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INSURGENT

IRAQ

GoldType

Al Zargawi and
the New Generation

Loretta Napoleoni



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INSURGENT IRAQ

Al Zargawi and the New Generation

Loretta Napoleoni

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Introduction

In July 2005 a series of bomb attacks brought the violence of jihad to the streets of London in the worst terrorist attacks against the city since World War II. On 7 July, four British citizens blew themselves up during rush hour. At the time of writing, their intentions are still unclear, but it looks as though they were hoping to blow themselves up at the four points of the compass, drawing a cross in violence, inscribing the sign of Crusade and counter-Crusade across the slate of the city. If that was their intention they failed. The creaking public transport system frustrated their plans. A signal failure on the northern line forced one of the suicide bombers to try to reach his destination by bus. Two weeks later, a second attack, most likely an attempted replica of the previous one, took place. According to the confession of one of the perpetrators arrested in Rome, the aim was not to kill people but to terrorize Londoners.

In May 2004, Nicholas Berg was beheaded as the world watched in horror. Berg was the first of a series of hostages brutally executed in Iraq by armed Islamist groups. In the video, broadcast live on the Internet, a masked man flanked by three others read Berg's death sentence and warned Westerners to stay out of Iraq. He then proceeded to sever the head of the American hostage with a knife, proudly displaying it to the camera. Relentlessly, Western media showed those images to the world as proof of the jihadists' barbarism, of the inhuman nature of their fight in Iraq.

These awful events are manifestations of a new, little understood

phenomenon: Islamist terror. In the words of those who claimed responsibility, their motivations and aims were identical: a protest against the presence of foreign troops—Coalition forces—in Iraq and a demand for their immediate evacuation.

The analysis of the jihadists' Web sites would suggest that the new global wave of terrorist attacks is not an isolated phenomenon, nor the insane manifestation of a small group of maniacal religious fanatics. The response of Western countries to the 9/11 attacks, especially Bush and Blair's "war on terror," has greatly contributed to the evolution of terror. In a series of propaganda campaigns directed at their populations, Western governments have hidden the truth, manipulated the facts, and vigorously published fictions to justify their policies. Their most extraordinary creation is the myth of al Zarqawi. The story of his life and legend reveals a great deal about Islamist terrorism and the West's ambiguous role in creating, defining, and sustaining it.

Was Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi, the new leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, Nicholas Berg's executioner? The CIA and the White House insist that he was. To them, al Zarqawi is a barbarous psychopath, the leader of a ruthless group of terrorists. He is the ultimate villain, a foreigner who has hijacked with violence part of a country the West is trying to bring under control. He is a "consultant" to the London suicide bombers, the man who masterminded the Istanbul and Casablanca attacks, and who inspired the Madrid bombings. From New York to London, from Paris to Tokyo, al Zarqawi has come to symbolize the non-Iraqi nature of the insurgency and the new face of global Islamist terror.

This analysis clashes with the views of some people who met and knew him when he was much younger, in the city of Zarqa and later in Afghanistan, or as a prisoner in Jordan. None of them recognize, in the cold-blooded butcher of Nicholas Berg, the young man they have known, befriended, or even loved. Experts on Islamist terrorism, former mujahedin, and members of his group also cast serious doubts on the transnational nature of al Zarqawi's terror network; they seem

skeptical of his purported role at the center of a worldwide web of cells and the idea that he is more important than dozens of other leaders of the insurgency. Many Iraqis also strongly deny that he is in control of the insurgency in their country.

Has al Zarqawi's profile been deliberately inflated by the U.S. administration to justify the war in Iraq, and subsequently to cover up the true nature of the Iraqi insurgency? Or have the Americans simply relied upon information provided by third parties such as the Kurdish secret service, the Jordanian authorities, and British intelligence? The first time the Bush administration heard of him was after 9/11, from the Kurdish secret service. Is the myth of al Zarqawi a product of neo-conservative propaganda, the newest political merchandise, "Made in America" and sold to the public to promote the politics of fear? Or is his reputation the brainchild of Kurdish and Jordanian intelligence, eager to secure U.S. backing against the rising tide of Islamist movements in their countries? In retrospect, the Americans, the Kurds, and the Jordanians are among those who benefited most from the construction of his myth. How and why was he singled out from among hundreds of jihadists as early as October 2001? The myth of al Zarqawi has now taken on a nightmarish reality driven by brutal events in insurgent Iraq.

The first time the world heard about al Zarqawi was on 5 February 2003 when Colin Powell, U.S. secretary of state, went to the United Nations to justify the forthcoming war in Iraq. Powell claimed that bin Laden and Saddam Hussein were allies. Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi was singled out as the link between them. "[W]hat I want to bring to your attention today is the potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder," said Powell. "Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network, headed by Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda lieutenants."¹ Today we know that there was no alliance between al Qaeda and Iraq, just as there were no weapons of

mass destruction. But from Powell's fallacious claims sprung one of the most compelling myths of the "war of terror."

Throughout the "unofficial" Iraq war, begun as the U.S. president publicly declared a close to official hostilities, al Zarqawi's violent gestures have been manipulated by the Bush administration to personalize, demonize, and fictionalize the nature of the enemy in Iraq. At the same time, attacks conducted outside that country have been attributed to him. Thus, in the world's public opinion he has replaced in "liberated" Iraq the evil figure of Saddam Hussein. Elsewhere he now plays the role of Osama bin Laden. In the Arab world, his myth has encouraged foreign jihadists to travel to Iraq—a stream of Arab troublemakers exported as suicide bombers. This export reduced tension in neighboring countries, strengthened al Zarqawi's group inside Iraq, and consolidated his reputation. Suicide attacks have attracted media attention, shocked global public opinion, and relegated all other groups involved in the insurgency to a position subordinate to al Zarqawi's jihadists. The fact that foreign fighters are a very small minority—as little as 10 percent of the entire resistance—and that suicide attacks represent a fraction of the attacks in Iraq has been systematically obscured. The anti-Shi'ite aims of the suicide attacks masterminded by al Zarqawi have created a wedge between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis, a factor that has prevented the formation of a united Iraqi front, based on nationalist objectives, against Coalition forces. In a skilful power game, Shi'ite leaders have used these attacks to ally themselves and their militias with the United States against the Sunnis. Furthermore, the purposely inflated role of al Zarqawi and the excessive importance attached to the presence of foreigners in Iraq has allowed the United States to present the resistance as an insurgency manipulated by foreign forces.

The appeal of suicide missions is spreading among second-generation immigrants in Europe. These are young men from lower middle-class backgrounds, often well educated and acutely sensitive to the suffering of Muslims in occupied countries. The myth of al Zarqawi as the embodiment of the Islamist jihad has also been a decisive fac-

tor for young men in the Middle East who choose death as a manifestation of their political commitment. And the spread of jihadist ideology associated with him has prepared the ground for the recruitment of the European brigades of suicide bombers. In this, the links with bin Laden are important, providing a narrative of continuous resistance to Christian invaders beginning with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In the midst of propaganda wars fought by all sides and by all means of communication, it is difficult to keep track of the truth. Understanding the real nature of the Iraqi insurgency requires accuracy and objectivity. It also requires an investigation into the metamorphosis of al Qaeda from a small armed organization into a global anti-imperialist ideology, al Qaedaism. This book is an attempt at a disciplined analysis of the roots of the armed jihadist groups, al Qaeda amongst them; of the rise of al Qaedaism; and of the true nature of the Iraqi insurgency. These linked phenomena are comprehensible only in the wider context of Middle Eastern politics. At the end of this investigation, Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi will appear for who he is: one of the anti-imperialist voices of al Qaedaism, representing a part of the Iraqi insurgency and a section of the tapestry of political violence woven in the Middle East. A region plagued by poverty, deceit, tyranny, political betrayal, and religious radicalism, the Middle East is not lost to hope. It is a region still in transition from a traditional to a modern society, in search of a new identity. The tale of al Zarqawi's life is the tale of a Muslim world in deep turmoil and on the brink of dissolution. The construction of his myth is the latest manipulation of Arab politics, a screen to hide the real nature of the Iraqi insurgency.

The legends created around al Zarqawi are part of a strategy to present the Muslim world as a single culture and worldview on a dangerous collision course with the West. These legends have allowed the West and its allies, the Muslim ruling elites, to manipulate the perils posed by the jihadist movement and to justify the implementation of hegemonic and conservative policies both at home and abroad. America's decision

to use war as a weapon against terrorism is a decision to reinvent the world through violent confrontation. Ironically, this is entirely consistent with the Islamist objective of forcing America and its allies into open confrontation. The objectives of the “war on terror” have been shifted away from Osama bin Laden and the perpetrators of 9/11 onto imaginary new enemies: Saddam Hussein in the Iraq of the past and al Zarqawi in the Iraq of today. This strategy has weakened counterterrorism measures, facilitated the rise of Abu Mos’ab al Zarqawi as an international leader, reignited an ethnic war between Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims, and facilitated the recruitment of jihadists in the West as well as in the East. Above all it has given birth to a new generation of jihadists in the West and opened a new sectarian front in Iraq.

Ironically, this strategy is a marked departure from the policies of old-style counterterrorism. Western European democracies previously fought the “propaganda by deeds” of armed organizations by stifling the broadcast of their ideology. In the United Kingdom, for example, Gerry Adams’s voice was dubbed on all broadcasts, diminishing the power of his message. In Italy, likewise, statements by members of armed organizations were not publicized. These strategies, combined with appeals to the moderate majority, succeeded in reducing the effectiveness of political violence in Europe and undermining the legitimacy of armed groups. Islamist terrorism is a weak enemy. It can be defeated by the instruments of democracy. New technology makes it more difficult to suppress its propaganda, but meaningful engagement with moderate Muslims and continued commitment to the rule of law will greatly degrade the appeal of the Islamist jihad among European youth. To depart from these methods is to threaten our greatest achievement: societies ruled by justice and freedom.

Since 9/11, far too much weight has been given to the violent actions of al Zarqawi, contributing to the proliferation of legends about his life and boosting his popularity among jihadists. The myth of al Zarqawi is a creation of the politics of fear, a form of propaganda blossoming in the West and in the Muslim world. These politics feed

on the collective memory of 9/11 and on the Madrid and London bombings, offering seemingly prescient visions of apocalyptic nightmares still to come.

The myth of al Zarqawi has fuelled sectarian civil war in Iraq and encouraged terrorism in Europe. It belongs to a genre of political fantasy that may haunt the West and the Arab world for decades to come unless a concerted effort is made to understand both the appeal of heroic resistance and the uses made of youthful idealism by the jihadist leadership. If Iraq slips into civil war and ethnic cleansing, the fantasies of the jihadists and their enemies will come true. Ethnic violence between Sunnis and Shi'ites, or Kurds and Sunnis, Armenians, Turcomans, Maronites, and Jews, could sweep through the entire region, spilling sectarian tension and terrorism over into Europe. Our best hope is to reject the bad dream of a world transformed by violence. Understanding the origins of al Zarqawi the man and al Zarqawi the myth is crucial if we are to escape from what appears to be a deepening nightmare.

Prologue

THE CITY OF ZARQA

The city of Zarqa is a depressed industrial site north of Amman, the Jordanian capital. Unemployment, especially among the young, is rampant. Poverty is widespread and hope is a forgotten concept. Over the last forty years, the growth of the city has been marked by the proliferation of Palestinian refugee camps, a shanty belt of misery encircling its outskirts. For the residents of Zarqa, the Palestinian diaspora is like a tangible cancer, an uncontrollable growth that strangles the already weak local economy, reduces employment opportunities, and plagues their souls. Religious fundamentalism seems the sole cure for this terminal illness.

Through the years, the imams' sermons have become the heartbeat of the city; daily prayers mark the rhythm of life. Mosques are much more than places of worship; they are the core of Zarqa's sociopolitical identity, where people meet to discuss their bleak destiny and allow themselves to dream of a better future.

Religion and politics have met before in Zarqa. In the book of Genesis, we are told that Jacob, on his way home from Egypt, wrestled all night with a stranger at Jabbok, one of the crossings of the River Jordan. Jabbok was the ancient name of the city of Zarqa. At daybreak the stranger asked Jacob to release him. Jacob demanded the man's blessing in return. So the stranger gave Jacob his benediction and bestowed upon him a new name. He called Jacob Israel, "because you fought with God and men and won," he said.¹ Thus, the alliance between God and the Jewish people was sealed at Zarqa, the biblical birthplace of modern Israel.²

CHAPTER ONE

The Seeds of Religious Radicalism

*Religion and State, spirituality and
action, Koran and sword.*

—Hassan al Banna, founder of the
Muslim Brotherhood

Ahmed Fadel al Khalaylah, who would later become known as Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi, was born at the end of October 1966 in Zarqa, a city of 800,000 people, about sixteen miles northeast of the Jordanian capital of Amman. His relatives still live in the shabby two-story family home at number 13 al Hasmi Street. Situated at the top of a hill, in the working-class Ma'sum neighborhood, the house overlooks an abandoned quarry. Like most of the local construction, it is built of cement blocks and borders a road strewn with trash. This is familiar scenery in a town renamed by its own inhabitants "the Chicago of the Middle East" for its poverty and crime.¹

Ahmed Fadel's childhood was spent in this tough environment, rife with contradictions. Ma'sum is a place like many others in the Middle East, a miserable neighborhood where traditional and tribal values mix badly with the culture of Western consumerism and rapid modernization. Satellite dishes lie next to rows of clothes drying in the sunshine. Shop windows displaying electronic merchandise are framed with gigantic graffiti celebrating suicide bombers. Veiled women hurry down the streets holding the hands of young boys sporting brand new Nike sneakers. Just three decades ago, Ahmed Fadel was

one of them. He attended the local school and used the neighborhood cemetery as a playground, an eerie yet exciting place for a child to wander about in. At school he was not a star pupil. According to his teachers, he was rebellious and unruly.

The family belonged to the al Khalaylah clan, a branch of the Banu Hassan, a large East Bank Bedouin tribe loyal to Jordan's Hashemite royal family. The tribe includes 200,000 people scattered across Jordan and its neighboring countries, including Iraq.² Ahmed Fadel had all the physical traits of his tribe: short and slim, with dark piercing eyes and black hair. He was agile in his movements but not athletic. His was the body of the men of the desert—thin and flexible—used to endless peregrinations.

For the members of Ahmed Fadel's family, their Bedouin heritage was a source of pride, even if the ancient Bedouin traditions had vanished before their eyes, wiped away by the greed and corruption of Arab consumerism. Part of the difficulty Ahmed Fadel faced in adjusting to Ma'sum's working-class environment and his family's low social status sprang from the speed with which the Palestinian diaspora tore into the Bedouin way of life. His father, Fadil Nazzal Mohammad al Khalaylah, a retired army officer, was very much a product of this changing reality. During the 1948 war, he participated in the Battle of Jerusalem, fighting to keep the Old City and eastern Jerusalem within Jordanian territory. Back in Zarqa, where he worked as a mediator in neighborhood problems, he witnessed the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees from the Israeli-occupied territories.³

Ahmed Fadel's sense of security collapsed in 1984 when Fadil Nazzal died.⁴ According to one of his sisters, Ahmed was "the apple of his father's eye"; they were very, very close. With their father gone, their mother, Um Sayel, a gentle and loving, but illiterate, woman, was left with a small pension on which to raise six daughters and four sons. Inevitably, mother and children sank deeper into poverty. According to a family friend, at times it was difficult to find enough to eat.⁵ The adolescent Ahmed Fadel began acting out his anger and frustration.

He dropped out of secondary school, joined a local gang, began drinking, and turned into a bully. Soon he was arrested and charged for possession of drugs and sexual assault.⁶ He was subsequently imprisoned.

Ahmed Fadel's initial entry into the community of "outlaws" was limited to interaction with petty criminals and child gangsters; he was too young and insufficiently politicized to know or understand that his birthplace was bursting with the work of intellectuals and activists engaged in reshaping the face of militant Islam. However, in Zarqa, as across the Arab world, the networks of petty crime and of revolutionary Islam constantly criss-crossed, especially in prison; both existed on the margins of Arab society, constituting a web of illegality that encircled Arab politics and progressively suffocated moderate voices. It is likely that this first encounter with Jordanian prisons triggered the long process of radicalization which transformed Ahmed Fadel, decades later, into Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi, the new leader of al Qaeda in Iraq.

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

In the Middle East, the seeds of religious radicalism were sown in the early 1970s. Jordan, due to its geopolitical position and huge Palestinian refugee population, became a hothouse for revolt. An exceptional political event triggered this process. In September 1970, known as Black September, King Hussein of Jordan quashed an attempt by Palestinian organizations, mainly the Palestine Liberation organization (PLO), to overturn his monarchy. British-educated King Hussein was a man caught between two worlds on a collision course. He had welcomed Palestinian refugees into Jordan and backed their cause, but had undervalued the strategic genius of the leader of the PLO, Yasser Arafat. In less than a decade, the PLO had become a state within a state; it had penetrated the economic infrastructure of Jordan and gained control of most of its finances. At times, the king even borrowed money from the Arab Bank, which was the de facto central bank of the PLO.⁷ Between mid-

1968 and the end of 1969, the military wing of the PLO repeatedly clashed with the Jordanian authorities (over this period there were no fewer than five hundred violent incidents).⁸ In September 1970, in danger of losing his grip on the political situation, King Hussein expelled the PLO from the refugee camps in Amman and other Jordanian cities. The event was a watershed in the Middle East. Confused Jordanians watched endless caravans of Palestinians cross the border on their way to Lebanon, evicted for the second time from Arab soil.

After the exodus, King Hussein rewarded those who had backed his decision, including the Muslim Brotherhood,⁹ an anti-Israeli, reformist Islamic movement which had rejected the PLO's use of violence and instead sought political change within existing institutions. The king offered the Brotherhood charge of the Ministry of Education. This shaped an entire generation of youngsters who became exposed in Jordanian classrooms to the reformist message. At the same time the Brotherhood's indoctrination prepared the ground for the proliferation, in the following decade, of radical Islamist groups as a disenfranchised generation was taught to think of reform along fundamentalist lines. Although in 1984 Ahmed Fadel was not conscious of these developments, he had already come under the psychological influence of religious radicalism. It had been working on him for years; from school to prison the message spread by the Brotherhood was to liberate the Palestinian Territories from Zionist occupation through direct political participation.

In the late 1970s, radical Salafi¹⁰ preachers, representing a militant branch of Islam, had advanced their own message, which went well beyond the problem of Palestine and tackled the question of the legitimacy of Arab regimes. The central idea of radical Salafism was the purification of Islam from the Western contamination that caused corruption and stagnation in Arab countries. They blamed Arab states for the Palestinian fiasco, the 1967 defeat,¹¹ and the rise to power of Israel. Because of their reluctance to denounce the West for backing Israel, Salafi preachers claimed that Arab regimes had departed from the will

of God. No loyalty was due to states that had forged alliances with the backers of Israel. In sharp contrast with the Brotherhood, the radical Salafi message was revolutionary and uncompromising; whoever followed it came into direct confrontation with the state and its laws.

Within this framework, criminality assumed a new dimension: it became a way to weaken the illegitimate state and to show political dissent. Thus, the “illegitimacy” of the Arab state blurred the boundaries between crime and insurrection. Political activists and petty criminals came to share a common enemy, a phenomenon which in the 1980s and 1990s facilitated the transition of thousands of people from perpetrators of crime to perpetrators of political violence, thereby turning prisons into recruitment centers. It was within this fast-changing environment that the first signs of the metamorphosis of Ahmed Fadel from a drunken, working-class bully into a mujahed and eventual global terror leader became visible.

Though Black September had evicted the PLO leadership, it did not interrupt the flow of Palestinian refugees to Jordan. Unable to escape being dragged deeper and deeper into the turmoil of the Palestinian diaspora, Jordan remained fertile terrain for religious radicalism. In the 1970s, 1980s, and part of the 1990s, anyone who was anyone in the fight for an independent Palestine passed through Jordan, which became a sort of gateway into radical Islamic ideology. During these decades, as several Arab regimes grew increasingly conciliatory towards the state of Israel, this steady stream of intellectuals, victims of the Palestinian diaspora, came to reject the revisionism and moderate views of the Brotherhood and progressively embraced a revolutionary ideology. Among them was Abdallah Azzam, Osama bin Laden’s spiritual mentor and the cofounder of al Qaeda.¹²

ABDHALLAH AZZAM

Born in Jenin in 1941 to a religious peasant family, Azzam was drawn early on to the Brotherhood and became one of its strongest support-

ers in Palestine. In 1966 he graduated from the Faculty of Sharia at the University of Damascus, where he studied Muslim religious law. The following year he moved to Jordan after Israeli troops occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In Jordan, he began to reflect on the possibility of staging an armed struggle against Israel. Between 1969 and 1970 he participated in several attacks against the Israeli army. This ended after Black September because the border between Jordan and Palestine was closed.

Azzam was a man of the diaspora. Exiled for his entire life, he moved from one Muslim host to another. Unlike Hassan al Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Sayyed Qutb,¹³ its revolutionary voice, Abdallah Azzam had limited contact with the West.¹⁴ He belonged to the second generation of Islamic leaders, forged predominantly inside the Arab world. The boundaries of Azzam's world were strictly defined by Islam. Like the future terror leader Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi, Azzam was essentially the offspring of Middle Eastern, postcolonial contradictions, shaped by complex political events, such as Black September.

Like al Zarqawi, he sought a solution, a way out of the stalemate of Arab politics. Also like al Zarqawi, his universe was confined to only one language, Arabic; his knowledge and understanding of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European revolutionary movements was strictly filtered through the writings of the Brotherhood. It was the voice of leaders like Azzam that, in the 1970s and 1980s, spread across the Middle East.

In 1971 Azzam moved to Egypt to study Islamic jurisprudence at the University of al Azhar. After graduating in 1973, he returned to Jordan where he worked for the Department of Information in the Ministry of Religious Donations, al Awqaf, in charge of distributing charitable funds. From this official position, he succeeded in creating and activating the mosque network, a web of radical religious preachers who spread revolutionary messages to the masses of Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan. He also supervised the publication of several religious magazines that were distributed throughout the Middle East.

The idea was to reach out to Palestinian refugees and Arab youth—a vast reservoir of unemployed and disenfranchised people who were to be mobilized in the fight against Israel. Azzam's voice also appealed to the better educated and to intellectuals. From 1973 to 1980 he taught at the Faculty of Sharia at the University of Amman, also delivering lectures in Zarqa. At the same time he continued to be one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood of Jordan.

In 1980, the Jordanian government expelled Azzam by military decree. The administration feared his growing popularity inside and outside the university; more than anything, the regime was afraid of his “revolutionary rhetoric,” which seemed to mesmerize young people. Convinced that those involved in the Palestinian fight were too remote from “true Islam,” Azzam decided to move to Saudi Arabia, where he obtained a teaching position at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah. A fortuitous meeting in Mecca with Kamal al Senaniri, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, prompted his subsequent relocation to Pakistan. Al Senaniri, who had just returned from Afghanistan, told Azzam about his work among the Arab fighters engaged in the war against the Soviets. The Palestinian was enthralled by his friend's tales of the mujahedin. Through the intercession of the dean of the university in Jeddah, Azzam was appointed to the Islamic University of Islamabad. Towards the end of 1981 he arrived in Pakistan. He was one of the very first religious leaders to reach the mujahedin.

In Afghanistan Azzam found what he had been looking for all his life: the international army of the mujahedin. He soon became their spiritual leader and financial backer, via the Maktab al Khidamat, the Arab-Afghan Bureau, which he founded in 1984 to take charge of the influx of Arab fighters wanting to participate in the anti-Soviet jihad.¹⁵

IS THERE ONLY ONE JIHAD?

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan prompted a civil war. Backed financially by the CIA and the Saudis, an international

army of Arab warriors flocked to the country to help the Afghans fight the Soviet invaders. The solidarity generated by the event was reminiscent of the international support at the outbreak of the Spanish civil war in the 1930s, when socialist volunteers from Europe and the United States rushed to support the republicans. In both cases the call to arms had a global appeal because there was much more at stake than the politics of one country; these were conflicts fought on international issues, struggles between two opposing visions of the world.

In 1981, when Azzam reached Afghanistan, the conflict was already beginning to be known in the Arab world as the anti-Soviet jihad. This terminology symbolized the struggle of the Muslim alliance—the Afghans and the international Arab brigades—against communism. Jihad is a Muslim concept that is often misused and its true meaning easily escapes understanding. In 2003, an American Muslim asked me if I knew what the jihad was. I explained that jihad means “striving in the name of God.” This effort can be spiritual, a fight against the daily temptations of life—the greater jihad—or physical, against an enemy—the smaller jihad. He smiled and shook his head. “There are many more interpretations of the smaller jihad,” he said, “indeed too many. It is the most manipulated concept in our religion.”

The lives of generations of Islamic political activists of the twentieth century—mujahedin, jihadists, and their leaders, among them Azzam, bin Laden, and al Zarqawi—were shaped by the heated debate over the meaning of the smaller jihad, the modern jihad. Any attempt to reconstruct the life history of these men must include an overview of this debate. In the early 1980s, Ahmed Fadel was not yet conscious of the nuances of this argument, but, as we shall see, the interpretation of the modern jihad was to forge his destiny.

Developed after the death of the Prophet Muhammad by the *ulema* (religious scholars), the jihad was an elaboration of both the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet. Formulated when Islam was already a superpower, the idea of the smaller jihad reflected the imperial spirit

of the time.¹⁶ It was essentially a tool to protect the community of believers. The religious scholars of imperial Islam distinguished between two forms: the defensive and the offensive jihad. The defensive jihad was the obligation of all members of the community to take up arms against the enemy to safeguard Islam. The offensive jihad, on the other hand, could be called only by the emir, the caliph, the ruler of the community. Its task was to spread Islam, not protect it. As long as the emir had sufficient warriors ready for combat, the community was exempt from joining in.¹⁷ This is a crucial concept in understanding the appeal that Osama bin Laden and other leaders of Islamist armed organizations, including al Zarqawi, exercise over radical Muslims. These leaders claim that they are emirs and that it is thus the duty of all Muslims to join them.

As the years passed and imperial Islam faded, the greater jihad remained unchanged while the smaller jihad assumed new meanings, being adapted to the needs of the time. Faced with the uncompromising violence of the Frankish Crusaders, Saladin renovated the concept of the jihad as a response to the First Crusade.¹⁸ The radical spiritual resources of Islam animated his followers in their successful campaign of reconquest. It was an aggressive jihad; the war had been lost and a peace treaty agreed. However, it became known as the counter-Crusade, a defensive war against an invading power that was alien to Muslims in culture and religion. Saladin blurred forever the boundaries between the defensive and offensive jihad, and the Second Crusade became the benchmark for the smaller jihad.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the reinvigoration of Saladin's jihad was part of the Middle Eastern struggle for deliverance from colonization. During the British domination of Egypt,¹⁹ Hassan al Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, reshaped it into the anticolonial jihad, the fight for full independence from the British. A few decades later, Sayyed Qutb, an Egyptian intellectual, transformed it into a revolution—a vehicle for regime change. Because the revolutionary jihad was the brainchild of a man imprisoned, tor-

tured, and eventually hanged by the Nasser regime, Qutb became the voice of the victims of repressive Arab regimes.

Since the late 1950s, the debate over the true meaning of the modern jihad has revolved around three main concepts: counter-Crusade, anticolonial struggle, and revolution. Today, the boundaries of the modern jihad are defined by these interpretations. The 7 July London suicide bombers sought to draw a cross on the city's map to emphasize their fight against the new crusaders. Investigation into the lives of the perpetrators of the bombing has shown that their indoctrination included watching videos of Muslims being killed by Israeli and Western soldiers. "The film images clicking by in rapid-fire sequence to a soundtrack of pounding drums [showed] dead Iraqi children, Palestinians under siege, Guantánamo prisoners [and] snippets of President Bush repeating the word 'crusade.'"²⁰ The Sunni resistance in Iraq has a distinct anti-imperialist matrix vis-à-vis the new colonizers, the Coalition forces. Al Zarqawi is seeking to ignite a *fitna*, a civil war or a revolution, against the predominantly Shi'ite government, regarded as the supporters of Western powers.

Against this background, the nature of the modern jihad appears ambiguous. Is it a counter-Crusade, an anticolonial fight, or a revolution? This dilemma of definition is at the heart of modern Islam and at the core of the ideological differences that characterized the relationship between Osama bin Laden and Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi until the end of 2004 when, as we shall see, they entered into partnership.

In recent years, the West has been confronted by an identical dilemma at home and abroad. What is the meaning of the Madrid and London bombings? Is the insurgency in Iraq a national resistance against a foreign occupying power or a revolution led by a small and violent vanguard of foreign Arab forces, masterminded by Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi? Is it a counter-Crusade, a national liberation movement, or a civil war? Above all, are the motivations of the modern jihad a manifestation of a global anti-imperialist ideology, of al Qaedaism in the West as well as in the East? Thus, the answer to the dilemma presented by

the jihadist movement at home, as well as abroad, must be sought in an exploration of the true meaning of the modern jihad.

THE MAKING OF A MUJAHED

The anti-Soviet jihad can be described as the classic counter-Crusade jihad with a twist; it incorporated anticolonial elements into Saladin's jihad. This cocktail, a creation of Sheikh Abdallah Azzam, made it possible, even desirable, for Arab regimes to support the war in Afghanistan. As long as the jihad was directed against godless communists, their own states were largely left alone.

In the 1980s, Azzam's preaching in Pakistan centered upon the urgency of returning to the root of Islam, of purifying the religion from Western contamination in order to develop a fighting strategy. The jihad became a sort of cleansing process. Such exhortations carried the echo of the heroic battles of the mujahedin. In Jordan they fuelled heated discussions among supporters and sympathizers of the Muslim Brotherhood. Eventually, Azzam's radical message produced an ideological split inside the organization: his followers accused the Brotherhood of being a proestablishment group and disassociated themselves from it.

Azzam's preaching was welcomed by Jordanian radical imams of the mosque network that he had developed a decade earlier. The anti-Soviet jihad became daily news. Preachers encouraged the mujahedin who returned to Jordan to address the faithful; they raised money among the *umma*, the community of the faithful, to fund the distant war. Funds soon reached the Maktab al Khidamat, the Arab-Afghan Bureau created by Sheikh Azzam. Money was allocated to support the mujahedin in Afghanistan and to raise new recruits across the Middle East. Mosques soon became recruiting centers for the anti-Soviet jihad.

It was against this fertile religious and ideological background that, in the late 1980s, Ahmed Fadel, the future al Zarqawi, began frequenting al Hussein Ben Ali Mosque in Zarqa. Out of prison and now mar-

ried to a cousin, he was still too young and naive to grasp the true meaning of the anti-Soviet jihad. He clearly did not understand that the mujahedin were fighting a war by proxy, the last of the Cold War, nor did he realize the role that the Americans and the Saudis were playing in the conflict. Most likely he was instinctively drawn to the Muslim warriors' revolutionary role because they fought for a cause he could relate to.

In the mosque, he was fascinated by the stories of the Jordanian mujahedin who returned from Afghanistan, and captivated by the heroic image and romantic status of the mujahedin. Thus, like many other Arab youths, bursting with energy, Ahmed Fadel's decision to become a mujahed was taken without a true understanding of the politics involved. He was motivated by the desire to be part of a major initiative, to abandon the marginalization of his life. What could be better than joining an army of Islamic warriors?

Ahmed Fadel's transition from petty criminal to Arab warrior was facilitated by the fact that the anti-Soviet jihad was yet another dimension of the underworld of Arab "outlaws," an underground web that had grown in the shadow of corrupt, tyrannical, and repressive Arab politics. The Arab brigades were composed of informal soldiers, mostly people who had passed through the experience of Arab prisons; yet for Ahmed Fadel the status of mujahed represented a step up on the social ladder of the "outlaws." In the Arab world nobody likes a drunken bully, but everybody respects the mujahedin. "During the days of the jihad in Afghanistan the men used to leave their countries respected and praised."²¹ Ahmed Fadel was one of the thousands of Arab youths eager to gain respect through the jihad.

For many young men, joining the distant fight to free fellow Muslims from the hegemony of the Soviet superpower also sublimated the memory of the struggle at home, enabling them to put aside the frustrations of daily life in the poor suburbs of the Arab world. "Jihad in Afghanistan was the same as anywhere else, same as in Eritrea or elsewhere on God's earth. Jihad in Afghanistan was about reinstating the

value of Islam in people's minds [. . .] so when the opportunity arose, Muslims flocked to Afghanistan to spread the teaching of God's liturgy which was banned by the Soviet-installed government."²² In the 1980s, this was the message that radical preachers and former mujahedin proselytized across the Arab world, a formula that succeeded in widening the horizons of a generation of disenfranchised, young petty criminals like Ahmed Fadel.

In post-9/11 Europe, a similar message spread among a new generation of Muslims. Two of the 7 July London bombers—eighteen-year-old Hasib Hussein and twenty-two-year-old Shehzad Tanweer—were as young as al Zarqawi when they were recruited. Like him, they sought the deliverance of fellow Muslims from the humiliation of occupation by a superpower. Al Zarqawi wanted to join the anti-Soviet jihad to free Afghans from the Soviet Union, while Hussein and Tanweer joined an army of suicide bombers to liberate Iraqis from American and British occupation. In both circumstances, indoctrination and recruitment took place via a network of radical mosques, preachers, and recruiters—in the case of the two London bombers, a web of informal places of worship, prayer rooms in private homes, and universities.

However, while for the young Jordanian bully the al Hussein Ben Ali Mosque became a gateway into a new life in Afghanistan, for the four London suicide bombers the network of informal places of worship was a gateway to death. Thus, radical preachers and recruiters have gone underground, and the call is no longer to arms but to suicide missions. These are the fundamental differences between the indoctrination of al Zarqawi and of the new generation of jihadists.

Back in Zarqa, the Jordanian government, eager to export troublemakers such as Ahmed Fadel, facilitated the crossing. The necessary arrangements and expenses for travelling to Afghanistan were handled by a recruiter, Sheikh Abd al Majeed al Majaali, better known as Abu Qutayba, the Jordanian representative of the Arab-Afghan Bureau.²³ Today, the role of the recruiter is still paramount. A recruiter

is believed to have bankrolled three of the 7 July London suicide bombers' trips to Pakistan.

In the spring of 1989, Ahmed Fadel left Jordan. The young man who stepped into the Afghan adventure lacked the background to comprehend his novel environment, but his instinct compensated for the absence of culture, knowledge, and understanding of world politics, religion, and war. He sensed that major changes were about to take place in his life. This was the first of several metamorphoses leading to the emergence of Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi, the representative of al Qaeda in Iraq. Before departing from Zarqa, Ahmed Fadel buried his identity. The young man who boarded the plane to Pakistan was called Abu Muhammad al Gharib, the Stranger.

Stranger Among Warriors

[P]aradise is for alGhurabaa [the stranger].
—The Prophet

Former mujahedin say that Afghanistan is a deeply spiritual, almost magical place.¹ Set at the foot of the highest mountains in the world, the country breathes the air of the Himalayas. Many mujahedin describe the emptiness of the land as liberating compared to the overcrowding of Arab cities.

Upon al Gharib's arrival, in the spring of 1989, he went to the city of Khost. An ancient, dusty town, Khost, at the time, was teeming with former mujahedin; Arab Afghans from all corners of Afghanistan wandered along its streets, waiting for events to unfold. With the Russians' recent retreat, the city was in turmoil.

Al Gharib's first impression of Afghanistan was very different from the romantic images projected by the tales of former mujahedin delivered inside al Hussein Ben Ali Mosque. A frontline city, Khost was mired in the chaos that always follows a long and bloody war. Far from being united in the spiritual reawakening of the jihad, the mujahedin were plagued by deep infighting, split into several ideological groups, often along lines of ethnicity. Egyptian, Palestinian, Kuwaiti, and Saudi spiritual leaders skillfully manipulated their own groups as pawns in a power game conducted in the dilapidated streets of Afghanistan. This tough sociopolitical landscape did not intimidate the Stranger; on the contrary, he seemed eager to explore it. Raised in a

similarly hostile environment, he instinctively knew the rules of the game. Lacking connections, however, and a proper understanding of the politics pursued by the various groups, he remained an outsider, drifting from one group to another.

Al Gharib's late arrival, at the very end of the war, reinforced his status as Stranger among warriors. Throughout his stay in Afghanistan, he would remain an outsider; he would not join any group and would not become a member of al Qaeda.

It does not seem possible that al Gharib participated in the legendary siege of Khost;² by the time he reached the city, the Soviets had gone and the only remaining enemies were those loyal to the Afghan government of Najibullah. Failure to show his courage and determination in battle was for the Stranger a constant source of frustration. If only he were given a chance to prove himself! Attempting to blend into the tapestry of the Arab-Afghan war, he began in Khost to develop personal relationships within the community of Jordanian mujahedin.

Between 1989 and 1990 he befriended Saleh al Hami, a Jordanian mujahed journalist who had lost a leg in battle. "I got to know him while I was wounded and covered in blood," recalls al Hami. Al Gharib visited him regularly in the hospital. "Then one day he offered me to marry his sister. Actually I admired his noble character and courage. He reminded me of the noble characters of the Prophet's companions, may God be pleased with them, when one of them would offer his sister or daughter to another companion as a wife."³ Adrift in a world expansive beyond his comprehension and more complex than he had ever before known, the Stranger followed a well-known script, the only one he was acquainted with: he relied on his Bedouin instinct and used the teachings of Islam and the life of the Prophet as a guide.

Though al Gharib made this promise to an unknown man in a distant land, his family backed him fully. When his sister learned of the promise he had made to Saleh al Hami, she rejoiced and said, "God

honors the handicapped or the mujahedin.”⁴ Unlike many Arab troublemakers shipped by governments and relatives to Afghanistan, the Stranger never lost touch with his family, especially the women, who often visited him in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This closeness to his family is another important aspect of his personality, linked to his Bedouin background. At the time, the maintenance of family contacts was facilitated by the ease with which mujahedin family members could buy tickets and travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Arab regimes, charities, and the Arab-Afghan Bureau provided loans and financial help. It was during one of these family visits that al Hami met and married his wife.

In the video of the wedding, the Stranger hands his sister over to the disabled mujahed. Gone is the drunken bully who left Zarqa months earlier; the new man is a respected brother and son. “Abu Mos’ab [al Zarqawi] was a very simple person, normal, looking for truth in his own way, conducting jihad spontaneously, he was simple amongst people,” remarked Hamdi Murad, one of the spiritual leaders of the mujahedin. Hamdi, who was present at the wedding, is today a professor of Sharia at the Jordanian university of al Balqa. He believes that the young man who smiles in the video of the wedding is far removed from al Zarqawi, the terror leader, as portrayed by America. “You would never have thought that he would perhaps turn out to be a military leader one day, if ever.”⁵ Similar comments have been made by people who knew Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the 7 July London suicide bombers. Khan worked for four years as a learning mentor, an assistant who helped students, particularly children of immigrants, adapt to new school environments. Parents and colleagues confirm that “he was invaluable, a friendly and trusted person who loved children.”⁶

Those who met al Zarqawi in Pakistan and Afghanistan concur with Hamid Murad’s analysis. “I remember Abu Muhammad [al Gharib], he was a short, polite young man,” said Abdallah Anas, son-in-law of Sheikh Abdallah Azzam and then head of the Arab-Afghan

Bureau in Peshawar, Pakistan. “He always addressed me as ‘Uncle Abdallah.’ This was a sign of respect. He worked for us for quite some time, maybe over a year. He was a hard-working man, religious and rather quiet.”⁷ In the tales of the mujahedin who met al Gharib, there are no traces of Ahmed Fadel, the bully of Zarqa, nor of al Zarqawi, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq. The metamorphosis from a bully had already taken place. The metamorphosis into a terror leader would take place later. As we shall see, this latest transformation would be triggered by personal trauma, as well as by the transition of a generation of mujahedin from warriors to terrorists. However, were these factors sufficient to turn a modest young man into the butcher of Nicholas Berg and terror’s new global leader? Or has his myth contributed to this radical transformation? Many who met al Zarqawi are convinced that all of these factors played a role.

In 1990, al Gharib could not have envisaged such a destiny when he moved to Peshawar from Khost. This city, close to the Afghan border, was the first stop for the mujahedin on their way to battle and the main shelter town for their families. The city was rife with young and old warriors, and their wives and children. Night and day the mujahedin roamed the streets like orphans. It was an amazingly cosmopolitan human landscape, crisscrossed by several ideological undercurrents, which fascinated the Stranger. Only a very small group of people, however, were aware that for some time Peshawar had been at the core of a fierce ideological battle for the control of al Qaeda.⁸ Al Gharib was not one of them.

THE BATTLE TO TAKE CONTROL OF AL QAEDA

Originally shaped around the preaching of Azzam, al Qaeda was born as the military arm of a global Muslim insurgency, part of the army of Arab Afghans. “Every revolutionary ideology needs a rugged, elite cadre to protect it, inspire it and lead it to ultimate victory,” wrote Azzam in *al Jihad*, the official magazine of the Arab-Afghan Bureau.⁹

This Leninist-style vanguard had the task of spreading the jihad to liberate the oppressed across the Muslim world.

As far back as 1986 Azzam had openly denounced the tough conditions in which Muslims lived in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Uganda, declaring it the duty of all Muslims to defend and protect such populations. In Jedda, while teaching at King Abdul Aziz University, Azzam had described the jihad as a form of Muslim solidarity. This idea mesmerized and inspired a young Saudi, Osama bin Laden, who would soon join Azzam in Afghanistan. “Sometimes you are looking for justice in this life or something more to give to Muslims all over the world and when you see the world slipping from the Muslims everywhere, you wake up, the jihad wakes up inside of you.” This is how a former student and friend of Azzam’s summarized Azzam’s message in Jedda. “You see them in Bosnia, Sudan, Somalia, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Albania, Egypt, Syria. . . . You think about these things and if you don’t get together and if you don’t hold hands and believe in the same cause, then others will destroy you without you knowing it. You have to do something. . . . Jihad is the only saviour.”¹⁰

Towards the end of the anti-Soviet jihad, Azzam began envisaging Soviet-ridden Afghanistan as a safe haven for the future international army of mujahedin, a place to train new generations of Islamic warriors, who would then go out to defend the rights of Muslims around the globe. Essentially, Azzam saw the victory over the Soviets as the first step towards a new Muslim world order. As Trotsky had rejected the concept of a communist takeover of a single country—wanting the Soviet Union to be the engine of a permanent revolution—Azzam saw Afghanistan as the core of a global jihad. Al Qaeda was the vanguard of armies of Saladin’s Muslim warriors engaged in wars of liberation across the Muslim world. Thus the jihad became a global counter-Crusade against alien, oppressive cultures, enemies of Muslims.

Conscious that the anti-Soviet jihad had been a war by proxy, Azzam wanted to end the dependency of the mujahedin on Pakistan’s secret service, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and on the main sponsors

of the war: the United States and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, towards the end of the war, he urged the mujahedin to consolidate their power in Afghanistan. It was at this point that Osama bin Laden, the de facto representative of Saudi interests in Afghanistan, clashed with Sheikh Abdallah Azzam. Until then the two had worked closely together.

At the root of the dispute was a difference of opinion about the future of the mujahedin and of al Qaeda. Bin Laden was not interested in the consolidation of power inside Afghanistan. Clearly, bin Laden was conditioned by his Saudi sponsors who wanted to continue to influence and manipulate the future of the Arab brigades and of their vanguard, al Qaeda. According to Egyptian investigator Abderrahim Ali,¹¹ bin Laden was also greatly influenced by the Egyptian faction inside the Arab-Afghan Bureau, guided by Ayman al Zawahiri.¹² Al Zawahiri's followers sought to involve al Qaeda in terrorist tactics and to transform it into an armed organization. At the end of the anti-Soviet jihad, their idea was to use al Qaeda to prompt terrorist activity in Egypt in order to trigger a regime change via civil war.

Osama bin Laden's former personal bodyguard, Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al Bahari, confirms that there were plans and discussions to unify the Egyptian jihad and al Qaeda. "I remember that these contacts and meetings began in 1997 and even before that. There were coordination of operations, logistical support, and joint implementation of some operations in and outside of Afghanistan. There were al Qaeda Organization elements fighting within the ranks of the Jihad Organization and members of the Jihad Organization were fighting in the al Qaeda Organization ranks," he recalled.¹³

"Al Zawahiri was a newcomer," explains Abdallah Anas, who was at the time in charge of the Arab-Afghan Bureau. "He arrived in Afghanistan at the end of the war. He was not part of the inner circle of the Arab-Afghan Bureau. He had his own agenda, his fight was in Egypt; Afghanistan was only a vehicle to return to Egypt."¹⁴ Osama bin Laden was very much part of his plan; the Saudi had the finances to make it work. According to Anas and several other sources, the Egypt-

tians won over bin Laden by offering him the title of emir, or prince, of the group.¹⁵ This recognition flattered bin Laden and gained al Zawahiri access to the Saudi's fortune.

Sheikh Abdallah Azzam strongly rejected the idea of using al Qaeda as a terrorist group and warned against the diversion of mujahedin funds to causes outside Afghanistan. He even issued a fatwa, stating that channeling money earmarked for the jihad to terrorist activities was a violation of the Sharia.¹⁶ The feud ended on 24 November 1989 with the assassination of Sheikh Azzam.¹⁷ From that moment onwards Osama bin Laden and al Zawahiri progressively took control of the Arab-Afghan Bureau and transformed al Qaeda into the terrorist vanguard of revolutionary forces operating inside Arab countries.

The death of Sheikh Azzam was a major watershed in the evolution of al Qaeda, leading to the reformulation of its final objective. By taking control of al Qaeda and the Arab-Afghan Bureau, Osama bin Laden and al Zawahiri framed the jihad within the armed struggle.

The assassination was the first of a series of murders among al Qaeda's leadership, similar to Joseph Stalin's purges of top-ranking Bolsheviks, that transformed the organization and prepared the ground for the first bombing of the World Trade Center. In March 1991, Mustafa Shalabi, a supporter of Azzam, was also assassinated. He was in charge of the al Kifah Refugee Center on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, New York, and was replaced by the Egyptian Sheikh Omar Abd al Rahman,¹⁸ better known as the Blind Sheikh.¹⁹ In 1993, when Ramzi Youssef arrived in New York to plan and execute the first bombing of the World Trade Center, he met the Blind Sheikh and took refuge in the al Kifah center.²⁰

According to Muhammad Sadeq Awda, an imprisoned former member of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden ordered the assassination of Azzam because he suspected that Azzam had links with the CIA.²¹ Many sources, however, believe that al Zawahiri, not bin Laden, ordered the purges. The death of Sheikh Abdallah Azzam and the subsequent assassination of people close to him in the inner circle of the

mujahedin movement, in fact, benefited the Egyptian faction, which gained full control of bin Laden's finances and of al Qaeda.

THE MEETING WITH AL MAQDISI

When al Gharib joined the Arab-Afghan Bureau, Sheikh Abdallah Azzam was already dead, and the struggle for power was hidden and removed from people like him. He was unaware of the changes which were taking place. His future path, as that of thousands of young people like him, would be marked by these struggles.

In 1991, in Peshawar, al Gharib was still in search of his destiny. In the chaos of the city, he sought refuge in Zayd Bin Harithah Mosque, a popular place among Arab worshippers. The familiarity of the mosque appealed to him; prayer was therapeutic. "Many Arab brothers used to come and pray alongside us, including Abu Mos'ab [al Zarqawi]," recalls the preacher of the Zayd Bin Harithah. "I learned that he had come from Jordan for the purpose of jihad. He used to pray alongside us and he was a learned man. He even prayed alongside us in the evenings, especially during the last ten days of the month of Ramadan, together with the other Arab brothers."

In Peshawar, the Stranger refined his religious affiliation and seemed eager to perfect his role of believer. "Once, before I went on pilgrimage, after Ramadan," continues the imam, "[al Zarqawi] said to me: if you go on pilgrimage, pray and say may God forgive me."²²

During this period of intense religious fervor al Gharib met and befriended Issam Muhammad Taher al Barqawi, better known as Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi, a distinguished radical Salafi thinker. Of Palestinian origins, al Maqdisi had been brought up in Kuwait, where he studied theology.²³ In the 1980s he had moved to Afghanistan with the Palestinian sheikh Omar Mahmoud Abu Omar, known by the nickname Abu Qatadah, who later found refuge in London. These two figures became the main source of authority for the Salafi jihadist ideology in Jordan, which established its stronghold in the city of Zarqa.

The Stranger and al Maqdisi were two completely different characters, yet they immediately became close friends. Al Maqdisi was a well-known scholar; he came from the inner circle of radical Salafism and had gone through the mujahedin training camps. Though he never actively participated in the fight, he was an insider. The meeting and their friendship was a crucial turning point for the Stranger and, as we shall see, for the development of his leadership. It is likely that, initially, their common ground was Jordan and Zarqa (where, after 1967, al Maqdisi had taken refuge with his family before moving to Kuwait)²⁴ and the milieu of radical Salafism which blossomed in the Palestinian refugees' shanty towns. Though the Stranger had no links with this movement, he was a child of that environment, someone who had grown up in the shadow of the Palestinian diaspora, who had gone through, even if only as a petty gangster, the harshness of Jordanian prisons. It is reasonable to believe that the two had acquaintances in common, since the worlds of Jordanian outlaws and that of radical Salafi jihadists were deeply intertwined.

In Peshawar, al Gharib and al Maqdisi began weaving a symbiotic relationship that was to last for a decade. The former became the pupil of the latter, absorbing his teachings. They were an odd pair who must have caught people's eye. Al Maqdisi was tall, with blond hair and blue eyes, a strikingly good-looking man, while al Gharib had all the physical characteristics of his Bedouin blood.

Around the beginning of 1992, the Stranger, possibly thanks to al Maqdisi, began his training in al Sada, one of the camps set up by Sheikh Azzam. Training in the camps was the mujahedin equivalent of baptism, a sort of initiation for Muslim warriors; the Stranger could not have left Afghanistan without experiencing it.

AL SADA TRAINING CAMP

Sheikh Azzam had to battle for permission to run al Sada. Until 1985, his role had been confined to funding and facilitating the jihad, not to

forging its soldiers and commanders. Wael Hamza Jalaidan, a Saudi activist and fundraiser who became one of the top aides to Azzam, summarized the vision behind the camps as follows: “We wished that everyone coming after us should pass through the same method of preparation—by participating and sharing [. . .] after morning prayers we would get together for Koran recitation, while after the afternoon prayer, we would get together to read some *hadith* [religious narratives attributed to the Prophet Muhammad] and benefit from them. After that, if there were any military operations, we would participate in them.”²⁵ Thus the idea was not only to indoctrinate the volunteers in combat tactics, but to teach them unity of religious thought and by so doing, create a brotherhood that would neutralize ethnic and regional distinctions. After the death of Azzam and the purges, the camps came under the control of Osama bin Laden and his Egyptian followers. More emphasis was put on military and guerrilla preparation.

Osama bin Laden’s former personal body guard, Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al Bahari, describes life in the camps as a strenuous and disciplined regimen:

There are three phases in the Al-Qa’ida Organization military camps. The first is the testing period. It is called the days of experimentation. The second phase is the military preparation period. It is called the drilling period. It lasts forty-five days. The third phase is called the guerrilla war tactics course. It also lasts forty-five days. During the experimentation period we used to experience all forms of exhaustion, including psychological exhaustion, as well as moral exhaustion. The training was extremely hard. Sometimes we hardly slept for four hours in two days at various times. The experimentation period is just over fifteen days. At the end of this period, when we were extremely tired, the instructor would come and say with extreme coolness: “Today is the last day of experimentation. You must now walk for thirty kilometers.”

Only very few individuals lasted until the end of the experimentation. Yet, each one of us used to urge his exhausted comrades, to encourage them to remain steadfast and continue. This phase teaches recruits to withstand difficulties.

Indeed, because of the exhaustion and fatigue during the experimentation period, some of them said that they could take no more, that they no longer wanted jihad.

During the second phase, the drilling period, the new recruits take all military courses, deeply studying all kinds of weapons, beginning with light machineguns, through anti-aircraft guns, and ending with shoulder-borne missiles, like SAM-7 and Stinger missiles, in addition to explosives and all kinds of guns, like the recoil and recoilless guns and the bow guns (madafi' qawsiyah). They are trained on surveys, maps and how to draw them, as well as sand maps, and other things. The trainee in this phase is given an integrated military education just like any graduate from the best regular military colleges.

Then comes the third phase, which is called the tactics and guerrilla warfare course. It also lasts forty-five days. This course was compulsory for all because the irregular warfare is based on guerrilla warfare. In this course, theoretical military skills are learned. Practical applications are carried out using all kinds of weapons that had been studied in the previous course, and employing military skills that have been gained. Indeed, this is a period of testing to measure what a man can absorb during previous courses.²⁶

Al Sada is near the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan; several of those who participated in both attacks on the World Trade Center, including Ramzi Youssef, who was responsible for the first bombing, and Khaled Sheikh Mohammed, one of the people who masterminded the destruction of the Twin Towers, trained in this camp.

AL TAWHID

In Peshawar, al Maqdisi introduced his young Jordanian friend to modern Salafism.²⁷ Ironically, at its outset in the second half of the nineteenth century, Salafism was not an anti-Western ideology. On the contrary, it was Arab admiration for the modernized West that prompted the movement. Fascinated by European development, Arab countries began to compare their socioeconomic and political conditions with those of Europe. This evaluation triggered deep reflection on the crisis of the Ottoman Empire, the political power that controlled the Arab world at the time, and stimulated great interest in Western civilization. In the Arab world this process is known as *al Nahda*, literally, the “awakening” or “renaissance.” Produced by the interaction of Arab thinkers with Western revolutionary ideals, al Nahda marked the beginning of Arab modernization or, rather, of the will to modernize. In essence, the Arab world acknowledged the socioeconomic and political superiority of the parliamentary European states. Looking to the achievements of the Old Continent, Arabs wanted to create a Muslim modernity in the new Arab states emerging from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸

Salafism identified the Ottoman Empire as the primary cause of the Arab failure to modernize. To overcome this obstacle, the doctrine called for all Muslims to go back to the purity of religion, to the origins of Islam and the teachings of the Prophet. Reconnecting with their roots would provide them with the necessary strength to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire and a way to create an Arab identity. This was essentially a process of spiritual purification, of cleansing from centuries of political and economic domination.

Thus, Salafism envisaged the regeneration of Islam along lines compatible with the political, economic, and technological conquests of the West. According to Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905),

founder of the political Salafiyya movement, “properly understood, Islam is perfectly in sync with the liberal, democratic and scientific values of the modern world.”²⁹ To achieve this symbiosis, the core principles of Sharia law had to be adapted to the process of Western modernization.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the betrayal of Europe, which, far from freeing the Arab world, colonized it, contributed to the transformation of Salafism into the xenophobic, conservative, and puritanical revivalist movement of today. The central idea of modern Salafism is still the purification of Islam, but this time from the contamination of corruption and stagnation produced by Western colonization. Foreign European powers, not the Ottoman Empire, are blamed for the decadence of the Arab world.

Against this background, in the 1950s, Sayyed Qutb reformulated the concept of *al Tawhid*,³⁰ the divine and absolute unity of God, giving it a distinct political identity. “God is the source of power,” wrote Qutb from the Egyptian jail where Nasser had imprisoned him, “not the people, not the party neither any human being.”³¹ This notion, known as *al hakimiyya lil-llah* (the principle of the government of God), projects Islam to the core of the political arena, the boundaries of which are strictly defined by the interpretation of the Prophet’s teachings. Qutb’s message is one of total severance from the Western-style politics embraced by Nasser and, at the same time, an exhortation to cleanse Islam of any external influence, including that of men. Any departure from the principle of the government of God, he affirms, is an act of apostasy (*kufir*).

Although the accusation of apostasy (*takfir*) is a religious concept, it has, from the outset of Islam, been molded into a powerful political weapon. The first war of apostasy was fought soon after the death of the Prophet, during the reign of Caliph Abu Bakr (632–34).³² Through the centuries, both Shi’ites and Sunnis have used the concept of *takfir* to exclude each other from power.³³

AL TAKFIR

In insurgent Iraq, al Zarqawi accuses secular and moderate Iraqi Muslims (especially those with liberal and democratic tendencies) as well as Shi'ites (whom he characterizes as the allies of the Coalition forces) of apostasy. They are heretics, he says, and as such they should be killed. One can draw dangerous parallels with the Spanish Inquisition in the fifteenth century.³⁴ Religion in Europe at that time was essentially a political weapon. The sin of apostasy was a crime punishable by a gruesome death by fire. Europe was alight with the auto-da-fé, as bodies burned in the name of God. The Iraq envisaged by al Zarqawi would be forced into this apocalyptic path.

The great danger faced by fifteenth-century Europe was the outbreak of civil war between Catholics and Protestants, a war fought along religious divides, with its roots in the Continent's vicious power struggles. Today, al Zarqawi's accusation of apostasy against the Shi'ite population aims at triggering just such a civil war (fitna)—that is, a war of religion in which political and economic interests are obscured.

Fitna in Iraq takes a characteristic form. At its root is the battle for power between the Shi'ite majority and the Sunni minority, who have succeeded in imposing their hegemony on the country for centuries. The feud between Shi'ites and Sunnis is almost as ancient as the Muslim religion. It was ignited in 655, a year before the assassination of Caliph Uthman, when the followers of Muhammad fought the Great Fitna over the issue of succession. Uthman was charged with apostasy by the supporters of Ali, considered the direct descendent of the Prophet. The Great Fitna gave birth to the schism between the Sunnis, the followers of Uthman, and the Shi'ites, the followers of Ali. The hostility between them remains virulent to this day.

From those early days, the concept of takfir remains solidly anchored to political and economic issues. It is essentially an instrument to challenge existing powers. In the eighteenth century, Abd al Wahhab, a Saudi preacher and founder of the Wahhabi movement, accused

the Ottoman Empire of apostasy on the basis of heresy; he claimed that it had departed from the true source of legitimacy, the word of God. The alliance between the House of Saud and Wahhab was forged around the takfir of the Turks, a sin and a crime which allowed the population of the Arabian Peninsula to take up arms against its rulers.³⁵ For the following two centuries, the war of conquest conducted by these two powerful allies was fought with economic and political weaponry, but dressed up as a war against apostasy.

The final aim of the takfir is not the exclusion of the heretics from the *spiritual* community, but their eviction from the *material* community: removing them from the system of social rights and privileges and from the economy. The heretics are pushed outside the boundaries of political legitimacy. Defining the takfir is as slippery as defining terrorism. In the 1970s, when the Red Brigades accused the Italian state of terrorism, the government promptly returned the favor. In the mid-1990s, Ramzi Youssef, while on trial in the United States for the first bombing of the World Trade Center, accused the American government of engaging in terrorism.

In the 1950s and 1960s, members of the Muslim Brotherhood redefined the takfir to justify their opposition to Nasser, who they claimed had pushed them into the underworld of illegality. Again the question centered upon the legitimacy of the state. In response to tough government repression, Sayyid Qutb accused the Arab ruler of being an infidel, stating, "God is the sole source of power." The return to the legitimacy of God, to al Tawhid, to the acceptance of an absolute, supernatural power, allowed Qutb's followers to condemn the injustice done in the name of Arab nationalism. This move crippled Arab secularism. Against the bleak political landscape of the Cold War, rife with corruption, injustice, and treason, al Tawhid became the voice of God, the deliverance of the oppressed Arab people; for the new Arab generations of unemployed and dispossessed, it became the only hope to change the world they lived in.

These are the concepts that al Maqdisi unveiled to al Gharib in

Peshawar, the pillars of the radical Salafi jihadist movement. What al Zarqawi learned from al Maqdisi was the fundamentalist way of thinking; he learned to reject all those who do not believe in al Tawhid ideology, and to reject all those who do not join in condemning all tyrants, including Muslims and Arabs. Listening to his tutor, al Gharib began to understand his own past. Al Maqdisi's teachings projected him further into the fringe, into the Salafi jihadist movement, which shuns both Western and Arab socioeconomic and political environments. Takfir became the answer to al Gharib's many questions; it wiped away the deep contradictions of his upbringing. Takfir was his response to the consumerism and rapid modernization that had destroyed the Bedouin way of life, and to the Jordanian government, which had imprisoned him. Takfir was how he attacked those who had forced upon him a life of misery, of socioeconomic marginalization, of endless humiliation.

The radicalization of modern Salafism appealed to al Gharib and to the thousands of his peers who had completed the journey from petty criminal to mujahed. "The Salafist ideology is primarily a movement of violent rupture with the environment," explains Nadine Picaudou, professor at the National Institute for Oriental Language and Civilization (INALCO), Paris.³⁶ While the Muslim Brotherhood exists within the political space (its members participated in the elections in Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait), modern Salafism not only rejects such a space, but seeks its destruction. The former are associative and legitimate, the latter are disruptive and illegal. What appealed to the Stranger in Peshawar was precisely the uncompromising, destructive nature of modern Salafism. In Europe, the same violent ideology draws a new generation of jihadist to suicide missions.

Modern Salafism also offers a way forward, a future vision. From the ashes of the disintegrating infidel regimes will rise al Tawhid, the ideal society. Thus, for al Zarqawi, to build the true Muslim state, the Iraq of Saddam, as well as the Iraq of Allawi and of those who follow him, must be demolished.

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However, in 1993, al Zarqawi was not thinking of Iraq, but of his homeland. Together with al Maqdisi he began gathering Jordanian mujahedin to convince them to return home to begin the destruction of the Jordanian regime. Before the year's end, they were both back in Zarqa.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations, 5 February 2003. See <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,77676,00.html>.

PROLOGUE: THE CITY OF ZARQA

- 1 Genesis 32:22–32
- 2 This event is regarded by Zionists as the biblical justification of the existence of the state of Israel. Christian fundamentalist also regard it as a proof of the existence of Greater Israel, a land which goes from Iraq to Palestine. According to their belief, Christ's second coming will be postponed until such state has been re-created.

CHAPTER 1: THE SEEDS OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

- 1 *al Arabiyya*, 13 July 2004.
- 2 The Banu Hassan tribe extends to Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, and even to Egypt and Sudan.
- 3 Jean-Charles Brisard, *Zarkaoui. Le Nouveau Visage d'Al-Qaida* (Paris: Fayard, 2005), 24.
- 4 Gary Gambill, "Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi: A Biographical Sketch," in "Special Issue on Zarqawi," ed. Mahan Abedin, *Terrorism Monitor*, 2, no. 24 (16 December 2004). See www.jamestown.org/.
- 5 Leo Sisti, "Zarqawi Segreto," *l'Espresso*, 30 September 2004.
- 6 Gambill, op. cit.
- 7 Loretta Napoleoni, *Terror Inc* (London: Penguin, 2004), chapter 5.
- 8 See <http://encyclopedia.lockergnome.com>.

- 9 The Muslim Brotherhood, also known as the Muslim Brethren (Jamiat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin), is an Islamic organization with a political approach towards Islam. It was founded in Egypt in 1928 as a youth organization aimed at spiritual, moral, and social reform by Hassan al Banna. The organization motto is: "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Koran is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope." Overall, the Brotherhood opposes secular tendencies in Islamic nations, seeks a return to the precepts of the Koran, and rejects Western influences. As an organization, it is very popular among the poor because it is active within the community, organizing social and religious groups ranging from prayer meetings and sport clubs, to charity and medical care.
- The Muslim Brotherhood is considered the matrix of all modern Sunni Islamist movements and is represented all over the world. While taking an extreme stand in Egypt, the Jordanian members of the Muslim Brotherhood supported King Hussein of Jordan in his position against the PLO and against the attempts of Egyptian president Gamal Nasser to overthrow him. The Jordanian group sought changes within the Arab regimes through reforms by participating in politics. Today, the Brotherhood is considered a moderate movement.
- 10 See chapter two.
- 11 The so-called Six-Day War began on 5 June 1967 and was fought by Israel against its Arab neighbors: Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The background to the war was the escalation of violence and mounting tension on Israel's northern and southern border, which led Egypt's president Nasser to close the Tiran Straits. Within six days the Israeli forces achieved victory and occupied Sinai, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Old City of Jerusalem.
- 12 In 1988, Abdallah Azzam asked bin Laden to register all the Arab mujahedin who had joined the anti-Soviet jihad. This database became an independent section of the Arab-Afghan Bureau, known as Sijl al Qaeda (Register of al Qaeda), and was under the supervision of Azzam. After Azzam's death, bin Laden took control of both the Arab-Afghan Bureau and al Qaeda.
- 13 Sayyed Qutb was an important theoretician of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In 1954 he was jailed after a failed assassination attempt against President Nasser. While in prison he wrote his two most important works, *In the Shade of the Koran* and *Milestone*, the latter which became the manifesto of political Islam. While in prison his popularity grew, and in 1965 he was accused and found guilty of plotting to overthrow the Nasser regime; the following year he was executed by hanging.
- 14 He travelled to the United States as a professor from the University of Jordan, often invited by the Association of Muslim Students.
- 15 The Arab-Afghan Bureau had several tasks, including unifying the Arab mujahedin in spite of their different ideologies; linking the Arab and the Islamic world with the Afghan jihad and making sure financial aid would flow to Afghanistan; distributing articles on the jihad and about the victories of the mujahedin in the

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- Muslim world; and training Arab volunteers for the war. See Abderrahim Ali, *Half al irhab. Tanzim al Qaeda min Abdallah Azzam ila Ayman al Zawabiri 1979–2003* (Cairo: Dar al Mahrusa, 2004) 25–26.
- 16 From the eighth to nineteenth century.
 - 17 *Zarkaoui: la Question Terroriste*. Documentary by Patrice Barrat, Najat Rizk, and Ranwa Stephan. Arte TV (France and Germany), broadcast 1 March 2005. Unpublished interview by Patrice Barrat with Nadine Picaudou.
 - 18 *Zarkaoui*, Barrat, Rizk, and Stephan, op. cit.
 - 19 Toward the end of the nineteenth century European powers got very involved in the Middle East; in 1882 the British and French landed troops in Egypt and took control of the country. Although Egypt was not regarded as a colony, in 1914 it was officially annexed to Britain. In 1922, the British agreed to grant Egypt its independence while retaining control over many important aspects of Egyptian sovereignty.
 - 20 Brian Murphy, “Messages hint at London blast recruiting,” Associated Press, 16 July 2005. See http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/bombings_recruiting_terror.
 - 21 *Zarkaoui*, Barrat, Rizk and Stephan, op. cit
 - 22 Ibid.
 - 23 He should not be confused with Abu Qatadah, in custody in the United Kingdom at the time of writing.

CHAPTER 2: STRANGERS AMONG WARRIORS

- 1 Abdallah Anas, interview by the author, London, February 2005.
- 2 The siege of Khost (located 150 kilometers south of Kabul) is part of the legendary heroism of the mujahedin, to the point that it is considered “the conquest of conquests.” Khost was under siege by the Afghans and Arab Brigades for almost eight years. The battle was led by Jalal al Din Haqqani, leader of al Hizb al Islami, and by Hikmatyar, who commanded the mujahedin; the Arab brigades fought under the leadership of Abu al Harith al Urduni. For a mujahed, having participated in the battle of Khost is a sign of prestige; this is why some people have claimed that al Zarqawi was part of the Arab-Afghan brigade. But, he actually arrived in Afghanistan after the siege of Khost had already taken place.
- 3 *Under the Microscope*. Al Jazeera Arabic Satellite TV. 1 July 2004 broadcast, in Arabic.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 *Zarkaoui: la Question Terroriste*. Documentary by Patrice Barrat, Najat Rizk, and Ranwa Stephan. Arte TV (France and Germany), broadcast 1 March 2005.
- 6 Lizette Alvarez, “Portrait of Three Suspects Emerges in Britain,” *International Herald Tribune*, 15 July 2005.

- 7 *Abu Mo'ab al Zarqawi, from Herat to Baghdad*. Documentary by Fouad Hussein. LBC TV (Beirut), broadcast 27 and 28 November 2004, in Arabic. Transcript by Article Z and Firehorse Films.
- 8 "Actually there were rivalries among al Qaeda members depending on their countries of origin. The Egyptians used to boast about being Egyptian. The Saudis, Yemenis, Sudanese, and Arab Maghreb citizens used to do the same thing sometimes. This troubled Sheikh Osama and he used to send me to them to help eliminate these regional rivalries because the enemies of God, those who have sickness in their hearts, and informants would exploit these ignorant attitudes and try to sow divisions and disagreements among al Qaeda members." Khalid al Hammadi, "Al Qaeda organization from Inside, as Reported by Abu-Jandal, Nasir Al-Bahari," part 6 of a series of interviews with Nasir al Bahari, *al Quds al Arabi*, 30 March 2005.
- 9 Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al Qaida's Jihad in Europe* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004), 9.
- 10 Steven Emerson and Khalid Duran, "Interview with Abu Iman, 4 November 1993," in Kohlmann, op. cit.
- 11 Abderrahim Ali is an Egyptian researcher specializing in Islamic movements. He also worked as a journalist with *al-Ahali* (the most left-wing newspaper in Egypt) and is now editor of the Web page Islam Online (www.islamonline.net). He is director of the Centre for Studies on Islamism and Democracy in Cairo.
- 12 See chapter four for more on al Zawahiri.
- 13 Khalid al Hammadi "Former bin Laden 'Bodyguard' Recalls al Qaeda Figures, Views East Africa Bombings," part 9 of a series of interviews with Nasir al Bahari, *al Quds al Arabi*, 31 March 2005.
- 14 Abdallah Anas, interview by the author, London, February 2005.
- 15 Montasser al Zayyat, *The Road to al Qaeda* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).
- 16 Azzam insisted that the money destined for the Maktab al Khidamat had to be used within Afghanistan. See Abderrahim Ali, *Half al irhab. Tanzim al Qaeda min Abdallah Azzam ila Ayman al Zawahiri 1979-2003*, (Cairo: Dar al Mahrusa, 2004), 29.
- 17 Sheikh Azzam was killed, along with his two sons by a 20 kg TNT bomb while he was driving. His death remains an unsolved mystery.
- 18 Sheikh Omar Abd al Rahman was the spiritual guide of al Jamaa al Islamiyya, which is with al Jihad the most active radical Islamist organization in Egypt. This group used his fatwas to justify their actions. Omar Abd al Rahman issued a fatwa prior to the assassination of Sadat, in which he justified the assassination of the Pharaoh (the name given to Sadat by the radical Islamists).
- 19 In 1990, Sheikh Omar Abd al Rahman came to the United States for a series of lectures fully funded by Mustafa Shalabi. Once in the United States, the Blind Sheikh attempted to undermine the authority of his sponsor who refused to let him use the money of the Arab-Afghan Bureau for his own expenses. As managing director of the Arab-Afghan Bureau, Abdallah Anas was in charge of the finances of the al

- Kifah Refugee Centre in Brooklyn. During a visit to Mustafa Shalabi a few months before his assassination, he confirmed that the centre could not support Sheikh Omar's expenses in the United States. Anas even went to talk to the Blind Sheikh, trying to reason with him and suggesting that he move to Peshawar. Sheikh Omar was adamant that his place was in the United States. By the time Mustafa Shalabi was killed, the Egyptians were in control of the Arab-Afghan Bureau in Peshawar, therefore making it easy for the Blind Sheikh to step into his predecessor's shoes. Abdallah Anas interview by the author, London, February 2005.
- 20 Loretta Napoleoni, *Terror Inc* (London: Penguin, 2004), chapter 1.
 - 21 There are several theories about the death of Abdallah Azzam, for example, that he was killed by secret agents working for the Soviets.
 - 22 *Abu Mo'ab al Zarkawi*, Hussein, op. cit.
 - 23 Al Maqdisi finished his secondary studies in Kuwait and studied sciences at the University of Mosul. He lived between Kuwait and the Hijaz and learned the classic works of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab.
 - 24 Dominique Thomas, *Les Hommes d'al Qaeda* (Paris: Éditions Michalon, 2005), 87.
 - 25 Muhammad Basil, "Al Anсарu l'Arab fi Afghanistan," Committee for Islamic Benevolence Publications, Kohlmann, , op. cit.
 - 26 Khalid al Hammadi, "Former bin Laden 'Bodyguard' Discusses al Qaeda Training Methods," part 5 of a series of interviews with Nasir al Bahari, *al Quds al Arabi*, 26 March 2005.
 - 27 Though the term Salafi refers to Muslim predecessors and ancestors, particularly the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) was the founder and champion of the brand of modernist Islamic political thought known as *Salafiyya*. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2000), 32, 97, 139.
 - 28 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).
 - 29 Brown, op cit., 32, 96.
 - 30 Salafism, or *Salafiyya*, centers on the concept of *al Tawhid*, which holds that God is one and the unity of God is absolute. The divine unity of God is also the unity of the umma, the community of believers. Monotheism is, therefore, the core of Islam and at the same time it represents its heartbeat. Al Tawhid demands that "people seek to become one with God," explains Muhammad Taleb, "their lives must merge into such unity, thus Islam demands from its members a multidimensional participation," in *Zarkaoui*, Barrat,Rizk, and Stephan op. cit.
 - 31 Sayyed Qutb, *Maalim fi l-tariq* (Cairo: Dar al Shuruq, 1987), 105.
 - 32 Abu Bakr accused of apostasy several tribes of the Arabian Peninsula who staged an insurrection against his caliphate by refusing to pay the zakat, the religious almsgiving that is one of the five pillars of Islam. Abu Bakr utilized the concept of takfir to bar the rebellious tribes from society. Abdelilah Belqaziz, *Al Islam wa al*

siyasa. Dawr al haraka al islamiyya fi sawg al majal al-siyas (Casablanca: al Markaz al Thaqafi al Arabi, 2001), 85–98.

- 33 The principal root of the dispute between Sunnis and Shi'ites is the question of the origin of power, with the Shi'ites disqualifying all the caliphs except Ali and the other clans (Omeyas and Abbasis). There is also the question of the prerogatives of power; for Sunnis, the caliph is a temporal sovereign charged with protecting the religion and the law, and is fallible; for Shi'ites, the imam or the caliph, who must be a descendant of Ali, is infallible.
- 34 King Philip II of Spain used religion as a tool to crush the revolt of Protestant Flanders.
- 35 Pascal Minoret, *Sull'Orlo del Vulcano, il caso dell'Arabia Saudita* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2004), chapter 2.
- 36 *Zarkaoui, Barrat, Rizk, and Stephan op. cit.*



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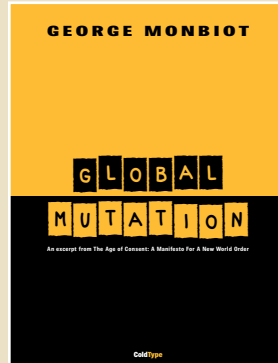
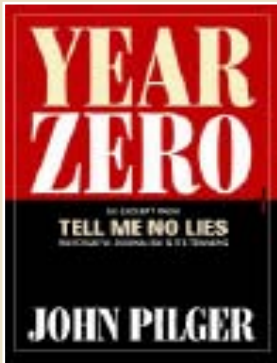
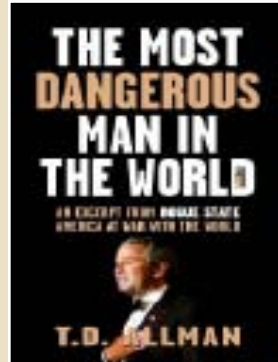
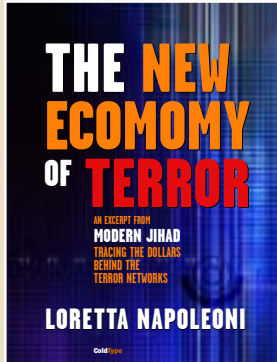
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