

## THE FOUR WAVES OF GLOBAL JIHAD, 1979-2017

Glenn E. Robinson

*Dr. Robinson is on the faculty at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA, and is also affiliated with the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.\**

Debates about the role that Islam should play in shaping politics and political systems have been around since the beginning of Islam itself. Islamism as a sociopolitical movement, however, originated in the twentieth century, its beginnings linked to problems associated with imperialism, modern states, rapid urbanization and the rise of mass societies. The organized expression of Islamism began in 1928, when Hasan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates remain the gold standard for the institutional expression of Islamist thought.<sup>2</sup>

While the Muslim Brotherhood engaged in violence from time to time in Egypt and elsewhere during the middle of the twentieth century, Islamist political thought in general was not predicated on the use of violence to achieve political ends.<sup>3</sup> This began to change in the 1960s, as new schools of Islamist thought began to advocate the use of violence to accomplish their political goals, usually the overthrow of local regimes that were viewed as apostate. Within the Sunni world, the most im-

portant of these new thinkers who stressed the role of violent jihad was Sayyid Qutb.<sup>4</sup> Like most jihadi ideologues, Qutb was a lay Muslim rather than a cleric, employed within Egypt's Ministry of Education and fairly worldly, having spent two years in the late 1940s in the United States. As with the rest of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership, Qutb ran afoul of the new Free Officers regime, which came to power in Egypt in 1952. He spent years in prison before finally being hanged by Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime in 1966.

Qutb's fatal offense was writing the slim volume *Maalim f'il-Tariq* (Milestones), in which he called for the violent overthrow of Nasser's regime on the grounds that it was *jahili*, anti-Islamic. Qutb's book was a call to arms for jihadis throughout the Sunni Muslim world, in much the same way that Vladimir Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* was for Communists.<sup>5</sup> Qutb's work provided the intellectual foundations for the jihadi movement in the contemporary Sunni world and remains influential in jihadi circles to this day.<sup>6</sup>

While this essay focuses on global jihad among Sunni Muslims (there is no real

\* The author wishes to thank Daniel Byman, Mohammed Hafez and Robert Springborg for their invaluable comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Any remaining errors of fact or interpretation are his alone.

equivalent of global jihad among the Shia), it would be remiss not to mention that the intellectual foundations of modern jihadism in the Shia world arose at nearly the same time. In 1970, while in exile in Najaf, Iraq, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini delivered a series of lectures on Islamic government in which he argued that the shah's government was illegitimate and un-Islamic and must be removed.<sup>7</sup> The implication was clear: violence might well be necessary to effect regime change in Iran. Khomeini was the most famous voice to articulate a Shia rationale for violence in order to implement a more just political and social order, beginning in the 1960s; however, he was not alone. For example, from the late 1960s until his death under mysterious circumstances in 1977, Ali Shariati (a Sorbonne PhD) articulated a political-religious ideology that married Shiism with Marxism, much as Liberation Theology among leftist Catholic priests had woven together Christianity and Marxism in the 1970s.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, as we date the emergence of Islamism to 1928 with the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood, we can likewise date the emergence of modern jihadi thought — the call for violence to implement a political agenda under the banner of Islam — to the 1960s. Their intellectual foundations now laid, both Islamism and jihadism surged in importance in the Muslim world in the 1970s and 1980s. The reasons for the dramatic rise of these two phenomena are complex and varied, including the sudden strengthening of Saudi Arabia and other conservative oil states and the general failure of secular republics in the Middle East to deliver economic growth and good governance.<sup>9</sup>

The key point in this discussion is that, in both intellectual construct and practice, neither Islamism nor jihadism contained

an important global aspect. Like Christianity, Islam is a proselytizing religion, and thus pious Muslims (like pious Christians) believe aspirationally that the whole world must one day share their religion. As a result, one can always find this type of global religious reference in the writings of Islamist and jihadi thinkers (and other Muslims), but this is different from placing a global strategy for change or violence at the center of one's political project. Early jihadi thinkers in particular focused on local issues, primarily what Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj would later call the “near enemy”: local Muslim regimes.<sup>10</sup>

Global jihadism emerged as an offshoot of the broader jihadi movement in the 1980s or, more specifically, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. While the global jihadi movement has grown substantially over the past four decades, it has remained a fairly small component of militant jihadism, which still overwhelmingly focuses on local issues. Global jihadism has now witnessed four distinct waves. None is part of some grander conspiracy, but rather a response to a specific crisis from which a particular idea of global jihad emerged. Each wave has had a defining idea about what was meant by global jihad and at least one ideologue who most closely articulated it. In every case, the idea of global jihad was clearly shaped by the crisis from which it arose.

I will briefly summarize the four waves here and then treat each one in more detail below. The first wave of global jihad began with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent call for Muslims from around the world to come and help liberate Afghanistan. This jihad against the Soviets continued throughout the 1980s to be primarily a classic anti-colonial jihad, but during this time a jihadi offshoot

emerged dedicated to the idea of freeing all occupied Muslim lands around the world. Although this would begin with Afghanistan, the global jihad was to move on to other lands viewed as properly Muslim but occupied by infidels — from Palestine to Kashmir to Mindanao and, ultimately, to Spain (*al-Andalus*). The idea was that a “solid base” of mujahideen warriors would travel the world working with local Muslim populations to liberate Muslim lands, forming a type of “Jihadi International.”<sup>11</sup> This first wave came to an end after the Soviets left Afghanistan and the Jihadi International idea proved impractical.

The second wave of global jihad — Bin Laden’s “America First” or far-enemy strategy — can be dated from about 1996. It arose out of a crisis of defeat, particularly in Egypt and Algeria, where jihadi

armed insurrections to overthrow local regimes had largely ground to a halt in failure. The defeat in Egypt was particularly stinging to Bin Laden, given the importance of Egypt as the most populated and strategically important Arab country. This second wave of global jihad had its heyday from 1998 to 2001 with a series of increasingly audacious direct attacks on American targets, culminating in the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. What came to be known as “al-Qaeda Central” was largely defeated by 2002 but sputtered on in diminished form under Bin Laden until 2011, when he was killed by U.S. Navy Seals at his compound in Pakistan.

The third distinct wave of global jihad began with the overthrow of the Iraqi state in 2003 by U.S. forces and intensified with the civil war in Syria that began in 2011.

**TABLE 1.** The Four Waves of Global Jihad, 1979-2017

Wave	Specific Crisis	General Crisis	Solution	Key Ideologue(s)
<b>I. Jihadi International, 1979-1990</b>	1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan	Occupation of Muslim lands	Create international band of Muslim warriors to liberate Muslim territory	Abdullah Azzam
<b>II. America First (Far Enemy), 1996-2011</b>	1997 defeat of jihad in Egypt and Algeria	Durability of apostate regimes	Direct violent action to drive U.S. out of Muslim world	Osama Bin Laden
<b>III. Caliphate Now!, 2003-2017</b>	2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, 2011 civil war in Syria	Apostasy, aided by Shia rule	Take and hold territory, implement sharia, declare Islamic State	Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Abu Bakr Naji, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
<b>IV. Personal Jihad (Keep Hope Alive!), 2001-present</b>	2001 defeat of Taliban, destruction of ‘emirate’	Looming defeat of global jihad	Networked, decentralized, small-scale violence attached to media campaign	Abu Musab al-Suri

The creation of essentially “ungoverned lands” in the Sunni areas of northwestern Iraq and eastern Syria allowed for the creation of a new form of global jihad, one focused on establishing a territorial jihadi state. The end of this third wave of global jihad comes with the end of the “Islamic Caliphate” as a territorial state, likely in 2017. The “Islamic State” group, or ISIS, will no doubt continue as a terror organization, but the loss of its territorial state will mark the end of an era.

The fourth wave of global jihad began almost simultaneously with the third, but out of a different crisis and with a very different idea about global jihad. It emerged from the defeat of the Taliban in 2001 and the loss of the Islamic “emirate.” The defeat of the Taliban (and the near-destruction of its al-Qaeda allies) was the crisis that prompted Abu Musab al-Suri to rethink global jihad for an era when the movement was on the defensive, asking the question of how global jihad could survive to fight another day. His answer was networked but decentralized *jihad fardi*, personal jihad, undertaken by individuals and small cells under the banner of global jihad, making full use of the Internet and other new information technologies. It is this fourth wave of global jihad in which the world finds itself today, a wave that, while not a high-level strategic threat, does constitute a durable and deadly source of fear.

#### **JIHADI INTERNATIONAL, 1979-90**

In an attempt to save an allied regime on the verge of collapse, Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Prior to the Soviet invasion, the “jihad” in Afghanistan against the leftist regime in Kabul had not gained significant attention among jihadi audiences, even though it was on the cusp of victory. The armed

takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Saudi jihadis earlier in 1979 was a far more notable event, as was the overthrow of the shah in Shia Iran at the beginning of 1979. However, the military occupation of Muslim Afghanistan by “infidel” Soviet troops changed the calculus and gave much greater international attention to the conflict in Afghanistan.

The USSR’s invasion of Afghanistan fit into a dispossession narrative common in the Muslim world, and its theme resonated even more among Islamists of all stripes: the gradual loss of Muslim lands around the world to non-Muslim forces since the high point of Muslim expansion in the seventeenth century. The jihad to drive out the Soviets would become a cause célèbre in the Muslim world and generate among jihadis the idea that Muslim warriors, united by their faith, could be nearly invincible.

The man responsible for laying the intellectual foundations for this first wave of global jihad was Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, a Palestinian-Jordanian who was both well educated and well traveled, having studied and taught in Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> Assassinated in 1989 in Peshawar, Pakistan, Azzam is still considered one of the most important intellectuals in jihadi circles, both as a popularizer of the Afghan jihad and as an important innovator in jihadi thought. It is fair to say that Azzam was the founder of the idea of global jihad.

Unlike most jihadi ideologues, Azzam was a trained cleric, having received his doctorate in Islamic jurisprudence from the famed al-Azhar University in Cairo. This clerical training gave Azzam’s fundamental radicalism a more traditional bent, and also gave his writings significant credibility among fellow radicals.

Azzam laid out his arguments in a series of texts, the two most famous being the 1984 *fatwa* (religious opinion) *The Defense of Muslim Lands* and the 1987 book *Join the Caravan*. Azzam's basic argument may be summarized as follows: Muslim lands have been lost over time to non-Muslim forces, and they need to be taken back for use by the Muslim *ummah* (community). The two most important places to begin the reconquest of Muslim lands globally are Afghanistan and Palestine. Where Muslim lands have been occupied, it is obligatory for all Muslims (*fard ayn*) to participate in their recapture, which can only be accomplished through violent jihad. No other method will be successful, since occupiers will not readily give up such territory. The strategy is for a solid base of mujahidin (the "beating heart and thinking mind of jihad") to travel the world and work with Muslim communities to undertake "peoples' jihads" to liberate occupied Muslim lands.

Azzam's signature innovation was the call for global jihad based on a "solid base" (*qaidat al-sulba*) of well-trained Muslim mujahidin from around the world, a sort of "Jihadi International." Azzam's vision was at once both radical and traditional: he interpreted jihad in a far more globally expansive manner than had been the case previously, but he maintained a strict focus on territory. Armed jihad to liberate occupied land is an orthodox, traditional use of the concept of jihad. Indeed, Azzam rejected the *takfir* argument made most strenuously by Ayman al-Zawahiri, that the post-Afghan jihad should focus on overthrowing apostate Muslim regimes, beginning in Egypt, not on liberating territory, which would be far more difficult. Azzam saw the use of *takfir*, ex-communication of Muslims, to be a slippery slope leading

directly to *fitna*, internecine Muslim discord. For Azzam, *takfir* would weaken the *ummah* rather than strengthen it.<sup>13</sup>

Azzam's radicalism was not limited to the expansive, globalized nature of armed jihad. Azzam agreed with Sayyid Qutb that armed jihad was not an episodic set of discrete events (the orthodox Muslim view) but rather a permanent state for all Muslims, reminiscent of Leon Trotsky's argument for permanent revolution. Azzam can also be credited with the idea of the "cult of martyrdom," including religious justification for suicide bombings. Suicide is a mortal sin in Islam, as in Catholicism, making Azzam's task of justifying suicide operations difficult.

Azzam's call for young Muslim men to "join the caravan," and come to Afghanistan to fight, successfully recruited thousands to the cause, although foreign fighters did not play a decisive role in the ultimate defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of the USSR in early 1989 left the followers of global jihad with a dilemma: where to take the jihad next? Should they follow Azzam's advice and fight in Palestine or some other occupied Muslim lands, or follow Zawahiri's *takfiri* line and put their resources into overthrowing apostate rulers in the Muslim world, particularly Hosni Mubarak? More traditional Muslims simply left for home, knowing that the particular jihad to liberate Afghanistan was over. The debate among global jihadis was furious and may have contributed to Azzam's assassination by car bomb in Pakistan in November 1989.<sup>14</sup>

The Soviet withdrawal, along with Azzam's death, helped bring to a close the first wave of global jihad. One last effort to realize Azzam's vision of a Jihadi International that would travel to occupied zones to liberate land occurred in Kuwait follow-

ing the Iraqi invasion in August 1990. Az-zam's former pupil and colleague, Osama bin Laden, approached the Saudi royal family with an offer: instead of bringing in the Americans and other infidels to liberate Kuwait, allow Bin Laden to put the band back together, bring in 100,000 mujahidin from around the world, and liberate Kuwait with Muslim hands. The Saudis, of course, had no interest in enabling tens of thousands of foreign jihadis to roam around the kingdom, and declined the offer, setting a spurned Bin Laden off on his own path to change the nature of global jihad.

### AMERICA FIRST, 1996-2011

The Saudi decision to reject Bin Laden's offer to bring in foreign mujahidin to liberate Kuwait tipped the scales decisively against the idea of a Jihadi International, as it proved to be unworkable in practice. The rejection also profoundly affected Bin Laden's thinking, bringing him much closer (at least for a few years) to Zawahiri's takfiri idea that the fundamental problem was the nature of regimes in the Muslim world. How could any proper Muslim leader prefer the use of hundreds of thousands of American and other infidel forces to — as the jihadi narrative would have it — the genuine and pure mujahidin, who had just demonstrated their power in defeating one of the world's two superpowers in Afghanistan? For Bin Laden, this decision demonstrated an intrinsic corruption.

In the early 1990s, banned from Saudi Arabia because of his growing militancy and holed up in Sudan, Bin Laden had little to do other than entertain the occasional jihadi visitor and perhaps lend a hand to militants next door in Somalia.<sup>15</sup> At the broader level, there was very little, if any, organized global jihad during this period. Local groups remained active, although

most were now on the defensive against renewed regime efforts in the post-Cold War regional environment. The conflict in Bosnia following the collapse of Yugoslavia attracted a large number of Muslim volunteers from different lands, but it would be an exaggeration to say they were fighting under the banner of global jihad.

Indeed, the 1990s were proving to be a very difficult decade for jihadis of all stripes, whether local or global. After 20 years of sustained success, either taking power in countries or becoming significant political actors, both Islamists and jihadis were losing ground as the 1990s wore on.<sup>16</sup> The two most important examples of this reversal of fortune were Egypt and Algeria. The Egyptian regime had proved unable to stamp out either the growing influence of Islamism or the low-intensity conflict of Egyptian jihadis, led by both the Islamic Group (*al-gamma al-islamiyya*) and the Jihad Organization (*tanzim al-jihad*). Areas of Cairo had become dangerous places for police and security personnel to visit after dark, including one very large neighborhood periodically referred to as the "Islamic State of Imbaba." Predictions of the likely fall of the Mubarak regime and the coming to power of Islamists of some stripe were commonplace.<sup>17</sup> Yet by 1997, to the chagrin of Bin Laden and other jihadis, the insurrection in Egypt was largely defeated, with many jihadi leaders calling for a ceasefire and acknowledging that their path of violence had been a mistake.<sup>18</sup>

In Algeria, the story was largely the same. The political liberalization that began in the late 1980s swept into power the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS in its French acronym, essentially the equivalent of the Muslim Brotherhood) in the 1990 municipal elections across Algeria. With the FIS halfway to the goal of win-

ning national parliamentary elections, the Algerian military staged a coup in January 1992, stopped the elections and took power, prompting a bloody civil war. While Egypt's conflict was generally one of low intensity, the Algerian civil war was all-out and bloody. It featured some extremely gruesome acts of terror against civilians, the likes of which would not be seen again in the region until the rise of ISIS. By 1994, the Islamists and jihadis were mostly fighting among themselves, and, as in Egypt, by 1997 the civil war had been largely won by the Algerian state.<sup>19</sup>

How did Bin Laden make sense of this reversal of fortune? Was it not inevitable that apostate regimes would collapse under the righteous pressure of the mujahidin? And how was it that local apostate regimes in many parts of the region — not just in Egypt and Algeria — had proven to be much more durable than Bin Laden had expected? It was in this context that Bin Laden developed his “America First” idea. According to this notion, it was U.S. support for apostate regimes that allowed them to survive. The logical strategy, then, was to drive the United States from the Middle East, thereby making local regimes more vulnerable.<sup>20</sup>

Bin Laden drew his inspiration from Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj, the ideologue for the jihadi group that had assassinated Anwar Sadat in 1981. In his tract to fellow jihadis on the “missing duty” of armed jihad (*al-farida al-ghaiba*), Faraj warned his fellow jihadis not to waste precious resources fighting the “far enemy,” which Faraj defined as Israel. Even if jihadis successfully liberated Jerusalem, apostate Arab regimes in Cairo and elsewhere would end up claiming credit for it. Rather, Faraj urged the jihadi movement to focus on the “near enemy” of local apos-

tate regimes, beginning with the overthrow of Sadat.<sup>21</sup>

Borrowing Faraj's near-enemy/far-enemy rubric, Bin Laden turned it upside down in two ways. First, he decided that Israel was just a symptom of a larger problem; it was the United States, not Israel, that should be viewed as the far enemy (*adu baid*). Second, Bin Laden believed that it would be impossible to overthrow apostate regimes in Cairo, Riyadh and elsewhere without first breaking their links with Washington. So the focus of direct action should not be on the near enemy (*adu qarib*) of the apostate regimes — not yet, anyway — but rather on American targets, both military and civilian. Once the Americans had been driven out of the region, he assumed that the local regimes would fall rather easily. Bin Laden was convinced that the Americans would not have the stomach for a fight, given how easily they were driven out of Lebanon and Somalia.

The first iteration of Bin Laden's transition to a “far enemy” or “America First” strategy was his 1996 “declaration of war,” written shortly after he had been forced out of Sudan and taken up residence in Afghanistan. This long and meandering document, appealing mostly to those interested in internal Saudi dissent, received little attention at the time. It is something of a hybrid, still very much a takfiri-jihadi argument for the illegitimacy of the Saudi state (and the religious leadership that gave such a state legitimacy), but also bringing in the United States as the key enabling power that allowed not just apostasy in Saudi Arabia, but also anti-Islamic action in Palestine and across the region. With this document, Bin Laden kept one foot in the door of the takfiri near-enemy camp, but took a step with the other foot toward a

far-enemy strategy — something no jihadi ideologue had ever done.

Bin Laden's clear and unequivocal move to an "America First" strategy came in the form of a 1998 fatwa against "Jews and Crusaders," of which Bin Laden was the lead author. This document generated considerable criticism, both because Bin Laden did not have the religious credentials to issue a fatwa, and because he signed his name "Shaykh" Osama Bin Muhammad Bin Laden (thus implicitly claiming those credentials). Recognizing his overreach, Bin Laden never again signed a fatwa as a religious "shaykh." The document itself was pure "far enemy": the United States was in military occupation of the holy lands of Arabia, was engaged in aggression against Iraq and allowed the "petty state of the Jews" to occupy Jerusalem and murder Muslims. In short, the United States had "declared war on God, his Messenger, and all Muslims." Thus, it was the duty of all Muslims to kill Americans and their allies — civilian and military — wherever possible, until Jerusalem and Mecca are liberated and the Americans "leave all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim."<sup>22</sup>

Bin Laden maintained his focus on the far-enemy strategy for the rest of his life, although the heyday of the strategy and of his revitalized al-Qaeda organization was brief. It dated from the issuance of this fatwa and al-Qaeda's bombing of the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam less than six months later to the near destruction of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2002.

While the central al-Qaeda organization did survive the loss of Afghanistan and the overthrow of its hosts, the Taliban, it never again amounted to a significant force that could threaten the survival of

governments. In the post-9/11 period, al-Qaeda gave rise to several offshoots, its affiliate in Yemen being the most successful (much of Yemen constituting "ungoverned space" over which the state had little influence).<sup>23</sup> Other existing groups, such as al-Shabab in Somalia, pledged loyalty to Bin Laden, largely because of the increased marketing leverage such an alliance might portend. But most of these affiliates were focused on local jihads and not particularly concerned with the ideological cornerstone of al-Qaeda — the thing that made it a global jihadi group and set it apart from all other jihadi groups: the focus on attacking America first to drive it out of the Muslim world. Only al-Qaeda's Yemen affiliate, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), made attempts from time to time to inflict damage directly on the United States, most notably by the "underwear bomber," Umar Faruq Abdulmutallab, in 2009. The death of Bin Laden at U.S. hands in 2011 and the rise of ISIS took the wind out of al-Qaeda central's tattered sails.

### **CALIPHATE NOW! 2003-17**

Neither Azzam's quest to create a Jihadi International nor Bin Laden's call to strike America First garnered large numbers of adherents among potential jihadis, the vast majority of whom were focused on issues in their own countries. By contrast, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was far more successful in attracting recruits and resources from around the world than its two global jihadi predecessors. Perhaps, ironically, the reason ISIS proved more successful was in large measure because it was less global and more local. ISIS was quite traditional in some ways: fighting foreign invaders in the heart of the Middle East, establishing its own territorial state and working to overthrow Shia

regimes in Baghdad and Damascus. In terms of extreme Sunni fundamentalism, ISIS was rather orthodox. Even the radical aspects of ISIS — the declaration of a caliphate — fits in with a long history

of multiple claimants to the office.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, ISIS quite consciously patterned much of its behavior after early Saudi state-

building attempts, primarily in the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Thus, of the four waves of global jihad, ISIS has the least claim to a global agenda, but the greatest ability to recruit — two closely related phenomena. As a more orthodox Sunni extremist group, ISIS appealed to a broader audience than al-Qaeda.

A reasonable question suggests itself: why should ISIS be considered a global jihad phenomenon, instead of just another local Middle Eastern jihadi group? There are three reasons for this. First, ISIS successfully recruited large numbers of fighters and other resources from all over the world. Approximately 30,000-40,000 people from at least 86 countries joined the fighting in Iraq and Syria, most under the ISIS banner, including about 5,000 western Europeans.<sup>26</sup> Second, ISIS has a global vision: to bring the world's 1.6 billion Muslims under its authority and sovereignty. This was the meaning of declaring a "caliphate" as opposed to an Islamic "emirate": a caliphate claims authority over all of the world's Muslims, while an emirate claims authority only over those people inside the territory it controls. Third, ISIS has shown a global reach, from terrorist

attacks in Europe to affiliated emirates around the Muslim world. It should be noted that ISIS violence in the West only began after Western countries started to bomb its "caliphate" in parts of Iraq and

Syria; those acts of terror were motivated more by revenge than ideology.

The crisis that ultimately led to the formation

---

**The crisis that ultimately led to the formation of ISIS was the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003. That invasion, widely seen as a major strategic blunder by the United States, created the chaos and grievances from which ISIS emerged.**

---

of ISIS was the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003. That invasion, widely seen as a major strategic blunder by the United States, created the chaos and grievances from which ISIS emerged. The American occupation of Iraq created a platform for a jihadi radical from Jordan, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, to implement his violent program through his recently formed group, *al-tawhid wal-jihad* (monotheism and jihad). Zarqawi had a long history of radical politics and prison time in Jordan; his primary focus was initially on inciting sectarian war against the Shia. At the same time, al-Qaeda, in its diminished state, was looking to gain a toehold in Iraq to fight the Americans. Negotiations between Zarqawi and al-Qaeda did not go well at first, as Zarqawi clearly did not want to pledge allegiance (*baya*) to Bin Laden — and, in any case, he had a different vision for jihad than did al-Qaeda.

By October 2004, however, Zarqawi decided that joining with al-Qaeda made the most sense for the growth of his group. Thus was formed the Organization of Jihad in Mesopotamia (*tanzim qaidat al-jihad fi bilad al-rafidayn*), better known in the West as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). While

AQI was technically a branch of al-Qaeda for two years, it remained very much a Zarqawi operation with Zarqawi's goals. AQI focused its efforts on bombing Shia targets and publicly executing foreigners, only periodically attacking American military forces in Iraq. Straying so far from al-Qaeda's party line earned Zarqawi a letter of rebuke from Ayman al-Zawahiri, who noted that the issue of the Shia was best saved for a later date, as American forces were the proper target at that point. Besides, the posting of videos of executions of civilians was doing serious harm to the image of the jihadi cause.<sup>27</sup>

Relations between Zarqawi and al-Qaeda, never great, continued to sour until Zarqawi was killed by U.S. forces in June 2006. Four months later, AQI formally broke with al-Qaeda and declared itself a state: the Islamic State in Iraq (*al-dawla al-Islamiyya fil-Iraq*), or ISI.<sup>28</sup> The idea of a territorial state appears to have taken root, at least in part, as a solution to the natural tension that had arisen between what became the ISI alliance of jihadis and Iraqi Sunni nationalists: a territorial state to appease the nationalists, but run under sharia to appeal to the jihadis.<sup>29</sup> However, without Zarqawi's charismatic (if thuggish) leadership, ISI stagnated, unable to hold territory and increasingly alienating the Sunni community it claimed to represent. U.S. efforts to begin working with Sunni Arabs in Iraq, particularly tribal groups, starting in 2007 (broadly lumped together in American parlance with the later troop escalation, or "surge"), further weakened the position of ISI.

Two nearly simultaneous events reversed ISI's fortunes. First, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took over ISI in 2010.<sup>30</sup> Baghdadi proved a skillful leader, able to rally his troops and think creatively. Second, by

March 2011 the Arab Spring protests had come to Syria, rapidly leading to a militarized response by the regime and, over time, its loss of control over large swaths of Syrian territory. It was in this vacuum that ISI reorganized and recovered from its near destruction in Iraq. The vehicle for ISI's entry into the Syrian conflict was the Nusra Front in Syria (*jabhat al-nusra fil-sham*); indeed, Baghdadi and Zawahiri engaged in a public squabble over whom the Nusra Front belonged to. Having lost that argument when the head of the Nusra Front, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, declared allegiance to al-Qaeda, ISI nevertheless had become powerful enough to take and hold much of the Euphrates River valley in eastern Syria in the absence of government forces. The Nusra Front concentrated its efforts in the western part of the country, particularly Homs and Idlib provinces. Gaining significant territory in Syria in 2013 and early 2014 allowed ISI to declare itself an Islamic state in both Iraq and Syria, or ISIS.

The apex of ISIS history occurred in June 2014, when its forces rapidly spread out from its new base in Syria and took over Iraq's second city, Mosul, and much of the territory where Sunni Arabs held a demographic advantage. On June 29, 2014, from the pulpit of the twelfth-century Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi formally declared the re-establishment of the caliphate and proclaimed himself the new caliph. The territorial expansion of ISIS quickly hit its natural limits — Sunni Arab areas without a meaningful state presence in Iraq and Syria — and during the ensuing three years, Iraqi, Kurdish and American forces slowly drove ISIS back. As of this writing, it appears likely that ISIS will lose its territorial caliphate sometime in 2017,

although it will likely continue to exist as a jihadi group for some time to come.

This brief summary of the development of ISIS as the third wave of global jihad has stressed the differences between ISIS and al-Qaeda, even though some of the roots of ISIS were in al-Qaeda. Those differences can be further refined, beyond personal rivalries and diverging histories, by focusing on four issues: the nature of the overarching societal problem faced, the solution to that problem, the strategy to achieve the requisite solution, and the organizational vehicle to carry out that strategy. Al-Qaeda considered the overarching problem to be the durability of local apostate regimes that resulted from their ties to Washington. Al-Qaeda believed that if those ties were broken and the Americans driven out, the apostate regimes would begin to fall. By contrast, ISIS focused on neither the far enemy nor the takfiri regime, but on apostasy itself. According to this thinking, Muslims cannot be truly Muslim unless and until they live in an Islamic state that implements sharia. It was a simple but appealing argument, much easier to market and recruit with than an arcane “far enemy” doctrine. Thus, ISIS focused on the requisites of state creation, a focus al-Qaeda did not share. However, to the degree that ISIS concentrated on state-building issues, it was through a sectarian lens: Shia rule in Baghdad and Damascus must be replaced (eventually) by rule by the caliphate.<sup>31</sup> One of the striking things about the Syrian civil war is just how little ISIS has fought against Syrian regime forces, preferring to battle local groups to hold onto territory, its first priority.

The second major difference between al-Qaeda and ISIS was the solution to the overarching problem. For al-Qaeda, the way to make local apostate regimes fall

was to drive out their international support, the United States. For ISIS, the solution to societal apostasy was to forcibly purify society, allowing its members to live pious lives under sharia.

Those solutions need different strategies. For al-Qaeda, the strategy was to direct violent attacks against American targets, both civilian and military. For ISIS, the strategy was to grab and hold territory, declare a state, and implement true sharia (or at least the ISIS interpretation of it). Savage violence was essential to create the conditions to implement that strategy.

Finally, the organizational form needed to implement the strategy was completely different. Al-Qaeda saw itself as an elite vanguard. To al-Qaeda, recruiting the right types of jihadis was more important than mass recruitment. By comparison, mass recruitment was the ISIS goal, and its media production reflected it. Baghdadi and others routinely put out the call for all Muslims — and especially those with needed talents — to join them in their caliphate. ISIS had its leadership stratum, of course, but saw itself as a mass-based populist movement, not an elite force.

There are a large number of primary texts that lay out the ideology (and evolution) of ISIS. Perhaps the three most important are the 2004 book *The Management of Savagery* (*idarat al-tawahhush*), the 2004 letter of allegiance from Zarqawi to Bin Laden and the 2014 speech by Baghdadi announcing the caliphate.<sup>32</sup> *The Management of Savagery* better describes the strategic use of extreme violence by ISIS than any other work. For its author, Abu Bakr Naji (a pseudonym), over-the-top savagery is needed in order to force the state to disengage from parts of its claimed territory. Drawing on the experience of Algeria in the 1990s, Naji’s idea was notably

put to use in Iraq, where ISIS (AQI, ISI) was easily the most vicious in its implementation of post-2003 violence. Once in power in its territorial state, ISIS continued to implement Naji's call to savagery, as it served a number of political purposes.

What these documents have in common (along with other ISIS documents) is an emphasis on three issues: creating a territorial state, virulent anti-Shiism and the use of spectacular violence for political ends. These ideological foci strongly differentiate the third wave of global jihad from the first two. The most important point was the push for a territorial state as soon as possible. Other jihadi groups, even those that support a new caliphate in theory (most view it as an inevitable step in the future), have been reticent to declare a caliphate, primarily because if it were to be defeated and disappear, it would constitute a historical disaster for the movement, likely setting it back decades. Al-Qaeda warned ISIS against declaring a caliphate for exactly this reason. However, once ISIS had declared it, to great excitement in some quarters, al-Qaeda responded, falsely, that it had already declared a new caliphate earlier.

The emphasis on immediately declaring a territorial state as the central necessity of jihad dates back to Zarqawi, although he was killed just months before the first declaration of a new state was made in 2006. As ISIS's territorial caliphate shrinks and disappears, its critics will likely have been proved right about the folly of such a declaration. Conversely, it may be argued that the ISIS experience, however heinous in many ways, put the idea of re-establishing the Islamic caliphate on the front burner in the Muslim world. However, those outside of ISIS who support the idea would likely attempt to implement it in

a more humane and historically accurate fashion.

Perhaps what set ISIS apart from its jihadi competitors was its brilliant marketing strategy, making global jihad cool for the small segment of the world's population it targeted: young, somewhat marginalized males seeking glory and meaning in their lives.<sup>33</sup> Declaring a caliphate was a stroke of genius, no matter that every major cleric in the Muslim world who weighed in on the subject dismissed Baghdadi's declaration as wrong-headed on many different levels.<sup>34</sup> For marketing and recruitment purposes, it was the sexiest, most outrageous — and most effective — move Baghdadi could have made, stirring the imagination of some Muslims. For young men willing to come and fight for the caliphate, ISIS promised a sort of Disneyland for jihadis: infinite thrills from doing outlandish things with little real-world accountability. The gore-stained videos that ISIS regularly put out repulsed most Muslims, but captured the imagination of just enough of its target demographic.<sup>35</sup> ISIS never sought the approval of the keepers of Islamic tradition (the *ulama*), wanting instead to create its own imagined history. Even Zarqawi's mentor, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, one of the few clerics with a track record of supporting jihadi movements, denounced his former pupil.<sup>36</sup> In the end, the *ulama* decisively rejected the ISIS program and its ephemeral caliphate.

### PERSONAL JIHAD, FROM 2001

The gradual destruction of the territorial caliphate in the 2015-17 period represented the demise of the third wave of global jihad, even though acts of violence will no doubt continue to be carried out in the name of ISIS from time to time. The

quest for and accomplishment of the territorial state was the defining characteristic of the third wave, so its destruction would represent a mortal blow. It is possible that a new territory could be found to revive the caliphate, but, given the ISIS experience, this is not a likely outcome. In the aftermath of the Islamic State, global jihad has moved into its fourth wave, likely to be its most durable.

The fourth wave of global jihad began nearly simultaneously with the third, although it was much more closely linked with the 2001 defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the loss of the al-Qaeda “emirate” there, than with the 2003 Iraq war. This wave was born of desperation and defeat, and focused on the idea of surviving to fight another day. At a time when global jihad was on the cusp of elimination, given Osama bin Laden’s enormous blunder in attacking the United States, what strategy was needed to keep hope alive, to keep the movement going until circumstances improved enough for a rebirth of global jihad?

It fell primarily to Abu Musab al-Suri to devise a strategy for desperate times. Suri, whose birth name was Mustafa Bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar, was global jihad’s most nimble and widely read theorist. Born in Aleppo, Suri got his start in jihadi circles during the Muslim Brotherhood’s armed campaign to overthrow the Syrian regime of Hafiz al-Assad in the early 1980s. That effort came to defeat in 1982, when the city of Hama was pulverized by the Syrian army, leading to the deaths of thousands of Syrians and the effective surrender of the Muslim Brotherhood. Suri escaped Syria for Europe, ultimately marrying a Spanish woman and gaining Spanish citizenship, thereafter splitting his time between Europe and Af-

ghanistan/Pakistan. He remained active in jihadi circles and is still wanted by Spain regarding two deadly acts of terror, including the 2004 Madrid train bombings that killed nearly 200 people. Suri was captured in Pakistan in 2005 and handed over to the Americans, who reportedly rendered him to Syria, where he was a wanted man. While there are numerous Internet rumors about Suri’s fate, given the absence of reliable sightings for over a decade, it is reasonable to conclude that he is now dead.

Suri was among the most prodigious writers of all the jihadi ideologues. In the years following the failed uprising in Syria in the early 1980s, he wrote a 900-page book (in Arabic) on the “Islamic Revolution” in Syria that analyzed the reasons for its failure. It was these “lessons learned” that he wanted to apply to the global jihad, in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Suri went through the same exercise after the fall of the Taliban and the loss of the jihadi Islamist emirate in Afghanistan in 2001, publishing a 1,600-page manifesto on the Internet, *Call to Global Islamic Resistance (dawat al-muqawama al-islamiyya al-alamiyya)*.<sup>37</sup> It is this book that forms the intellectual cornerstone of the fourth wave of global jihad. What sets Suri apart from every other jihadi ideologue is his ability to engage in self-criticism and to call out mistakes his own movement has made. He considered Bin Laden’s decision to attack the United States on September 11, 2001, to be an error of historical significance.<sup>38</sup>

Well-read in literature on guerrilla warfare, Suri was unusual in drawing on lessons from outside the Muslim world in order to inform the global jihad. And the strategic environment that Suri faced was not unusual in the annals of the subject: how to best undertake action following the defeat of massed, territorial-based

troops? Indeed, it was Suri's willingness to draw on non-Muslim sources that further antagonized the purists among the global jihadis, with whom Suri had a long-running feud. He coined the term "Salafi-jihadi" and did not use it in a complimentary fashion. For Suri, among the principal impediments to the success of global jihad were puritans who refused to cooperate with other jihadis if they did not share absolute agreement on all points of theology. He witnessed such inflexibility among Arab Salafi-jihadis fighting in Afghanistan, who refused to cooperate with the Taliban because they viewed them as not sufficiently Muslim. The Taliban, like most Pushtun Muslims in Afghanistan, incorporate elements of the ancient tribal code of *pushtunwali* in their understanding and practice of Islam, a practice foreign to other Muslims. Suri stressed the importance of strategic cooperation among different jihadi groups, even when there were minor points of theological or ideological difference, advice he was never particularly successful at convincing puritanical Salafi-jihadis to follow.<sup>39</sup>

Much in Suri's arguments is common to other global jihadis, particularly those of the al-Qaeda strain. He believed that there is, in fact, a global war against Islam led by the United States, designed to keep the Muslim world weak and to plunder its resources. Suri argued that violence is a necessary central feature of resisting the war on Islam, and that such "military operations" must include attacks on civilians. Indeed, there is a ritualistic nature to Suri's call for violence, reminiscent of Franz Fanon's argument in *The Wretched of the Earth* about the cleansing quality of killing one's oppressor with one's own hands, to feel his blood on your skin.<sup>40</sup> It is quite likely that Suri had read Fanon's

work about the Algerian revolution against France, as he closely followed the later civil war in Algeria in the 1990s. Spectacular and gory violence and its ritual importance were central to Suri's ideas on how the global jihad should be waged and have impacted ISIS thinking as well. Other parts of his arguments are likewise familiar, including his agreement with Abdullah Azzam (whom he knew) that global jihadis must avoid the temptation to indulge in takfir, fighting fellow Muslims through the threat of excommunication. He also shared the common jihadi contempt for the ulama, for their role in weakening the Muslim ummah over many decades, even centuries.

Suri's strategy for the survival of global jihad in desperate times, of keeping hope alive, focused primarily on three elements. First, he believed that the global jihad had entered a period of jihad fardi or "personal jihad." The idea has entered the English language as "leaderless jihad."<sup>41</sup> Because the Afghan emirate had been lost, and thus the critical aspect of territoriality of the movement was gone for the foreseeable future, it was important for individual Muslims and groups of like-minded jihadis to undertake small-scale violence around the world in the name of global jihad. Suri realized that such pinprick attacks would not by themselves pose an existential or even a strategic threat to the United States and its allies. However, such attacks could keep fear alive in the minds of the enemy and would encourage other Muslims to undertake similar attacks, always under the banner of global jihad. Such "lone wolf" and small-cell attacks are virtually impossible to entirely stop. In fact, many such small-scale attacks in the name of global jihad have been successfully undertaken in Europe, the United States, Canada and elsewhere in the years since Suri's call to arms

was published.<sup>42</sup> Suri was correct, it seems, in suggesting that, while such attacks objectively pose little significant strategic threat, they do generate an outsized fear in many victimized nations, thereby keeping the hope of global jihad alive for the future.

The second critical feature for Suri was the use of the media and new information technologies. He was the first major jihadi ideologue to recognize the power of the Internet and call on jihadis to take full advantage of it. While global jihad was a serious business, its marketing needed to be hip and savvy, appealing to a younger generation of Muslims in ways that stultifying speeches by Ayman al-Zawahiri could never accomplish. While Suri disappeared from the scene years before ISIS was able to establish a territorial state, the ISIS marketing department certainly learned from Suri's arguments. Its vivid and gory videos of executions and battlefield exploits were celebrations of the type of media work Suri envisioned. As well, it was critical for individuals and small cells embarking on a personal jihad of violence to leave messaging behind to insure that people knew their violence was not random criminality but, rather, global jihad.

Third, in the absence of a territorial state (which remained a long-term goal for Suri), individual jihadis should remain linked together in a virtual network made possible by new information technologies.<sup>43</sup> The Internet and other media are not only useful in marketing jihad, but in organizing it as well, keeping jihadis linked together and learning from each other, even in the absence of a central hub. The al-Qaeda jihadi ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki demonstrated the role the Internet could play in linking together fellow jihadis and radicalizing them virtually. Awlaki, the most important global jihadi ideologue in

the English-speaking world and an American citizen, was killed in Yemen in 2011 in a U.S. drone strike.

The era of "personal jihad" was partially absorbed by ISIS, particularly as the territory under its control shrank. As the caliphate came under increasing pressure, ISIS called on all followers to engage in the type of violent personal jihads for which Suri had given an ideological and strategic foundation. Most of the 140 terror attacks conducted or inspired by ISIS from June 2014 to February 2017 fit the Suri model of individual or small-cell operations.<sup>44</sup> While such personal-jihad tactics have been adopted by ISIS, they are not fundamentally linked to its fortunes. Personal-jihad attacks are not foundational to the notion of an ISIS caliphate, nor will the likely disappearance of the ISIS caliphate mean the end of such attacks. The messaging of many acts of jihad al-fardi in the West have included reference to ISIS or have been claimed by ISIS, but the two phenomena are not the same. Personal jihad in the Suri framework will long outlast the territorial state of ISIS and even the group itself as it transforms into a "regular" jihad organization.<sup>45</sup> Because of both the pervasiveness of new media and the difficulty of detecting all acts of personal jihad in advance, this fourth wave of global jihad will likely prove to be the most durable. It represents more of a deadly nuisance that will murder people from time to time than a strategic threat, but it is already proving to be exceptionally difficult to stop.<sup>46</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This essay makes three broad arguments. First, a distinct offshoot of the broader jihadi movement emerged in the 1980s that made global claims and had a

global reach. Prior to this point, the various jihadi groups — those militants who used violence to advance their political agenda under the banner of Islam — that had arisen in the 1960s and 1970s were focused primarily or even exclusively on local issues, mostly local regime change. The Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in December 1979 was the precipitating event that gave birth to the global-jihad strand of thinking and organizing.

The second and larger claim in this essay is to argue for a reconceptualization of the global jihad into four distinct waves, each coming out of a specific crisis, each with its own distinct ideological arguments, and each producing particular strategic goals and organizational forms. Borrowing from the Communist experience, I describe the first wave as that of the Jihadi International, a global band of mujahidin that would fight around the world in concert with local Muslims to liberate occupied Muslim lands. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan gave birth to this model, which essentially died out by 1990 with the death of Abdullah Azzam and the failure of the model to be applied to Kuwait after Iraq's invasion and occupation. The second wave of global jihad, America First, was birthed by Osama bin Laden beginning around 1996, as "near enemy" regimes proved to be durable in the face of jihadi pressure.

The essential defeat of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan by 2002 following the attacks of 9/11 left the hollow shell of a central organization, which continued to limp along until Bin Laden's death in 2011. Militants allied with al-Qaeda then focused overwhelmingly on local conflicts, in Syria and elsewhere. The Caliphate Now! third wave of global jihad arose from experiences in Iraq following the U.S. invasion in 2003

and blossomed with the ungoverned spaces allowed by the Syrian civil war. The focus on creating a territorial Islamic state immediately made the ISIS wave both unique and vulnerable, with the end of the territorial "caliphate" likely to be realized during 2017. The fourth wave, Personal Jihad, was the brainchild of Abu Musab al-Suri as he witnessed the destruction of the "Islamic emirate" in Afghanistan and the killing or capture of many of the leaders of the global-jihad movement. Networked, small-scale, media-savvy attacks around the world were his best means to keep hope alive during a period of defeat.

The third broad claim in this essay is that the fourth wave of global jihad is a more durable form of organization and violence likely to be around for many years to come. Small-scale attacks can be murderous, to be sure, but do not constitute either an existential threat or even much of a strategic threat to the West. Their ability to create havoc is more of a challenge to local countries in the Muslim world, but even there, sober perspective is needed to assess actual levels of threat. The only really plausible route for global jihad to rise to the level of strategic threat is for major powers to respond poorly, to over-react, thereby polarizing relations between the West and the Muslim world. In the words of ISIS, such polarization would help remove the "gray zone" and make the strategic context more suitable to jihadi goals.<sup>47</sup> This was a classic Vanguard/Leninist tactic to provoke the state into over-reaction, but one that has rarely worked well in practice.

The four waves of global jihad each arose out of a specific crisis. The waves themselves represent one response to each of those crises and are not part of some broader grand conspiracy of stages. To be sure, those conspiracies of stages do

exist in the fertile minds of some jihadi ideologues, including Abu Bakr Naji in his *Management of Savagery*, mentioned above.<sup>48</sup> But global jihad is, at base, a relatively marginal movement that simply does not have the power to force a specific evolution of history to its benefit and ultimate victory. The totality of all global jihadi fighters in these four waves numbered

fewer than 100,000 men, about the size of one small city in the Muslim world. The outsized attention that global jihadis have generated over the past four decades derives both from their own acts of spectacle and violence, and from the power of the information revolution around the world to unduly glamorize political murder.

<sup>1</sup> A good introduction to the life and thought of Hasan al-Banna can be found in Gudrun Kramer, *Hasan al-Banna* (OneWorld Publications, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> The earliest extensive study of the Muslim Brotherhood was Richard P. Mitchell's classic book *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford University Press, 1969). For an excellent recent history of the Muslim Brotherhood, see Carrie Rosefsky Wickam, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton University Press, 2013). The best analysis of the early years of the organization can be found in Brynjar Lia, *The Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Movement, 1928-1942* (Ithaca Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Violence by the Muslim Brotherhood was in any case more broadly used against colonial powers than against local regimes, particularly postcolonial regimes.

<sup>4</sup> The Arabic word "jihad" comes from the verb *jahad*, "to exert an effort," and is a commonly used word outside of any religious context. In contemporary orthodox Islam, the religious meaning of jihad has two forms: the "greater jihad" to resist temptations and lead a good and pious life, and the "lesser jihad," or jihad of the sword (*jihad al-sayf*), which is the armed defense of the Muslim community or its lands. An armed jihad may only be called for by a religiously qualified individual. In their stressing of armed jihad over all else, in their appropriating the credentials to call for jihad, and in their expansive understanding of the nature of armed jihad, the ideologues studied in this essay do not take an orthodox view of jihad.

<sup>5</sup> *Milestones* is widely available online, both in the original Arabic and in English translation.

<sup>6</sup> Qutb was a prolific and influential writer even before his political radicalization in prison, and many of his books have been translated into English, including *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, *Social Justice in Islam*, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics*, *Basic Principles of the Islamic Worldview* and his autobiographical *A Child from the Village*. The best study of Qutb is John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Islamic Radicalism* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> The lectures, with annotation, can be found in Hamid Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Mizan Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> For a good biography of Shariati and his ideas, see Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati* (IB Tauris, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> The literature on Islamism and its jihadi offshoot is extensive. A good place to start is Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Belknap Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Faraj was the principal ideologue of the group that assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. It was Faraj who coined the now-common dichotomy between a "near enemy" and a "far enemy" in his book *The Hidden Obligation (al-farida al-gha'iba)*. This book has been translated into English in Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (McMillan, 1986). See also Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge University Press, second edition 2009).

<sup>11</sup> "Solid base" — *qaidat sulba* — is one translation of "al-Qaeda" and is the original meaning of the term in jihadi circles. It is the Arabic phrase that I am translating as Jihadi International, in order to capture its meaning in a broader comparative political sense; that is, a sort of jihadi equivalent to the old Communist

International, or Comintern, which sought to advance Communism globally “by all available means,” including violence. A parallel use of the word al-Qaeda during the 1980s was *qa'idat al-ma'lumat*, which referred to the database of foreign fighters who had enlisted to fight in Afghanistan.

<sup>12</sup> An excellent introduction to Azzam’s life and writings is “Abdallah Azzam,” by Thomas Hegghammer, in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, eds. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Belknap Press, 2008). Hegghammer is currently working on a biography of Azzam, which is sure to be the best source on his life.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Springborg has suggested that Azzam’s focus on territorial liberation may have reflected his Palestinian origins and the Palestinian struggle to liberate their historical territory; similarly, Bin Laden’s later focus on Saudi Arabia may have reflected the importance of his upbringing in Jeddah. The same may be said for Ayman al-Zawahiri, in that his arguments in favor of takfir could be viewed as a cover for his deep-seated desire to overthrow the regime in Egypt, which had jailed him. In each of these cases, there may well have been a tactical or even psychological dimension to the broader strategic arguments made by these ideologues. Private communication.

<sup>14</sup> It is not clear who was behind the assassination of Azzam, and there is a long list of the “usual suspects.” The two most credible theories of responsibility revolve around Pakistan’s military intelligence (ISI) and the factional struggle within al-Qaeda between Azzam and Zawahiri.

<sup>15</sup> There is debate about the extent of Bin Laden’s involvement in Somalia during the early 1990s, including in the “Black Hawk Down” incident. Bin Laden claimed to Peter Bergen that he and allied Arab jihadis played a role, but no real evidence has been produced to corroborate the claim. See Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War Inc.: Inside the Secret War of Osama Bin Laden* (Touchstone, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Kepel takes up the decline narrative in the 1990s in his *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*.

<sup>17</sup> For an excellent discussion of the concerns about the stability of the Egyptian regime at the time, see the article by “Cassandra” (a pseudonym adopted by a senior American scholar of the region), “The Impending Crisis in Egypt,” *Middle East Journal* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1995).

<sup>18</sup> The renunciation of violence by Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (“Dr. Fadl”) was particularly germane, as he had been a close associate of Ayman al-Zawahiri and an important ideologue of global jihad. While in prison, he wrote *Wathiqat Tarshid al-'Aml al-Jihadi fi Misr w'al-'Alam* (roughly, Guidance on the Proper Place of Jihad in Egypt and the World) in which he strongly criticized the ways in which he and other jihadis had misused violence. Sharif became a target of criticism in jihadi circles as a result. The renunciation of violence by the Islamic Group can be found in translation, with an excellent introduction by Sherman A. Jackson, in *Initiative to Stop the Violence (Mubadarat Waqf al-'Unf)* (Yale University Press, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> For more on the Algerian civil war, see Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War, 1990-1998* (Columbia University Press, 2000). For an interesting account of the “lessons learned” from the violence in the Algerian civil war, see Jacob Mundy, *Imaginative Geographies of Algerian Violence: Conflict Science, Conflict Management, Antipolitics* (Stanford University Press, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Ironically, the Sunni jihadi Bin Laden’s strategy of driving the United States out of the region in many ways mirrored the post-revolutionary Shia regime in Tehran’s regional strategy as well.

<sup>21</sup> See Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, esp. 192-93.

<sup>22</sup> The original Arabic text was printed in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* newspaper on February 23, 1998. There are many English language translations, including here: <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> The best discussion of the rise of al-Qaeda in Yemen is by Gregory D. Johnsen, *The Last Refuge: Yemen, al-Qaeda, and America’s War in Arabia* (W.W. Norton, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> See Hugh Kennedy, *Caliphate: The History of an Idea* (Basic Books, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Cole Bunzel, *The Kingdom and the Caliphate: Duel of the Islamic States* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2016). See as well Bunzel’s paper for the Brookings Institution: *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State* (March 2015).

<sup>26</sup> The lower estimate can be found in Sean C. Reynolds and Mohammed M. Hafez, “Social Network Analysis of German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq” in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, published online February 14, 2017, 1. The higher estimate can be found in Robin Wright, “Does the Manchester Attack Show the Islamic State’s Strength or Weakness?” *New Yorker* online, May 24, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Zawahiri’s letter to Zarqawi in the original Arabic can be found here: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Zawahiris-Letter-to-Zarqawi-Original.pdf>. An English translation can be found here: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Zawahiris-Letter-to-Zarqawi-Translation.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Not to be confused with Pakistan's military intelligence service, noted earlier.

<sup>29</sup> This insight comes from Mohammed Hafez in a private correspondence.

<sup>30</sup> Baghdadi is his nom de guerre. Baghdadi's birth name was Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali Muhammad al-Badri al-Samarrai. After the declaration of the caliphate, Baghdadi went by "Caliph Ibrahim." An excellent account of the formation of ISIS, and particularly its use of apocalyptic traditions in Islam to recruit and mobilize, can be found in William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (St. Martin's Press, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Although the ruling Baath party in Syria is secular, the regime is dominated by members of the Alawi sect of Islam, a Shia offshoot. ISIS routinely referred to the "Nusayri" regime, an insulting reference to Alawis.

<sup>32</sup> *The Management of Savagery* can be found here: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf>. Excerpts in English from Zarqawi's letter may be found in Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, 251-267. The complete letter, albeit with a poor translation, can be found here: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm>. The official text of Baghdadi's speech was released by ISIS under the title *This Is the Promise of Allah*, and can be found in English here: [https://ia902505.us.archive.org/28/items/poa\\_25984/EN.pdf](https://ia902505.us.archive.org/28/items/poa_25984/EN.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> The Reynolds and Hafez article on "Social Network Analysis" discusses social background considerations.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the letter from ulama denouncing the declaration, found here: <http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com>.

<sup>35</sup> Polling data routinely showed support for ISIS among Muslims in the single digits. See <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis>.

<sup>36</sup> The best account of Maqdisi is Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihad: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Suri's long (and quite repetitive) treatise can be found in full on the Internet in the original Arabic, but has not been fully translated into English. Brynjar Lia provides a good translation of key excerpts in his *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* (Columbia University Press, 2008). Jim Lacy also provides a partial translation in his *A Terrorist's Call to Global Jihad: Deciphering Abu Musab al-Suri's Islamic Jihad Manifesto* (Naval Institute Press, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> The best work on Suri is by Brynjar Lia, especially his *Architect of Global Jihad*, including Suri's criticisms of Bin Laden's strategy.

<sup>39</sup> For an excellent discussion of Suri's feud with puritanical Salafis, see Brynjar Lia, "Destructive Doctrinarians: Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Critique of the Salafis in the Jihadi Current," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (Columbia University Press, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 1963).

<sup>41</sup> For an early example of this, see Marc Sageman's excellent analysis *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>42</sup> It should always be remembered that global jihadis have killed far more Muslims than non-Muslims.

<sup>43</sup> This form of informational and networked warfare was first made famous by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt in "Cyberwar Is Coming!" *Comparative Strategy* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1993).

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/index.html>.

<sup>45</sup> But even as ISIS normalizes into a more generic jihad organization, it will likely remain able to carry out deadly terror attacks as the root causes of Sunni alienation in Iraq and Syria will almost certainly be ignored by the regimes in Baghdad and Damascus. For more on post-caliphate terror by ISIS, see Seth G. Jones et al., *Rolling Back the Islamic State* (RAND, 2017) and Robin Wright et al., *The Jihadi Threat: ISIS, al-Qaeda and Beyond* (USIP and the Wilson Center, December 2016/January 2017).

<sup>46</sup> A smart article on how to deal with this form of violence can be found in Daniel Byman, "How to Hunt a Lone Wolf: Countering Terrorists Who Act on Their Own," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2017).

<sup>47</sup> For ISIS's discussion on the "gray zone," see its propaganda publication *Dabiq*, Issue 7, "From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Gray Zone," hosted by the Clarion Project at <https://clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> See also Brian Fishman, *The Master Plan: ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory* (Yale University Press, 2016).

The four waves of global jihad, 1979-2017. Middle East Policy, 24(3), Fall 2017. URL: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mepo.12287/abstract> Spotlight on Global Jihad (October 3-18, 2017). The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, October 19, 2017. [ber-28-october-2-2017/](http://www.mepo.org/ber-28-october-2-2017/) The social roots of jihadist violence in Burkina Faso's north. International Crisis Group (ICG), Report #254, October 12, 2017. URL: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/burkina-faso/254-social-roots-jihad-ist-violence-burkina-fasos-north> The March 2016 Brussels attacks – 10 reasons by the Islamic State & the context of the Sunni extremist universe. Online Jihad: monitoring jihadist online communities. October 15, 2017. Download Table | The Four Waves of Global Jihad, 1979-2017 from publication: The Four Waves of Global Jihad, 1979-2017 | This paper argues for a new conceptualization of the Sunni global jihad movement as four distinct waves with each wave rising out of a particular crisis and having its own unique ideological calculus and strategic goal. The first wave (1979-1990) emerged from the Soviet | We use cookies to make interactions with our website easy and meaningful, to better understand the use of our services, and to tailor advertising. For further information, including about cookie settings, please read our Cookie Policy . By continuing to use this site, you consent to the use of cookies. Got it. We value your privacy. The first wave saw the mujahedeen fighting Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The second wave was made up largely elite expatriates from the Middle East who went to the West to attend universities, and then to fight in hotspots such as Bosnia, Chechnya, and Kashmir. A third wave of "homegrown jihadis" emerged in the West in the wake of the Iraq War. "By 2008-2010", Coolsaet argues, "this third wave had run its course." But the Syrian civil war, and emergence of Islamic State and other jihadi groups in the Levant, "once again reinvigorated the waning jihadi movement", giving rise to a new, fourth w...