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About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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The Muslim Brotherhood's Role in the Egyptian Revolution

By Steven Brooke and Shadi Hamid



An Egyptian anti-government protester celebrates in Cairo's Tahrir Square on February 12, 2011. - Photo by Patrick Baz/AFP/Getty Images

ON FEBRUARY 11, 2011, Egypt had its revolution when President Hosni Mubarak finally stepped down after 18 days of massive protests. With the military taking control and promising a transition to democracy, the question of what comes next has acquired a particular urgency. Specifically, Western fears of the Muslim Brotherhood stepping into the political vacuum have re-energized a longstanding debate about the role of Islamists in Middle Eastern politics, and the dilemma that poses for the United States.¹

¹ The Muslim Brotherhood is the world's oldest and most influential Islamist group. Founded in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna in 1928, the group has since established branches throughout Middle Eastern and European countries. The Brotherhood differs from jihadist groups in that the Brotherhood rejects violence as a means to alter society, instead advocating political participation and peaceful, long-term change.

Missing from the discussion is an attempt to put the Brotherhood's actions during the protests in historical perspective. Doing so reveals that the Brotherhood's cautious approach to the protests over the last few tumultuous weeks has been in large part an extension of the group's strategy of the past decades: a preference for incremental rather than revolutionary change, caution and pragmatism, and close cooperation with other Egyptian political actors. While it is always difficult to predict future behavior from past actions, viewing the Brotherhood's recent actions as part of a longer process of accommodation illuminates some of the issues that will undoubtedly arise in the months ahead.

The Brotherhood in the Background

The Brotherhood played a relatively limited role in the demonstrations. The group officially held back from participation in the “day of rage” protests on January 25, wary of associating with an enterprise that had uncertain prospects for success.² While endorsing the demonstrations only on Friday, January 28, the Brotherhood remained in the background. As one Brotherhood leader argued, “we are not pushing this movement, but we are moving with it. We don’t wish to lead it but we want to be part of it.”³ Soon after, the Brotherhood deferred to secular opposition figure Mohammed ElBaradei as the face of the movement, falling in line with a collection of other opposition groups.⁴ As the demonstrations gathered steam, the Brotherhood went out of its way to assure Western audiences that it did not seek to dominate Egypt’s post-Mubarak political scene.⁵

The Brotherhood in Power?

Any attempt to forecast the behavior of the Brotherhood in power should rest on realistic assumptions of the group’s capabilities and intentions. The group’s electoral dominance has been overstated, largely due to regime manipulation and stifling restrictions imposed on other Egyptian political actors. Allowing the Brotherhood to emerge as the *de facto* face of the Egyptian opposition was crucial for Mubarak’s attempts to convince Western audiences that he was all that stood in the way of an Islamist takeover. As a leading member of the Brotherhood said in Cairo in 2006, “if there were free elections with all groups competing and

debating, we would get maybe 25% of the vote. Parties cannot compete under a police state.”⁶

The Brotherhood may be Egypt’s largest opposition group with an estimated 300,000 members and millions of sympathizers. The group is particularly strong with the urban middle class, among doctors, engineers, lawyers, and other professions. Yet that does not mean it would win a majority stake in elections—in part because that is not the group’s aim.

Contrary to their image as a group obsessed with power, the Brotherhood has historically been content to “run to place,” aiming simply for representation rather than control. Islamist groups often deliberately lose elections. Arab

“The events in Egypt pose greater long-term challenges to jihadist groups than they do to the United States.”

Islamist parties in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Yemen have, on average, chosen to contest less than 40% of the available seats in recent elections.⁷ In other words, even if Islamists won every seat they contested, they still would not gain a majority. Even the Hamas victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections of 2006 came about more as a result of Fatah’s lack of coordination and general disarray than from an attempt by Hamas to take power.⁸ This caution is reflected in the January 31 comments of senior Brotherhood leader Mohamed el-Beltagui: “the Brotherhood realizes the sensitivities, especially in the West, towards the Islamists, and we’re not

⁶ Personal interview, Abdel Moneim Abou el-Fotouh, Cairo, August 2006.

⁷ For more on why Islamists deliberately lose elections, see Shadi Hamid, “Arab Islamist Parties: Losing on Purpose?” *Journal of Democracy* 22:1 (2011); Steven Brooke, “Running to Place: Alternative Explanations for Islamist Political Behavior,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Political Science Association, 2010.

⁸ In particular, multiple candidates from Fatah would run for one seat, splitting the vote, while Hamas ensured only one candidate per district.

been to be at the forefront.”⁹ Islamists even have a phrase for this—the “American veto”—the notion that the United States, and the world at large, is not yet ready for Islamists in government. The memory of Algeria—where the Western-backed military annulled parliamentary elections after Islamists won—looms large.

Thus, taking into account both capabilities and intentions, it is clear that the Islamists will not be in a position to control Egypt’s foreign policy. For a group like the Brotherhood, attempting to take the lead on controversial issues such as the peace treaty with Israel offers significant risks yet few benefits. The Brotherhood, as part of any post-Mubarak political order, will be subject to whatever pressures and constraints the United States and the international community places on it. For instance, any abrupt change in Egypt’s foreign policy would risk not only the \$1.5 billion that the country receives from the United States, but also significant assistance from the European Union, as well as the broader commercial ties between Egypt and the West.

The Brotherhood, however, is and will remain a potent force in any Egyptian democracy that emerges. In other words, the Islamists are here to stay. Like any political organization, the Brotherhood will reflect the interests and desires of its constituency, which will increase in importance as the group competes with others in the political marketplace. Over time, this will drive the group to articulate a more distinctive foreign policy platform and attempt to influence the direction of Egypt’s relations with Israel, its neighbors, and the international community. Anticipating the coming changes, the United States should begin a serious and sustained strategic dialogue with all Egyptian opposition parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, both in order to communicate U.S. interests and concerns, as well as to absorb theirs.

Counterterrorism Implications

There will be consequences for U.S. security interests following the fall of a key Arab ally. For instance, a democratically-elected government in Egypt would undoubtedly reduce

⁹ Jack Shenker, “Egypt Protesters Play Down Islamist Party’s Role,” *Guardian*, January 31, 2011.

² Other factors likely playing into the Brotherhood’s decision were its recognition that the regime would seize the opportunity to portray any demonstration as an Islamist project, as well as perhaps a wariness to publicly mobilize given the Christian-Muslim tension in the wake of the Alexandria church bombing on January 1, 2011.

³ “Nobel Peace Winner Returns to Egypt to Lead Anti-Government Protest Movement,” Associated Press, January 27, 2011.

⁴ Margaret Coker and Summer Said, “Muslim Group Backs Secular Struggle,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2011.

⁵ Essam el-Erriani, “What the Muslim Brothers Want,” *New York Times*, February 9, 2011; Abdel Moneim Abou el-Fotouh, “Democracy Supporters Should Not Fear the Muslim Brotherhood,” *Washington Post*, February 9, 2011.

cooperation with Israel and the United States on the blockade of Gaza. Yet given that the blockade is deeply unpopular across all sectors of Egyptian, and indeed, Arab societies, this should not be surprising. As Egypt's post-Mubarak political order congeals, it is easy to imagine Egypt following a trajectory similar to Turkey: maintaining close economic and commercial ties to the West, while increasingly charting a more independent course in foreign affairs. Also as in Turkey, the military will likely play a significant behind-the-scenes role as a conduit of Western influence.

In some ways, the events in Egypt pose greater long-term challenges to jihadist groups than they do to the United States. First, there appears to be a causal link between lack of democracy and terrorist activity.¹⁰ When citizens lack a peaceful outlet to express their views, the likelihood that they will turn to violence increases.¹¹ In the Middle East, regimes have historically deflected this anger by focusing it outward, on the United States and Israel. The jihadists have mirrored the process by changing the targets of their attacks from local regimes—the “near enemy”—to the “far enemy” of the United States.¹²

Second, al-Qa`ida has painstakingly crafted a narrative that peaceful, democratic change in the Middle East is both illegitimate and impossible, and that the Brotherhood's embrace of those strategies reveals its bankruptcy. For instance, Ayman al-Zawahiri's anger toward the group is laid out in his 1991 book *The Bitter Harvest: The Muslim Brotherhood After 60 Years*, in which he wrote,

The Brotherhood participates in elections in Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Kuwait, Algeria, Syria, and other Muslim lands governed by infidel governments. What is truly regrettable is the Ikhwan's rallying of thousands of duped

Muslim youth in voter queues before ballot boxes instead of lining them up to fight in the cause of Allah.¹³

The events in Egypt and Tunisia have perhaps definitively undermined this narrative, while reinforcing the Brotherhood's longstanding position that peaceful political engagement is the only legitimate way to change the political system, and that non-violence should be adhered to even in the face of repression by local governments.¹⁴

Egypt is in many ways fortunate because the Brotherhood's deep-rooted presence in Egyptian society has meant that jihadist groups have been unable to gain much traction inside the country.¹⁵ Apart from a small number of scattered, uncoordinated incidents, Egypt has been largely free of jihadist violence since the bloody insurgency of the mid-1990s. While partially due to the Egyptian security service's brutally effective counterterrorism campaign, the Brotherhood has also succeeded in making their incrementalist approach to social change “the only game in town.” Former jihadist groups, such as al-Gama`a al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Group), have engaged in extensive ideological revisions, renouncing violence and accepting the legitimacy of the existing system, moving closer to a Brotherhood-style interpretation of Islam.¹⁶ As long as the Brotherhood remains strong, Egypt will continue to present an unfriendly environment for the growth of Salafi-jihadism.¹⁷

Brotherhood Faces Challenges Ahead

Like any large organization, the Brotherhood contains multiple ideological trends: those desiring a more explicit political orientation, those wishing to focus on social and cultural reform, and those inhabiting a broad middle.¹⁸ In the past, the organization has been able to manage these tensions through caution and calculation. In the end, the group has earned a reputation for hedging that has occasionally bordered on paralysis. Rather than cunning, the Brotherhood's involvement in the recent protests in many ways reflects these tensions—younger, more politically-oriented Brothers sought the group's involvement from the outset, while those focused on sociocultural issues were content with restraint.

The next few months, however, will see the Brotherhood pushed out of its comfort zone and forced to play a more explicit political role. Given the presence of ideological trends inside the group hesitant to take on this role, it is likely that the requirements of an increased political profile will exacerbate internal divisions. To be sure, the group has, in recent years, developed internal consultative mechanisms that increase its ability to resolve debates while maintaining organizational cohesion. Yet with the advent of Egyptian democracy, this may not be enough. Repression, for all the problems it caused the Brotherhood, served to unify its ranks. When survival is at stake, a group can postpone answering difficult questions. Now, for the first time in decades, the Brotherhood will have little choice but to face them.

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10 Shadi Hamid and Steven Brooke, “Promoting Democracy to Stop Terror, Revisited,” *Policy Review*, February 1, 2010.

11 Ibid.

12 Steven Brooke, “Strategic Fissures: The Near and Far Debate,” in Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman eds., *Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions with al-Qa`ida and its Periphery* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2010); Steven Brooke, “Jihadist Strategic Debates Before 9/11,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:3 (2008).

13 The full book is available in Arabic online at www.tawhed.ws/r?i=2gxseb4t.

14 See the three part series by Brynjar Lia, “Jihadis Debate Egypt,” *Jihadica.com*, February 4, 2011 and February 7, 2011.

15 On this point, see Marc Lynch, “Jihadis and the Ikhwan,” in Moghadam and Fishman.

16 Steven Brooke, “Muslim Brotherhood Faces Growing Challenges in Egypt,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:3 (2009).

17 It is instructive to contrast Egypt to Iraq in this respect. Saddam Hussein had brutally repressed the Muslim Brotherhood for years, forcing the group almost completely into exile, leaving a vacuum that Salafi-jihadis were able to exploit in the post-Saddam environment. Similarly, whatever the other problems of Hamas control in Gaza, the organization has succeeded in preventing Salafi-jihadi infiltration.

18 See the summary in Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, “The Muslim Brotherhood after Mubarak,” *Foreign Affairs*, February 3, 2011. Also see Brooke, “Muslim Brotherhood Faces Growing Challenges in Egypt.”

Revolution in Tunisia and Egypt: A Blow to the Jihadist Narrative?

By Nelly Lahoud

THE JIHADISTS, LIKE most observers of the Middle East, had not anticipated that “people power” could topple Tunisia’s Zein al-`Abidin bin `Ali, let alone Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak. If, in addition, the Middle East “is being battered by a perfect storm of powerful trends,” and if “leaders in the region may be able to hold back the tide for a little while, but not for long,” as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked, then the jihadists may have to reconsider whether their narrative remains relevant or indeed whether their *raison d’être* is justified. In the words of Brynjar Lia, jihadism may lose “one of its main ideological selling points: that only armed struggle can bring down the regimes in the region.”¹

This article explores the extent to which jihadists can stay relevant in view of the gale-force winds of change blowing through the region.

The Jihadists’ Case in Perspective

The corrupt politics of the Middle East during the past 30 years has done more to advance the focal argument of jihadism than the jihadists could ever have accomplished on their own. Thus, notwithstanding the impossibility of ever achieving their idealistic goals, jihadist ideologues and leaders relied on stating the obvious to make their case: neither would the dictators who rule the Arab world ever embrace genuine reform, nor would the democratic regimes in the West led by the United States and its allies want such reforms because their interests are best served by dictators in power. Jihad, the jihadists repeatedly argue, is the only way out of this *cul de sac*.

In many respects, the jihadists’ modern articulation of individualized jihad (the belief that jihad is the individual duty, *fard `ayn*, of each Muslim) is designed to achieve nothing short of a revolution on a global scale. This principle of individualized jihad undermines all forms of political, religious and

even parental authorities.² This revolutionary understanding of jihad gained momentum through the various wars in which the United States and its allies have fought and are still fighting on the territories of Muslim-majority states. Such wars have unwittingly advanced the narrative of the jihadists and led some Muslims to embrace the path of jihad, thus giving jihadism an international profile much bigger than the sum of its parts. Even Usama bin Ladin acknowledged that the jihadists could not take full credit for their successes and that the policies of the United States are equally instrumental in the jihadists’ influence. As stated by Bin Ladin,

those who say that al-Qa`ida has won against the administration in the White House or that the administration has lost in this war have not been precise, because when one scrutinizes the results, one cannot say that al-Qa`ida is the sole factor in achieving those spectacular gains. Rather, the policy of the White House that demands the opening of war fronts to keep busy their various corporations—whether they be working in the field of arms or oil or reconstruction—has helped al-Qa`ida to achieve these enormous results.³

The Jihadists’ Dilemma

What if non-violence were perceived to be the solution? What if the United States were increasingly perceived to be on the side of the Muslim people, not their dictators? Would defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf`*) against the United States (far enemy) and its “apostate agents” (near enemy) still carry a sense of legitimacy? It is to be remembered that Ayman al-Zawahiri’s jihadist career began by arguing that “the road to Jerusalem passes through Cairo,” by which he meant that defeating the Egyptian regime through jihad should take precedence against fighting Israel and the United States.⁴

2 Nelly Lahoud, “The Strengths and Weaknesses of Jihadist Ideology,” *CTC Sentinel* 3:10 (2010).

3 A transcript of Usama bin Ladin’s speech in English is available at www.worldpress.org/Americas/1964.cfm.

4 Ayman al-Zawahiri, “Al-Tariq ila al-Quds yamuru `abra al-Qahira,” available at www.tawhed.ws/r?i=4wwr6wa8.

Before elaborating on the consequences of such developments, it is important to recognize that the flame of jihad has plenty of fuel before it burns itself out. Not only must Tunisia and Egypt succeed in translating their respective revolutions into meaningful political change, but the entire Middle East must follow suit, including a permanent and fair resolution to the Palestinian

“It stands to reason that the jihadization of politics that once carried an aura of plausibility when all other political forms of struggle seemed either stalled or futile is going to be subjected to sharp scrutiny.”

problem. It should also not be forgotten that the jihadists’ narrative is not limited to highlighting the political grievances endemic to the Middle East, but it also draws on grievances resulting from conflicts in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir, Mindanao, Somalia and beyond.

Despite these enormous obstacles that must be overcome before the jihadists’ narrative ceases to be purposeful, recent events in Tunisia and Egypt must give pause to jihadist leaders on at least two fronts. The first has a bearing not necessarily on jihadists in the fold, but on aspiring jihadists who, until two months ago, were contemplating joining the caravan of jihad. It is highly probable that these aspiring jihadists are reviewing their choices and considering whether their energy is more fruitfully directed to the “Tahrir” in their home countries rather than risking the uncertainties of joining jihad in the mountains of Afghanistan.

Perhaps a more critical blow for the jihadists concerns the limitations their ideology imposes on any involvement they might wish to have in this seemingly new era of political and leaderless actors who are weary of the burdens of ideologies. Central to jihadist ideology is the negation

1 Brynjar Lia, “Jihadis Debate Egypt (I),” *Jihadica.com*, February 4, 2011.

of the political process because it is compromised by positive law (*qawanin wad`iyya*). Jihadist ideologues and leaders are all in agreement that man-made laws represent an assault on God's Law and compromise the profession of divine unity (*tawhid*), the cornerstone on which it is incumbent upon jihadists to unite. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, for example, holds that constitutions and positive law are the vilest forms of

“The emerging political momentum demonstrates that the jihadists’ fight represents the revolution of the few while the peaceful revolt of the Tunisian and Egyptian people represents the revolution of the many.”

tawaghit.⁵ The term *taghut* literally means “idol”; in Islamic parlance it also means “tyranny,” as in the case of the pharaoh in ancient Egypt who is described in the Qur’an as having governed with excessive hardship because his source of governance was not God’s Law. Similarly, Ayman al-Zawahiri repeatedly argued in unequivocal terms that rulers in Muslim countries whose source of governance relies on positive law are to be declared apostates, and “it is the duty of Muslims to rebel against them, fight against them and oust them.”⁶

The jihadists’ exclusively religious paradigm does not recognize the legitimacy of the political establishment that monopolizes the legitimate use of physical force and thus denies them their individualized jihad. It stands to reason that the jihadization of politics that once carried an aura of plausibility when all other political forms of struggle seemed either stalled or futile is going to be subjected to sharp scrutiny. The events in Tunisia and Egypt are more than perplexing for the jihadists: on the one hand, it is a dream come true, the

very dream that set them on the path of jihad in the first place; on the other hand, they are not active players in the realization of this dream, nor can they be, so long as they stick to their jihadist principles. While the jihadists cannot but reject the legitimacy of positive law and the democratic process, the Egyptians and Tunisians are demanding nothing less. This irony manifests itself in the statements recently released on jihadist forums in support of the Tunisian and Egyptian protestors, where it is obvious to observers of jihadism that these statements are implicitly lamenting the role of the jihadists as mere spectators.⁷

The Jihadists’ Future Relevance

The emerging political momentum demonstrates that the jihadists’ jihad represents an attempt at revolution by a few while the peaceful revolt of the Tunisian and Egyptian people represents the revolution by the many. In view of the stifling political environment that reigned in the Middle East during the past 30 years, the jihadists are entitled to claim that their actions were shaping history, but they failed to convince the majority of Muslims to share their vision. The Tunisians and Egyptians, on the other hand, took the course of history into their own hands without availing themselves of the services of the jihadists. There is a lot riding on the success of the transition of these revolutions into functioning democracies. Failing that, jihadism will be given a longer lease on life if the jihadists are able to say: “we told you so, *plus ça change plus c’est la même chose!*”

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AQIM’s Objectives in North Africa

By Geoff D. Porter

DURING THE COURSE of 2010, al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has become highly active, striking numerous times in the Sahara desert across multiple borders and threatening to attack targets in Europe. In July 2010, French President Nicolas Sarkozy heightened awareness of AQIM in policy circles by declaring war on the group, and AQIM reciprocated by declaring war on France. At the same time, AQIM’s activities have dwindled in the historic heart of its operation in the Boumerdes Mountains in the Tizi Ouzou region of Algeria. The shift in the primary area of operations, the seeming diminishing importance of its historic leader Abdelmalek Droukdel, and the rise of new leaders in the Sahara merits a deeper exploration of its ideology. Understanding what AQIM’s Saharan leaders intend and what they want ultimately leads to more effective ways to combat the group.

The group’s media arm, al-Andalus, regularly releases statements claiming responsibility for attacks and employs the vocabulary and symbolism of Salafi-jihadi thought. Likewise, individual groups associated with AQIM occasionally publicize videos in which they expound on their ideology and the group’s goals. The ideology conveyed in these sources is a rudimentary appropriation of Salafi-jihadi thought with a clear North African overtone harkening back to the days of the early Islamic conquest of the Maghreb and the southern portion of the Iberian Peninsula, or to the 11th century when Berbers launched an Islamist revivalism in the Sahara and marched northward to conquer the North African coast and most of what is now Spain.

It is challenging to derive from this ideology what the group wants beyond a rough sketch—to rid North Africa of insufficiently Islamic governments and to cleanse North Africa and the Sahara of foreigners, in particular the French and the Americans. Since other violent Islamist groups have sophisticated ideologies that are drawn from an idealized reading of Islamic history and woven into a complex strategy to

⁵ Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, *Kashf al-Niqab ‘an Shari’at al-Ghab*, p. 18.

⁶ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *al-Hisad al-Murr*, p. 26.

⁷ Jihadology.net and Brynjar Lia’s postings on Jihadica.com conveniently assembled many of these statements.

attain their objectives, it is tempting to think that AQIM is adhering to a more nuanced agenda than it conveys publicly. This does not appear to be the case, however. The group's actual appeal among its recruits is complicated as is how it continues to function in the Sahara (or why it no longer operates fluidly in northern Algeria), but what the group says it wants is very plain.

AQIM's Shift to the South

In 2010, AQIM intensified the pace of its activities in the Sahara and Sahel, and it has become a predominantly Saharan-based organization. Activities along Algeria's Mediterranean coast have virtually ceased. Some analysts have speculated that Saharan groups within AQIM have stepped up activities to demonstrate to al-Qa`ida's core leadership that they are the true carriers of the AQIM mantle, opposed to AQIM's leader Abdelmalek Droukdel in northern Algeria.¹ Others have created the perception that the U.S., French and Algerian governments are attempting to define the threat in the south as a way to extend their influence to the Sahara, but this interpretation relies on conjecture and supposition.² Likewise, divining what the faster pace of Saharan operations says about relations among AQIM leaders and between AQIM and al-Qa`ida itself is fraught with speculation. What can be said with greater confidence is why AQIM operations in the Sahara have outpaced those of AQIM in northern Algeria.

In late 2010, the Algerian military undertook a series of campaigns against AQIM in the Tizi Ouzou region.³ In part, these campaigns were due to the resolution of conflicts among Algerian decision makers that had hindered a coordinated response to AQIM since its emergence in 2007. The campaigns were also due to a shift in attitude among the Tizi Ouzou population toward the Algerian military. While the Tizi Ouzou population had historically viewed the military with suspicion due to its heavy handed tactics quashing Kabyle

populism during the Black Spring of 2001, local sources say that the population has become more welcoming of the military's effort to curtail AQIM because the latter had resorted to extorting the local population and to kidnap and ransom.⁴ The military campaigns have restricted AQIM's movement in the Tizi Ouzou region and have hampered its ability to carry out attacks in Tizi Ouzou, let alone in Algiers or elsewhere in northern Algeria.

In the Sahara, however, south of Algeria's borders, AQIM factions have been active. This is largely due to the opened, ungoverned spaces throughout northern Niger, northern Mali and eastern Mauritania, an area roughly the size of Australia. It is also at least in part due to the failed attempts by regional governments to mount a coordinated counterterrorism effort. Despite the formation of a transnational counterterrorism center in Tamanrasset in Algeria, the governments in Nouakchott, Bamako, Niamey, and Algiers at times appear to be working at cross purposes in combating AQIM in the Sahara and Sahel and this has created an opening for the group's different factions to carry out operations.

A Kidnap and Ransom Threat

Most of AQIM's activities in the Sahara have been kidnap operations targeted at aid workers, diplomats, tourists and expatriate employees of multinational corporations. Some of these have resulted in the ransom of the hostages, some in the hostages' death, and others in prisoner swaps. On February 23, 2010, the French citizen Pierre Camatte was released by AQIM.⁵ In April, another French citizen, Michel Germaneau, was kidnapped in Mali and subsequently died—either at the hands of AQIM or due to poor health—sometime between May and July. On August 23, two Spanish aid workers who had been kidnapped in Mauritania in 2009 were released by AQIM possibly in exchange for the release of an Islamist held in Mauritanian custody as well as the possible payment of a ransom. AQIM also claimed credit for the kidnapping on September 16 of

seven people (five French citizens, a Togolese, and Malagasy) from an Areva uranium facility in Arlit in northern Niger. AQIM has more recently claimed responsibility for the January 7, 2011 kidnappings (and subsequent deaths) of two French citizens in Niamey. Even more recently, on February 2, an Italian tourist was kidnapped by a group of

“These strong Almoravid overtones, as well as references to Tariq ibn Ziyad, are in line with Salafi-jihadi narratives of restoring a caliphate and returning Islamic authority to lands that it once ruled.”

unidentified militants (although some reports suggest that the kidnapers said that they were AQIM) south of the Algerian town of Djanet.

There has also been one instance of a direct attack on a Mauritanian military facility in Nema on August 25, 2010, which resulted in the death of a suicide bomber who was driving an explosives-laden vehicle. This appears to have been in retaliation for a July 2010 raid by French and Mauritanian troops in an attempt to free Germaneau.

The kidnap operations have the triple benefit of raising revenue through ransoming hostages, functioning as collateral for prisoner exchanges and generally discouraging further foreign presence in the Sahel. Some of the hostages have been ransomed for significant sums. The revenue generated by kidnap operations—which could amount to tens of millions—has reportedly augmented the capabilities of different factions within AQIM.⁶ A source in Algiers disclosed that AQIM leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar has used his new revenue to procure a more lethal arsenal, including DSHK (Dushka) .50 caliber anti-aircraft heavy

1 Olivier Guitta, “Turmoil and Dissent in North Africa’s Al Qaeda,” *The National*, December 27, 2010.

2 “France’s Military Intervention in the Sahel,” MENAS Associates, August 2, 2010.

3 “La région est devenue une sorte de djihadistan,” *El-Watan*, December 12, 2010.

4 “Victime d’un faux barrage, un entrepreneur succombe à ses blessures Kabylie, en finir avec les kidnappings,” *El-Watan*, November 20, 2010.

5 “Paris espère la prochaine libération de Pierre Camatte,” *Le Monde*, February 23, 2010.

6 According to an al-Jazira report, kidnapping and ransom generated more than \$60 million for AQIM between 2005 and 2010. See “Al-Qaeda Displays French Hostages,” al-Jazira, September 30, 2010.

machine guns.⁷ Another AQIM leader in the Sahara, Mohamed Ghadir (alias Abdelhamid Abu Zeid), was the first within AQIM to try to leverage hostages for the release of imprisoned Islamists rather than simply raise ransoms. In 2009, he demanded the release of Abu Qatada from prison in the United Kingdom in exchange for the release of the kidnapped Edwin Dyer. Abu Qatada was not released, and AQIM claimed that it killed Dyer in retaliation.⁸ Pierre Camatte's release was also contingent on a "prisoner swap," in this case the release of four Islamists held in Mali. More recently, in a video released by AQIM's media arm in October 2010, Abdallah Chinguetti, a local leader of AQIM in eastern Mauritania, called for the release of prisoners.⁹

AQIM members have also targeted employees of European and American multinational corporations in the region to ostensibly exert pressure on European countries and the United States to change their foreign policies elsewhere around the world. The September 16, 2010 kidnapping of Areva employees at Arlit is the clearest example of this tactic. AQIM has demanded that France withdraw from Afghanistan and that it cease military operations in the Sahara and Sahel before it will release the kidnap victims. A speaker in a video about the kidnap operation released by al-Andalus said that the Areva facility was targeted because of its strategic importance to France.

AQIM Messaging: Salafi-Jihadi with a Saharan Backdrop

What has this newly assertive southern AQIM said about its ideology and what it wants? The bulk of AQIM's messages, the speeches and statements, consist of the broad strands of Salafi-jihadi rhetoric, with frequent references to *fitna* (disorder), *jabiliyya* (pre-Islamic ignorance), *fasad* (corruption), and the importance of fighting for the return of the proper way of life.

7 The source of the weapons is unclear; however, it is likely that they originate in West Africa where the resolution of armed conflicts in recent years has brought a surfeit of arms to the market.

8 Matthew Weaver, "British Hostage Edwin Dyer 'Killed by al-Qaida,'" *Guardian*, June 3, 2009.

9 See www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogx83KJJov4, August 28, 2010.

The contemporary targets of this timeless vocabulary are the governments of Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, which are described as *kuffar* (unbelievers). Ultimately, according to AQIM, these states should be replaced with proper Shari'a states. For example, in a video from August 2010, Abdallah Chinguetti declared the need to topple corrupt and unbeliever governments throughout the Maghreb and Sahel and the need to establish Shari'a states.¹⁰ A rare written statement that claims credit for the August 25 attack on the Nema military base levels criticism specifically at Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, calling him a varmint and an unbeliever who has corrupted the people of his country.¹¹

The letter directed toward Abdelaziz also invokes another theme common to AQIM messaging and one that is intended to have more local resonance than the universal Salafi-jihadi rhetoric. In the letter, the driver of the car bomb in the Nema attack is identified as Yusuf ibn Tashfin. Ibn Tashfin was the 11th century leader of the Almoravid (al-Murabitun) dynasty. This is an important theme recurring throughout much of the Saharan AQIM's messaging.

References to the Almoravids abound in AQIM messaging, mostly through *noms de guerre* and the names of AQIM's Saharan battalions. The Almoravids arose from two tribes in what is presently Mauritania, the Sanhaja and the Lamtuna. Their territory stretched from the Senegal River (now the border between Mauritania and Senegal) to Niger. Men from the Sanhaja and Lamtuna veiled themselves (as opposed to the women, who did not) and the practice is now the name of AQIM leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar's unit, *Katiba al-Mulathimin*, or "The Battalion of Veiled Men." Under the banner of the Almoravids, veiled men from the Sanhaja and Lamtuna struck northwards with a message of religious reform and asceticism aimed at toppling the lax and irreligious Idrissids, the ruling dynasty in what is now Morocco. The Almoravids stressed personal moral comportment and the responsibility of

10 Ibid.

11 "A Letter to the Varmint Mauritanian President," *Jihadology.net*, August 30, 2010.

the individual for the Islamicness of the whole community—a notion echoed eight centuries later by Sayyid Qutb.¹²

At their peak, the Almoravids controlled large parts of the Sahel, Sahara and Maghreb as well as half of the Iberian Peninsula—or al-Andalus. Yusuf ibn Tashfin was responsible for the conquest of what is now Algeria and

“Tourists will stop attending music festivals, diplomats’ movements will be curtailed, and aid groups will no longer send representatives. This will not, however, pose a serious challenge to the viability of the governments in Bamako, Niamey, Nouakchott and Algiers.”

the establishment of the learned center of Tlemcen. Ibn Tashfin went on to conquer al-Andalus, which is the name of AQIM's media arm.

Ghadir, also known as Abu Zeid, the leader of the other Saharan AQIM branch that has claimed responsibility for numerous kidnappings, makes reference to an earlier period in Islamic history, but one that is equally "local." His unit is the *Katiba Tariq ibn Ziyad*, named after the eighth century Berber general who led the first Islamic conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. The historical Ibn Ziyad likely came from northeastern Algeria. Ghadir himself is rumored to come from the region of Debdeb in Algeria, along the Tunisian border. The names of other battalions in the Sahara are less ideologically significant. For example, a Malian national Abou Abdelkrim Targui allegedly headed *Katiba al-Ansar*, or simply the "The Battalion of the Victors."

12 Vincent Cornell, "Understanding is the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tumar," *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987): pp. 71-103.

These strong Almoravid overtones, as well as references to Tariq ibn Ziyad, are in line with Salafi-jihadi narratives of restoring a caliphate and returning Islamic authority to lands that it once ruled. Part of this broader Salafi-jihadi narrative is the objective of attacking the “far enemy,” which implies attacks on France and Spain. AQIM’s messages directly target the governments that support the so-called un-Islamic governments of the Maghreb and Sahara. The primary thrust of this is France. For example, in November 2010 Abdelmalek Droukdel, the head of AQIM itself, demanded that France negotiate for the release of the hostages taken from Arlit directly with Usama bin Ladin and that France withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.¹³ In another instance, Khadim Ould Semman, who allegedly led a Mauritanian group sympathetic to AQIM until his arrest, said from prison that AQIM would directly target French “crusaders” in retaliation for the raid against AQIM in August that resulted in the reported deaths of six AQIM fighters.¹⁴

Rarely does rhetoric about attacking the far enemy translate into real action. The closest AQIM’s Saharan groups have come may have been on January 5, 2011 when a Tunisian man who is suspected of having links to AQIM blew up an explosive device in front of the French Embassy in Bamako, Mali. The reason for this shortcoming is likely a lack of capabilities, rather than prioritization of other targets. AQIM in the Sahara simply seems unable to carry out sophisticated attacks in the urban locales where important “crusader” targets are located. This is even more true of the Saharan AQIM’s ability to actually carry out attacks in French or Spanish territory. It is not for lack of desire, but lack of ability.

Conclusion

One reality that has heretofore limited AQIM’s impact in the Sahara has been the target poor environment. There are simply too few targets for AQIM to strike. This remains true, and the travel warnings from European governments and the restrictions on movement of Europeans in the Sahel and Sahara means that the target environment is going to become scarcer and more challenging. In this sense, it is possible that AQIM’s Saharan units will achieve part of their goal of ridding the Sahara and Sahel of foreigners. Tourists will stop attending music festivals, diplomats’ movements will be curtailed, and aid groups will no longer send representatives. This will not, however, pose a serious challenge to the viability of the governments in Bamako, Niamey, Nouakchott and Algiers. It will also deprive AQIM of whatever meager leverage kidnapping afforded it with Paris and Washington.

Threats to foreign direct investment will not jeopardize the Algerian, Malian, Mauritanian, or Nigerien governments. European and American investment will continue to flow into the region regardless of AQIM’s presence and tactics. Attacks on multinational corporation facilities like the Arlit attack may make foreign investors pause, but they will ultimately proceed, albeit with a stronger and more robust security profile. Part of that profile will be deeper suspicion of the local population, who will be excluded to a greater degree from the economic benefits that industrial investment can bring. To the contrary, the states themselves will be direct beneficiaries of foreign direct investment, through collecting revenue, royalties and taxes.

Due to the diminishing soft targets (expatriates and tourists) and the hardening of others, AQIM may soon face a paucity of targets and will struggle to maintain the momentum it built over the course of 2010 and remain relevant. This may necessitate a change in strategy, albeit in a way that is consistent with its messages and ideology.

Despite rhetoric that stridently criticizes the corruption and illegitimacy of governments in the Maghreb and Sahara, AQIM’s Saharan units have stopped short of attacking government targets directly. There has been only one instance in 2010 of a direct AQIM attack on a government installation in the Sahara, the August 25 attack at Nema in Mauritania. On February 2, 2011, there was a second attack in Mauritanian territory, which involved possibly three trucks of AQIM fighters. The attack was disrupted outside the capital Nouakchott and its intended target is still unclear. This, however, was arguably in retaliation for a Mauritanian and French raid on AQIM itself and was not a proactive part of AQIM’s strategy in the Sahara and Sahel. Likewise, AQIM’s ideology makes frequent reference to “crusaders” and enemies in Europe, which is a standard element of Salafi-jihadi rhetoric, but unlike AQIM’s counterparts in the Arabian Peninsula or in Pakistan, it has not been able to carry out an operation that targets Europe or the United States.

For AQIM, this means that to maintain the relevancy that it has managed to establish in 2010, it will have to shift to directly targeting local security services and redouble its efforts to hit targets outside the Sahara and Sahel. This will be the true test of AQIM’s messaging. The Almoravids became the Almoravids not just because they staged a rebellion south of Morocco’s Atlas Mountains, but because they went on to conquer Marrakech and beyond to al-Andalus.

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¹³ “Aqmi exige que Paris négocie avec Ben Laden pour la libération des otages,” Agence France-Presse, November 19, 2010.

¹⁴ “Un djihadiste menace la France,” *Le Figaro*, October 20, 2010.

The Tribal Allegiance System within AQIM

By Mathieu Guidere

SYMBOLISM PLAYS AN important role for al-Qa`ida and its related groups. Each attack is typically conducted according to a symbolic date and against a symbolic target. Most attacks fit within the organization's internal ideology. Al-Qa`ida and its affiliated groups use ancient symbols and medieval Islamic references. As a result, events or signals that might seem random to outside observers in fact possess a logical and internal coherence. Deciphering al-Qa`ida's messaging is important when making political or military decisions, and analysts must avoid falling into ethnocentric interpretations when trying to comprehend this phenomenon.

Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) provides a useful case study of this ancient symbolism. From the outside, AQIM's actions appear to reveal internal leadership schisms. Analysts frequently suggest that AQIM's leaders are competing for power, without providing sufficient evidence proving that genuine leadership disagreements exist. This article contends that what may look like leadership differences to outsiders are in fact part of AQIM's tribal allegiance system, which is found at the heart of all al-Qa`ida affiliates.

An Outside Perspective of Proxy Terrorism

On September 11, 2006, al-Qa`ida announced the allegiance of the Algerian militant group the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). On January 24, 2007, Abdelmalek Droukdel, the Algerian leader of the GSPC, responded to the announcement by changing the name of the group to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb and by increasing terrorist activity in the name of al-Qa`ida and Usama bin Ladin in North Africa and the Sahel.¹ From this date forward, many of AQIM's activities seemed to occur without any real coherence when viewed from an outside perspective. Since different

AQIM leaders claimed responsibility for the same attacks, certain analysts assumed that competition or division plagued the group.

For example, on September 16, 2010, five Frenchmen and two Africans working at the Arlit site of the French uranium group Areva were kidnapped in Niger. On September 21, Salah Abu Muhammad, the official spokesperson for AQIM, claimed responsibility for the kidnapping by praising Abdelhamid Abu Zeid, the Algerian leader of the subgroup responsible for the kidnapping:

Following the promise of our emir, Abu Mussab [Algerian Abdelmalek Droukdel], a group of heroic mujahedeen last Wednesday, under the command of Shaykh Abu Zeid, succeeded in penetrating the French mining site at Arlit in Niger.²

To prove that this claim was true, the recording was accompanied by photos of the hostages sitting in a circle with Shaykh Abu Zeid under a tree in the Mali desert.³ On the recorded audio, the hostages introduced themselves but did not specify any conditions for future negotiation. Despite the French government expressing its willingness to enter into discussion for the release of the hostages, Usama bin Ladin released an audio message on October 27, 2010 claiming responsibility for the kidnapping, the first time he claimed credit for a kidnapping undertaken by AQIM. In the message, Bin Ladin demanded that France withdraw its troops from Afghanistan to avoid terrorist attacks on French soil and to save the lives of the hostages: "The only way to safeguard your nation and maintain your security is to lift all your injustice and its extensions off our people and most importantly to withdraw your forces from Bush's despicable war in Afghanistan."⁴

Two weeks later, on November 18, AQIM's leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel, responded to Bin Ladin in an audiotape aired on al-Jazira. In the recording, Droukdel appeared to have understood the al-Qa`ida chief's message. In addition

"Since AQIM operates in such a large territory, there is not really an established hierarchy or a stable command but rather a shifting leadership based on the oath of allegiance taken between influential individuals."

to repeating the message verbatim,⁵ he directed the French government to negotiate with Bin Ladin concerning the hostages: "Any negotiations over the release of the hostages should be carried out directly with the Lion of Islam, our leader Usama bin Ladin."⁶

Many analysts did not understand the reason for this shift in responsibility between the leader of al-Qa`ida and the leader of AQIM, as well as the leader of the Sahara Brigade, Abu Zeid. When the spokesperson of AQIM, Salah Abu Muhammad, paid tribute during the September 21 statement to both Droukdel and Abu Zeid, he phrased it in a way to express the hierarchical link between the two leaders. Droukdel is presented as the originator of the operation and Abu Zeid as the executing officer. Some analysts believed this showed internal division, suggesting that a war of succession could explode within AQIM.⁷ Others suggested that it was a propaganda exercise aimed at putting Bin Ladin in the international media spotlight. These views, however, are external and ethnocentric interpretations that rely on conjecture. Instead, the statements represent an internal oath of allegiance

1 To understand the roots and evolution of AQIM, see Stephen Harmon, "From GSPC to AQIM: The Evolution of an Algerian Islamist Terrorist Group into an Al-Qa`ida Affiliate and its Implications for the Sahara-Sahel Region," *Concerned Africa Scholars*, June 2010.

2 "Al-Qaeda Claims French Kidnappings," al-Jazira, September 22, 2010.

3 Edward Cody, "'Emir of the South' Abu Zeid Poised to Take Over Al-Qaeda in NW Africa," *Bloomberg*, October 20, 2010.

4 "France Threatened in Alleged Bin Laden Tape," *CNN*, October 27, 2010.

5 "Al-Qaeda Branch Warns France," al-Jazira, November 19, 2010.

6 "AQIM Demands Afghan Withdrawal in Return for French Hostages," *Reuters*, November 18, 2010.

7 See, for instance, Olivier Guitta, "Turmoil and Dissent in North Africa's Al Qaeda," *The National*, December 27, 2010.

that linked the two organizations and laid down certain rights and duties between the two individuals. The same trend occurred with al-Qa`ida in Iraq when Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi and then later Abu Hamza al-Muhajir continued to announce allegiance to Bin Ladin.⁸ Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula's leaders act in the same way.⁹

An Inside Perspective of Proxy Terrorism

Internally, the pledges are a sign of a renewal of allegiance and a confirmation of obedience via an action. Therefore, in the September 21, 2010 AQIM message claiming responsibility, Abdelmalek Droukdel's spokesperson was claiming responsibility for the action of Droukdel's southern commander, Abu Zeid, in pursuit of the oath of allegiance that the latter took during Tariq ibn Ziyad's nomination as leader of the unit. This oath means that all actions performed by Abu Zeid and his unit are done in the name of and on behalf of Droukdel, even if he does not actually participate in the direct order.

Similarly, in his October 27, 2010 message, Bin Ladin was reminding AQIM that they must obey him and that the hostages belong to him in accordance with the hierarchy of allegiance. Bin Ladin achieved this without even mentioning the name of AQIM's leader, Droukdel, or the name of the person who carried out the operation, Abu Zeid. Three weeks later Droukdel confirmed this interpretation by issuing a message that confirmed the allegiance. This allegiance runs from Bin Ladin down to the lowest leader in the field without there ever being any contact or orders given. How can one explain the power and efficiency of this system of implicit command? To understand this process, it is necessary to examine the roots and functioning of allegiance within Middle Eastern tribal societies.

⁸ See, for instance, the article on the forum al-Qim-mah: "From the Secrets of History: Zarqawi as I Knew Him," available at www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=3483. Also see "In Their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency," International Crisis Group, February 15, 2006.

⁹ For Yemen, see Abdel Ilah Haidar Shae'e, "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," *Yemen Times*, March 20, 2010. For Somalia, see "Website: Somali Militants 'Officially' Pledge Allegiance To Bin Laden," CBS News, June 12, 2009.

The Roots of Proxy Terrorism

Since AQIM operates in such a large territory, there is not really an established hierarchy or a stable command but rather a shifting leadership based on the oath of allegiance taken between influential individuals: Droukdel in the north, Yahya Abu Ammar in the south, Abu Zeid in the southeast, Belmokhtar in the southwest, Abu Anas al-Shingieti in the southeast, and Abdelkrim "the Touareg" in the Kidal region.¹⁰ The actions of each loyal combatant and of each local leader are executed in the name of Bin Ladin, and then he can claim responsibility since all members

"The latest terrorist attacks in the region and the declarations made by top al-Qa`ida leaders shed light on the reason for this movement. It essentially stems from the tribal roots of the organization that are based on the oath of allegiance."

of the organization follow the same rules of allegiance. These implicit allegiance rules, internalized by all members, are from ancient Arabic tribal practices and possess a cultural and historical foundation. They are historically founded on the oath of Hudaybiyya (*bay`at al-ridwān*), taken by Muslims before the Prophet Muhammad to renew their trust and loyalty to him. This oath is mentioned in the Qur'an:

Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfills that which he has promised Allah—He will give him a great reward.

¹⁰ See, for instance, the jihadist forum at www.majahd.com/vb/index.php.

Several authenticated stories show that the pledge of allegiance can take on several forms and can be passed between people of different backgrounds and sexes or even between entire groups who choose a leader to represent them.¹¹ The Nigerian group Boko Haram pledged allegiance to AQIM on October 2, 2010 during an announcement calling Nigerians to wage jihad via AQIM's media division al-Andalus.¹² It was actually the leader of the group, Shaykh Muhammed Abu Bakr Bin Muhammed al-Shakwa who pledged allegiance to the AQIM leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel, and by doing so incorporated his group into Bin Ladin's circle of influence, although his allegiance was actually in response to the offer of help made by the AQIM leader several months prior. This offer is not just symbolic but practical, and was of importance to the organization.

Conclusion

Until now, AQIM has grown within the African Sahel without anyone knowing what was driving it. There are of course a number of political, social, economic and military factors that could explain in part such expansion, but it seems that the continuous desire of AQIM leaders to "please" Bin Ladin and to prove their capacity to engage in global jihad through the allegiance mechanism is the main factor driving this branch of the organization today. Their growth seems to be directly related to their "desire of recognition" from the top command of al-Qa`ida. The latest terrorist attacks in the region and the declarations made by top al-Qa`ida leaders shed light on the reason for this movement. It essentially stems from the tribal roots of the organization that are based on the oath of allegiance.

¹¹ See Ibn Hisham, *Sira* 1/141-143, 1/213, 2/40-42, 2/47-56; Maqrizi, *Imtā' Al-Asmā'*, pp. 274-291; Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj Al-Sunna Al-Nabawiyya* 5/330-331.

¹² Note that the failed Christmas Day bomber in 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, was a Muslim of Nigerian descent. "Boko Haram Releases Eid Al-Fitr Address Via Al-Qaeda in North Africa's Media Division Calling on Muslims to Wage Jihad," Arabic Media Monitor, October 2, 2010.

This highlights two fundamental aspects. First, pledging allegiance seems to be imposed on all al-Qa`ida members, linking each individual indirectly to Bin Ladin himself. Second, since the punishment for violating this oath is death, one can understand the driving force behind the loyalty displayed by these individuals. The utmost importance should be placed on understanding the goals of these pledges. Generally, al-Qa`ida, and particularly AQIM, expects all its members to be loyal and faithful because they are fighting in the name of Allah. The pledge reminds the members of their personal duty (*fard `ayn*, or individual jihad) of fighting and dying for the Muslim religion. This pledge is not magical, and it plays an important symbolic role in furthering AQIM's violence and operations.

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The Violent Shift in Hizb al-Tahrir's Rhetoric

By Madeleine Gruen

WITHIN THE LAST year, Hizb al-Tahrir (HT, also transliterated as Hizb ut-Tahrir), the global political Islamist group that has sought to establish an Islamic state through non-violent activism, has issued several blunt calls for Muslims to engage in armed combat with Israel and with coalition military troops in Afghanistan. Such clearly stated appeals are a significant departure from HT's standard rhetoric, which has not previously included overt calls for violence. This article will detail the changes in HT's rhetoric and outline a few of the resulting implications.

HT's Standard Rhetoric on Violence

HT was founded in 1953 by Palestinian-Jordanian Taqiuddin al-Nabahani as "a political party whose ideology is Islam."¹ Al-Nabahani had been involved with the Muslim Brotherhood but was opposed to its cooperation with Western-friendly regimes in the Middle East. Although HT and the Muslim Brotherhood are working toward the same objective, HT does not endorse participation in, or cooperation with, democratic political systems. Rather, HT seeks to establish the Islamic state (which they say will serve as a base from which Islam will be spread to the rest of the world) by liberating Muslims from the "thoughts, systems and laws of the *kufr* (non-believers in Islam)," and through the relentless exposure of the proclaimed collusion between existing regimes in the Muslim world and the United States, which HT calls the chief enemy of Islam.²

HT is not a designated terrorist organization in the United States because it has not been shown to engage in terrorism or any other acts of violence. HT states in its literature that it has "restricted itself to political actions alone" and does not resort to "material actions against rulers" or against those who attempt to hinder

its mission.³ Nevertheless, HT's role in the incitement of violence, or its participation in violence at a future date, has been ambiguous.

While HT regularly declares that it is opposed to terrorism, it will simultaneously present reasons why the victims of terrorism brought the attacks upon themselves. HT's literature also alludes to the notion that a violent confrontation between Muslims and non-Muslims is a likely eventuality, but has not previously stated that belief in definitive terms. HT is entirely clear in its position that armed warfare is a requirement for all Muslims to defend against enemy attack, but has, until recently, shied away from specifics related to timing, place, or methods.

A 2001 leaflet issued by Hizb al-Tahrir America (HTA) states that it is a "direct pre-requisite to the work to establish the State of Khilafah...[to] enhance the physical might of Muslims, weaken that of non-Muslims, strengthen morale for sacrifice among Muslims, and develop the zeal to change reality not to yield to it."⁴ HT's literature also implies that while the party itself does not employ the use of violence, it is a requirement for its Muslim members to fight enemies that attack Islamic countries:

The fact that the Party does not use material power to defend itself or as a weapon against the rulers is of no relevance to the subject of jihad, because jihad has to continue till the Day of Judgment. So whenever the disbelieving enemies attack an Islamic country it becomes compulsory on its Muslim citizens to repel the enemy.⁵

Indeed, HT has never attempted to conceal its belief that resistance is justified when carried out against Israelis and Western military and government personnel operating in an official capacity in Muslim countries. For example, Dr. Imran Waheed, the former spokesman for HT Britain,

¹ "Hizb ut-Tahrir," www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/index.php/EN/def, accessed on February 12, 2011.

² "America Bans Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bangladesh," press release, Hizb al-Tahrir Media Office in Bangladesh, October 29, 2009.

³ "Hizb ut-Tahrir," www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/index.php/EN/def, accessed on February 12, 2011.

⁴ "Establishing Khalifah is Mandatory for Muslims in America," Workshop for Awareness on Islam and Enlightenment (front for Hizb al-Tahrir America), 2001.

⁵ "Hizb ut-Tahrir," www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/index.php/EN/def, accessed on February 12, 2011.

said in an interview in March 2007 on BBC's "HARDtalk" that "Israel is a country that occupies Muslim land. We [HT] support the right of Muslims everywhere to resist that occupation."⁶ Such public statements, however, have not defined the term "resistance" and have usually been folded into more general statements about politics to dilute the impact. Additionally, HT has, to this point, maintained an ability to plausibly deny any direct role in inciting violence by using reported speech, inference, or the passive voice in its published statements.

For example, in December 2010 HT Scandinavia responded to media speculations about Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly's (the "Swedish Bomber") involvement with HT while he was a student in the United Kingdom.⁷ HT did not deny the link but instead went on the offensive by chastising the media for "introducing malicious rumors." The press release proceeded to denounce violence against civilians as Islamically unacceptable under any circumstances, including during military conflicts, but then continued to list reasons why the West has inspired such hatred in the Muslim world, insinuating that violent attacks in the West are brought about as a result of Western governments' policies and treatment of Muslims, even within their own populaces. The release cited repeated "aggression and killing of innocents in Palestine committed by the Jewish occupying force, which constantly is supported by Western governments and media," "the support of Western governments to numerous dictatorships in the Islamic world where the populations suffer from tyranny and oppression," and "the integration policy of the Western governments, which aim at assimilating Muslims in the Western way of life as well as prohibiting the Muslims from their right to preserve their Islamic values and identity."

Call to Violence

It is important to note that HT is a monolithic organization. Press releases issued by any branch are first vetted by HT's leadership and represent the views of the entire organization. The HT main "Media Office" website confirms that "the official opinions of Hizb ut-Tahrir are those carried in statements issued in the name of the various provincial offices, the various media offices of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and the statements of the official spokesmen and media representatives of Hizb ut-Tahrir."⁸

While insinuations of the justifiability of violence abounded, HT had not stated that Muslims "should" commit acts of violence in a specific context. This, however, changed in 2010. In June 2010, HT Bangladesh published a press release titled "O Muslim Armies! Teach the Jews a Lesson After Which They Will Need No Further Lessons" in which they called for "Muslim Armies" to "march forth to fight the Jews, eradicate Israel, and purify the earth of Jewish filth."⁹ According to this statement, there is no uncertainty that HT would like to see Israel eliminated through an armed confrontation.

The HT Bangladesh press release was followed by a September 15, 2010 press release from HT Afghanistan in which they made a plainspoken call for Muslims "to turn [their] guns and anger towards the enemy and to eject them from Afghanistan."¹⁰ This is the first time HT wrote explicitly about the use of weapons.

There is also indication that the rhetoric coming out of HT's Western branches is becoming more militant. Many HT branches in the West, and others around the world, host public conferences as a way to circulate the group's ideas more broadly. Soft topics, such as the comparison of political systems, are the

typical vehicle to introduce the tenets of HT's doctrine at their conferences. For example, HTA hosted a conference in 2009 titled "The Fall of Capitalism & the Rise of Islam" at which the problems created by capitalism were discussed and the concept of an Islamic state was presented as the best alternative. The subject of violence had not been raised

"According to this statement, there is no uncertainty that HT would like to see Israel eliminated through an armed confrontation."

by HT at any of its previous public conferences until HT Scandinavia (which changed its name from HT Denmark in March 2010 to indicate that the branch now represents Sweden, Norway, and Finland) changed that trend in a January 21, 2011 conference in Copenhagen titled "Afghanistan: The Scandinavian Governments' Service to the USA." The invitation to the conference stated that it is "Islamically unacceptable to be passive and it's not enough to just be against the war [in Afghanistan] on a moral level."¹¹

The invitation further stated that the "meeting will also focus on the duty of armed resistance of the Muslims in Afghanistan and its environs. We consider this resistance as fully legitimate." Although the language used by HT Scandinavia in the press material to promote the conference and the language used by the speakers at the conference was not as blunt as that used by HT Afghanistan, their message was clear when they likened a potential civilian armed "resistance" in Afghanistan against coalition troops to the Danish Resistance,¹² in which approximately 900 Danish citizens lost their lives fighting the Nazis' control of Denmark during World War II.

6 Dr. Imran Waheed, BBC's "HARDtalk," November 18, 2003, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3BE94oB_w.

7 "A Sincere Advice to the Swedish Media From Hizb ut-Tahrir Scandinavia," press release, Hizb al-Tahrir, December 12, 2010.

8 For details, see www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info.

9 "O Muslim Armies! Teach the Jews a Lesson After Which They Will Need No Further Lessons," press release, Hizb al-Tahrir Bangladesh, June 3, 2010, available at www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/info/english.php/contents_en/entry_8271.

10 "O' Muslims, Your Internal Conflict is Adding to the Strength of the Invaders," press release, Hizb al-Tahrir Afghanistan, September 15, 2010, available at www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/info/english.php/contents_en/entry_9248.

11 Invitation to conference "Afghanistan: The Scandinavian Governments' Service to the U.S.A.," www.hizb-ut-tahrir.dk/new/, accessed on January 28, 2011.

12 "Hizb ut-Tahrir Scandinavia Afghanistan seminar promotional video," available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqaGvVSOYZo, accessed on January 31, 2011.

Implications

Even if it hypothetically became their intention, it is highly unlikely that HT has the capability to launch a sustained campaign of deadly attacks on U.S. and NATO troops without partnering with an armed militant group. Nevertheless, HT has members and supporters situated in professional positions of authority, or who have access to sensitive security information.¹³ HT's strategic recruitment and placement of members in such positions is done in anticipation of opportunities to weaken adversarial governments.

HT may not even have the will to spearhead violent attacks, as such actions would jeopardize the organization's ever-growing foothold around the world. In most countries, HT goes largely unchallenged, in part

“In most countries, HT goes largely unchallenged, in part because counterterrorism resources are dedicated to immediate physical threats. The lack of attention has enabled HT to carry on in its mission to persuade Muslims to adopt its beliefs as their own.”

because counterterrorism resources are dedicated to immediate physical threats. This lack of attention has enabled HT to carry on in its mission to persuade Muslims to adopt its beliefs as their own. On the other hand, if HT perceives that the time is ripe for it to gain control of a Muslim country, especially one which has a potentially supportive population and an established military, then its foothold in other countries may be worth sacrificing.

HT has caused contention in nearly every one of the nearly 50 countries in which it has a presence; whether it is between governments and their citizenry or between competitive factions within one government. HT is banned in most of the Muslim world because, even though it is not an armed militant organization, it has the ability to diminish support for already-fragile governments through its grassroots propaganda campaigns and its large-scale anti-government demonstrations.

In the West, HT has sparked intra-government tensions between those who believe it should be banned, citing HT's outspoken anti-democracy positions and its track record in playing a role in the radicalization of individuals who have gone on to participate in acts of terrorism, and those who believe that HT has a right to voice its viewpoints, no matter how offensive, because allowing such expression is essential in free democratic societies.

HT has survived attempts to ban its branches in the United Kingdom and in Denmark because it cannot be proven that the group is engaged in any criminal or violent activity. Nor could it be proven that HT incites violence. To date, HT has been able to deny a responsible role in any act of terrorism because it had not issued any direct or specific orders for Muslims to engage in terrorism or any other kind of violence.

Nevertheless, now that branches of the group have told its members and supporters that it is “Islamically unacceptable to be passive and it's not enough to just be against the war on a moral level”¹⁴ and that the time has come for Muslims to turn their guns against the enemy, it will become more difficult for HT to deny having played a role if its members or supporters turn up on the battlefield.

Conclusion

HT appeared to be relatively benign in the spectrum of radical Islamist groups because it does not directly engage in terrorism and other forms of violence (although it is regarded by many to be a radicalizing catalyst for those who may ultimately take a violent path). The group has so far stuck to its non-violent methods; however, its recent shift from passive approval of violence against coalition troops and Israelis to active encouragement of attacks may signal HT's transition from its standing as a mere “cheerleader for jihad”¹⁵ to full-fledged instigator of violence.

In the past, when HT has been accused of anti-Semitism or of instigating violence, it has responded with counter-accusations that the media takes quotations out of context so that it may distort HT's intended meaning. Now that HT has expressed violent intentions so clearly, it has crossed a threshold that will be difficult from which to step back. Tactically, it will be harder for HT to continue referring to itself as purely a political party when it has taken on a new role goading Muslims to pull the trigger on those HT has declared as its enemies.

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¹³ Muhammad Amir Rana, “Hizbut Tahrir in Pakistan: Discourse and Impact,” Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, October 2010, p. 16.

¹⁴ Invitation to conference “Afghanistan: The Scandinavian Governments' Service to the U.S.A.,” www.hizb-ut-tahrir.dk/new/, accessed on January 28, 2011.

¹⁵ Shiraz Maher, “Glasgow Bombs: The Doctor I Knew,” *New Statesman*, July 5, 2007.

Baltimore's Jamaat al-Muslimeen: Promoting a Radical but Disciplined Message on Jihad

By J.M. Berger

AS CONCERNS ABOUT homegrown terrorism mount, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials are increasingly focused on initiatives targeting radicalization in an effort to preempt violence. In congressional testimony in early February, DHS officials touted interagency and “whole government” efforts to counterprogram against radical narratives.¹ Such efforts open the door to a complex problem-set that defies traditional policing. A case study on the challenges ahead can be found in Jamaat al-Muslimeen (JaM), an Islamic organization in Baltimore, Maryland with a decades-long track record of extremist rhetoric.

Although JaM explicitly discourages acts of violence by Muslims in the United States, it advances a number of ideological points closely linked to violent radicalism, while excusing virtually all Muslims convicted of terrorism as victims of government persecution. Even with its careful qualification regarding violence in the United States by its adherents, JaM's message contributes to a permissive environment for violent radicalization by validating core assumptions shared by nearly all homegrown Islamist terrorists.

Background

Headquartered in Baltimore, JaM members hold leadership positions in at least three mosques in the Baltimore area. The organization also has representatives in Tennessee, New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.² Its active membership is estimated to be between 100 and 200 people.

1 Testimony of Michael E. Leiter, director, National Counterterrorism Center, Committee on House Homeland Security, February 9, 2011.

2 “Accused Bomb Plotter's Mosque Tied to Radical Group,” IPT News, December 16, 2010; “National Islamic Shoorah of Jamaat al-Muslimeen Highlights Central Issues Facing Muslims of America,” www.jamaatmuslimeeninternational.org, accessed on February 12, 2011.

JaM's primary function is *da'wa*, or calling Americans to Islam, and supporting Muslims imprisoned in the United States, including a number of convicted terrorists. It also endorses military jihad in Muslim-majority countries and in situations where Muslims are perceived to be under physical attack. This support is mostly rhetorical, but JaM also raises funds for legal costs for the families of Muslims in the United States accused of terrorism.³

Ideologically, JaM is openly critical of American values and morals and supportive of jihad in several theaters overseas, but it repeatedly emphasizes that violent action is not permitted in the United States.⁴ Islamic thinkers cited by the group include `Umar `Abd al-Rahman, Ayatollah Khomeini, Abu al-A`la Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb, with the consistent thread being movement-oriented Islam and a focus on the establishment of Islamic states.⁵

JaM carries out its *da'wa* function through personal appearances by group leaders at mosques and conferences around the United States, as well as through an online newsletter called *New Trend Magazine*, which has been published weekly since the 1970s. JaM claims its speakers draw crowds often in the low hundreds for Friday *khatbas* (sermons) at its own mosques and as guests at unaffiliated mosques.⁶ The organization also hosts conferences, protests and rallies of varying size, but usually including at least dozens of participants.

Leadership and Organization

Lincoln University English literature professor Kaukab Siddique is JaM's leader and the dominant editorial voice of *New Trend*.⁷ During the

3 *New Trend Magazine*, December 27, 2004; *New Trend Magazine*, May 7, 2005. These are just two examples. Many other issues of the magazine contain similar content.

4 “National Islamic Shoorah of Jamaat al-Muslimeen Highlights Central Issues Facing Muslims of America.”

5 “Great Islamic Thinkers of Modern Times: Glimpses,” www.newtrendmag.org, accessed on February 12, 2011.

6 Personal interview, confidential source, February 12, 2011; “National Islamic Shoorah of Jamaat al-Muslimeen Highlights Central Issues Facing Muslims of America”; *New Trend Magazine*, May 19, 2005.

7 For more details, see “Far-Right and Muslim Extrem-

ists Gather in Baltimore: Jamaat al-Muslimeen & Kaukab Siddique,” Anti-Defamation League, August 19, 2008.

8 “Islam in America: Muslim Students' Association Collection,” annual report, The Islamic Teaching Center, DePaul University, August 25, 1977.

9 “Islam in America: Muslim Students' Association Collection,” Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, North American Islamic Trust, DePaul University, November 26-27, 1977.

10 *New Trend Magazine*, June 4, 2004.

11 For details, see www.jamaatmuslimeeninternational.org.

12 “President Clinton Honors Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentors,” National Science Foundation, September 7, 2000.

13 *New Trend Magazine*, April 30, 2008.

Embittered by what he saw—with some justification—as the Saudi government's use of money to buy religious influence over American Muslim groups, Siddique began publishing a controversial newsletter, *New Trend Magazine*, around the same time he departed MSA. At some point, his activism congealed into the organization, Jamaat al-Muslimeen.¹⁰ JaM's national leadership is rounded out by a *shura* council consisting of five members who are located around the United States, including in Brooklyn, Texas, North Carolina and Louisiana.¹¹ The *shura* members individually take part in both Muslim and minority activism but are less vocal and visible than Siddique. One of the more prominent members, Abdulalim Abdullah Shabazz, is a former member of the Nation of Islam and a distinguished mathematician who received a presidential award for math mentoring in 2000.¹²

Positions

Jamaat al-Muslimeen's primary communications vehicle is *New Trend Magazine*, a weekly newsletter. *New Trend* claims “a bigger circulation than any of the other Muslim media,” which is difficult to credit.¹³ The newsletter was distributed in print for decades, but switched to online-only distribution in recent years due to financial reasons. Issues of *New Trend* from 2000 forward are available online.

JaM activists travel to unaffiliated mosques around the country to speak and distribute pamphlets and publications, the latter at times without the approval of local mosque leaders. In *New Trend* issues since 2000 and in *khutbas* by members of the *shura* council, JaM reveals a mix of views that defy easy categorization. The organization is inclusive toward both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, but dismissive of Sufis. Although it is stridently conservative, virulently condemning homosexuality and American moral values in general, it also supports leadership roles for Muslim women and condemns those who it feels distort Islamic teachings to oppress women.

JaM's website states that "jihad is considered a sixth pillar [of Islam] in countries where Islam is the majority religion." In its preaching and in the newsletter, the organization has repeatedly supported armed struggle in overseas theaters commonly associated with Islamist terrorism and extremism.¹⁴ During *khutbas* given in the Baltimore area in 2004, Siddique cited conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya and the Palestinian Territories as part of a worldwide war against Islam and examples of aggression against Islam by the United States and others.¹⁵ In *New Trend*, JaM characterizes the war in Afghanistan as part of a "clash of civilizations":

The American troops [in Afghanistan] seem aware that it's a war between two ways of life: the Islamic, inward, spiritual, family oriented, non-consumer, and the American, entertainment oriented, sexually easy going, based on multinational corporations. It's a strange fate which has brought the poorest country in the world, devastated by war, brimming with the energy of resurgent Islam, up against the most powerful country in the world, overflowing with destructive power and backed by endless Jewish finance.¹⁶

During a *khutba* given in Greensboro, North Carolina, Imam Badi Ali, a member of JaM's *shura* council, similarly argued the case for an Israeli-controlled global war against Islam, citing Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir and Chechnya as connected fronts in that single conflict.¹⁷ One issue of *New Trend* celebrated Iraqi insurgents in Falluja not long after the killing of four American military contractors, whose burned bodies were paraded through the streets and eventually hung from a bridge:

April 10, 2004 was a day of glory for Islam and the Islamic resistance in Iraq. The most powerful military power in the world could not conquer FALLUJAH. The Iraqi people are UNITED AS NEVER BEFORE, Shi'ites and Sunnis joining hands to resist the American elite army installed in their country...America has not understood the Islamic spirit of martyrdom and the concept of the Hereafter. Muslims with that spirit can be killed but they cannot be defeated...As the resistance continues, American power will gradually be undermined, as was the Soviet power in Afghanistan. Over the years, FALLUJAH will be an example for Muslims. An Islamic will to fight back is gradually developing.¹⁸

Despite its celebration of military jihad opposing American "occupations" abroad, Siddique clearly and repeatedly advises readers of *New Trend* that they cannot undertake violence against Americans in the United States, where Muslims are a minority:

In America, Muslims have the duty of peacefully giving the message of Islam. The jihad with the sword is not applicable to a Muslim minority living in a non-Muslim country. Jihad with weapons is appropriate where Muslims are being physically attacked.¹⁹

Despite this important qualification, Siddique in a 2005 *khutba* blasted an anti-terrorism *fatwa* issued by mainstream Muslim leaders as *dajjali* (a reference to

the anti-Christ in Islamic eschatology).²⁰ JaM clearly defines jihad primarily as armed struggle and explicitly refutes arguments by mainstream U.S. Muslim leaders in favor of a non-violent definition prioritizing the spiritual struggle against temptation and wrongdoing:

The fact is that Islam teaches Jihad as ARMED STRUGGLE against oppressors. The verses of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), make it absolutely clear that JIHAD MEANS ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST OPPRESSORS, OCCUPIERS, TYRANTS. Many in the Muslim world consider America and Israel, along with India and Russia, as oppressors and exploiters who should be fought. The idea that Jihad is a peaceful, inner, spiritual development is absurd and without foundation.²¹

While overtly repudiating violence on U.S. soil, JaM nevertheless supports a wide range of Muslims accused of taking part in such violence, most notably `Umar `Abd al-Rahman, who was convicted of seditious conspiracy in relation to multiple terrorist plots in New York, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. JaM leaders dispute al-Rahman's guilt and claim he is a political prisoner. Other so-called political prisoners include al-Qa`ida member Jose Padilla, convicted killer Jamil al-Amin and Ahmad Ajaj, who was convicted of conspiracy in the World Trade Center bombing.²² According to an article in *New Trend*, even World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef was tortured and coerced into a questionable confession, which was responsible for his conviction.²³

²⁰ *New Trend Magazine*, August 7, 2005.

²¹ "Husein Ibish of ADC Makes a Fool of Himself Talking About Jihad," *New Trend Magazine*, accessed on February 13, 2011.

²² "America Post-Bush: What is our Role as Muslims?" www.jamaatalmuslimeeninternational.org, accessed on February 13, 2011.

²³ "Voice of the Oppressed Masses," *New Trend Magazine*, accessed on February 13, 2011.

¹⁴ *New Trend Magazine*, August 7, 2005.

¹⁵ *New Trend Magazine*, December 25, 2008.

¹⁶ *New Trend Magazine*, April 1, 2004.

¹⁷ *New Trend Magazine*, July 1, 2006.

¹⁸ *New Trend Magazine*, April 12, 2004.

¹⁹ *New Trend Magazine*, April 8, 2004.

During *khutbas*, Siddique has stated flatly that “no American Muslim is a terrorist.”²⁴ In a 2005 *khutba* in New York City, he told audiences to support Muslim political prisoners, saying, “We assure you, they are not guilty. They have been railroaded. Not one of them is guilty!”²⁵

In addition to these mixed messages, Siddique denies most of the historical account of the Holocaust, a view shared by others in the organization to varying degrees. While insisting the organization is not anti-Semitic, *New Trend* routinely rails against what it perceives as the ubiquitous influence of Jews in American politics and media:

It is not anti-Semitic to note that even the most idiotic book written by a Jew will get published in America and will even be introduced by an adviser to the President. By contrast, the books of a great historian like [Holocaust denier] David Irving are barred from all book chains like Borders and Barnes & Noble because he honestly could not find any evidence of gas chambers at Auschwitz or of the claim that the Nazis killed six million Jews...Irving is NEVER invited to C-Span. Why? Because a Jew named Lamb decides which books will be introduced on C-Span. Is that view anti-semitic or a fact?²⁶

JaM also has little use for mainstream Muslim organizations, such as the Islamic Society of North America and the Council on American-Islamic Relations. During a *khutba* to students at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Siddique said:

For years, these self-proclaimed leaders obtained funds from overseas and tried to impose themselves on the Muslim community on the basis of their financial power. Thus the richest, not the best, became the leaders of America’s Muslims. There are leaders here who do not reveal their incomes or their sources of

income. As a result, most Muslims do not know the real allegiance of their leaders.²⁷

Transitional Media

New Trend presents an interesting example of English-language extremist propaganda in flux. During the 1990s, the scene was dominated by print newsletters such as *al-Hussam* (The Sword), published most Fridays during the 1990s by followers of `Umar `Abd al-Rahman in Boston.²⁸ The paper newsletter was costly, running about \$1,000 per month for printing and distribution, and the newsletter was frequently banned by mosques for its radical content,²⁹ a problem also faced by JaM.³⁰ *New Trend’s* switch to online distribution provided greater reach with fewer costs, while circumventing the firewall at moderate mosques.

Al-Hussam had a single-minded focus on supporting military jihad. *New Trend* is more cosmopolitan, mixing commentary on overseas jihad with discussion of women’s issues and other Islamic topics. *New Trend* is also more aggressively anti-American, continually attacking the state of U.S. politics and lamenting America’s “war against Islam.”

New Trend’s online distribution, diverse topics and careful parsing of language concerning violence foreshadowed the new breed of radical websites most effectively represented by Revolution Muslim (now rebranded “Islam Policy”). Like *New Trend*, the Revolution Muslim family of blogs focuses on a wide range of Islamic issues and voices with enthusiastic support for radical figures, while carefully hedging against anything that could be interpreted in court as an actionable incitement to violence. *New Trend*, however, is far more disciplined in its message that jihad within the United States is forbidden (no matter how grievous the provocation might be).

Impact

If estimates of JaM’s membership in the low hundreds are accurate, JaM is miniscule in comparison to the mainstream Muslim population, but

strikingly large given the strident tone of its political views. Its reach extends beyond the committed membership, thanks to *khutbas* given around the country by JaM leaders.

The most directly comparable movement, Revolution Muslim, is estimated to have peaked at about a dozen active members, although its reach on the internet and visibility in the media have been substantially larger. Revolution Muslim’s status as the target of law enforcement action is correspondingly larger, leading to several arrests of members and affiliates. In comparison, no known JaM members have been arrested for terrorism or related crimes despite scrutiny from law enforcement.³¹

JaM stays on the right side of the law through its extraordinary message discipline. More than 10 years of *New Trend* issues reviewed by this author show a remarkably consistent set of principles and an extremely careful and considered sense of where the line should be drawn. Despite being against violence in the United States, JaM’s message contributes to violent radicalization by supporting arguments shared by nearly all homegrown Islamist terrorists:

- The United States is conducting a military war against Muslims.
- The United States is persecuting Muslims on U.S. soil.
- The U.S. government and media are controlled by Israeli/Zionist/Jewish manipulation.
- Those who militarily resist the United States and Israel, including the Taliban and Iraqi insurgents, are heroes acting within their Islamic beliefs.
- Those killed while fighting the United States and Israel are martyrs.

The problem is accentuated by JaM’s blanket denial that American Muslims are capable of terrorism and its characterization of virtually all such cases as political persecution. A possible example of how this background noise can lead to more aggressive actions may be found in Antonio Martinez, a Muslim

²⁴ *New Trend Magazine*, December 25, 2004.

²⁵ *New Trend Magazine*, January 17, 2005.

²⁶ *New Trend Magazine*, May 12, 2004.

²⁷ *New Trend Magazine*, May 31, 2004.

²⁸ *U.S.A. v. Muhamed Mubayyid, Emadeddin Muntasser, and Samir Al Monla*, District of Massachusetts, 2005.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *New Trend Magazine*, July 11, 2006.

³¹ “National Islamic Shoora Meets in Pennsylvania: Anti-Israel, Interracial, Strongly pro-Woman, anti-War, Based on the Qur’an and Hadith,” www.jamaatalmuslimeninternational.org, accessed on February 13, 2011.

convert accused of attempting to bomb a Maryland military recruiting center. He attended one of the mosques controlled by JaM in Baltimore. Martinez began attending the mosque about six months before he was arrested in December 2010.³² No evidence has emerged, however, to indicate Martinez was a member of the JaM organization proper.

Because its message is so carefully crafted and controlled, JaM presents a challenging target for traditional law enforcement and counterterrorism techniques. JaM's strong stand against mainstream Muslim "collaborators" also makes it a highly unlikely partner for the sort of community-based outreach that DHS hopes to use in its counterradicalization efforts. Other radicalizing organizations, including those more closely tied to violence, are already learning to adapt by adopting an approach similar to the strategy that has kept JaM viable and operating in plain sight for decades. In 2010, Revolution Muslim renamed and revamped its operation under the flag of "Islam Policy," shifting its focus to a more expansive range of Islamic issues and calibrating its public face to present a less violent and controversial image.

Counterterrorism, while challenging in its own right, is made possible by the illegality of terrorism. Counterradicalization is a much different problem-set due to the legality and protections afforded to free speech under the U.S. Constitution. JaM's durability illustrates just how little latitude the government has to take concrete action against radicalizing actors. Approaches to this problem-set will require especially innovative thinking, and metrics should be devised to quantify the cost-benefit ratio of new counterradicalization efforts compared to traditional counterterrorism, rather than trusting an intuitive hope that this path will lead to a more stable homeland threat environment.

J.M. Berger is editor of INTELWIRE.com and author of the forthcoming book, Jihad Joe: Americans Who Go to War in the Name of Islam.

³² Scott Calvert, "Man Charged in Bomb Plot Appeared to Drift into Islamic Extremism," *Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 2010.

Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

January 1, 2011 (EGYPT): A suspected suicide bomber ripped through a crowd outside a church in Alexandria, killing at least 21 people. The explosion occurred in the early morning of New Year's Day, as the New Year's Eve service at the al-Qiddissin Church drew to a close. As stated by the Associated Press, "The attack came in the wake of repeated threats by al Qaeda militants in Iraq to attack Egypt's Christians." - *BBC, January 1; AP, January 1*

January 1, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Multiple U.S. aerial drones killed 15 suspected militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Reuters, January 1*

January 2, 2011 (IRAQ): Suspected militants killed four Iraqi security force members in a series of Baghdad attacks. All of the killings involved assailants equipped with silencers, and all occurred within less than an hour of one another. - *AP, January 2*

January 3, 2011 (FRANCE): The trial of eight men accused of armed robberies to fund al-Qa`ida began in Paris. The leader of the group, Ouassini Cherifi (known as "The Turk"), is accused of meeting Islamist extremists in Turkey in September 2005 and pledging to fund their operations. - *UPI, January 3*

January 4, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab Province, was assassinated by one of his bodyguards in Islamabad. Punjab is Pakistan's most populous province. - *AFP, January 4*

January 5, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghanistan's intelligence agencies announced that they had foiled two major attacks in Kabul in the past 20 days, one of which targeted First Vice President Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim. As part of the plot against the vice president, five militants belonging to the Haqqani network planned to assassinate Fahim with a suicide bomber. The other disrupted plot was a planned bombing near President Hamid Karzai's palace in the capital. - *AP, January 5*

January 5, 2011 (MALI): A suspected al-Qa`ida-linked man detonated a bomb at the French Embassy in Bamako. According to the Associated Press, "The assault on the French diplomatic compound in Mali's capital was unsophisticated. It was carried out by a single man who police say fired several gunshots and set a gas cylinder alight and threw it, wounding two people and causing only minor damage to one of the embassy's outer gates." The alleged bomber is a 25-year-old Tunisian who came from an al-Qa`ida camp in the Sahara, and who had a "personal hatred for France." - *AP, January 6; AFP, January 5*

January 5, 2011 (MOROCCO): Moroccan security forces announced that they dismantled a 27-member al-Qa`ida cell in the Western Sahara. One of the al-Qa`ida operatives had been "dispatched to set up a rear base" in Morocco. - *Deutsche Press Agency, January 5*

January 7, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated explosives in a bathhouse in Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province, killing 17 people, mostly civilians. The bomber appeared to target an Afghan police commander, who was killed in the attack. - *Christian Science Monitor, January 7*

January 7, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone killed two people in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *BBC, January 12*

January 7, 2011 (YEMEN): Suspected al-Qa`ida militants killed at least 17 Yemeni soldiers in two ambushes near the town of Lawder in Abyan Province. - *AP, January 7*

January 7, 2011 (NIGER): Armed men kidnapped two French nationals from the upscale Toulousain restaurant in Niamey, the capital of Niger. The following day, on January 8, both hostages were killed after a failed rescue attempt by French military forces across the border in Mali. The men were identified as Antoine de Leocour, an aid worker in Niger, and his friend Vincent Delory. Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb later took credit for the kidnapping. - *AP, January 7; Christian Science Monitor, January 9; AFP, January 10; Voice of America, January 13*

January 9, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Punjab Province Law Minister Rana Sanaullah told reporters that Qari Saifullah Akhtar, a suspected senior Islamist militant, was released from Pakistani custody in early December 2010 "because authorities finished questioning him in connection with the October 2007 attempted assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and found no grounds to charge him." According to the Associated Press, "one U.S. official said Akhtar has extensive ties to al-Qaida and other terrorist groups and is someone who should not be free to walk around the streets of Pakistan or any other country." He is also a founder of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami. - *AP, January 9*

January 9, 2011 (SAUDI ARABIA): Saudi Arabia issued global arrest warrants for 47 suspected al-Qa`ida militants thought to be located in Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Iraq. The wanted men allegedly tried to build terrorist cells inside the Saudi kingdom. Some of the men are considered senior leaders in al-Qa`ida. - *Reuters, January 9*

January 10, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed two policemen and one civilian in Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province. - *Los Angeles Times, January 11*

January 12, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted a minibus carrying Afghan intelligence service employees in Kabul, killing at least two people. The Taliban claimed responsibility. - *AP, January 12*

January 12, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a mosque and police station in Bannu District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, killing 18 people. The two buildings were adjacent to one another. - *AFP, January 12; New York Times, January 12*

January 12, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone killed at least three militants near Mir Ali in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. According to the BBC, "The compound, the target of Wednesday's attack, was owned

by Zafar Khan, who was linked to a militant group led by Hafiz Gul Bahadur." - *BBC, January 12*

January 14, 2011 (IRAQ): Twelve militants linked to the Islamic State of Iraq escaped from a prison in Basra. The men apparently escaped after obtaining police uniforms. - *Reuters, January 14; BBC, January 14*

January 14, 2011 (TUNISIA): Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali stepped down from power, ending his 23 year rule. His move came in response to massive protests against the government, and he and his family were forced to flee Tunisia for Saudi Arabia. - *BBC, January 14*

January 14, 2011 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber detonated explosives in a café in Khasavyurt, located in Dagestan. Two people were killed. - *AP, January 14*

January 15, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban fighters set 14 NATO supply tankers on fire in the Dera Murad Jamali area of Baluchistan Province. - *AP, January 15*

January 17, 2011 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle in Ramadi, Anbar Province. The bomber targeted the governor of Anbar Province, but he survived the attack. - *UPI, January 17*

January 17, 2011 (YEMEN): A Yemeni security court sentenced Hisham Assem, a suspected al-Qa`ida member, to death for killing a French oil worker in October 2010. The court also convicted Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi in absentia and sentenced him to 10 years in prison. - *AP, January 17*

January 18, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan police said that approximately 40 Taliban insurgents surrendered in Kunduz Province. A Taliban spokesman denied the claim, saying, "They are not genuine members of the Taliban as real Taliban fighters would never surrender to the government. If anyone is seen to do so, they will be punished by death." - *Reuters, January 18*

January 18, 2011 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated an explosives vest among a crowd of prospective police recruits in Tikrit, Salah al-Din Province, killing at least 50 people. - *New York Times, January 18; AP, January 18*

January 18, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone killed five militants in Dashgah village in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AFP, January 18*

January 19, 2011 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber driving an ambulance targeted an Iraqi police training center in Diyala Province, killing at least 15 people. - *Reuters, January 19*

January 19, 2011 (THAILAND): Approximately 30 insurgents attacked an army base in Narathiwat Province of southern Thailand, killing at least four soldiers. The fighters reportedly stormed the armory, stealing assault rifles and other weapons. - *Voice of America, January 20*

January 20, 2011 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. government designated Qari Hussain as a "specially designated" global terrorist. Hussain is considered to be a leading trainer of suicide bombers in Pakistan and Afghanistan. - *AP, January 20*

January 20, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): German al-Qa`ida militant Bekkay Harrach (also known as Abu Talha al-Almani) is believed to have been killed in Afghanistan. Fellow militants announced that Harrach was killed while leading an attack on Bagram airbase. The date of his death was not provided. Harrach appeared in al-Qa`ida videos in 2009 threatening to attack Germany during that country's general elections. - *BBC, January 20*

January 20, 2011 (IRAQ): Three car bombs along the roads leading to Karbala exploded, killing at least 52 people traveling to the city as part of an annual Shi`a pilgrimage. - *New York Times, January 20*

January 21, 2011 (GLOBAL): Usama bin Ladin purportedly released a new audiotape warning that France would pay a "high price" for its policies and that "the release of your [French] prisoners in the hands of our brothers

is linked to the withdrawal of your soldiers from our country.” Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb is holding a number of French hostages. Bin Ladin cautioned France, saying that the French economy is not prepared for a successful fight against al-Qa`ida: “The size of your debts and the weakness of your budget will not allow you to open a new front.” - *France24, January 21; AP, January 21*

January 21, 2011 (CANADA): The Canadian government served deportation papers to Mohamed Harkat, who is allegedly an al-Qa`ida sleeper agent. The Algerian native is accused of operating a guesthouse in Pakistan for jihadist militants before moving to Canada in 1995 on a forged Saudi passport. - *BBC, January 21*

January 21, 2011 (UNITED KINGDOM): A British judge agreed to extradite Abid Naseer to the United States for his alleged role in plotting attacks in the United Kingdom, the United States and Norway. Naseer, a suspected al-Qa`ida operative, is a 24-year-old Pakistani who was arrested in the United Kingdom in 2009. The case will now move to Britain's home secretary for final approval. - *AFP, January 21*

January 22, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb killed two NATO personnel in eastern Afghanistan. - *Reuters, January 22*

January 22, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A roadside bomb killed two police officers and a civilian in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *CNN, January 22*

January 23, 2011 (IRAQ): Five car bombs exploded in different Baghdad neighborhoods, killing at least six people. According to the *New York Times*, “The bombs struck Sunni neighborhoods as well as Shiite areas. Two appeared directed at security forces and one at Iranian pilgrims marching to observe Arbaeen, which commemorates the end of the 40-day mourning period for the death of Imam Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. The targets of the other two bombs were unclear.” Insurgents appeared to employ a new tactic by using taxis for at least two of the car bombs, since taxis reportedly

draw less security attention when parked on the street. - *New York Times, January 23*

January 23, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Two suspected U.S. aerial drones killed six alleged militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Voice of America, January 23*

January 24, 2011 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber ripped through Moscow's busiest airport, killing 36 people. The bomb was detonated in the international arrivals hall of the Domodedovo airport. Russian investigators later determined that the bomber was a 20-year-old man from the troubled North Caucasus region. - *New York Times, January 25; Bloomberg, January 29; BBC, February 2*

January 24, 2011 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb killed Iraqi Brigadier Samer Hassan Saleh near his Baghdad home. - *New York Times, January 24*

January 24, 2011 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded at a terminal filled with buses carrying Shi`a pilgrims to Karbala, killing seven people. The incident occurred 12 miles east of Karbala. - *BBC, January 24*

January 24, 2011 (IRAQ): A car bomb killed 18 people in south Karbala. - *BBC, January 24*

January 24, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Brigadier Sultan Amir, better known as “Colonel Imam,” was executed by Taliban fighters at some point in the last few days. Colonel Imam, a former Pakistani intelligence official, was considered the “Godfather of the Taliban,” as he played a major role in the formation of the Taliban in Afghanistan. He was captured by the Pakistani Taliban in March 2010. According to the *New York Times*, “Colonel Imam formed a close bond with Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban leader who welcomed Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan. After Sept. 11, when the Taliban movement became stronger in Pakistan, Colonel Imam struggled to stay relevant to a new younger generation of jihadists, more ruthless and uncontrollable.” - *New York Times, January 24; The News International, February 22*

January 25, 2011 (UNITED STATES): A federal judge sentenced Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani to life in prison for his role in al-Qa`ida's truck bombings on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. - *Christian Science Monitor, January 25*

January 25, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a Shi`a procession in Lahore, killing at least 10 people. - *New York Times, January 25*

January 25, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a Shi`a procession in Karachi, killing at least two people. - *New York Times, January 25*

January 25, 2011 (EGYPT): Egyptian authorities announced that they arrested 19 people, including Tunisians and Libyans, with suspected links to al-Qa`ida. According to Egypt's interior minister, the group “had used Egypt as a transit point from which they would travel to other countries, including Iraq, to join a group called the Islamic State of Iraq.” The men were arrested last month. - *AFP, January 25*

January 25, 2011 (PHILIPPINES): A bomb exploded on a bus in Manila, killing four people. - *Reuters, January 25*

January 26, 2011 (YEMEN): Suspected al-Qa`ida gunmen killed four Yemeni soldiers and a postal official in Hadramawt Province. The militants recovered \$50,000 from the army-escorted postal truck. - *Reuters, January 26*

January 27, 2011 (SPAIN): Spanish police arrested Malik Imtanan Sarwar, a Pakistani man, on charges of forging passports for al-Qa`ida-linked groups. - *AP, January 28*

January 27, 2011 (IRAQ): A car bomb ripped through a funeral ceremony in a Shi`a district of Baghdad, killing 48 people. The vehicle may have been driven by a suicide bomber. - *AFP, January 27*

January 27, 2011 (YEMEN): Suspected al-Qa`ida gunmen ambushed the car of Ahmed Ghaleb Rahawi, identified as a senior Yemeni official. The attack, which occurred in Abyan Province, wounded the official's children.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

Rahawi was not in the car at the time of the ambush. - *AFP, January 28*

January 28, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a supermarket in a wealthy section of Kabul, killing at least eight people. - *Los Angeles Times, January 29*

January 28, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A truck packed with explosives ripped through the Kohat tunnel, killing at least four people. The tunnel connects Peshawar with Kohat. - *Voice of America, January 28*

January 29, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber assassinated the deputy governor of Kandahar Province, Abdul Latif Ashna. - *Voice of America, January 29*

January 29, 2011 (ALGERIA): A court sentenced six people to death for a June 2009 al-Qa`ida attack that killed 19 people. According to Agence France-Presse, "The court in Constantine also handed four others two-year prison sentences for 'supporting a terrorist group'...Another 15 were acquitted, while sentencing for a last defendant, still at large, has been postponed." - *AFP, January 29*

January 31, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani security forces shelled Taliban positions in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 21 militants. - *CNN, February 1*

January 31, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a vehicle carrying Rasheed Khan, the deputy superintendent of police in southern Peshawar, killing him along with three other people. - *AP, January 31*