Anatomy of the Salafi Movement

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The Salafi movement (often referred to as the Wahhabis) includes such diverse figures as Osama bin Laden and the Mufti of Saudi Arabia and reflects a broad array of positions regarding issues related to politics and violence. This article explains the sources of unity that connect violent extremists with nonviolent puritans. Although Salafis share a common religious creed, they differ over their assessment of contemporary problems and thus how this creed should be applied. Differences over contextual interpretation have produced three major Salafi factions: purists, politicos, and jihadis.

Introduction

The Salafi movement (often referred to as the Wahhabis)[1] represents a diverse community. All Salafis share a puritanical approach to the religion intended to eschew religious innovation by strictly replicating the model of the Prophet Muhammad. Yet the community is broad enough to include such diverse figures as Osama bin Laden and the Mufti of Saudi Arabia. Individuals and groups within the community reflect varied positions on such important topics as jihad, apostasy, and the priorities of activism. In many cases, scholars claiming the Salafi mantel formulate antipodal juristic positions, leading one to question whether they can even be considered part of the same religious tradition.

This article explains what unites such seemingly irreconcilable tendencies as well as the causes of diversity, factionalization, and intra-community conflict. In doing so, it provides an anatomy of the Salafi movement to help readers better understand how groups like Al Qaeda are connected to similarly minded nonviolent fundamentalists and what sets them apart.

Salafis are united by a common religious creed, which provides principles and a method for applying religious beliefs to contemporary issues and problems. This creed revolves around strict adherence to the concept of tawhid (the oneness of God) and ardent rejection of a role for human reason, logic, and desire. Salafis believe that by strictly following the rules and guidance in the Qur'an and Sunna (path or example of the Prophet Muhammad) they eliminate the biases of human subjectivity and self-interest, thereby allowing them to identify the singular truth of God's commands. From this perspective, there is only one legitimate religious interpretation; Islamic pluralism does not exist.

Although Salafis share this religious perspective, divisions have emerged as a result of the inherently subjective nature of applying religion to new issues and problems. Scholars must apply the immutable principles of the religious sources to specific contexts, which requires not only a deep knowledge of Islamic law, but an understanding of a particular problem or issue as well. Although Salafis share the same approach to religious jurisprudence, they often hold different interpretations about contemporary politics and conditions. For example, all Salafis hold the jurisprudential view that, if the enemy purposely attacks Muslim civilians, Muslims are allowed to respond in kind. But in applying this view to the United States, they must evaluate whether the United States intentionally kills Muslim civilians. This is a contextual question, not a point of religious belief. As one jihadi put it, "The split is not in thought; it is in strategy."[2]

The different contextual readings have produced three major factions in the community: the purists,[3] the politicos, and the jihadis. The purists emphasize a focus on nonviolent methods of propagation, purification, and education. They view politics as a diversion that encourages deviancy. Politicos, in contrast, emphasize application of the Salafi creed to the political arena, which they view as particularly important because it dramatically impacts social justice and the right of God alone to legislate. Jihadis take a more militant position and argue that the current context calls for violence and revolution. All three factions share a common creed but offer different explanations of the contemporary world and its concomitant problems and thus propose different solutions. The splits are about contextual analysis, not belief.

This indicates that if the United States wants to influence the Salafi community and prevent its radicalization, it should focus on the competing political analyses and interpretations and not necessarily the specific content of jihadi beliefs. Because all Salafis accept the same religious precepts, whether someone in the community becomes a jihadi depends on the resonance of the contextual analysis made by jihadi scholars and entrepreneurs. At least in terms of impacting the balance of power between pacifists and violent extremists in the Salafi movement, the primary concern should thus be countering political views rather than undermining radical religious beliefs.

A Common Creed and Method

The various factions of the Salafi community are united by a common religious creed or *aqida*. This creed outlines the basic dogma or articles of faith that constitute the core precepts of religious understanding and interpretation. It addresses such fundamental religious questions as the role of human reason, the balance between human agency and predestination, the nature of God, the nature of the Qur'an, and the basis of belief. The creed provides organizing principles, guiding precepts, and procedures for constructing religious legal positions on contemporary issues.[4]

The concept of *tawhid* (the unity of God) is the crux of the Salafi creed. It includes three components, all of which Salafis consider necessary to be accepted as a "real Muslim." They are, essentially, equated with belief. First, the one God is the sole creator and sovereign of the universe. This is the basis of all monotheistic religions and is reflected in the *shahada* or testimony of faith: "I testify that there is no God except Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger."

Second, God is supreme and entirely unique. He does not share characteristics or powers with humans or any of His other creations. Because the Qur'an mentions God as the supreme legislator, humans are obligated to follow the shari'a in its entirety. To do

otherwise is to imply that humans can legislate, a power clearly reserved for God alone. This view of tawhid leads Salafis to reject secularism and the separation of church (or mosque) and state, because these suggest the supremacy of human-made laws and institutions over divine governance.

Third, God alone has the right to be worshipped. At the most obvious level, this means Muslims cannot associate others in worshipping God (*shirk*). For example, Salafis ban the practice of praying to important religious figures as intercessors with God (a practice known as *tawassuf*) because it is seen as worshipping something other than God. For Salafis, however, this component of tawhid is deeper. The Qur'an and Sunna outline rules that are supposed to govern every aspect of human belief and behavior (Islam as a comprehensive way of life). As a result, every act is an act of worship if it is in accordance with Islamic law. Deviant behaviors, on the other hand, indicate submission to something other than God. This element of tawhid tends to elide with the conceptualization of God as the unique sovereign.

To protect tawhid, Salafis argue that Muslims must strictly follow the Qur'an and hold fast to the purity of the Prophet Muhammad's model. The latter source of religious guidance plays a particularly central role in the Salafi creed. As the Muslim exemplar, he embodied the perfection of tawhid in action and must be emulated in every detail.[5] Salafis also follow the guidance of the Prophet's companions (the *salaf*), because they learned about Islam directly from the messenger of God and are thus best able to provide an accurate portrayal of the prophetic model (the term "Salafi" signifies followers of the prophetic model as understood by the companions).

Any other sources of guidance beyond the Qur'an, Sunna, and consensus of the companions will lead Muslims away from the straight path because they do not represent the original revelation or the prophetic model. The Prophet predicted that Muslims would draw from other sources, resulting in sectarianism and deviancy. To avoid this, he advised his followers to remain focused on his Sunna and the Qur'an to ensure the purity of Islam: "I am leaving you two things and you will never go astray as long as you cling to them. They are the Book of Allah and my Sunna."[6] In a widely cited hadith (recorded saying or tradition), the Prophet told Muslims that, "[T]his Ummah [Muslim community] will divide into seventy-three sects all of which except one will go to Hell and they are those who are upon what I and my Companions are upon."[7] The Salafis believe they are this saved sect (*firqa al-najiyya*) and that they will receive salvation on the day of judgment.[8]

In an attempt to hold fast to the original message of Islam, Salafis argue that any belief or action not enjoined by the Qur'an or the Prophet is an innovation (*bid'a*) that threatens tawhid. The Prophet told his followers that, "Those of you who live long after me will see a lot of differences, so hold fast to my Sunnah and to the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Khallefahs [successors] after me. Cling to it tightly and beware newly-invented matters, for every newly-invented matter is an innovation, and every innovation, and all misguidance, is in the Fire."[9] In practice, this means that contemporary Salafi jurisprudence narrowly relies on the Qur'an and authentic (sound or verifiable) hadiths. Sufis reject the imitation of earlier scholars (*taqlid*), following schools of jurisprudence, and other widely accepted instruments for rendering religious legal opinions.

According to Salafis, human desire threatens the clarity of tawhid. In Islamic historiography, the divine revelations (the Qur'an) were sent to rescue humankind from its own capriciousness. Left to their own devices, humans will oppress one another in a Darwinian struggle of the strong against the weak. The pre-Islamic period is characterized

as the period of ignorance (*jahiliyya*), a time when unbridled human desire ruled with unfettered brutality, resulting in abhorrent practices such as female infanticide. Amidst this viciousness, the Prophet Muhammad offered the path for eternal divine justice through the Qur'an and his example. In this sense, Islam is seen as a civilizing mission, intended to bring enlightenment and social justice to protect humankind. All Muslims are part of this project, as reflected in the Muslim duty to engage in constant propagation (*da'wa*). During the first part of the Prophet's mission in Mecca, Islam was promoted through peaceful calls to Islam. After the establishment of the first Islamic state in Medina, war became an instrument for the expansion of Dar al-Islam (Abode of Islam) into the territories of disbelief. Both methods were viewed as means for combating the fickleness and injustice of human desire, which could only be tempered by the spread of Islam.

Despite the success of the Prophet's mission and the growth of Islam, Salafis believe human desires continue to grip Muslims and challenge the purity of the message. In this view, there is an eternal temptation to manipulate and distort the religion through innovation. Although nefarious interests often drive deviancy, it can also result from good intentions. Muslims who pray more than the explicitly proscribed five times a day, for example, are likely motivated by love for God. They are, however, still engaged in innovation because they are inventing new practices to fulfill a human desire.

Many innovations, according to Salafis, resulted from the expansion of Islam to new locales, where practitioners blended local culture and Islamic tradition. This helped conversion by rendering Islam accessible through local vernacular customs, but Salafis cite this syncretism as a major source of innovation. Culture is thus seen as the enemy of pure Islam. As Olivier Roy argues, one of the primary objectives of neo-fundamentalist groups like the Salafis is "deculturation"—they seek to strip Islam as practiced into its pristine elements by jettisoning folk customs and delinking Islam from any cultural context.[10] This makes Salafis agents of a new globalized Islam—their creed is explicitly intended to transcend local space, traditions, and religious authority by connecting Muslims to an imagined community of true believers. A large part of the Salafi mission is to expand this community by eliminating culturally produced innovations.

Perhaps the most dangerous challenge to pure Islam, from the Salafi perspective, is the application of human intellect and logic to the original sources ("rationalism" in the Salafi lexicon). Salafis operate as though the Qur'an and hadith are self-explanatory: if the scholar has enough training and knowledge, then the vast majority of derived rulings are clear and indisputable. As a result, there is no need to apply human systems of logic. The scholars are, in a sense, reduced to the archeology of divine texts: their function is to simply unearth the truth that lies somewhere in the Qur'an and Sunna. In this understanding, there is really no such thing as interpretation—the sources either sanction or prohibit particular beliefs, choices, and behavior; there is a single truth, as revealed by the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad; and there is no room for interpretive differences or religious pluralism. Any time humans attempt to apply their own logic or methods of reasoning (the scientific method of Sir Francis Bacon or Ibn Khaldun, for example), they open the way to human desire, distortion, and deviancy. Approaches that are guided by human logic will necessarily fall foul of human desire, which will lead to the selective and biased extrapolation of religious evidence to support human interests rather than religious truth.

The division between rationalists and those who follow the Salafi creed is exemplified by the historical dispute over the nature of God's attributes. Throughout the Qur'an, there are references to the names and attributes of God:

Allah is He, other than Whom there is no other god. Who knows all things, both secret and open. He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Allah is He, other than Whom there is no other god. The Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the justly Proud. Glory to Allah! High is He above the partners they attribute to Him.

He is Allah, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth declare His Praises and Glory. And He is Exalted in Might, the Wise. (Qur'an 59:22–24)

Although the Qur'an describes God through adjectives and names normally used to describe humans, it at the same time prohibits anthropomorphism: God is unique and cannot be likened to His creations (see, for example Qur'an 42:11; 112:1–4). This produces an inherent tension between the descriptors and God's uniqueness, an important component of tawhid and thus belief.

This tension eventually sparked a debate in the eighth century about how Muslims should understand references to God's attributes. At one end of the debate, rationalists like the Mutazilah sought to defend Islamic orthodoxy against anthropomorphism through discursive arguments (*ilm al-kalam*) and reason. Influenced, at least in part, by Greek and Christian philosophy, they used logic to construct arguments supporting the existence of God and the concept of tawhid.[11] Their central theological principle was that reason and revelation cannot contradict one another. In terms of God's attributes, the Mutazilah drew on this principle to argue that descriptors represent metaphors rather than literal traits. Thus God's eyes, for example, signify His divine knowledge. This approach was later adopted by groups like the Asharites and the Maturidis (both associated with the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, the most liberal of the Islamic schools of law).

The opposing argument was represented by groups that rejected the use of human logic and metaphorical principles, such as the Hanbalis (and later the Salafis). They argued that the Qur'an, as the literal word of God, is not open to interpretation, and that the Mutazilah and other rationalists were guilty of stripping God of His attributes (*ta'til*). Instead, they ascribed to a school of thought that placed these characteristics in domains beyond human senses and perceptions (*ghayb*). Muslims cannot understand the words literally, because this implies anthropomorphism; but nor should they interpret them as metaphors, because this questions the Qur'an's description of God. Instead, the names and attributes are to be understood without turning to limited human faculties for specification or comprehension (*bi la kayf*, literally "without how").[12]

For contemporary Salafis, the Mutazilah (and later the Asharites) epitomize rationalist deviancy. By using human reason, the rationalists negate or suspend God's attributes, thereby rejecting a cornerstone of tawhid (*tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat*, the unity of the names and attributes).[13] From a Salafi perspective, the influence of Greek and Christian systems of logic and reasoning is particularly onerous, because all knowledge and manner of locating religious guidance must come from the sources of Islam.

The Salafi antipathy toward the rationalist schools helps explain their near obsession with Ibn Taymiyya. Not only did Ibn Taymiyya share the Salafi creed (even though he was a Sufi), but he also ardently rejected rationalism at a time when rationalism represented Islamic officialdom. At one point, his enemies accused him of anthropomorphism

for refusing to view God's attributes in metaphorical terms and imprisoned him for heresy.[14] The fact that he continued to promote a Salafi perspective despite the opposition of the state and its rationalist clerics serves as an inspiration for contemporary Salafis, who see him as a man of righteous conviction willing to sacrifice himself for his beliefs. Ibn Hanbal, another Salafi favorite and one of Ibn Taymiyya's most important sources of inspiration, also opposed the rationalist officialdom of his time and was beaten and imprisoned for his beliefs.[15]

Opposition to rationalism and its various schools of theology also helps explain the Salafis' antipathy toward the earlier salafiyya (Islamic modernists) influenced by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), and Rashid Rida (1865–1935).[16] There has been some confusion in recent years because both the Islamic modernists and the contemporary Salafis refer (referred) to themselves as al-salafiyya, leading some observers to erroneously conclude a common ideological lineage. The earlier salafiyya, however, were predominantly rationalist Asharis. During an interview in Jordan, one Salafi emphasized this distinction by citing Muhammad Abduh's interpretation of the jinn, a creature referenced in the Qur'an. According to this respondent, Abduh's understanding of the jinn as microbes or germs demonstrates his rationalist credentials: not only does it indicate a metaphorical approach to the Qur'an, but it also implies the influence of the West on his thinking.[17] Muhammad Abduh and other similar thinkers are frequently excoriated as deviant rationalists. Some go as far as to claim they were British agents, planted to specifically undermine the purity of Islam.[18]

Today, the Salafis frame themselves as embroiled in a battle against the rationalists and human desire. Polemics are riddled with references to the conspiracies and deviancy of contemporary Asharites, Maturidis, Mutazilah, and other rationalist sects. In this battle, Salafi publications eschew human systems of argumentation, preferring instead to make a point and follow it with a series of direct quotes from the Qur'an and sound hadith collections. In some cases, a religious position is stated in a sentence or two and is followed by page after page of quotations. For a Western audience, the presentation seems almost mind numbing and lacks convincing argumentation. But it reflects the Salafi rejection of human logic and their objective of undermining the rationalists.

That all Salafis share this creed and approach to Islam is not surprising if one conceptualizes the movement as a vast educational network. Salafis spend most of their time learning about Islam and refer to themselves as "students of religious knowledge." They are centrally concerned with religious education, because only by understanding the complexities of Islam can a Muslim fulfill his or her duty to God. From this perspective, Muslims must master the commands of God, as outlined in the sources, to ensure that they are following the straight path and have not deviated from the purity of the Prophetic model, necessary to protect tawhid. Even jihadis devote most of their time to education and the acquisition of religious knowledge: they spend more time with the Qur'an than a Kalashnikov. The various Salafi factions are all tied to the same educational network, which explains their commonly understood religious creed.

The key to understanding this network is the critical role of student–scholar relationships. Scholars are seen as the repositories and protectors of religious knowledge, the inheritors of the Prophet's mission. They are intellectually equipped to interpret the immutable sources of Islam and the paradigm of the *salaf* in light of the changing conditions of the temporal world and are responsible for passing along knowledge and training to the next generation of scholars. Without scholars, religious knowledge and education wither, as does the Salafi mission to promote tawhid.[19]

All of the factions clearly acknowledge the centrality of the scholars. In his "Address

to the Ummah on the Anniversary of the Crusader War," for example, Bin Laden notes that,

> While the Ummah has its collectivist duties, and a common role which it has to carry out collectively, there are groups who have a specific role which they have to take care of in a special manner. In the lead of these groups is the group of the Islamic scholars and callers to Allah, who are the heirs of the prophets, who are the holders of the knowledge trust, and the obligation to the duty of calling to Allah and the duty of announcing him. And that's why Allah had raised their status and heightened their significance and importance, when He said, "Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge." (Qur'an, Al-Mujadala, verse 11)[20]

Nonviolent Salafis repeat these sentiments and argue that, "The source for mankind's rectification is through knowledge."[21]

The student–scholar relationships in this educational network frequently connect individuals from the various factions together in a common educational experience. They typically learn from the same teachers, sit in the same study circles, and attend the same schools, such as the Islamic University of Medina and Umm al-Qura University in Mecca. The most influential and well-known Salafi scholars produce students, followings, and groups representing the entire spectrum of Salafi activism, ranging from pacifists to the extremes of Al Qaeda.

A particularly striking example of this common educational lineage is represented by the students and followers of Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), a well-known Salafi hadith scholar and ardent opponent of political activism (particularly violence). Albani taught in Saudi Arabia for a time; and although he moved to Syria during the 1960s, he inspired a movement in Saudi Arabia called al-Jamaa al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba (JSM), which was founded sometime in the mid-1970s. Although part of the JSM emphasized an apolitical focus, a radicalized faction led the takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979. Members of JSM fled to other countries, including Yemen and Kuwait, where they set up religious study circles and influenced figures such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who went on to become one of the most influential scholars in the jihadi Salafi network.[22]

A similar pattern occurred among Albani's Jordanian followers during the 1980s. In 1979, after Hafez al-Assad began cracking down on Islamic groups in Syria, Albani decided to move to Jordan. When he arrived, he held a number of study circles, including one for an elite group of young students. Among the elite students were Ali Hasan al-Halabi, Salim al-Hilali, Hasan Abu Haniya, and Umar Abu Qatadah. The first two went on to become prominent nonviolent scholars in their own right with substantial international influence. Hasan Abu Haniya emerged as a local jihadi sheikh. And Abu Qatadah became the mufti for the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria, a member of Al Qaeda's fatwa committee, and one of the most influential scholars in the Salafi jihadi network. All four learned about Islam directly from Albani, yet they eventually moved in radically different directions.[23] This example is not unique and indicates a densely connected educational network that links the various factions through student–scholar ties and a shared religious education.[24]

Given these connections, the shared creed of the factions is quite predictable. They receive the same basic educational training and are therefore exposed to the same precepts

and approach to Islam. The result is that scholars from the various factions share an emphasis on tawhid, rejection of human desire and intellect, and other elements of the creed.[25]

The Ambiguity of Religious Interpretation

If the various factions of the Salafi movement are unified in their basic creed, then what leads to the divergences? The answer to this question lies in the inherently subjective nature of applying a creed to new issues and problems. This is a human enterprise and therefore subject to differing interpretations of context.

Salafis like to approach the process of applying religious principles to contemporary issues and problems as though it is a scientific enterprise governed by the hard laws of nature (in this case divinity). The Salafi creed outlines the rules for generating religious opinions to ensure that conclusions are methodologically sound and based on solid evidence from the Qur'an, Sunna, and consensus of the companions. This creed, Salafis assume, eliminates (or at least limits) the potential of human bias and error by structuring the process of deduction and the criteria for acceptable findings according to the Prophetic model. In a way, it is a positivistic approach that eschews normative ambiguity, relativism, and the possibility of multiple truths. If one follows the method and procedures of the Salafi creed, the expectation is that religious rulings represent the unadulterated and singular truth of God's will because they rely on the original and pure sources of Islam.

In this endeavor, Salafis frequently exhibit the arrogance of scientific certitude. Because there is only one straight path and saved sect, the Salafi creed and method are seen as inexorably producing the "correct" Islamic understanding. Conclusions are represented as the teleology of a process rooted solely in the sources of Islam. It is as though Muslims posit questions to a computer run by divine software. Ipso facto, all alternative conclusions are misguidance and reflect the interjection of human reasoning or a lack of religious training and knowledge, the glitches of inferior programming. In these circumstances, well-trained scholars are truly doing God's work: they merely take contemporary questions and follow methodological rules set out by God.

The Qur'an is considered the first source of guidance, and Salafis often refer to "clear cut" verses to support their religious rulings. But is there really any such thing as a verse that clearly and objectively supports one ruling over another? Take the Qur'anic prohibition against usurious economic activity, for example, which appears in a number of verses and is extremely explicit (see Qur'an 2:275–280, 282; 3:130; 4:161). The ban itself is clear enough and there is consensus in the Muslim community, but what does usury look like in the modern context, given the complexities of a globalized, capitalist economy? Does it include a home mortgage, car loans, or credit cards? Is it determined by the amount of interest? Because the Qur'anic verses about usury do not directly refer to contemporary economic practices, scholars must infer mobile principles from the prohibition that can traverse particular economic practices not necessarily envisioned in the text.

In gauging the intention of Qur'anic principles, scholars turn to the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who demonstrated how abstract values and rules should be applied to concrete, real world problems. Because of the ambiguity involved in translating Qur'anic verses into practice, particularly in new contexts in the modern world, the hadith have become critical for generating guidance, perhaps even more important to Salafis than the Qur'an itself. It is for this reason that some Salafis refer to themselves as Ahl al-Hadith (the People of Hadith).

In the collection of hadiths, however, there were inevitably forgeries, which threaten to distort the prophetic model and lead people astray. There were thousands of such forgeries written by heretics, sectarian preachers, caliphal sycophants, storytellers, and traditionalists. Some were motivated by a desire to make Islam more attractive to potential adherents by sprucing up the corpus of hadith. Others were prompted by less benign purposes. The end result was the same: the injection of false hadiths that threatened to pull Muslims away from the straight path of Islam and into the hellfires. Muhammad Ibn 'Ukkasha and Muhammad Ibn Tamin are said to have forged over ten thousands hadiths. Ahmad al-Marwazi reportedly fabricated ten thousand himself. A large number of forgeries by men such as Ziyad Ibn Mayun, Shurak Ibn 'Abd Allah, and Talha Ibn 'Am are still used in sermons today.[26] Though Muslims have preserved the core hadiths as recorded by reliable transmitters like al-Muslim and al-Bukhari, the existence of inaccurate hadiths threatens the Salafi creed.

It is for this reason that hadith scholars, who are trained to authenticate the traditions, play such a vital role in the Salafi community. Until the third century of Islam, each tradition recorded in a hadith collection included the chain or narrators who transmitted it, known as an *isnad* (authority). Hadith scholars assemble biographies of the transmitters to ascertain the validity of the chain of transmission. They examine such factors as whether there is a complete chain of transmission over time, the reputation and character of those transmitting the stories, and whether connected transmitters could actually have come in contact with one another to pass along the stories (e.g., whether they were alive as adults at the same time or lived in the same place). Many Salafi scholars spend their entire lives checking the authenticity of hadiths.[27]

But even if one is able to validate the reliability of a hadith, this in itself does not ensure an objective process of religious interpretation. Perhaps the Prophet's saying about a particular subject is clear, but its translation to modern issues and problems is not. Salafi scholars must examine the life of the Prophet to extract model actions that transcend time and then apply these examples to the modern context. In essence, they ask what the Prophet would do if he were alive today. Given his life and example, how would he respond to contemporary issues and problems? Applying the prophetic model to the contemporary period is a process that necessitates reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*). Reasoning by analogy, in turn, includes not only knowledge about the hadith, but also an interpretation of the context to which a scholar seeks to apply the immutable sources of Islam.

Which hadith a scholar selects as relevant is entirely dependent on how he or she interprets a contemporary issue and thus the proper analogy. If, for example, a scholar believes that the current context is analogous to the Meccan period, a time when the Muslims comprised a small minority in a society still dominated by disbelievers, he will likely argue that the focus of Islamic activism should be peaceful propagation because this is what the Prophet Muhammad emphasized during the first half of his mission. However, if the scholar reasons that today is better compared to the Medinan period after the *hijra* (migration) when the Prophet established the first Islamic state, implemented the *hudood* (Islamic penal code), and waged jihad of the sword, conclusions about Islamic activism will likely include more militant measures.

The status of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) provides a good example of the relationships among contextual analysis, analogies, and religious rulings. To support the use of WMD, some jihadis have turned to a hadith about the siege of Taif. During a battle, the enemy fighters retreated to Taif, which was surrounded by a high brick wall. The fighters asked Muhammad whether they could use the catapult to lay siege to the

city, even though they were unable to discriminate between civilians and fighters in the attack. The Prophet sanctioned the attack, arguing that the enemy fighters were responsible for non-combatant deaths because they choose to mix among them. In drawing analogies, jihadis argue that the catapult was the WMD of the Prophet's lifetime and that his example legitimates the use of WMD today.[28] This conclusion is not rooted in an objective reading of the religious sources: it is entirely dependent on whether one views the catapult as the historical equivalent of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Human reasoning thus plays a critical role.

Another telling illustration is provided by the debate about whether Western civilian workers in Iraq can be attacked.[29] Based on their creed, all Salafi groups agree that Islam prohibits purposely targeting and killing noncombatants, a perspective they share with mainstream Muslims. There is no theological disagreement over the issue. In deriving a specific judgment about whether it is permissible to attack western civilians in Iraq, the critical contextual question is whether these "civilians" are, in fact, non-combatants. If a scholar views them as explicitly assisting the American military in the occupation, then the most relevant Qur'anic verses and hadiths are related to the status of those who assist in warfare against Muslims (and the vast majority of Islamic scholars concur that such individuals are legitimate targets). If, however, a scholar concludes that they are not directly assisting the enemy in the war (e.g., if he focuses on civilian NGO workers), the clear Qur'anic and Prophetic prohibitions against killing noncombatants become operative.

The same process of analogical thinking is used when Salafis draw on Islamic scholars across time, such as Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyya, and Abd al-Wahhab. These earlier scholars produced large bodies of work and covered a wide range of issues. When contemporary scholars draw from these earlier thinkers, they look for writings that seem most relevant for addressing current issues. They are unlikely to draw on earlier responses to problems that no longer exist. Instead, they ask whether the earlier scholars faced concerns that are similar to contemporary issues and then look for responses that could serve as useful guidance.

This means that all Salafi factions can draw on the same set of scholars to justify very different positions. If a scholar believes that the current context is similar to the Mongol period, he will look for Ibn Taymiyya's writings related to the Mongols, which includes a fatwa denouncing the Mongol leaders as apostates, even though they converted to Islam.[30] On the other hand, if a scholar rejects the analogy to the Mongols, he will likely instead focus on Ibn Taymiyya's writings about tawhid, shirk (worshipping other than God), and the dangers of rationalism. The different uses of Ibn Taymiyya are not a matter of belief; all of the factions accept him as a Salafi scholar par excellence. Divergent conclusions about which of his writings to emphasize are contingent on contextual interpretation, not theology.

Because Salafis share the same creed, they would likely issue similar fatwas if they also shared the same interpretation of context. The selected analogy to apply to a contemporary problem is entirely dependent on how one understands the problem itself. Different interpretations make different jurisprudential principles operative. The converse is also true: similar interpretations make similar jurisprudential principles operative.

Salafi Factions

This section outlines the major Salafi factions in more detail and points to the contextual interpretative differences that drive intra-Salafi splits and conflicts. Central to these

divisions is a debate about which faction is best suited to interpret modern problems. To a large extent, this is a generational struggle between the senior purists, on the one hand, and the younger politico and jihadi scholars, on the other. The younger generation of more politically minded Salafis believes it has a better grasp of the complexities of contemporary politics and international affairs as well as intellectual autonomy. These scholars argue that this allows them to issue better informed, honest rulings. The purists, in contrast, emphasize their religious training and credentials and argue that an emphasis on politics and current affairs threatens to erode the purity of Islam by introducing temporal human emotions and desires.

Each faction believes it alone is practicing and implementing tawhid according to the model of the Prophet Muhammad. Other factions may hold the right beliefs, but they fail to properly manifest these beliefs through behaviors. This means that they are not considered "real" Salafis, since they fail to follow the strategies of the Prophet and his companions. As a purist Salafi put it, "Salafism is a single way which is found in the unified understanding of the *Salaf*. Just as there were no two Prophet Muhammads or two sets of Companions, there are no two Salafisms."[31] This mentality creates an exclusivist understanding of Islam in which each faction claims to represent "the real Salafis."

Purists and the Defense of Tawhid

As the name suggests, "purists" are primarily concerned with maintaining the purity of Islam as outlined in the Qur'an, Sunna, and consensus of the Companions. They believe that the primary emphasis of the movement should be promoting the Salafi creed and combating deviant practices, just as the Prophet fought polytheism, human desire, and human reason. Until the religion is purified, any political action will likely lead to corruption and injustice because society does not yet understand the tenets of faith. The proper method for implementing the creed is therefore propagation (*da'wa*), purification (*tazkiyya*), and religious education or cultivation (*tarbiya*).

This is based on an analogy to the Meccan period, when the Prophet first began his mission. During this period, the Prophet and his followers were a minority and therefore vulnerable to the use of force by the dominant Quraysh elite. They preferred propagation and advice to leaders rather than rebellion and overt opposition, which could have mobilized the ruling elite to crush the movement. Jihad during this period meant peaceful struggle in the effort to promote Islam, not uprisings and dissent. As Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani argues, "History repeats itself. Everybody claims that the Prophet is their role model. Our Prophet spent the first half of his message making da'wa, and he did not start it with jihad."[32]

This analogy has been used to discourage overt activism of any kind, even under conditions of repression. When asked about the proper response to the cancellation of election results in Algeria in 1991 and the ensuing crackdown on Islamist dissent, Abd al-Aziz Bin Baz (d. 1999), then the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, referred back to the Meccan period:

> They did not used to call the people to the sword. They used to call the people with the aayaat [verses] of the Qur'aan, good speech and good manners, because this was more effective in rectification and more effective and causing others to accept the truth. . . . This is obligatory upon our brothers in Algeria and other than Algeria. So the obligation upon them is to traverse the path of the Messenger (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and the Companions when they were in Makkah, with beautiful speech and good manners.[33]

A similar logic has been used to oppose the Palestinian al-Aqsa intifada.[34] The basic line of reasoning is that the Prophet and his companions were repressed, but they remained peaceful in order to facilitate the spread of Islam. Overt opposition to the rulers would have engendered reprisals and threatened to destroy the nascent Muslim community. As Ali al-Halabi put it, Muslims "should not say the state is kufr [run by disbelievers] and change it with force. Otherwise the mosques would be closed and scholars put in prison. Change in Islam must be for the better."[35] This reflects an understanding that actions should not create a greater evil, such as weakening Islamic (Salafi) propagation.

Purists do not view themselves as a political movement; they in fact often reject reference to Salafis as a *harakat* (movement), because this carries political connotations. They instead envision themselves as a vanguard or "group of pioneers" whose purpose is to protect tawhid and the purity of Islam from corruptive influences.

For the purists, Christians, Jews, and the West more generally are seen as eternal enemies determined to destroy Islam by polluting it with their concepts and values. This is derived, in part, from Qur'an 3:118: "The Jews and Christians will never be pleased with you until you change your religion." This creates a conspiratorial view of non-Muslims as arch enemies driven by a desire to pull Muslims away from their beliefs. Although all Salafis believe that the West intends to destroy Islam, purists transform this suspicion into an active ideological program to prevent any usage of Western values, behaviors, or systems of logic to discuss religion. This even applies to the use of concepts and categories of analysis—if they were not used by the Prophet and his companions, they are an innovation, most likely derived from non-Muslims. In a critique of "borrowing" concepts from the West, Jamal bin Farihan al-Harithi argues against the use of the term "Islamic awakening" (*al-sahwah al-Islamiyya*) coined by Saudi politicos:

> This description has not had any judgment passed over it by Allah, since it is a new term and we do not know of it ever having been used upon the tongues of any of the Salaf. Its usage came about in the openings of the 15th century after hijrah, after the Disbelievers, such as the Christians returned to the Church, and then it slowly found its way to the Muslims. Hence, it is not permissible for the Muslims to take on the "foreign clothing" from them in the affairs of the religion, and nor the creation of slogans that Allah and His Messenger have not granted permission for, since the Islamic terms are restricted to a text.[36]

Similarly, Muhammad Abu Shaqra, a prominent Jordanian purist who was at one time former Crown Prince Hassan's religious adviser, argues against use of the terms "extremism" and "fundamentalism":

> I say that the word "extremism" that we now know was not known by our salaf and is not a part of our religion. In our religion, there was another word that should be commonly used. . . . The terms should all come from the shari'a. The word "extremism" is not a religious term; it is a modern term. And there is a similar term that is used—"Islamic fundamentalism." This term is also not a shari'a term. Extremism and fundamentalism are two terms that mean, linguistically speaking, that you rectify the path of a nation that has lost its way. The right term that should be used for people who have lost their way is "gulu." And the Prophet says to the people of the Book, "Do not overdo your worship to God." This term gulu is what should be

used to describe such a condition. And people who use these other terms
[extremism and fundamentalism] are just imitators of the people whose clothes
we wear and behavior we copy [e.g., the West]. So the word gulu should be
used.[37]

Such denunciations may seem rather menial, but they demonstrate the degree to
which purists are concerned with the influence of the West on Muslim understandings
of Islam. Purists see Western terminology as the linguistic representation of an alterna-
tive, rival system of meaning, epistemology, and ontology. From this perspective, the
use of such terms indicates that an individual is thinking like the enemy and thus an
instrument for western corruption and influence. Foreign ideas are the thin edge of the
wedge: once Muslims start talking like the West, they will begin thinking like the en-
emy and become deviant. The concern about the use of terminology is so germane to
the purification effort that Salafis even virulently debated whether they could call them-
selves "Salafis," because the Prophet and the companions never used the term (obvi-
ously the debate was resolved in favor of its usage).

This obsession with maintaining and propagating a pure understanding of Islam has
produced a strong tendency toward isolationism. Any interaction with nonbelievers is
viewed as an opportunity for the nonbelievers to infect Muslims. Although interactions
for propagation are permissible, purists see little benefit to dialogue and exchange be-
yond those needed to spread the faith. After all, if all knowledge and guidance are in the
sources of Islam, nonbelievers offer nothing. To think otherwise is to question the su-
premacy of Islam, something that signifies disbelief.

As a result, purists are highly unlikely to engage in interfaith dialogue and often try
to physically separate themselves from non-Muslims. Purist scholars in Saudi Arabia,
for example, advise Muslims in Europe to leave the domain of disbelief to avoid any
corrupting influence. European Salafis who choose to remain try to limit their interac-
tions with the broader society, often developing enclave communities that function like
Salafi ghettos. They reject association with non-Muslims in their countries of residence
and instead view themselves as part of an international imagined community of true
believers. Their identity is predicated on their creed and not their country.[38]

This policy of isolation to avoid corrupting influences is applied to other Muslims
as well. Followers are asked to avoid interactions with deviant sects, which are defined
as any groups that do not follow the purist interpretation of Islam. There is thus very
little *intra*-faith dialogue as well.

For purists, the dangers of corrosive Western and deviant influence are clearly epitomized
by the strategies of the rival Salafi factions. Although the politicos and jihadis adopt the
Salafi creed, purists believe they do not follow the proper method of implementation
(i.e., strategy). In this respect, purists distinguish between the Salafi creed (*aqida*) and
the Salafi method (*manhaj*). The creed comprises "the knowledge of tawhid" and is the
basis of belief. Method, on the other hand, is action and signifies the prophetic model of
putting beliefs into practice. According to purists, to be a Salafi a Muslim must adhere
to both proper belief as well as method.[39]

Purists ardently reject the oppositional (and often violent) method of the politicos
and jihadis as religious innovations without precedent in the prophetic model and con-
sensus of the companions. They argue that the Prophet never launched demonstrations,
sit-ins, or revolutions to oppose the rulers. He instead propagated and gave leaders ad-
vice in private. The contentious politics of the politicos and jihadis are seen as products
of the West, where mass protest and overt, public opposition to government leaders are

ubiquitous. The revolutionary model is typically traced to the American and French revolutions as well as Marxism.

Even peaceful political engagement through political parties or organizations is seen as an innovation derived from the Western model of party politics and democracy. From a purist perspective, the adoption of Western-style parties highlights the dangers of foreign influences on method: parties follow their own logic of political power and result in partisanship (*hizbiyya*), thereby pushing activists to place the interest of the party and political power over God and the necessity of protecting tawhid. This danger is exacerbated by the inclusive nature of political parties, which often constitute umbrella organizations and could incorporate deviant sects (and even nonbelievers), thereby further corrupting the purity of tawhid. The failure of political organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood to claim political power and the repression of Islamist parties serve as evidence that this is a deviant method because God provides success to those who strictly follow His path (it is too early to tell how the recent electoral success of Hamas will impact this argument).[40] Salafis who form political organizations are frequently labeled Ikhwanis (Muslim Brothers) or Bannawites (followers of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood).

Citing the use of non-Islamic methods to promote the creed, purists level two significant charges against the politicos and jihadis. First, purists claim that the rival factions have committed *irja* (the separation of belief and action) by failing to act on their Salafi beliefs: they may accept the Salafi creed, but they have failed to follow the prophetic model. This is a weighty charge because it paints jihadis and politicos as modern day Murji'a (those who separate belief and action), a classical sect reviled by all factions of the Salafi movement (see "The Debate over Takfir" below for more about the Murji'a).

Second, purists portray jihadis and politicos as rationalists driven by human desire. In their desire to promote religious and political change, according to purists, these oppositional Salafis have demonstrated a proclivity to adopt strategies according to a utility calculation rather than the sources of Islam. They first choose the most effective strategies and then selectively misappropriate religious evidence to support their decision. In this process, strategy drives religious evidence rather than the other way around. This characterization frames jihadis and politicos as largely driven by human evaluations of strategic effectiveness, as opposed to the rules outlined in the Qur'an and Sunna. They are thus equated with the Mutazilah, Maturidis, and Asharites, rationalist schools ardently rejected by the entire Salafi community.[41]

This indicates that the purists' major concern with the other factions is related to strategy, not belief. All of the factions are kindred spirits tied together by a common creed. Purists even sometimes give radical figures like bin Laden the benefit of the doubt and view them as motivated by a sincere desire to adhere to Salafi principles. But despite recognition of a common religious orientation, purists view the jihadis and politicos as two of the most dangerous threats to the purity of Islam. The fact that they share the same creed makes the rival factions a nefarious instrument for deviancy. They are Salafis in belief and thus use the language of the creed, which allows them to lull unsuspecting followers who are eventually corrupted by the un-Islamic methods. Because these followers do not have the depth of religious knowledge and training to identify the deviancy, they easily fall prey to those who claim the Salafi mantel but in reality follow a deviant method.

It is for this reason that purists instituted a policy of boycotting (*hajr*) their rival Salafis. This was seen as a way of limiting the ability of the politicos and jihadis to

infect the purity of Islam. The potential that these deviant scholars could attract well-intentioned Muslims and capture the Salafi movement was simply too great to allow for interactions. In 2000, when asked whether Salafis should listen to tapes by Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awdah, two leading politico scholars, Mohammed al-'Uthaymin (d. 2001) responded that, "The good that is in their cassettes is also found in other than their [Salman and Safar] cassettes, and their cassettes have some observations against them [meaning innovations], some of their cassettes, not all of them. And I am not able to distinguish between them for you—I (am not able)—between this and that."[42] When asked the Salafi stance toward the Turath movement in Kuwait led by the politico Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq, Muhammad Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali answered that, "Our position with them is that we separate ourselves from them until they return to the correct way. There is nothing in between that. Because if we say that we will co-operate with them—they will corrupt [us] but we will not reform [them]."[43]

This has led to a general ban on politico and jihadi publications. Purists tell their followers not to read books by the rival factions, lest they fall prey to the lure of deviancy. In Zaid al-Madkhali's book on terrorism, he "made an open request to all book publishers and bookstores to ban and abolish the books of the Harakiyeen [supporters of political movements], including the books of Qutb, Mawdudi, Suroor, Safar and Salman and others."[44] Other purist scholars have followed suit. The ban holds even if the intention of a teacher is to use the books to deconstruct and refute the politico and jihadi arguments.

The boycott and ban reflect the purist strategy for promoting the Salafi creed, which focuses on purification and the Meccan model. They follow a nonoppositional method because they interpret the contemporary context as analogous to the first part of the Prophet Muhammad's mission, when he emphasized noncontroversial propagation rather than political action. This perspective is derived from their contextual analysis, not the creed alone.

Politicos and the Jurisprudence of Current Affairs

The divisions within the Salafi community, in part, represent a generational struggle over sacred authority—the right to interpret Islam on behalf of the Muslim community.[45] Older scholars dominate the purist faction and attempt to monopolize religious authority by arguing that they alone have the depth of religious training, knowledge, and experience to render judgments about complex issues. Because the purists control the state religious establishment in Saudi Arabia, including the Council of Senior Ulama (Scholars), they enjoy considerable influence over government policy and have used their positions to promote purist interpretations of Islam. Their authority, however, was challenged during the 1980s and 1990s by a group of young, more politically minded Salafi scholars, here referred to as "the politicos." The politicos argued that they have a better understanding of contemporary issues and are therefore better situated to apply the Salafi creed to the modern context. They generally stop short of declaring revolution, unlike the jihadis, but are highly critical of incumbent regimes. Although the politicos control fewer resources and assets, they have clearly shaken the purist grip over Islamic interpretation and put the older generation of scholars on the defensive.

For a long time, the Salafi movement was relatively homogeneous. It was primarily located in Saudi Arabia and rather parochial in orientation. The kingdom escaped the experience of colonialism and the aftermath of vying ideological movements and power struggles that politicized Islamic discourse in much of the Muslim world. As a result,

the Salafi scholars of Saudi Arabia were not forced to address political questions related to current affairs and international relations. The scholars, in fact, seemed to hold little regard for politics and the world outside the kingdom, which was seen as a domain of potential corruption. Their primary concern was apolitical and local: they sought to up-root deviant religious practices and protect tawhid and the purity of Islam in Saudi Arabia. Politics was something best left to the rulers. In short, the Salafi community was purist in nature.

The relative unity of the Salafi community, however, started to fray during the 1960s when members of the Muslim Brotherhood began arriving in Saudi Arabia after fleeing Gamal Nasser's crackdown in Egypt. The well-educated Muslim Brothers were welcomed by the Saudi government and incorporated into the project of state building. During the 1970s, many took teaching positions and became influential on university campuses. They also succeeded in widely distributing their books in the kingdom. As one Saudi Islamist observed, "most of the books that could be found in the bookshops in the 1970s were written by members of the Brotherhood."[46]

The Muslim Brothers brought a more politically oriented agenda and awareness to the predominantly purist Saudi context. They had a long history of political engagement and enjoyed a sophisticated understanding of political events, international affairs, and the world outside Saudi Arabia. Their arrival on the Saudi scene was an energizing force for young students eager to learn more about the modern world.

Although the Brotherhood tended to follow rationalist thinking, a perspective inherently inimitable to the Salafi approach and thus unlikely to gain much of a foothold in Saudi Arabia, the movement succeeded in spreading its politicized Islam in the kingdom through the more Salafi-oriented faction spawned by Sayyid Qutb and his disciples. Qutb was heavily influenced by Ibn Taymiyya and Abd al-Wahhab and thus reflected the Salafi creed. He emphasized tawhid; the importance of relying on the Quran, Sunna, and companions; the fight against shirk (worshipping other than God); and the conspiracies of Islam's enemies. Although Salafis to this day continue to debate whether Qutb was a "Salafi," at a minimum he held a number of Salafi precepts. This produced political arguments framed by the Salafi creed and its various principles, which eased its introduction into the predominantly purist environment by using locally acceptable religious discourse. Muhammad Qutb (Sayyid's brother), Muhammad Sorour, and other former Ikhwanis went on to teach many students who later became the next generation of politically active scholars in Saudi Arabia, including Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awdah.

Armed with politicized Salafism, young scholars emerged from the universities during the 1980s. Unlike their purist forefathers, they believed they had a moral responsibility to discuss politics and critique un-Islamic rulers and policies. They sought to remain faithful to the Salafi creed while expanding their domain of influence to include issues beyond rituals and combating deviancy in society. They still accepted that protecting the purity of Islam is essential, but they believed real protection requires addressing political issues as well. Otherwise, the rulers could destroy tawhid and Islam.

The politico faction was in its nascent development when Saddam Hussein invaded Iraq in August 1990. Prior to the invasion and its aftermath, the politicos had remained largely deferential to their more senior purist elders. Disputes bubbled beneath the surface, but they had yet to become acrimonious or public.

This changed dramatically after the senior purists issued a fatwa permitting American troops in Saudi Arabia. Although some of the purists initially objected to issuing the fatwa, the regime successfully corralled them into unifying behind the decision.[47] This sent shockwaves throughout the Salafi community and was the single most important

factor in accelerating its factionalization. The politicos came out publicly and opposed the fatwa. Safar al-Hawali and others argued that the regime and the purist scholars misread American intentions and that the arrival of American troops was just the beginning of a strategy to dominate the Muslim world. For the politicos, the invitation to American troops was not simply seeking help (*isti'anah*); it was an invitation for colonization.

The Gulf War fatwa led many younger scholars to question whether the senior purists really understood the political world in which they lived. After all, the purists had consciously avoided politics and received little or no training related to international affairs. How could they then be expected to issue fatwas of such grave importance? The critique was not about a difference in belief; it specifically addressed whether the purists understood the context to which they were expected to apply the Salafi creed.

The politicos argued that the purists had grown up in a different time, isolated from politics and the rest of the world. They therefore lacked the skills, political savvy, and knowledge of current affairs to render informed fatwas about political issues. A frequently cited example of this is Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani's fatwa about the Palestinians. He reasoned that because Israel occupied the territories, it was no longer Dar al-Islam (the domain of Islam). This meant that Palestinians had to emigrate to a Muslim country.[48] Even Albani's followers were surprised at his ignorance about the situation. Clearly Palestinians were still allowed to pray and practice Islam. The territories therefore remained Dar al-Islam and Albani's call to emigrate was based on faulty reasoning. This fatwa severely undercut Albani's reputation and authority, and both he and his students were put on the defensive. Albani eventually issued a book on the jurisprudence of current affairs to defend himself.[49]

The politicos offered themselves as better equipped and situated to address political issues like the Gulf War. This initial critique was rather polite: the politicos continued to show deference to the senior purists while simultaneously challenging their authority by questioning their limited understanding of context. The purists were framed as relics of a bygone era whose antiquated view of the world left them ill-prepared to issue informed fatwas. Safar al-Hawali captures the general thrust of the argument:

> We cannot justify everything for them [the senior purists], we cannot say they are infallible!! We say: Yes! They do have some shortcomings in their acquaintance of the current state of affairs, they have some things and we round them off! But not from our superiority upon them, but because we have lived the events, and they have not lived them because they lived in another time! Or different conditions![50]

For many politicos and their supporters, the relevance of the purists' almost myopic focus on fighting shirk and promoting tawhid through propagation, education, and purification had been superseded by a series of more pressing crises, at both the local and international level. From the politico perspective, while the purists insisted on preaching about doomsday, how to pray, the heresy of saint worship, and other elements related to tawhid, corrupt regimes in the Muslim world repressed their people, the Israelis continued to occupy Islamic land, the Americans launched an international campaign to control the Muslim world, the Russians suppressed separatist aspirations in Chechnya and Dagestan, and the Indians slaughtered Kashmiri Muslims. The world was burning while the purists continued to advise people to pray for the very leaders who facilitated its destruction. Salman al-Awdah, for example, issued the following complaint:

> So you come upon the preacher (who gives the Friday sermon), and you find that it is as if his ears have become deaf and he's not able to hear anything. He is speaking about a subject which is far (from the reality which we experience). Either he is speaking about that which is under the ground in that which is related with the conditions of the hereafter, the grace and death, or he is speaking about that which is above the heavens in that which related to the conditions of Paradise, Hell, the Resurrection, the Reckoning and other than that (!!). All of these matters are truth, and speaking about them is truth, but it is necessary that the person take advantage of an opportunity being that the spirits (should) be ready for the exhortation, guidance and orientation; and that they obtain the lessons and instructive admonitions from these events, and the people can be reassured with regard to that matter.[51]

Frustrated by the purist scholars' insistence on remaining outside politics, some of the politicos coined a number of colorful pejoratives to deride the purist focus on rituals, including the "scholars of trivialities," "the scholars of menstruation" (referring to purist fatwas about the permissibility of sexual relations during menstruation), and the "scholars of toilet manners." Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq, the leader of the Turath movement in Kuwait, was particularly vocal in this regard. He derided the senior purist scholars as "mummified," "a collection of blind men who have given themselves the roles of leading the ummah in giving verdicts," and "those who live in the Middle Ages."[52] The use of these insults injected a heavy dose of personalism into the divisions.

Although these terms entered the vernacular of politico and jihadi criticisms of the senior Saudi clerics, they are predominantly used by critics *outside* Saudi Arabia. This likely reflects the continued power and influence of the senior purists inside the kingdom and the fact that some of the influential politicos outside Saudi Arabia enjoy their own financial support networks and organizations. Thus although the author has yet to see a statement by Hawali or Awdah that uses the pejoratives, Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq, whose movement is one of the purists' chief competitors, has been far less restrained (purists like to refer to him as a "money lender," a charge intended to indicate that his popularity results from his use of money to buy support rather than his knowledge of religion).[53]

The politico challenge sparked a debate over what came to be known as the "jurisprudence of current affairs" (*al-fiqh al-waqi*). The purists insisted that a focus on current affairs produced emotional responses that led to deviant practices, thus threatening tawhid. This was particularly dangerous since it pushed Muslims to engage politics before they actually grasped the fundamentals of tawhid, thereby increasing the potential that they would simply act on their desires and rational human thinking. When asked about Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq's charge that the purists were ignorant about current affairs and only understood the hadith, for example, Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani responded that, "those who take on the leadership of the Muslim youth today are themselves from the youth and those who have not equipped themselves with this knowledge."[54] The politicos, on the other hand, argued that the purists simply did not understand the modern context and were thus unable to engage the jurisprudence of current affairs.

The popularity of the younger generation thus had very little to do with their depth of religious knowledge. At the time of the Gulf War fatwa, most of the popular preachers like Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awdah were only in their late thirties and early forties, hardly seasoned enough to contend with the religious training and experience of the senior purists, who were much older. There were hardly any politicos (or even jihadis)

who would have claimed greater *religious* knowledge. Their sense of authority and legitimacy was instead rooted in their political analysis.

Safar al-Hawali, for example, developed his stature as a result of his political analysis of American intentions in the Muslim world.[55] His earlier work had demonstrated a degree of familiarity with America. He had written about the role of the Christian right in American politics and foreign policy. In the build up to the Gulf War, he framed the American presence in the Gulf and the war against Iraq as part of a strategy to secure Israeli interests by undercutting its chief regional rival. Although his knowledge of the United States displayed a certain level of ignorance, his *relative* expertise among Salafis and his ability to construct a cogent political analysis attracted a wide following. In bin Laden's 1996 Declaration of War, for example, he references Hawali not for his outstanding religious scholarship, but for his assessment of American intentions in the Gulf: "The imprisoned Sheikh Safar Al-Hawali, may Allah hasten his release, wrote a book of seventy pages; in it he presented evidence and proof that the presence of the Americans in the Arab Peninsula is a pre-planed military occupation."[56]

Contextual analysis is the cornerstone of the politico critique and the fault line of the factional dispute with the purists; it is not about the creed itself. Politicos are primarily concerned that the senior purists have become largely irrelevant for Muslims. They are characterized as out of touch with the concerns of the people and uninformed about the world in which they live. Politicos frame themselves, in contrast, as knowledgeable about current affairs and therefore better situated to interpret context.

Jihadis and the Character Challenge

The jihadi faction, those supporting the use of violence to establish Islamic states, emerged during the war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. This conflict functioned as a dangerous incubator by exposing Saudi Salafis (and others) to the radical and politicized teachings of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and related splinter groups (the Islamic Group, Islamic Jihad, etc.) in a context of military training and warfare. Unlike the politico exposure to Ikhwani analysis at the universities, the jihadis received their political training on the battlefield. As a result, their introduction was imbued with an emphasis on politics as warfare, something they later brought back to their own countries.

During the early 1990s, the jihadis were marginal to intra-Salafi debates. They seemed to generally accept the politico argument that the purists had a rather limited grasp on context. At this point in time, the politico and jihadi factions were somewhat blurred: the jihadis appeared to take their cues from politico oppositionists and had yet to fully oppose the Saudi government. In fact, at that time bin Laden was perhaps best described as a politico at heart.[57]

Toward the middle of the 1990s, however, the Saudi regime heavily repressed politico dissidents, leaving a critical void that was eventually filled by the jihadis. After the formation of the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights, the regime initiated a broad crackdown on politicos.[58] Some fled to London; others were imprisoned.

In 1994, the regime finally silenced both Hawali and Awdah, two of the best known voices of dissent. According to purists themselves, the regime approached the Committee of Senior Scholars and asked them to review several cassettes and publications by Hawali and Awdah. After the review, the Committee decided to force them to repent in front of two scholars. Bin Baz warned that if they refused, "then they are to be prevented from giving lectures, seminars, khutbahs, public lessons, and from making cassettes—in order to protect society from their errors; may Allah guide them both, and

direct them both to right conduct."[59] Whether bin Baz and the other committee members sanctioned Hawali and Awdah's imprisonment is unclear, but critics of the purists viewed them as participants in the regime's repression of "honest" scholars.

The imprisonment of the politico scholars and the alleged purist participation prompted jihadis to denounce the senior clerical establishment in Saudi Arabia. Their point of contention was not related to differences over the creed or the purists' level of religious knowledge. Quite the contrary; the jihadis believed that the purists were quite knowledgeable about Islam. But, they argued, the purists were either ignorant about the state of affairs or consciously hiding the truth about the context from the people. During the mid and late-1990s, criticism of the purists seemed to vacillate between charges of ignorance and claims that that they were purposely misleading people.

In some instances, the jihadis seemed willing to give the purists the benefit of the doubt and allow for the possibility that they had been duped by the Saudi regime. Although bin Laden's 1996 "Declaration of War" viciously attacks the Saudi regime, it is more forgiving of the purist ulama.

> They [the dissidents] stood up tall to defend the religion; at the time when the government misled the prominent [purist] scholars and tricked them into issuing Fatwas (that have no basis neither in the book of Allah, nor in the Sunnah of His prophet (Allah's Blessings and Salutations may be on him)) of opening the land of the two Holy Places for the Christians armies and handing the Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Zionists. Twisting the meanings of the holy text will not change this fact at all.

Elsewhere in the Declaration, bin Laden argues that,

> When the Islamic world resented the arrival of the crusader forces to the land of the two Holy Places, the king told lies to the Ulamah (who issued Fatwas about the arrival of the Americans) and to the gathering of the Islamic leaders at the conference of Rabitah which was held in the Holy City of Makka. The King said that: "the issue is simple, the American and the alliance forces will leave the area in a few months."[60]

Although this portrays the senior purists as dupes, forgiveness waned at the turn of the millennium as jihadis became increasingly convinced that the purists were acting as agents of the regime. In this critique, the jihadis argued that the purist scholars were well aware of the context. How could they not be, given the extensiveness of the regime's deviancy and the aggression of the United States? The only explanation for their unwillingness to stand against the regime and America is that they are part of the machinations to destroy the "true" scholars. This logic was eventually extended to denounce the refusal of the purists to support the jihadi fighters and Al Qaeda, particularly after 11 September 2001. In a statement, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, complains that,

> You, our clerics, reconciled with the tyrants and handed over the land and the people to the Jews, the Crusaders, and their hangers-on among our apostate rulers when you remained silent about their crimes, feared to preach the truth to them, and did not succeed in bearing the banner of Jihad and monotheism. . . . You abandoned us in the most difficult of circumstances, and you handed us over to the enemy. . . .[61]

For the jihadis, the purists represent *al-ulama al-sulta* ("the scholars of power"). The term is laden with negative connotations, implying an insidious relationship with regimes and authority structures that undermines the independence and legitimacy of Islamic interpretation. It is typically surrounded by a barrage of other disparaging terms, such as "palace lackeys," "the corrupt ulama," and "the ulama who flatter [those in power]." Even more damning, jihadis tie these scholars directly to the Ministry of the Interior in Saudi Arabia, responsible for maintaining internal security: "Sometimes officials from the Ministry of the Interior, who are also graduates of the colleges of the Shari'ah, are leashed out to mislead and confuse the nation and the Ummah (by wrong Fatwas) and to circulate false information about the movement [Al Qaeda and jihadis]."[62] For jihadis, this means that these scholars "speak in their masters' languages and in the concepts of the enemy of the umma."[63] Bin Laden, for example, observes that "The offices of the Clerics Authority [in Saudi Arabia] are adjacent to the royal palace. . . . In such a situation [when even the offices are linked], is it reasonable to ask a civil servant [for a fatwa], who receives his salary from the king? What is the ruling regarding the king, and should the king be regarded as supporting infidels?"[64]

This is contrasted with politico and jihadi scholars, who are framed as "honest" and willing to sacrifice for the cause. Their sincerity is evinced by their oppositional stance and consequent imprisonment by Saudi authorities.[65] These oppositionists are exalted as the real ulama, the only ones capable of interpreting Islam free of corruption and revealing the truth to the masses. They are framed as a vanguard capable of interpreting Islam and confronting un-Islamic regimes and their scholars of authority:

> So O truthful scholars, reformers and callers to Allah, you are the ones who should be at the front of the lines, to drive the Ummah and to lead the way, for this is incumbent upon your inheritance to the prophethood. Your first duty is the declaration of the truth to the Ummah, and to slap it in the faces of the tyrants without deceit or fear, for this is the requirement of the covenant which Allah had bestowed upon you. The importance of your duty is derived from the danger of the fraudulent and deceiving operations which are being practiced by the scholars of the regimes and the servants of the rulers who deal with the religion of Islam, who have hidden the true state of the Ummah, and who have sold their religion for a cheap offer from this Life.[66]

Bin Laden summarizes the intended consequences of attacking the character of the purists:

> The *fatwa* of any official *alim* [religious scholar] has no value for me. History is full of such *ulama* [clerics] who justify *riba* [economic usury], who justify the occupation of Palestine by the Jews, who justify the presence of American troops around Harmain Sharifain [the Islamic holy places in Saudi Arabia]. These people support the infidels for their personal gain. The true *ulama* support the *jihad* against America.[67]

The jihadi critique is thus based on judgments about the purists' inability or unwillingness to reveal the truth about context to the people. In jihadi reasoning, if purists were willing or able to come forward and explain the truth about the regime, everyone would recognize that certain oppositional actions become operative, according to shared Salafi precepts. The critique is not about belief; it is about the unwillingness of the

purists to put this belief into practice by addressing the injustices of the regime and its American (and Zionist) masters.

The Debate over Takfir

The debate over whether Muslims can declare incumbent rulers apostates (a process known as *takfir*) represents one of the most prominent sources of fissure within the Salafi community and exemplifies the impact of contextual interpretation on factionalization. Although the factions share a set of criteria for declaring someone an apostate, rooted in the Salafi creed, they differ over whether these criteria have actually been met with regards to rulers in the Muslim world. The disagreement is not about whether one can use takfir or the conditions for apostasy; it instead centers on differing interpretations about the ruler's beliefs and behaviors.

This issue revolves around the nature of faith (*iman*) and its relationship with belief and action. The mainstream Muslim opinion is that faith includes both belief in Islam and behaviors in accordance with God's commands. So long as an individual continues to believe in Islam, he or she remains a Muslim. If that person fails to live according to God's commands and dies without repenting, he or she is a sinner and will not receive salvation on judgment day, which is reserved for the saved sect (those who follow the true faith). If a Muslim no longer believes in Islam, however, he or she becomes a disbeliever and apostate, and the proscribed punishment is death.

The history of the debate over faith is important for understanding how Salafis situate their creed vis-à-vis non-Salafi Muslims as well as rival Salafi factions. The debate over the relationship between faith and belief and action became prominent following the death of the third caliph, Uthman, in 656 and the ensuring intra-Muslim struggle for power. 'Ali ibn Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, and his followers were the largest Muslim faction, but they still had to fight other claimants to power, including the Prophet's favorite wife, Aisha. Although he defeated most of his rivals, Ali faced strong opposition from Mu'awiya ibn abi Sufyan, one of Uthman's close relatives and the governor of Damascus. Mu'awiya accused Ali of harboring Uthman's assassins and demanded extradition so that he could fulfill his vendetta, according to tribal customs.[68] After the two armies engaged at Siffin in 657, they agreed to submit to arbitration by two referees who would settle the dispute according to the Qur'an.

A number of Ali's fighters felt betrayed by his decision to submit to human arbitration and turned against him. The Khawarij, as they became known, argued that, "God alone has the right to judge" and declared Ali an apostate. A Khawarij assassin eventually killed him in 660. This was followed by guerilla warfare that wreaked havoc and threw parts of the Umayyad Empire into anarchy. Although small strains of the Khawarij still exist today in a few places like Oman, they were largely quelled by the time the Abbasids came to power in 749.[69]

The impact of the Khawarij on the Islamic community was immensely profound. The Khawarij had threatened to rip the newly founded Islamic community from within by refusing to submit to the authorities and through their exceptionally liberal use of takfir. Any Muslim who disagreed with them was declared an apostate and a legitimate target of warfare. Whereas most Muslims viewed faith as both belief and action, the Khawarij essentially conflated belief and faith as one and the same. This meant that "belief" was comprised of both belief in Islam, as understood by the Khawarij, and Islamic behavior. In this understanding, failure to act according to Islam constituted

grounds for takfir. The sinner had become the apostate. Because of this unbridled use of takfir, the Khawarij have been historically reviled by the entire Muslim community.

At the other end of the spectrum in the debate about faith was a sect known as the Murji'a. The name is derived from the Qur'anic use of the verb *arja*, which means "to defer judgment." There are verses in the Qur'an that command Muslims to leave judgment about individual belief to God, who on the Day of Reckoning will decide whether to condemn or forgive sinners. Qur'an 9:105–106 exemplifies this command:

> And say: "Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers: Soon will ye be brought back to the knower of what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did." There are (yet) others, held in suspense for the command of Allah, whether He will punish them, or turn in mercy to them: and Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

The Murji'a interpreted this to mean that takfir was not possible. A Muslim could become a sinner through his or her actions, but God alone decides this. Moreover, the Murji'a defined faith as belief alone and de-linked it from action. So long as Muslims proclaimed the *shahada* (testimony of faith) and belief in Islam, they had faith.

Just like the Khawarij, the Murji'a argument about faith was constructed in response to intra-Muslim struggles over power and leadership. Muhammad al-Hanifiyya, generally recognized as the author of the doctrine that links faith to belief alone and excludes actions (the doctrine of *irja*), argued that the adjudication of intra-Muslim strife should be left to God. In his reasoning, Muslims should refrain from choosing sides and/or using takfir, because all Muslims remain believers and part of the faithful, regardless of their actions. This generally meant that Muslims could not wage war against fellow Muslims, even those they viewed as sinners and "aberrant believers." The doctrine of *irja* was thus a means of maintaining unity amidst the chaos of civil war. This perspective informed some of the rationalist schools, such as the Maturidis, as well as the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.[70] The Asharites also adopted a similar position about the relationship between faith and belief.

The Salafis have positioned themselves between the Murji'a and the Khawarij when it comes to takfir. On the one hand, they are unwilling to accept the Murji'a argument that faith is belief alone, because the Qur'anic verse referring to iman (faith) makes a distinction. This distinguishes between a Muslim, who believes in Islam and submits to God, and someone with iman, who manifests this belief through his or her actions.[71]

On the other hand, the Salafis reject the Khawarij use of takfir based on actions. Because the references to apostasy are about belief, and not faith, one cannot use takfir on the basis of bad behavior and sin. After all, an act of apostasy may be an indicator of possible disbelief, but it is not disbelief itself. In other words, there is a distinction between an act of apostasy and an apostate. The former may indicate disbelief, but a person can only be declared an apostate if it can be determined that he or she has renounced Islam.

Salafis from all of the factions generally cite three reasons, short of disbelief, why someone might commit sin.[72] First, the person could be ignorant. For example, a ruler may be surrounded by deviant clerics who give him erroneous advice about what is and is not Islamic. Or he may not understand the divine rules regarding a particular issue or policy. Ignorance is not the same thing as disbelief, and it is the responsibility of the scholars to give him good advice about what is permissible in Islam. An individual

cannot be condemned simply because they have been misled or do not understand an issue from an Islamic perspective.

Second, a person may be coerced. An individual can do and say un-Islamic things because they are under pressure and coercion. An individual who acts un-Islamically at knife-point is not responsible for his actions. He may behave a certain way for fear of death and remain a believer.

And third, the intention of the individual may have nothing to do with disbelieving in Islam. A ruler, for example, may accept the supremacy of God, but promulgate certain laws because he derives personal benefit, such as material gain or power. In this instance, the ruler is motivated by selfish interest and does not necessarily reject God. He is certainly a sinner and will not be part of the saved sect unless he repents, but this is not apostasy. He only becomes an apostate if he rules by something other than the shari'a because he believes this is better than Islam.

Even the jihadis accept these principles.[73] In the aftermath of the Al Qaeda attack in Riyadh in which several Muslims were killed, some jihadis argued that one of these victims "was one of the greatest advocates of obscenity and debauchery" and therefore a legitimate target (essentially saying that he was a disbeliever). In the justification for the Riyadh attack, Al Qaeda responded that, "The debauchery and sins mentioned in connection with that victim killed in the complexes do not justify his killing. . . . One must call attention to the fact that accusing a person of debauchery and the like is not allowed except with legally accepted evidence."[74]

Perhaps reflecting their traditional Salafi training, this perspective distinguishes Al Qaeda jihadis from Sayyid Qutb and many of his followers, who denounced entire populations as apostates without meeting the three conditions. The vast majority of jihadis today argue that only individuals can be declared apostates and that proper evidence must be presented to address the obstacles to takfir. Responding to many of it critics in the aftermath of the Riyadh attacks, Al Qaeda insisted that, "We are not people of error and deviation, that we should turn our weapons against Muslims. If anyone alleges that we declare the generality of Muslims to be unbelievers and countenance killing them, we take refuge in God from this error. . . . We declare no one who prays toward Mecca to be an unbeliever for any sin, as long as he does not consider it licit."[75] Jihadis even argue that, "The ruler of a country is the one that has authority in it. Unless he is an atheist, he can rule even if he lacked shari'ah conditions."[76]

But note that the evaluation of the three criteria depends on judgments about whether a threshold has been passed that represents clear evidence of disbelief. For example, the level of knowledge is a relative and somewhat subjective assessment. At what point does a ruler have sufficient knowledge about the Islamic position toward a particular issue to clearly understand whether Islam prohibits or permits particular policies? Some rulers may simply grasp the issues and theological concerns more readily than others. Or a ruler may never be convinced of a particular Islamic perspective. How does one measure whether the ruler understands that a policy is un-Islamic? Is this measured in terms of years, number of petitions sent by religious scholars, the number of books on Islamic law related to the issue, and so on? Who gets to decide whether the ruler has been duly informed and understands that what he is doing is un-Islamic?

Intention is similarly ambiguous. How does one determine intention, a psychological and internal precipitant? For Salafis, there are a few clear behaviors that indicate disbelief, such as mocking Islam or the Prophet Muhammad, but even these require some measure of interpretation. What exactly constitutes "mocking"? And how, exactly, does this indicate intent? A playwright might create a satirical drama about the life of

the Prophet to make a point about contemporary society; although the intention is entertainment or political commentary, it could also be interpreted as mockery by conservative Muslims.

Even the issue of coercion is difficult to gauge objectively. What, precisely, constitutes coercion? One could, for example, argue that American global hegemony prevents any ruler in the Muslim world from truly acting independently, lest they provoke the ire of the United States (and given the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the possibility of military invasion). Given the conspiratorial Salafi view of the world, one could construct an argument about coercion based on the pervasiveness of pressure from Christian and Zionist forces.

In short, the three "obstacles" to takfir, which all Salafis agree limit declarations of apostasy, must be applied to specific cases in the contemporary period. The evaluation of these criteria is part of the inherently subjective nature of applying religious precepts to contemporary contexts: it requires human judgment about a particular case, which is subject to variability depending on an individual's understanding of context. If all Salafis agreed that the Saudi rulers have replaced the shari'a, are not coerced, understand that they are being un-Islamic, and implement non-Islamic law because they no longer believe in Islam, they would unite in condemning them as apostates (although some would still weigh the consequences for Muslims and whether takfir would create a lesser or greater evil).[77]

The positions of the factions on takfir of the rulers try to balance between the absolute restrictions of the Murji'a and the excessiveness of the Khawarij. The purists tend to fall closer to the Murji'a and typically discuss apostasy in terms of categories of actions rather than specific individuals.[78] So, for example, they will say that the act of gambling is an act of apostasy without calling the individual gambler an apostate. The distinction is important, because it emphasizes the high threshold set by purists: one cannot determine whether the action is driven by disbelief without strong evidence that passes the three critical criteria for declaring someone an apostate.

Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), once one of the most conservative purists when it comes to takfir, exemplifies the purist understanding about limitations. In 1996, he was asked the status of a person who mocks the religion. He responded that the culprit should face Islamic punishment for the deviance (lashes) and that there should be no further judgment. In 1999, he further elaborated on his position:

> And we have no way of knowing what is in the heart of a fasiq or a fajir (i.e., sinner), or a thief, a fornicator, one who takes interest and whoever is similar to them. Unless he expresses what is in his heart with his tongue. As for his action then that merely informs us that he has opposed the Shar'iah in his action and we would therefore say: "You have opposed (the Sharee'ah)! You have sinned (fusooq)! You have sinned (fujoor)!" But we do not say: "You have disbelieved and have apostatized from your religion" until something occurs from him that is a justification for us in the sight of Allah the Mighty and Majestic to make a judgment of apostasy against him.[79]

Albani was merely expressing the generally accepted conditions that must be met to perform takfir, but his politico critics were quick to denounce the ruling. The charge was led by Safar al-Hawali. In his earlier doctoral dissertation (The Phenomenon of Irja' in Contemporary Islamic Thought), Hawali interpreted Albani's view as the separation of belief and action. In a virtually unprecedented public denunciation of a senior Salafi

scholar, Hawali accused Albani of being a Murji'a, an accusation that stirred massive controversy within the Salafi community. Purists believe that Hawali was serving as a mouthpiece for his mentor, Muhammad Qutb, who was seeking retribution against Albani for several books he wrote denouncing Sayyid Qutb.[80]

Calling Albani a Murji'a was tantamount to calling him an unbeliever and apostate, because Salafis all accept that the Murji'a held deviant beliefs. This elicited a terse response from Albani, who labeled Hawali and other politicos "the Khawarij of this era." He accused them of being "treckless ignoramus, who are but young newcomers accusing us of Irja!!"[81] Purists picked up on Albani's use of the Khawarij label and used it in their polemics to describe the politico and jihadi factions.[82] All of the factions thus drew distinctions based on the classic sectarian divisions.

In terms of rulers in the Muslim world, the purists argued that the conditions had not been met to use takfir for several reasons.[83] First, rulers still incorporated Islam into law. Most constitutions in Muslim countries include Islam as a source of legislation, and Islam continues to inform personal status law. There is recognition that if a ruler replaced the entire shari'a with non-Islamic law, it would constitute sufficient evidence of disbelief; but purists argue that no ruler has done this. In a place like Saudi Arabia, they find it implausible to argue that rulers have abolished the shari'a in its entirety, because the Qur'an is the kingdom's constitution and the government clearly supports the promotion of Salafi thought, both locally and internationally. This indicates that they are still believers.

Second, although members of regimes clearly commit sin (gambling, usury, etc.), there is no evidence that they have declared this lawful according to Islam. From this perspective, the rulers are sinners who fail to implement Islam in their actions and thus lack faith, but they are not disbelievers. Muslims must therefore tolerate and obey the rulers while trying to rectify their faith through advice.

Third, purists evaluate the consequences of using takfir against incumbent rulers and whether this produces a greater or lesser evil. They again point to the Meccan period and the Prophet's focus on propagation rather than revolt to protect the religion. For purists, takfir against rulers would prompt massive reprisals that would not benefit Islam.[84]

The high evidentiary threshold set by the purists helps explain why they have refused to denounce Bin Laden as an apostate for his transgressions. Although they reject his use of violence, they accept that he may generally share the correct creed and emphasis on tawhid. Without bringing him to Saudi Arabia for a religious trial, there is no way to measure whether he actually believes that Al Qaeda's actions are in accordance with Islam. Nor can they judge whether he has been given ample explanation that removes the possibility of ignorance. He could, for example, believe that what he is doing clearly violates Islamic law but does it anyway for personal reasons (political power, for example). And he may have surrounded himself with deviant advisers and scholars, such as Ayman Zawahiri (an Ikhwani, according to purists), who have given him erroneous religious rulings. In other words, if they were to charge him with apostasy based on his actions without truly determining his intentions, the purists would be guilty of the same extremism as the jihadis and the Khawarij. For the purists, bin Laden is sinful, but clear evidence of apostasy does not yet exist. This is why they choose to call him to repent and return to the straight path of Islam rather than condemn him as an apostate.[85]

The politicos and jihadi use different thresholds in measuring whether the criteria of takfir have been met. Like the purists, the politicos and jihadis do not focus on either the criterion of knowledge or coercion, choosing to instead emphasize intention. Their arguments focus on several Qur'anic verses related to God's right to rule, including

Qur'an 5:44,[86] and build on Sayyid Qutb's understanding of *tawhid hakamiyya* (the right of God alone to rule). Terms related to *hakamiyya* in the Qur'an are used to mean wisdom, judgment, and reconciliation, rather than authority, but Qutb expanded their meaning to incorporate governance and rule.[87] Qutb's understanding has been adopted by politicos and jihadis as a necessary condition for belief, equated with the other three traditional Salafi categories of tawhid. They argue that a ruler's persistence in legislating sinful acts, despite warnings from scholars, is sufficient evidence about what he believes. Because he has been informed time and again that these are un-Islamic acts, why else would he persist in the sin unless he believes it is better than Islam?

Take one of the most common issues used by the jihadis to declare rulers apostates: usury. Not only does the Qur'an condemn usury, but the Prophet also fought the people of Taif because they refused to renounce usury, despite their adherence to Islam more generally. Bin Laden and others have argued that the Saudi royal family has legislated usury through their banking practices and investments, an act that has become so pervasive that it indicates belief in the practice as a legitimate economic behavior.[88] Nasir al-Umar makes the following argument:

> The imagination that the evils present in our society are just sins? Many people now imagine that usury is only a sin or major sin, and that intoxicants and drugs are merely sins, that bribery is one of the major sins. . . . . No my brothers! I have investigated this matter and it has become clear to me now that many of the people in our society have declared usury to be lawful—and refuge is from Allah!! Do you know that in the usurious banks in our country there are more than a million people. Allah is over you. Do all of those millions know that usury is unlawful and that they have only committed this act while it is just a sin? No, by Allah!! Due to the spread and abundance of sin, the great danger present is that many have declared lawful these major sins—and refuge is with Allah.[89]

In this line of reasoning, the criterion for determining the link between action and belief is the pervasiveness of the sin. Because so many people practice usury, a practice that everyone knows was prohibited by the Prophet, the regime must believe it is better than Islam; otherwise they would have adhered to Islamic law and banned it. The fact that they imprison scholars who point out their acts of sin is used as further evidence that the rulers know that they are rejecting Islam; they are trying to prevent the truth from emerging by silencing their most potent Islamic critics.

This line of reasoning falls dangerously close to the Khawarij by deriving beliefs from outward behavior. In terms of declaring rulers apostates, even if one accepts the jihadi argument that pervasiveness of sin indicates disbelief, there is no objective threshold measure that can be used to evaluate a critical point of pervasiveness after which it becomes permissible to use takfir based on intent.

Certain that their reading of the context is accurate and that leaders do indeed intend disbelief, politicos and jihadis accuse the purists of forsaking a duty to use takfir.[90] Because the Qur'an clearly states that a person can disbelieve, this is akin to the actions of the Murji'a. Abu Hamza al-Misri goes even further and charges the purists with being both Murji'a and Khawarij, usually seen as two irreconcilable antipodes:

> The Khawaaarij Murji'a are a group of people that declare those they disagree with to be kaafir [unbelievers] or bid'ii [innovators]. They curse their

> opposition in addition to denying Haakamiyyah (Law giving and Legislative
> right) of Allah. Those having the ideas and characteristics of the Khawaarij
> Murji'a are in the majority among the modern movement which has given
> itself the name "Salafiyya." These so-called salafis label their opponents as
> bid'ii, kuffar or innovators but continue to strip Allah of His attribute, Al
> Haakim (Law giving Judge), which is mentioned twice in the Qur'an. . . .
> The Khawaarij Murji'a are also very keen to not make takfir on those who
> do not pray and those who replace the Shari'a with man-made laws. How-
> ever, when someone disagrees with them, they immediately turn and label
> him a deviant, bid'ii or kaafir![91]

The differences over the use of takfir are thus about the evidence used to determine
whether the three critical criteria have been met. The purists use a forgiving standard
based on their view that it is difficult to ascertain belief in the heart. The politicos and
jihadis measure the thresholds by inferring intent from the pervasiveness of behaviors.
Intention, it seems, is in the eye of the beholder.[92]

Conclusion: The Purist Paradox

The debate over takfir illustrates the central point of this article: the anatomy of the
Salafi movement and its internal divisions are based on differences over contextual in-
terpretation and analysis rather than belief. All Salafis share the same beliefs or creed
(aqida). They all emphasize tawhid and reject a role for human desire and intellect in
understanding how the immutable sources of Islam should be applied to the modern
world. But this application involves human evaluations of the modern world and its
particular problems and issues, evaluations that are vulnerable to the subjective nature of
human judgment. Whether the issue is the legitimacy of takfir or other contemporary
dilemmas, the factions are predominantly divided over how Muslims should understand
the context to which beliefs are to be applied, rather than the beliefs themselves.

In terms of U.S. strategy, the primary concern should be how strategy can influence
these interpretations of context to empower the purists. Although the purists are strongly
anti-Western (and anti-American), they are also the least likely to support the use of
violence. To the extent that the United States can amplify the purist contextual reading
at the expense of the jihadis, the movement of Salafis toward the radical extremists will
likely slow.

The difficulty is that the purists remain relatively ill-positioned to engage and refute
the jihadi and politico assessments of contemporary politics and international affairs.
The most powerful critique of the purists is that they are either unable or unwilling to
effectively address pressing crises currently afflicting the Muslim world and have there-
fore become irrelevant to the Muslim community. In this argument, politicos and jihadis
hold themselves up as viable alternatives in the struggle for sacred authority, and the
popularity of scholars like Hawali indicates that this argument has traction.

To counteract the growing influence of the politicos and jihadis, the purists need to
become better informed about politics and current affairs. This could include more non-
religious training in seminaries and Islamic institutes of higher education so that they
have a better understanding of the world. This would equip the purist scholars with
more sophisticated contextual insights and allow them to effectively counteract the po-
litical analysis of bin Laden and others. A purist scholar with a Ph.D. in the Islamic
sciences as well as advanced education in international relations would be well situated

to deconstruct and rebut Al Qaeda's worldview (although there is obviously the danger that purists might arrive at similar conclusions about politics).

At the same time, however, strengthening credentials related to contextual analysis undermines the identity of the purist scholars, which is based on isolation from the corruptive influences of politics and current affairs. These influences are seen as sources of emotional provocation, Western intrigue and guile, and threats to the purity of tawhid.

This creates a paradox for the purists. To avoid losing influence among Salafis (and even Muslims more generally), purist scholars must engage current affairs and politics, an action that undermines the very mission of the purist faction. How to strike a balance between informed contextual analysis and defending the purity of Islam is the great conundrum for the purists. To counteract the influence of the other factions, and thereby stem the tide of violence, the purists need to find a way to reconcile this tension.

Notes

1. Opponents of Salafism frequently affix the "Wahhabi" designator to denote foreign influence. It is intended to signify followers of Abd al-Wahhab and is most frequently used in countries where Salafis are a small minority of the Muslim community but have made recent inroads in "converting" the local population to the movement ideology. In these countries, local religious authorities have responded to the growing influence of Salafi thought by describing Salafis as Wahhabis, a term that for most non-Salafis conjures up images of Saudi Arabia. The foreign nature of the "Wahhabis" is juxtaposed to locally authentic forms of indigenous Islam. In this manner, opponents of Salafism inject nationalism into religious discourse by raising the specter of foreign influence. The Salafi movement itself, however, never uses this term. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find individuals who refer to themselves as Wahhabis or organizations that use "Wahhabi" in their title or refer to their ideology in this manner (unless they are speaking to a Western audience that is unfamiliar with Islamic terminology, and even then usage is limited and often appears as "Salafi/Wahhabi").

2. Author's interview with Salafi jihadi leader, Amman, Jordan, 1997.

3. The term "purist" is taken from International Crisis Group, *Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix*, Asia Report No. 83, 13 September 2004.

4. For background on aqida, see W. Montgomery Watt, "Akida," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-ROM edition v. 1.0 (Netherlands: Brill, 1999). For a brief summary of the Salafi aqida in particular, see Naasir al-'Aql, "Principles and Methodology for the 'Aqeedah of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah," *Al-Ibaanah* 2 (August 1995), pp. 25–26.

5. This even includes emulating the way the Prophet dressed, which explains the tell-tale Salafi style of wearing a loose fitting garment that reaches to the mid-calf (and not below the ankle).

6. As quoted in Jami'at Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, *A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Da'wah* (Ipswich, Suffolk, UK: Jami'at Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 1993), p. 5.

7. As quoted in Jami'at Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, *A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Da'wah* (Ipswich, Suffolk, UK: Jami'at Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 1993), p. 3.

8. See, for example, Saleem al-Hilali, "Who is the Victorious Group," *Al-Ibaanah* 2 (August 199), pp. 39–42; and Muhammad Ibn Jameel Zaynoo, "Methodology of the Saved Sect," *Al-Ibaanah* 3 (April 1996).

9. As quoted in Zaynoo, "Methodology of the Saved Sect," p. 22.

10. Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2004).

11. For a good overview of Islamic rationalism, see Tilman Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000). For issues related to the debate between rationalists and those who argued along the lines of Salafis, see various entries in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-ROM edition v. 1.0 (Netherlands: Brill, 1999), including tawhid, iman, kalam, il al-kalam, akida, Maturidiyya, Mutazila, and Ashariyya.

12. W. Montgomery Watt, "Akida," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-ROM edition v. 1.0 (Netherlands: Brill, 1999).

13. Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah, Bin Baz, "The Beautiful and Lofty Attributes," *Al-Ibaanah* 2 (August 1995), pp. 31–33.

14. H. Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-ROM edition v. 1.0 (Netherlands: Brill, 1999).

15. H. Laoust, "Ahmad B. Hanbal," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-ROM edition v. 1.0 (Netherlands: Brill, 1999).

16. For the Islamic modernists, see Charles Kurzman, ed., *Modernist Islam 1840–1940: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Mansoor Moaddell and Kamran Taltoff, ed., *Contemporary Debates in Islam:" An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

17. Author's interview with jihadi Salafi, Amman, Jordan, 1997.

18. This concern still resonates, and even jihadis view rationalism as a threat. An Al Qaeda–affiliated website posted an article citing the "threat of the Rational School" in which it blamed British imperialism for planting rationalism through Muhammad Abduh. It notes that rationalism "may become the first stepping stone to secularizing the region, because it is a mixture of secularism and Islam." As quoted in Yigal Carmon, "Contemporary Islamist Ideology Permitting Genocidal Murder," paper presented at the Stockholm International Forum on Preventing Genocide, MEMRI *Special Report—No. 25*, January 27, 2004, available at (http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SR2504).

19. Scholars are given a great deal of respect by their followers, so much so that more ardent Salafis complain that others are guilty of *taqlid*—blindly following their leader without considering the sources of Islam directly. Jihadi Salafis (and some other Islamists), for example, have argued that Sheikh Bin Baz's (former Mufti of Saudi Arabia, d. 1999) students blindly followed him in deviant understandings of Islam because of an emotional attachment and respect for the sheikh, irrespective of contrary religious evidence. Their love and admiration was seen as responsible for preventing them from looking for "the truth" (Author's interview with Omar Bakri Muhammad, a jihadi and founder of al-Muhajiroun, London, 2002).

20. Osama bin Laden, "Address to the Ummah on the Anniversary of the Crusader War Jihad," available at (www.jihadunspun.com). Accessed 1 November 2002.

21. "Respecting the Status of Scholars," Al-Asaalah Magazine, available at (www.al-manhaj.com/articles/knowledge/K1002.html). Accessed 9 October 2001.

22. International Crisis Group, *Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who Are the Islamists?* ICG Middle East Report No. 31, 21 September 2004, p. 3.

23. Author's multiple interviews with Hasan Abu Haniya, who sat in the study circle, Jordan, 1996–1997.

24. Bin Baz and the radical Hamoud al-Uqla al-Shuaybi both sat with Muhammad al-Amin al-Shanqiti. Al-Uqla also taught the current Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Abdul Aziz Al-Alshaykh.

25. The interconnections in the educational network beg an important question for future research: What variables lead to different orientations despite a common educational experience? Why, for example, would individuals from the same study circles go on to become part of rival factions? Methodologically, a researcher could examine several scholars who have produced students that eventually rise to prominence in rival factions (Albani and his students would be a good case in point). Are there common variables that underlie the divergent trajectories? Does it relate to personal attributes? Situational factors? Exposure to particular configurations of specific scholars? Quasi-controlled experiments could help answer these questions and identify critical radicalization variables.

26. Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origins, Development, and Special Features* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1993), pp. 31–36.

27. For a detailed explanation of the science of hadith, see M.M. Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1992).

28. This is one of the justifications (among others) used by Nasser ibn Hamed. See (http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SR2504).

29. See, for example, the controversy surrounding Yusuf Qaradawi's position on this issue, available at (http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SP79404).

30. For the extensive use of this argument, see Muhammad Farag's *The Neglected Duty*, as translated in *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1986). Also see Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), ch. 7.

31. Haneef James Oliver, *The 'Wahhabi' Myth: Dispelling Prevalent Fallacies and the Fictitious Link with Bin Laden*, p. 21. Accessed at (http://www.thewahhabimyth.com/), November 23, 2004.

32. Accessed at (http://www.allaahuakbar.net/scholars/albaani/debate_on_jihad.htm), 9 December 2004.

33. "Fatwaa of Imaan Ibn Baaz (D. 1420H) Concerning the Algerian Affair," pp. 2–3, posted at (www.troid.org).

34. See Article ID: CAF020011, available at (www.salafipublications.com).

35. Author's interview with Halabi, Zarqa, 2 April 1997.

36. As quoted in "Historical Development of the Methodologies of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen and Their Effect and Influence upon Contemporary Salafee Dawah," part one, p. 20, fn. 23. Available at (www.salafipublications.com).

37. Muhammad Abu Shaqra, *The Truth about the Extremists* (in Arabic), sound cassette, no date.

38. Roy, *Globalised Islam*, pp. 275–287; Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 251–252.

39. See, for example (http://www.sahihalbukhari.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=NDV10&articleID=NDV100009&articlePages=1). Accessed 10 December 2004.

40. On the dangers of hizbiyya, see various pieces posted at (http://www.thenoblequran.com/sps/sp.cfm?secID=GRV&subsecID=GRV13&loadpage=displaysubsection.cfm). Accessed 10 December , 2004.

41. For a good representation of these critiques, see various pieces posted at (http://www.thenoblequran.com/sps/sp.cfm?secID=GRV&subsecID=GRV07&loadpage=displaysubsection.cfm). Accessed 10 December 2004.

42. "The Speech of the Scholars upon Salmaan and Safar," part one, p. 11, posted at (www.salafipublications.com).

43. "Historical Development," ch. 5, p. 14, fn. 5.

44. Historical Development, ch. 5, p. 12.

45. For a discussion of sacred authority, see Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

46. International Crisis Group, "Saudi Backgrounder: Who are the Islamists?" 21 September 2004, p. 2.

47. Bin Baz initially supported a petition that implied criticism of the royal family and the decision to allow U.S. forces in the kingdom, but he eventually backtracked after the Council of Senior Scholars reprimanded the cleric who had publicized the petition. See International Crisis Group, *Indonesian Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix*, Asia Report No. 83, 13 September 2004, p. 20, fn. 96.

48. Apparently, this fatwa was made a number of years before the first intifada but was only made public after the uprising.

49. Mohammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *The Knowledge of Current Affairs*, trans. by Abu Talhah Dawud Ibn Ronald Burbank (Birmingham, UK: Jam'iat Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 1994).

50. As quoted in "The Knowledge of Current Affairs of Safar al-Hawaalee and Salmaan al-'Awdah Weighed upon the Scales," prepared by Abu Ibraaheem al-Canadee, p. 9, available at

(http://www.troid.org/articles/manhaj/innovation/qutbees/fiqhulwaaqi.pdf). Accessed 10 December 2004.

51. As quoted in "The Knowledge of Current Affairs of Safar al-Hawaalee and Salmaan al-'Awdah," p. 3.

52. As quoted at (http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~islamic/ilm/manhaj/arkh.html). Accessed 10 December 2004.

53. As quoted in "The Major Scholars Refute the Aqeedah and Manhaj of Abdur-Rahmaan Abdul-Khaaliq," p. 6, posted at (http://www.thenoblequran.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=NDV09& articleID=NDV090003&articlePages=1). Accessed 10 December 2004.

54. As quoted at (http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~islamic/ilm/manhaj/albanisalmankhaliq.html). Accessed 10 December 10 2004.

55. For background on Hawali and his views, see Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* New York: Palgrave, 1999), chapter two.

56. Assessed at (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html), 26 November 2004.

57. "Saudi Arabia Backgrounder," pp. 5–6.

58. For background on the CDLR, see Fandy, *Saudi Arabia*, ch. 4.

59. As quoted in "The Knowledge of Current Affairs of Safar al-Hawaalee and Salmaan al-'Awdah," p. 24.

60. Osama bin Laden, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," published in *al-Quds al-Arabi* (London), 8 August 1996.

61. MEMRI, *Special Dispatch Series—No. 639,* 7 January 2004.

62. Bin Laden, "Declaration of War."

63. Al Qaeda, "A Statement from *Qa'idat al-Jihad* Regarding the Mandates of the Heroes and the Legality of the Operations in New York and Washington," 24 April 2002. The original document was posted at (www.alneda.com) (hosted by Markaz al-Dirasat wal-Buhuth al-Islamiyya) and provided to the author by Paul Eedle after the website was shut down. English and Arabic are available at (http://www.mepc.org/public_asp/journal_vol10/0306_wiktorowiczkaltner.asp).

64. MEMRI, "A New Bin Laden Speech," *Special Dispatch Series*, no. 539, 18 July 2003.

65. Author's interview with jihadi Salafis in Jordan, 1996–1997.

66. Osama bin Laden, "To the Islamic Ummah, On the First Anniversary of the New American Crusader War," 12 October 2002. Available at (www.jihadunspun.net).

67. Osama Bin Laden interview with *Dawn*, as reproduced in Rubin and Rubin, *Anti-American Terrorism*, p. 262.

68. Source: T. Nagel. *The History of Islamic Theology: From Muhammad to the Present*. (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers), 2000, pp. 31–32.

69. Source: G. L. D. Vida. Kharidjites. In *Encyclopedia of Islam, CD-ROM edition,* v. 10 (Netherlands: Brill, 1999).

70. The early Murji'a also believed that faith did not decrease or increase, a position that contemporary Salafis continue to denounce. Because the Qur'an explicitly refers to an increase in faith, later Hanafis argued that faith could increase but never decrease. Although this may seem like an esoteric debate, it has become part of the Salafi polemics launched against liberal and moderate Muslims.

71. For the distinction, see, for example, (http://members.rogers.com/islamfrominside/Pages/ Tafsir/Tafsir(2-1to5).html).

72. For a good overview, see Shaikh Ahmad Fareed, *On the Issue of Takfeer* (Ipswich, UK: Jam'iat Ihyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 1997).

73. For a good summation of the jihadi acceptance of these principles, see Abu Hamza al-Misri, *The Khawaarij and Jihad* (Birmingham, UK: Makhtabah al-Ansar, 2000), pp. 64–70.

74. "The Operation of 11 Rabi al-Awwal: The East Riyadh Operation and Our War with the United States and its Agents," FBIS translated text, 1 August 2003. Available at (http://www.why-war.com/files/qaeda_east_riyadh_operation.txt). Accessed 10 December 2004.

75. "The Operation of 11 Rabi al-Awwal."

76. Ibid.

77. For weighing the consequences, see Ali Hasan al-Halabi, *Fundamentals of Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil According to Shaykh Ul-Islam Ibn Taymiyya* (Cincinnati, OH: Al-Quran al-Sunnah Society of North America, 1995), pp. 18–19.

78. For a purist overview, see Article ID: MNJ090001 and Article ID: GRV070018, available at (www.salafipublications.com).

79. "The Creed of Imaan al-Albaanee on Takfir and Apostacy," p. 10 fn. 1, posted at (http://www.thenoblequran.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=MSC06&articleID=MSC060006&articlePages=1). Accessed 10 December 2004.

80. See, for example, "Historical Effects."

81. "The Speech of the Scholars upon Salmaan and Safar," part one, pp. 8-9, posted at (http://www.thenoblequran.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=GSC02&articleID=NDV120006&articlePages=1). Accessed 10 December 2004.

82. Albani, however, seems to have been more reserved in his use of the term "Khawarij of this era" than his purist followers, who are responsible for much of the polemics. When asked about Hawali's book on irja, Albani's exact response was, "They have opposed the Salaf in much of the issues of manhaj, and it is befitting that I label them the Khawarij of the era. And this resembles their emergence at the current time in which we read their statements—because they, in reality, their words take the direction and objective of that of the Khawarij in performing takfir of the one who commits major sins" (quoted in "The Speech of the Scholars upon Safar and Salmaan," p. 8). He went on to say that he did not know whether they argued that every major sin was apostasy. As a result, Albani did not make the label absolute, instead observing that they resemble the Khawarij in certain respects.

83. See various publications related to takfir posted at www.salafipublications.com.

84. See, for example, a fatwa from Bin Baz about rebelling against rulers, available at (http://63.175.194.25/index.php?ln=eng&ds=qa&lv=browse&QR=9911&dgn=4). Accessed 1 December 2004.

85. For example, see "The Advice of Shayul-Islaam Ibn Baz (D. 1420H) to Usaamah Ibn Laadin Al-Khaarijee," posted at (www.troid.org).

86. There is a broader context for this verse than is typically explained by the jihadis. It comes after a number of verses that refer to the Jews and Christians, and the majority of scholars believe Quran 5:44 therefore refers to Jews and Christians in particular. See Rosalind Gwynne, "Al-Qa'ida and al-Qur'an: The 'Tafsir' of Usamah bin Laden," unpublished paper, 18 September 2001, p. 1. Purists frequently argue that the jihadis misapply verses about the Jews and Christians to Muslims.

87. Hussam S. Timani, ch. 4 from unpublished manuscript, pp. 204–206.

88. See, for example, "Declaration of War."

89. "The Creed of Imaam al-Albaanee," p. 37, fn. 49.

90. See, for example, the argument laid out in al-Muhajiroun, "6 Reasons Why all the Rulers are Kafir," extract from *The Shari'ah Magazine* 1(13) (no date), p. 1.

91. Al-Misri, *The Khawaarij and Jihad*, pp. 56–57.

92. There are a few other points of debate that revolve around technical and grammatical issues, but the differences are mostly related to interpretations about intention.