two terrorisms," one of the radical wing of the Algerian military junta, and "Islamic terrorism," which was a derivative of that.[17] The Algerian war was a classic case of civil strife pitting a tyrannical wing of the military apparatus that suspended the constitutional process against a powerful popular Islamist movement that was radicalized and splintered after its electoral victories had been rescinded and subjected to a formidable offensive of repression.

The point I'd like to stress here is that until the mid-1990s jihadis in two pivotal Arab states, Egypt and Algeria, who represented by far the largest active number of militants in the Muslim world (tens of thousands of active operatives), confined their confrontations to the near enemy and did not internationalize jihad. Their attacks against nonregime targets were limited in scope and did not greatly expand beyond national borders. On the whole, jihadis were still bogged down in civil wars at home and had not yet fully developed a transnationalist paradigm.

Early Warnings of Transnational Jihad

Nonetheless, in the early 1990s a wave of terrorist attacks against Western, particularly American, interests in Africa, the Middle East, and inside the United States was an omen of bigger and deadlier operations

to come. Although it would be misleading to link all these desperate attacks together and hold bin Laden and his jihadist cohorts accountable, evidence subsequently emerged that the bin Laden terrorist network had infiltrated many countries and established informal, tacit alliances with other similar-minded jihadist cells and factions. Some of bin Laden's associates later took credit for those attacks and boasted that their assistance led to the October 1993 shootdown of two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters by members of a Somali militia and the subsequent withdrawal of American troops from that country in early 1994.[18]

For example, a senior "personal guard" of bin Laden, Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdullah al-Bahri (known by his nom de guerre Abu Jandal), who spent several years by bin Laden's side, claimed that "the U.S. forces were met with fierce resistance from the Somali mujahedeen and Al Qaeda organization, which managed to expel them from Somalia in humiliation and ignominy after teaching them a harsh military lesson."[19] Regardless of the real military input of Al Qaeda in the Somali skirmishes, bin Laden and his senior associates subsequently exaggerated their role in order to recruit young Muslims into their organization and to convince them that American soldiers were vulnerable and could be easily defeated. Listen to bin Laden's use of Somalia in his pre-2001 recruitment videotapes: "We believe that America is much weaker than Russia; and our brothers who fought in Somalia told us that they were astonished to observe how weak, impotent, and cowardly the American soldier is. As soon as eighty American troops were killed, they fled in the dark as fast they could, after making a great deal of noise about the new international order."[20]

Thus lines became blurred between fiction and nonfiction regarding Al Qaeda's role in Somalia. One gets the impression that Al Qaeda's supermen, not Somali militiamen and fighters, fought the October 1993 costly, pitched battles that, for all intents and purposes, ended the American military mission there. But propaganda matters because it sheds light on efforts by the Al Qaeda leadership to portray itself as possessing a strategic vision designed to preempt and deter America's encroachment over Arab and Muslim territories long before September 11.

In a series of lengthy interviews and recollections with the Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, bin Laden's bodyguard and senior

lieutenant, al-Bahri, says that before American forces deployed to Somalia in late 1992, Al Qaeda had built a base there for Arab jihadis to use as a staging arena into the Arabian Peninsula, mainly Saudi Arabia, with the aim of overthrowing the pro-American royal families. Al-Bahri, a dual Saudi-Yemeni national who spent 20 months in a Yemeni prison, adds that "Al Qaeda viewed the entry of the Americans into Somalia not as a move that is meant to save its people from what happened to them, but to control Somalia and then spread U.S. hegemony over the region."[21] He also credits Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, general field commander of Al Qaeda until his death in 1996, who set up the cell that later carried out the 1998 bombings of the two U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with establishing a foothold in Africa in general and the Horn of Africa in particular. According to the recollections by bin Laden's personal guard, Banshiri used to say: "The United States will certainly control the Horn of Africa, and therefore we must establish ourselves in the Horn of Africa close to the Arabian Peninsula."[22]

This self-serving narrative endows Al Qaeda operatives with a "far-reaching" transnationalist foresight that predates the 2001 attacks on the United States by almost a decade. But the account must not be taken at face value and must be scrutinized because it colors history with a contemporary brush and deposits much more strategic credit in Al Qaeda's account than it deserves.

In the first half of the 1990s, similar attacks against American interests could also be interpreted as heralding a new dramatic shift from local to global jihadism. For example, in December 1992 bombs exploded at two hotels in Aden, Yemen, where U.S. troops stopped en route to Somalia, killing two people, but no Americans. According to *The 9/11 Commission Report*, the perpetrators are reported to have had connections with bin Laden's Al Qaeda.[23] In November 1995 a car bomb exploded outside a joint Saudi-U.S. facility in Riyadh for training the Saudi National Guard. Five Americans and two officials from India were killed. Almost a year later an enormous truck bomb detonated in the Khobar Towers residential complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, which housed U.S. Air Force personnel. Nineteen Americans were killed and 372 were wounded.

The weight of evidence indicates that the Khobar operation was carried out by Saudi Hizbollah, an organization that had received support from the Iranian regime. Although *The 9/11 Commission Report* insinuates that Al Qaeda may have played a role in the Khobar bombing, it stops short of assigning principal blame to the terrorist network. When asked if Al Qaeda was behind the Riyadh and Khobar explosions, al-Bahri, who had boasted about the organization's feat in Somalia, said he later learned from his boss that he "had nothing to do with these operations." Saudis dissatisfied with the royal family carried out the attacks, bin Laden informed his associates.[24]

Yet in a widely disseminated recruitment videotape in 2001, bin Laden heaped praise on the Khobar perpetrators by name because they responded "positively to our incitement." "We incited, and they responded. We hope that they are in heaven," bin Laden added.[25] It is possible that bin Laden was trying to take credit for the Khobar bombing without having been directly involved because he wanted to appeal to young Saudis to rise up against the ruling royal family. Otherwise, why had bin Laden conceded privately to some of his close subordinates that he had no direct role in the Khobar attack?[26]

Al-Bahri (who was privy to secrets, had an insider's view within Al Qaeda, and supported the attacks on the United States) adds that the Riyadh and Khobar bombings had more to do with domestic politics in Saudi Arabia than with international affairs or American foreign policy. In the first half of the 1990s there existed no centralized structure for transnational jihad, and Al Qaeda, as a formal organization, had not been activated yet. It would be misleading to talk about Al Qaeda as a formal organization before 1996; its official birthday is widely recognized as the 1998 announcement establishing the World Islamic Front. In the first half of the 1990s bin Laden was still in the process of formally setting up his network under the rubric of Islamic Army Shura, composed of his own Al Qaeda Shura together with representatives of other independent jihadist groups from various Muslim countries. The latter's principal target was the near enemy, not the far enemy.[27]

The 9/11 Commission Report lists other prominent attacks that occurred during the first half of the 1990s in which it says that bin Laden's involvement was also at best "cloudy."[28] These include the 1993

bombing of the World Trade Center, a plot that same year to destroy landmarks in New York, and the 1994–5 Manila Air plot to blow up a dozen U.S. airliners over the Pacific.

Regardless of whether bin Laden's role was "cloudy" or crystal clear in these attacks, the "new terrorism" constituted a qualitative escalation by targeting the American homeland and aiming to kill thousands of civilians. Freelance jihadis, not just bin Laden and his professional associates, frequently turned their guns against the United States and its citizens, whom they characterized as the oppressor of Muslims worldwide.

Why Did Jihad Go Global?

By the mid-1990s a new shift of focus away from localism and toward globalism began to take shape among some jihadis. A few critical factors contributed to this dramatic shift. To begin, the Afghan war and the humiliating withdrawal of Russian troops planted the seeds of transnationalist jihad and emboldened Arab veterans, in particular, to embark on ambitious military ventures both back at home and abroad. (For the effects of the Afghan war on jihadis, see Chapter Two.) Next, just as the Russians cut their losses in Afghanistan and went back home, the United States found itself entangled in the shifting sands of the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia) after the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The decision to station American forces in Saudi Arabia after the liberation of Kuwait inflamed the religious sensibilities of many Saudis, including bin Laden and like-minded radicals, and reinforced their convictions that the United States possessed hegemonic designs on their countries.

Overnight, the United States, the sole surviving superpower, went to the top of the list of bin Laden's enemies. More than any other variable, bin Laden frequently used the American military presence in the "land of the two holy places" (Islam's two holiest cities in Mecca and Medina) as a rallying cry and an effective recruitment tool to lure young Muslims to join his anti-American network: "Do people not believe that the home of the prophet and of his grandchildren is occupied and under American-Jewish control? Thus to fight Americans is fundamental to the Muslim faith and tawhid [affirmation of the oneness of God]. We have incited the ummah against this angry occupier [the Americans]

to expel it from the land of the two holy places."[29] Since then bin Laden has been obsessed with expelling American troops from "our most sacred places in Saudi Arabia," and he has made a fateful, strategic decision to take on what he called "the head of the snake," the United States. (Chapter Three elaborates further on the reasons and causes behind the rise of transnationalist jihadism.) Suffice it to say that the Gulf war in 1991 and the permanent stationing of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia played a decisive role in the globalization of jihad, particularly in the ideological incitement and mobilization of anti-Americanism.[30]

Furthermore, the early 1990s witnessed the emergence of a new generation of freelance roaming jihadis (I do not mean mercenaries), who traveled from one front to another in support of their persecuted and oppressed Muslim brethren worldwide. For example, after the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan in 1989, thousands of Afghan veterans and other seasoned jihadis, along with young Muslims from many countries, felt compelled to defend their coreligionists in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, the Philippines, Kashmir, Eritrea, Somalia, Burma, Tajikistan, and elsewhere and to wage jihad on their behalf. On the one hand, seasoned Afghan veterans and other jihadis effectively used these new theaters to stay in the jihad business and keep in touch with one another as well as to consolidate and expand their jihadist networks and numbers. The new jihad caravan proved to be a godsend to many Afghan veterans, who could not go back home for security reasons and who were able to utilize their rich operational experience to make further inroads into Muslim societies.

Take the case of Saudi commander of the "Arab mujahedeen" in the Caucasus, known by the nom de guerre Ibn al-Khattab (his real name was Samir Saleh Abdullah al-Suwailem), who was killed in 2002. According to recent diaries by Abu al-Walid al-Masri, a senior member of Al Qaeda's Shura Council, Khattab, who was strongly supported by one of the leading Saudi religious scholars, who provided him with money and a steady stream of fighters, succeeded in establishing an economic and financial base in the Gulf states as well as in controlling the flow of Arabs into Chechnya. Khattab also built his own media apparatus that linked him with the outside world. The result, Abu al-Walid adds, is that Khattab's position and status in Chechnya until the 1999 Russian military campaign were stronger than bin Laden's in

Afghanistan. In the 1990s the two Saudi jihadis communicated with each other and tried to pull each other to their own battle plans; but Khattab and bin Laden had defined the enemy differently and both were too ambitious to accept a subordinate role. To Khattab, Abu al-Walid notes, Russia was the real enemy and his goal was to free Muslim people and the lands of the former Soviet Union (Central Asia) from Russian control.[31]

In contrast, bin Laden wanted to fight the United States and expel its forces from Saudi Arabia. Abu al-Walid notes that bin Laden was interested in wooing Khattab to his side not just because Khattab had gained a large following and a reputation for courage and successful military exploits against Russian troops but also to obtain dirty bombs from the Russian arsenal through his contacts; bin Laden believed that Khattab joining in jihad against the Americans was a religious obligation because he was from Hijaz, a region in Saudi Arabia controlled by U.S. forces (which was not true). Bin Laden also believed that Khattab was a newcomer mujahid (Islamic fighter), whereas he was commander-in-chief of the Afghan Arabs and thus had earned the right to the leadership slot. But Khattab, Abu al-Walid reports, was not impressed and asked bin Laden to join him because he had a comprehensive program to liberate Central Asia from the Russian yoke.[32]

Although by the end of the 1990s the correspondence between the two Saudis had not produced any practical results, it is important for several reasons. First, it sheds light on the stiff competition between differing jihadist poles and perspectives and the intense drive to take charge of the jihadist caravan and control its speed and destination. Khattab not only competed on equal footing with bin Laden but assembled a more powerful contingent of jihadis than the latter. Second, the correspondence shows clearly the emergence of new transnationalist jihadi pockets and networks in Afghanistan and elsewhere. By the end of the 1990s the jihadist caravan had gone global with full speed. Third, regional conflicts in the Middle East, the Caucasus, Bosnia, Kashmir, and other places supplied a steady stream of Arab and Muslim recruits, most of whom became foot soldiers in the brigades of jihadis like bin Laden, Khattab, and Zawahiri. Fourth, by the end of the decade Saudis played a vital role in this transnationalist jihad caravan as top chiefs and operatives, and they equalled, if not surpassed, their Egyptian counterparts who had founded and pioneered the jihadist

movement; the bulk of the money was also Saudi. Equally important, Saudi religious clerics and scholars provided the doctrinal justification for this large migratory movement of men and resources to many corners of the world. Fertilized and fused with a new militant sensibility imported from Egypt and elsewhere, the traditionally introvert Salafi-Wahhabi genie is out of the bottle and can't be put back in. Khattab, bin Laden, the fifteen hijackers who crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11 are a direct product of this recent marriage between conservative, local Salafism-Wahhabism and revolutionary Egyptian Islamism.

Fifth, despite the asymmetry of power between transnationalist jihadis and their foreign powers, they were willing and prepared to take on the two most militarily powerful nations in the world without regard to repercussions, and they believed they could prevail. For example, as mentioned previously, bin Laden often lectured his associates that "America would not be able to sustain more than two or three of his painful blows," a reference to the attacks on the USS *Cole* in Yemen, the 1998 bombings of the two American embassies in East Africa, and September 11; similarly, Khattab reportedly said that the Muslim lands in Central Asia "would eventually fall into his hands" as soon as he operationalized his plans. Both also sought, Abu al-Walid reports, to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction (WMD), or at least dirty bombs, in their confrontation with the great powers. One of the major reasons for bin Laden's contacts with Khattab was a quest for WMD because Al Qaeda hawks were convinced, Abu al-Walid says, that their Chechen counterparts could acquire these weapons ready-made from the scattered arsenal of the former Soviet Union, or by seeking help from experts, who worked during the Soviet era and are now suffering unemployment.[33]

According to the author, after the failure of the Khattab–bin Laden correspondence, Al Qaeda hawks in Afghanistan wrote to Khattab and warned him against complacency and overconfidence in his fight with the Russians, who would militarily persevere until they prevailed and punished the Chechens: "The only way to protect the Chechens aganist this danger is to obtain WMD. . . . They also drew his attention to the point that Chechen mujahedeen are by law Russian citizens and that the Chechen mafia is able to obtain anything in Russia."[34] But Khattab paid little attention to the warning from the Al Qaeda hawks,

Abu al-Walid tells us, and when in 1999 the Russians struck militarily in retaliation for Khattab's failed attack on Daghistan, the mujahedeen government in Grozny, Chechnya, fell and the fighters met defeat; had Khattab planned for the worst-case scenario and listened to the free advice proffered by Al Qaeda hawks, he would have been more cautious and reluctant to do battle with Russia. Ironically, Abu al-Walid reports that after Grozny's fall, a Chechen mujahedeen delegation visited Afghanistan and sought assistance from the Taliban and the Afghan Arabs there; delegation members even asked if there were any WMD available in Afghanistan so that they could use them in Chechnya against the Russians to stop the mass killing of the Chechens. The moral of the story, Abu al-Walid concludes, is that neither bin Laden nor Khattab had reflected critically about their confrontation with America and Russia and, instead, had a superficial plan to win a quick and easy battle that would not require WMD: "Two years later, Afghanistan was lost and so was Chechnya. As for the ambitious plans of the Saudi jihadist leadership, they too failed."[35]

A qualification is in order here. Thousands of young Muslims, who were genuinely moved by the plight of their coreligionists and who had no previous links to militants, left their secure homes and families and traveled the world to fight for what they perceived to be a just cause. These young Muslims cannot be considered either religious nationalists or transnationalists. I interviewed several of them, who said they felt enraged by the suffering of Muslims worldwide, which they watched on their television screens, and this motivated them to leave everything behind and migrate to defend fellow believers.[36] But many of these zealous young men were transformed by the baptism of blood and fire and the comradeship of arms with other activist Muslims and jihadis alike. In the process, they acquired a new transnationalist consciousness and sensibility that made them vulnerable to radical calls by militants like bin Laden.

In his recent diaries and recollections in *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, al-Bahri retraced his jihad journey, which in 1995 took him first to Bosnia:

> My first station for jihad was Bosnia-Herzegovina. My journey for jihad at that time was not organized; it was an emotional trip to wage jihad. I was watching the tragedies of Muslims in Bosnia; the

> slaughtering of children, women, and old people; the violation of honor and mass rape of girls; and the huge number of widows and orphans left by the war. Therefore, I decided to go to jihad as a young man who was raised on religious principles and chivalry and who is full of zeal about religion and care for Muslims. Before that, I had wanted to take part in the jihad in Afghanistan, but God willed that I miss that opportunity. The arena of jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina was an opportunity for me.[37]

Al-Bahri (who was 21 years old when he said he "ran away from my home without the permission of my family" to join jihad in Bosnia) says that his generation closely followed political developments in Muslim countries and greatly interacted with and responded to them: "I recall a picture that is still printed in my mind to this day. It is of a Jewish soldier breaking the limbs of a Palestinian child with a stone, in front of the eyes of the world. No one moved for his sake. I cried at that sight."[38] A similar version of al-Bahri's story is often told by religious activists, who, time and again, list injustices inflicted on Muslims worldwide as a contributing factor behind their decision to join in jihad.

But there is more to al-Bahri and his generation's story than the simple emotional reaction to social and political upheaval in distant Muslim lands. There also existed a fertile religious environment and a large group of radical clerics who exercised profound impact on the impassioned youths and who instigated, not just enjoined, them to migrate and participate in jihad in those distant lands. For example, al-Bahri says that "our motivation in going forward and defending the honor of Muslims was not only chivalry and courage; there was a stronger religious drive. Add to that the instigation and call to jihad in the Friday sermons, the tape cassettes, the magazines that covered such events, and other media. I was greatly influenced by that, and I wished I was one of those mujahedeen, defending Muslim lands."[39]

Particularly critical was the role of the religious sheikhs who materially and morally prepared young men for jihad. Al-Bahri cites a hardliner cleric, Salman al-Awdah (along with 25 prominent Saudi religious scholars, in November 2004 Awdah posted an open letter on the Internet urging Iraqis to support fighters waging jihad against "the big crime of America's occupation of Iraq"),[40] who was highly active and effective in preparing and materially equipping many youths to go to

Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Tajikistan, and elsewhere. According to al-Bahri's personal encounters, clerics had access to huge charitable sums of money to nourish and finance the jihad caravan: "There were astronomical sums available for equipping the youths for jihad. There was no religious sheikh who stood against the jihad trend at all. This is because all of Saudi Arabia, starting with the government, the religious scholars, and the ordinary people, was on the side of driving the youths toward jihad. . . ."[41]

In the 1980s and early 1990s, according to al-Bahri, the landscape was in total harmony regarding the value of waging jihad in support of Muslims worldwide. Religious scholars, the Saudi ruling elite, and society at large fully supported the migration of young men to pursue jihad overseas. Private donations filled the coffers of mosques and sympathetic charitable foundations, financing the jihad. This fact partially explains the presence of a large number of Saudi men among the volunteers for jihad throughout the world. According to inside accounts by Al Qaeda members, the Saudi contingent was also the biggest within Al Qaeda.

Although in a way Saudi Arabia was an ideal case, it was not unique. In this period, young Muslims, not just Saudis, were bombarded with calls and pleas by the religious establishment to militarily support their beleaguered Muslim brethren all over the world. Governments either turned a blind eye to this systematic recruitment and indoctrinational drive of the youths or indirectly blessed the effort. They wanted to direct and divert jihad outside their own bloody borders and to counterbalance the powerful influence of revolutionary Shiite Iran among their citizens. It was a short-term tactic designed to buy time and absorb the jihadist shocks threatening their rule. Money was not in short supply, thanks to contributions from the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which subsidized the initial expenses of young Muslims heading abroad.

The tacit encouragement and support given by the religious and ruling establishment to the pursuit of jihad by young men had profound unexpected repercussions. A new transnational generation of young warriors was born. These warriors got a taste of freedom and military triumph. Muslim men of various national and social backgrounds met on the battlefield and shed blood in defense of an imagined community. They lost their innocence and were exposed to jihadis' radical ideas, and they built enduring ties cemented by toil and blood. The old rules no

longer applied or mattered to the new warriors, who viewed themselves as the vanguard of the ummah, not as citizens of separate countries.

For instance, al-Bahri's personal journey into jihad had a transformative, ideological effect on him. He says that before running away from home to go to Bosnia, "I used to consider jihad and carrying arms a kind of voluntary work. I did not view jihad as a religious duty prescribed to every individual (fard 'ayn, or a personal obligation) [as jihadis do], but a collective duty (fard kifaya), i.e,. if it is carried out by some, then others are exempt from it, albeit with their parents' consent."[42] By the time he left Bosnia, al-Bahri said he was a changed young man, and his definition of jihad mirrored that of jihad being a permanent and personal obligation and a pillar of Islam "like profession of faith, prayers, fasting, alms-giving, and pilgrimage."[43] Equally important, his brief stay there turned him into a committed pan-Islamist:

> We began to have real contact with the other trends, the enemies of the ummah, and the ideology of the ummah began to evolve in our minds. We realized we were a nation [ummah] that had a distinguished place among nations. Otherwise, what would make me leave Saudi Arabia – and I am of Yemeni origin – to go and fight in Bosnia? The issue of [secular] nationalism was put out of our minds, and we acquired a wider view than that, namely the issue of the ummah. Although the issue was very simple at the start, yet it was a motive and an incentive for jihad.[44]

Far from being unique, al-Bahri's experience is typical of a generation of young Muslims that was morally and emotionally transformed by the jihad journey. When he left Saudi Arabia and Yemen to fight in Bosnia at the age of 21, he possessed no jihadist tendencies of either localism or globalism. A year later al-Bahri sounded like a pan-Islamist on an eternal mission to fight and die for an imagined ummah. After Bosnia, he spent a few weeks in Somalia and Tajikistan, hoping to join in jihad with fellow Muslims there, but he was unsuccessful. Disappointed and frustrated, in 1996 al-Bahri went to Afghanistan and ended up swearing baiya (fealty) to bin Laden and becoming a trusted member of his inner circle and clan.

Recognizing his strong muscular build and his blind commitment to jihad, not to mention the fact that he was not yet married and did

not have much family responsibility, bin Laden coopted al-Bahri as a senior "personal guard," which meant being with bin Laden until bedtime every day. From 1996 until 2000 al-Bahri served as bin Laden's bodyguard and confidant, performing sensitive tasks and missions for bin Laden both inside and outside Afghanistan. This gave al-Bahri access to bin Laden's entire circle of associates and subordinates. It also made him privy to vital secrets and information within Al Qaeda in the second half of the 1990s, a formative period in the terrorist network's development and evolution (I will cite his lengthy diaries in subsequent chapters).

Al-Bahri's dual Saudi-Yemeni nationality also helped. Bin Laden had been born to a Yemeni family that migrated to Saudi Arabia and made its fortune there. He was trying to balance ethnically the large contingent of Egyptians within his organization by recruiting Saudis, Yemenis, and other young men from the Arabian Peninsula (the Gulf). According to al-Bahri, bin Laden told him this when he tried to recruit him and other young men from the Gulf. Ethnicity mattered and was a nuisance and complicating factor within Al Qaeda. Bin Laden was conscious of the criticism that Egyptians, including Zawahiri, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, Abu Hafs, Seif al-Adl, and many others, dominated his circle, and for several years he worked hard to rectify the ethnic imbalance among his men. By 2001 he had succeeded in surrounding himself with more recruits from the Arabian Peninsula, like al-Bahri and most of the September 11 suicide bombers, than from Egypt and elsewhere.

In less than two years, the terribly young al-Bahri underwent a metamorphosis and became a transnationalist jihadi, not just a pan-Islamist. He and his new generation of young warriors traveled a long distance in a short period of time. When he swore allegiance to bin Laden (a secret, private ceremony that includes only the new member and bin Laden), he said he knew he consciously embarked on a dangerous venture that would pit him against the might of the United States. There was no ambiguity about the new enemy being targeted: America and Americans. When bin Laden recruited al-Bahri and his companions to his network, according to al-Bahri, bin Laden tried to "convince us of the justification for his call to wage jihad against America."[45]

Although it took bin Laden a few days to sell his new call to these young men, they signed on with their eyes wide open. They bought into

his sales pitch wholeheartedly and believed that they possessed the will and tenacity to force the United States to leave Arab lands. Listen to al-Bahri's enthusiasm and inflated zeal when he and his young companions finally decided to join Al Qaeda:

> In view of our military experience and our experience in carrying arms, we said: What is America? If we had succeeded in many armed confrontations and military fronts against the Serbs, the Russians, and others, America will not be something new. We often sat down with the brothers who fought the Americans in Somalia, and we used to hear about the brothers who struck the Americans at the Aden Hotel in the early 1990s and about the brothers who blew up American residences in Riyadh and al-Khobar. We reached the conclusion that America is no different from the forces we have fought because it has become a target for all and sundry. All of its foes have dealt blows to it. So I decided to join sheikh Osama bin Laden. That was the beginning of my work with Al Qaeda.[46]

Al-Bahri's story captures the predicament and odyssey of a new generation of ideal young warriors who left their homelands to defend their Muslim brethren worldwide. But the jihad journey radicalized them and transformed them into hardened jihadis. They supplied the foot soldiers and suicide bombers for transnationalist jihadist groups, like Al Qaeda and Khattab's legion of Arab mujahedeen, as well as operated as militant freelancers.

Finally, the shift from localism to globalism occurred after pro-Western Muslim rulers militarily suppressed the uprising launched by religious nationalists during the second half of the 1990s. Jihadis in Egypt, Algeria, and elsewhere had to choose between surrender and a new mission that would keep their sinking ship afloat. They lost the battle against the near enemy and had few options at their disposal. From the early 1990s until the late 1990s government security services inflicted heavy losses on jihadis by killing and arresting tens of thousands of them and brutally cracking down against their families, friends, and potential supporters. After a brief initial hesitation, they adopted a systematic policy of collective punishment and military preemption that brought jihadis to their knees. Jihadis proved to be no match against the powerfully entrenched security apparatus and could

not withstand its counteroffensive. By the second half of the 1990s jihadis' internal revolt withered away.

In private conversations, jihadis, who were direct or indirect participants, acknowledged the asymmetry of power between themselves and their ruling nemesis and said they miscalculated horribly by plunging into an armed uprising against a militarily superior foe. Their inflamed passions and tribal desire to exact revenge against their ruling tormentors got the best of them, they added. They conceded that they possessed no strategy or program of reaching out to society at large and building a strong social base and foundation. But regardless of the reasons and causes for the operational defeat of jihadis on their domestic battlefields by the second half of the 1990s, they faced existential choices. At home, leaders of religious nationalists called for an unconditional unilateral ceasefire and decided to reassess the efficacy and utility of the strategy of armed struggle against the near enemy. A consensus existed in society that jihadis had reached a dead end, and a majority of jihadist leaders at home and abroad also arrived at a similar conclusion, even though they did so out of logistical and practical necessity, not good will or moral repulsion against the use of force and violence (more on the internal debates later).

Not all jihadis agreed with the call to lay down their arms and rethink the strategy of armed struggle. A vocal, strong, and determined minority of jihadis – residing overseas, mainly in Afghanistan, Europe (in the 1980s and 1990s senior jihadi leaders sought and obtained asylum status in European capitals), and elsewhere – dissented and went its separate way. A big schism developed within the jihadist movement and Zawahiri, leader of Tanzim al-Jihad, led the intrajihadist coup and stoked its flames. Unable to steer the jihadist ship in his direction in the late 1990s, Zawahiri broke away and joined forces with transnationalist jihadis like bin Laden and others. The irony is that while an overwhelming majority of religious nationalists at home agreed to the ceasefire call and suspension of military operations, a minority overseas, represented by the Al Qaeda network, escalated the confrontation and took jihad global.

Thus in the late 1990s, as jihadis' conflict with the near enemy was winding down, it was replaced by a deadlier one against the far enemy, the United States. Bin Laden's Al Qaeda, along with other fringe

jihadist groups, spearheaded this transnationalist war and discarded the views and attitudes of the bulk of jihadis, who as religious nationalists had no interest in fully internationalizing jihad. But this transnationalist generation of jihadis did not arise in a social and political vacuum and thrust itself on the world scene. Its journey was complex, full of ironies and dramatic turns and shifts. It is a tale that speaks volumes about political manipulation by Muslim authoritarian rulers and their Western, particularly American, patrons, as well as fatal miscalculation by jihadis whose thirst and hunger for power blinded their vision and led them into reckless adventures.

Nonetheless, it is worth stressing that the shift from localism to globalism did not occur until after the mid-1990s. From the mid-1970s through the first half of the 1990s, the modern jihadist movement was inward-looking and fully engaged in a costly internal struggle to overthrow entrenched local rulers. On the whole, jihadis, most of whom were religious nationalists, possessed little appetite to expand their jihad against the far enemy and go beyond their national borders. Their overriding goal was to keep the battle lines as close to the home front as possible. In my conversations with jihadis, they said that it was not in their interest to internationalize jihad because not only did they not want to give Western powers, particularly the United States, a pretext to actively join the fight against them but also, in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s jihadis were satisfied with their political prospects and felt that they had made inroads into society. By the 1980s and early 1990s their ranks, they added, had swelled with thousands of highly motivated young recruits. As a senior jihadi leader put it, "we were on a roll, while powerful Arab rulers were fighting for their political survival."

Muslim Rulers Flirt with Jihad

In the early 1990s pro-Western Muslim regimes aimed at internationalizing the confrontation and more deeply committing Western powers to their side. They hoped to obtain Western material and political support, particularly to ensure that their great power patrons remained committed to their survival. As hostilities between jihadis and government security forces intensified in the first half of the 1990s, pro-U.S. Arab rulers became very anxious about being abandoned by their

superpower patron and lashed out angrily against supposed plots by their reluctant, ungrateful partner. For example, Egyptian and Algerian leaders frequently criticized American and European governments for allegedly appeasing mainstream Islamists by initiating secret contacts with their rank and file and granting asylum to the "terrorist" leaders of the jihadis. The Algerian military junta also expressed its displeasure with its French ally for not doing enough to tip the civil war in its favor.

But pro-Western Muslim rulers had a short memory of their own complicity and shortsightedness in letting the jihadist genie out of the bottle. After the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the Gulf shiekdoms, and others collaborated with the United States in facilitating – or at least they turned a blind eye to – the recruitment and flow of young Muslims to wage jihad against the Russian occupiers. Their goals were to please their superpower patron, divert the threat of potential jihadis and militants away from their own thrones, and capitalize on their support for jihad against Communist invaders to gain public legitimacy at home. Although since September 11 the role of the United States in financing and arming the jihad caravan in Afghanistan has received considerable critical scrutiny, analysis of the full weight and input of Muslim rulers remains incomplete and shrouded in mystery.

According to recent memoirs, diaries, and private conversations with the so-called Afghan Arabs, Muslim political and religious authorities played a vital role in creating a fertile environment in support of the Afghan jihad. Young Muslims were bombarded with calls to join in jihad against the atheist occupiers. Mainstream and radical clerics alike urged and incited the youths to migrate to Afghanistan to help their Muslim brethren. Official media coverage also brought the message home regarding the importance of making jihad in support of Muslims worldwide. In his recollections, al-Bahri, who was in his teens at that time, said that the Saudi media "played a big role in stoking the fire of jihad among the people through coverage of the arenas of jihad, particularly the press interviews that were held with some of the leading mujahedeen figures."[47] As mentioned previously, al-Bahri painted a picture of the Saudi scene whereby the royal family and clerics fully supported the Afghan jihad with words and deeds. It is little wonder that of all their Muslim counterparts, the Saudi contingent was the largest

and that the ruling house of Saud contributed more financially to the Afghan war effort than the United States did.

In his memoir, a senior veteran of the Afghan jihad, Abdullah Anas, an Algerian and a son-in-law of sheikh Abdullah Azzam, leader of the Afghan Arabs, writes that Saudis donated millions of dollars to sheikh Azzam's Maktab al-Khadamat or Services Bureau, which housed and trained thousands of Muslim volunteers in Peshawar, Pakistan. Saudi Arabia, according to Anas, also became a ferrying port and station for Arab veterans and jihadis, like Zawahiri, who were journeying to Peshawar on their way to Afghanistan, and the country provided a 75 percent discount on airline tickets for young Muslims wishing to join the jihad there. Other veterans and jihadis confirm Saudi Arabia's centrality in supplying men and materiel to the Afghan war, as did neighboring Gulf states.[48]

Although Saudi Arabia and Pakistan led the way in supporting the Afghan war, other pivotal Muslim states, such as Egypt, Algeria, Indonesia, Turkey, Morocco, and Jordan, contributed their share. For example, Arab rulers profusely praised the Afghan mujahedeen and called on their subjects to join the jihad against the Russian occupiers. According to a first-hand account by an official of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood who spent time in Afghanistan, President Sadat met with the leader of the Brothers and encouraged them to help the Afghanis and send volunteers there. He added that the Brothers did so during Sadat's reign and after his 1981 assassination. Sanctioned officially and blessed by the religious authority, materiel and men, including both militants and seasoned jihadis, flowed freely into Afghanistan.[49]

Muslim rulers were as guilty of miscalculation in Afghanistan as their superpower patron, the United States, was; the United States had no monopoly on foreign policy blunders. In their eyes, the Afghan war briefly enabled Muslim rulers to export their troubles to distant lands, and it gave them a short respite. The patron-client relationship also required collaborating with Washington and performing useful functions for their superpower ally. But like the United States, Muslim autocrats gave little thought to what would happen after the Afghan jihad. What was to be done with the hardened and radicalized Afghan returnees? How would these fighters and militants affect the already widening Islamist-secular divide in Muslim countries? How could

they be fully reintegrated into restive and turbulent political structures? Would they channel their paramilitary experience and religious-ideological indoctrination to tip the internal balance of power in Muslim societies and turn their guns against their original sponsors and financiers?

Indeed, Muslim rulers' active support of the Afghan jihad helped to create a transnational army of jihadis, who felt emboldened by the Russian defeat and who subsequently attacked former local and external backers. Although in the 1980s Arab dictators unknowingly played a vital part in planting the seeds of transnationalized jihad, in the 1990s they desperately sought to internationalize the fight against those very same jihadis whom they helped to create. In both cases, American politicians took fateful decisions based on short-term, not long-term, calculations.

America Flirts with Political Islam

Since September 11, relations between the United States and Islamic activists, not just jihadis, have been portrayed as having always been on a collision course and fated to militarily clash. A dominant paradigm has gained momentum regarding the historical inevitability of confrontation between the two camps given their divergent values and interests. Thus the September 11 attacks are seen as a natural product of the intrinsic hostility and enmity that all Islamists and jihadis have against the West, particularly the United States. Similarly, mainstream Islamists accuse the United States of exploiting September 11 to launch a total war against the entire Islamist movement, not just jihadis, and the ummah. Their publications and pronouncements echo those of their hardliner American counterparts, who posit a hypothesis of hostility and inevitable confrontation. Both camps overlook and neglect history and substitute ideology and propaganda for critical analysis and reflection on a highly complex subject.

Far from being a one-way street leading to the September 11 attacks, the relationship between American foreign policy and political Islam is highly complex and nuanced, fraught with misunderstandings, contradictions, and bad judgments. Although I have written a book on the dynamics of this relationship, it is worth briefly highlighting its

salient features here.[50] Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the Cold War defined world politics. The United States and the Soviet Union fought war-by-proxy to avoid direct confrontation with each other and to reduce the risks of a nuclear holocaust. Both powers were in league with shadowy groups, trying to gain a comparative advantage over each other. As the Cold War rivalry in the 1950s and 1960s intensified, the United States viewed political Islam as a useful and effective defense mechanism against the rising local forces of revolutionary nationalism and socialism. Having failed to coopt these local forces, the United States turned to traditionalist Islamism – being a powerful legitimizing symbol – and hoped to build, as President Dwight Eisenhower said, an alliance of Islamic states with sufficient prestige to counterbalance "godless communism" and its secular nationalist allies as represented by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.[51]

This marriage of convenience between American foreign policy and political Islam was designed to prevent the further expansion of the radical secular, socialist-nationalist tide. As beneficiaries of the status quo, American officials and traditionalist Islamic forces, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the Muslim Brothers, and other Islamists, found it beneficial to cooperate against the new common menace. American policy was driven by Cold War considerations and strategic calculations, not by culture, values, or religious fervor. Washington did not possess a hidden agenda but took a hard, calculating, pragmatic stance to maximize its own interests.

Similarly, although Salafis-Wahhabis (ultraconservatives) and traditionalists, like the Muslim Brothers, deeply mistrusted American foreign policy, they were much more ideologically hostile toward world communism and secular Arab nationalism. Islamic activists were also engaged in a bloody power struggle against secular-nationalist rulers, who were tactically allied with the Soviet Union and who harshly suppressed and stifled Islamists' political ambitions. Forced to choose between either the pro-Western camp or the pro-Soviet one, Islamic traditionalists and fundamentalists chose the former – the lesser of the two evils. But deep down, mainstream Islamists were disposed toward Western capitalism, which resonated among their rank and file. It is worth mentioning that the Islamist movement was socially and economically very conservative and had more in common with the

capitalist West than with the socialist East. The Islamists' decision, like that of the United States, was based on pragmatic calculations of gains and losses. They cooperated with the Western powers because they considered them to represent no immediate danger to their values and interests, and they considered them as states with whom they could do business. Therefore, from the 1950s until the 1970s Islamic activists and American officials suspended their reservations and doubts about one another in order to confront the common enemy – Soviet communism and its local nationalist and socialist allies.

This mutual perception of the common enemy also partially explains the tactical alliance reached between the United States and revolutionary Islamists in Afghanistan. The 1979 Russian invasion of Afghanistan reminded American decision makers that their strategic struggle against the communist camp dwarfed their recent feud with the radical Iranian mullahs who had just toppled the pro-U.S. Shah of Iran and seized power. As President Carter said, the Russian invasion "could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War."[52] It is no wonder that United States actively supported the Afghan mujahedeen and turned a blind eye to, if it did not actually encourage, the recruitment and flow of foreign fighters and jihadis into that war-torn country. In American eyes, the rivalry with the Soviet Union took precedence over everything else, including the possibility that revolutionary Islamism and jihadism could spill over the Afghan borders and destabilize neighboring Muslim states, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey. Equally important, the trauma of the Islamic revolution in Iran did not leave deep scars on the official psyche of the United States, even though initially Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's assault on America's moral authority had a "profound effect" on American policy toward the broader Middle East.[53] Never before had a Muslim leader used the pulpit to denounce America as the epicenter of evil. In the American mind, populist, revolutionary Islam came to be associated with terrorism and the promotion of subversive activities. But in the hierarchy of strategic threats, communism was still seen as more potent and real than revolutionary Islamism.

Thus when Russian troops marched into the Afghan minefield, U.S. officials, who were caught off guard, swiftly seized this opportunity to mobilize Islamic resistance and to tap into the anticommunist feelings of the now-dominant "fundamentalist clergy" in Iran and elsewhere

in Muslim countries. Containing Soviet communism, said Zbigniew Brzezinski, Assistant for National Security Affairs for President Carter, dictated an avoidance of anything that could split Islamic opposition to the Russians, especially an American-Iranian military confrontation: "It now seemed to me more important to forge an anti-Soviet Islamic coalition," Brzezinski stressed.[54]

As in the 1950s and 1960s, the United States hoped to use religion and political Islam as a counterweight to radical, secular local forces and their atheist ally – the Soviet Union. The Carter and Reagan administrations recognized the new possibilities for cooperation with Islamist activists and hoped to harness their religious and ideological fervor against communist expansionism. Because they were obsessed with the struggle against godless communism, American leaders were naturally inclined to flirt with and align their country with the soldiers of God in the Muslim world. They paid little attention to the potential militarization of Muslim politics and the rise of a new generation of young warriors who could wreck the existing order. Nothing could distract the Americans from this engrossing game that great powers play.[55]

For more than three decades, the American foreign policy establishment got socialized into an anticommunist mind-set. Originality and nonconventional thinking were not nourished or encouraged. In official U.S. eyes, Islamic resurgence was a temporary distraction from the Cold War and was simply viewed through the lenses of the Cold War. Khomeini and his revolutionary ideologues were seen more as a nuisance than as a viable threat to U.S. security interests. American policy still revolved around the containment and rollback of "the evil empire" and remained wedded to supporting conservative religious elements against Third World nationalist-socialist forces. In a way, Afghanistan represented a continuity, not a rupture, in American foreign policy in the Muslim world during the second half of the twentieth century.

American officials viewed the fielding of a mujahadeen army in Afghanistan, including foreign veterans and jihadis, as an extension of their war-in-proxy against the Soviet Union.[56] They gave little thought to the aftermath of the Afghan struggle: what to do with tens of thousands of hardened fighters baptized into a culture of martyrdom and emboldened by victory over a rival superpower. How could these warriors be demobilized and reintegrated into their societies as law-abiding citizens? Could the jihad genie be put back into the bottle? With

hindsight, one would have expected American policy makers to reflect on these questions before throwing caution to the wind and plunging into the shifting sands of Afghanistan and Islamic politics. But no systematic assessment of the potential repercussions of the Afghan jihad seems to have been undertaken. Obviously, American officials reckoned that the mujahedeen and foreign guests and veterans could be contained and kept under control by their local clients once the Afghan conflict was over.[57]

Jihadis' Revisionist History

The Afghan war was full of ironies and contradictions. It brought out an unlikely convergence of interests between the United States and Muslim authoritarian regimes, on the one hand, and mainstream Islamists and jihadis, on the other. For expedient reasons, the latter set aside their deep suspicions of the United States and its local allies and collaborated against an immediate common enemy, the Russian occupiers. In particular, Afghanistan provided jihadis with a safe haven to regroup and gain field experience, recruit new foot soldiers, and build networks among other jihadis from various Muslim countries (see Chapter Two for further analysis). Both camps temporarily needed one another and cynically used each other. But they did join ranks and they found themselves fighting in the same trenches.

Although a marriage built on such a shaky foundation was bound to come to a bitter end, it lasted for a decade. Regardless of what occurred subsequently, history cannot be erased or suppressed. More than their former local and external sponsors, transnationalist jihadis, who underwent a metamorphosis in the second half of the 1990s, have tried to rewrite history and deny having had relations or getting financial and logistical support from the United States and its pro-Muslim partners. The jihadis want to portray themselves as having always been implacable enemies of the "head of the snake" (America) and its Muslim apostates. Retracing their journey, with its many dramatic turns and shifts, will show the many faces and colors of the jihadis and the pronounced contradictions in their words and deeds. Taking stock of their entire record will bring these "warriors of God" down to earth, which they deeply dread.

In his post–September 11 memoir, Zawahiri, official historian and theoretician of transnationalist jihadis, labors hard to convince his Muslim audience that Arab veterans and jihadis in Afghanistan neither dealt with America and its local cronies nor received any financial assistance from them. According to Zawahiri, Arab jihadis relied on their own resources and societal, as opposed to official, support by Muslim publics. It is worth quoting Zawahiri at length to bring his point home:

> While the United States backed Pakistan and the [Afghan] mujahedeen factions with money and equipment, the young Arab mujahedeen relationship with the United States was totally different.
>
> Indeed, the presence of those Afghan Arabs and their increasing numbers represented a failure of American policy and new proof of the famous U.S. political stupidity. The financing of the activities of the Arab mujahedeen came from aid sent to Afghanistan by popular organizations. It was substantial aid. The Arab mujahedeen did not just finance their own jihad but also carried Muslim donations to the Afghan mujahedeen themselves. Osama bin Laden informed me of the size of the popular Arab support for the Afghan mujahedeen that amounted, according to his sources, to $200 million in the form of military aid alone in ten years. Imagine how much aid was sent by popular Arab organizations in the nonmilitary fields such as medicine and health, education and vocational training, food, and social assistance (including sponsorship of orphans, widows, and the war-handicapped). Add to all this the donations that were sent on special occasions such as Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha feasts and during the month of Ramadan.
>
> Through this unofficial popular support, the Arab mujahedeen established training centers and centers for the call to the faith. They formed fronts that trained and equipped thousands of Arab mujahedeen and provided them with living expenses, housing, travel, and organization.[58]

Zawahiri's revisionist account flies in the face of empirical evidence, which shows that Saudi Arabia and other Gulf governments, not just Muslim masses, provided much of the money that financed the Afghan jihad. Between 1979 and 1988, like their American allies, the Saudis supplied billions of dollars worth of secret assistance to rebel groups in Afghanistan fighting the Russian occupation.[59] The Saudis partially

financed sheikh Abdullah Azzam's Services Bureau, or guest house, which housed and trained thousands of the so-called Afghan Arabs. Azzam and other Arab jihadis heaped praise on the ruling Saud family for its generous financial and moral contributions to the Afghan jihad. So did bin Laden before his estrangement from the Saudi regime after the 1990 deployment of American forces in the kingdom following Saddam Hussein's invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

Ironically, bin Laden was the middleman between the Saudis and Azzam's guest house, and he became the financier of the latter's activities, thanks mainly to official Saudi funds and donations flowing through charities or other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Although bin Laden used a small fraction of his own family's huge fortune, he also relied on a complex network of charities, personal contacts, and official Saudi contributions.[60] Bin Laden was a frequent visitor to the Saudi embassy in Pakistan, which funneled financial assistance through the Pakistan military intelligence service (Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, which played a pivotal role in supplying weapons and ammunition and in training Afghanis and other volunteers during the Afghan war years; it also served as a bridge between American intelligence services and Afghanis but its input went beyond that which fostered and nourished the jihadist internationale); and he also became very familiar with the Saudi intelligence chief, Prince Turki bin Faisal, who was in charge of the Afghan portfolio. By virtue of being one of the first prominent Saudis to go to Afghanistan and due to his family's standing as one of the wealthiest in the kingdom, Osama bin Laden became Saudi Arabia's point man during the Afghan jihad. There was no conspiracy involved. The United States and Saudi Arabia financed the Afghan resistance against the Russian occupation. But it is very important to register that arms and aid were flowing to the Afghan mujahadeen long before the Russian intervention in December 1979 and, in some measure, helped to bring it about. Since September 11, and after initial hesitation, Saudi officials came clean and publicly acknowledged that they, along with their American partner, financed the Afghan jihad but stopped doing so when the war ended. However, evidence shows that although between October 1989 and October 1990 the United States reduced its aid to Afghanistan by almost 60 percent, Saudi Arabia increased funding during the same period. The

point to stress is that both the United States and Saudi Arabia invested heavily in Afghanistan. President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, a pro-American ally who supported the U.S. project in Afghanistan, was less charitable, holding the United States accountable for creating the terrorist phenomenon in that war-torn country.[61]

The belated effort by Zawahiri and bin Laden to deny the official Saudi, Pakistani, and Arab connection can only be explained by their subsequent change of heart and their decision to internationalize jihad and target the United States and its local allies, including Saudi Arabia. Zawahiri is correct to reject the claim that the Afghan Arabs were funded (even "one penny") or trained by the United States. Azzam and bin Laden had access to a broad network of official and semiofficial Gulf funds as well as to donations from Arab and Muslim NGOs. They did not need American money to wage jihad, even though their network raised funds in the United States. But their mission and journey were facilitated by official Arab and Muslim support and American knowledge and agreement. They were part of the same diverse desperate team haphazardly assembled to roll back the Russian advance. For a decade, they willingly concurred in this arrangement and actively played by the rules of the game.

As a theoretician of transnationalist jihadis, Zawahiri sells a particular version of events and developments that serves his own network's interests. His sales pitch is that jihadis have always possessed independent and rebellious spirits and have been above politicking and making deals with the enemies of the ummah. Zawahiri devotes a whole section of his memoir to rebutting charges that jihadis had been America's "mercenaries" who subsequently turned against their master. If this is true, he sarcastically asks, "why cannot America bribe them once more? Are not they considered, particularly Osama bin Laden, danger number one that threatens American interests? Would not their purchase be less costly than the astronomical security and preventive budgets which America spends to defend itself against jihadis?"[62] Ironically, in the early 1990s the very same Zawahiri, who now denies having had any dealings or contacts with America, visited California's Silicon Valley and met with Muslims to raise funds for his local, not global, jihad. Although the FBI closely monitored his visit and movements, at this stage neither the FBI nor the CIA considered Zawahiri a menace to

American security; he had not theorized or called for targeting the far enemy yet.

Zawahiri goes for the overkill to disprove the existence of any prior link between jihadis and the United States in Afghanistan. He wants his jihadist base, and Muslims in general, to know that he and his associates never cooperated with America and have been intrinsically hostile to its designs in the region. As usual, Americans, Zawahiri writes, exaggerate and distort the historical record by claiming that bin Laden was on their payroll:

> How could bin Laden, who in his 1987 lectures called [on Muslims] to boycott American goods in support of the Palestinian Intifada, be an agent for Americans in Afghanistan? America was shocked to discover that its cooking in Afghanistan was spoiled by the "Afghan Arabs" and those good ones of the Afghan mujahedeen. America wanted a war-by-proxy against Russia in Afghanistan, but Arab mujahedeen turned it into a call to revive the neglected duty, jihad, for the sake of God.[63]

Zawahiri revisits and revises the history of the jihadist movement to avoid explaining the dramatic shifts that occurred within one of its constituencies – the Al Qaeda network. His is a selective, post–September 11 reading that does not take into consideration the tensions and differences that have shaken the movement to its foundation. It imposes the present on the past and fails to account for the dramatic turns and shifts in the journey of jihadis. Zawahiri also wants to project an image of jihadis as having all along had a master plan to join the Afghan jihad caravan, defeat the Russians, and then launch a two-pronged assault against the far enemy and the near enemy simultaneously. Zawahiri's memoir implies that the jihadis' entire plot was hatched in advance and that they had a strategic vision and strategy to cleanse Muslim lands of the local apostates and of corrupting Western influences.

No one doubts jihadis' enmity toward westernization, globalization, and secularism. But their selective ahistorical narrative overlooks critical questions and vital junctures in their journey. Why, for example, did jihadis take jihad global at this late stage in their march (the second half of the 1990s)? Why did they spend the first two decades of their existence (from the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s) targeting the near

enemy, as opposed to the far enemy? What brought about this dramatic shift in tactics and strategy? How do jihadis explain the fact that religious nationalists (the majority of jihadis) stayed on the sidelines and did not join the new crusade against the far enemy? Do they have anything to say about the internal mutation within the jihadist movement? And is it useful to deny their participation in the tactical alliances and coalitions built by Muslim states and the United States to resist the Russian occupation of Afghanistan?