PAUL KAMOLNICK, STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE

THE WAR SGAINST AL-QAEDA AND ISLAMIC STATE

Paul Kamolnick, Strategic Studies Institute

The War sgainst Al-Qaeda and Islamic State

History, Doctrine, Modus Operandi and U.S. Strategy to Defeat Terrorism

EAN 8596547400868

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword
About the Author
Summary
Prologue
1. Belief-System, Creed, Worldview, Doctrine
  I. Introduction

  II. The Al-Qaeda Organization (*Tanzim Qa'idat Al-Jihad*)
    Sunni Islamic Orthodoxy
    Sunni-Salafism/"Fundamentalism"
    The Muwahhidun/Wahhabism/Salafi-Wahhabism
    Shaykh Scholar-Mujahid, Dr. Abdallah Azzam: The Individual Obligation to Join the Caravan in Defense of Muslim Lands: An Armed Muslim Brotherhood-Salafi-Wahhabi Synthesis
    The "Base of the Jihad"; Al-Qaeda *(Qa'idat Al-Jihad)*
    From *Qa'idat Al-Jihad* to Bin Ladenism
    From Bin Ladenism Back to *Qa'idat Al-Jihad?*
      Back to the Future? Hubris, Delusion, Disaster, and the Remaking/Rebirth of a Post-Bin Laden, Post-Arab Spring *Qa'idat Al-Jihad*
    What is *Qa'idat Al-Jihad*?" In a Nutshell: Fazul Abdullah and Adam Gadahn

III. Islamic State Organization (*Tanzim Al-Dawla Al-Islamiyya*)
- "Zarqawism" vs. AQO: Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi's Worldview and Doctrine: 1989-June 7, 2006
- From Non-Religious Violent Street Tough to Ultra-Sectarian Salafi-Wahhabi Jihadist Prison Tough: 1980-1999
- Al-Zarqawi's Private Jihasist Armies of the Levant: 1999-2004
- Abdallah Al-Muhajir's Ultra-Extremism in *Takfir*, and *Takfir* of the Shia
- Abu Musa'b Al-Zarqawi's Embrace of Abu Abdallah Al-Muhajir's Extremism in *Takfir*
- Zarqawism Unveiled as Doctrine and Strategy: Al-Zarqawi's Negotiation and *Bay'ah* to Osama Bin Laden
- Zarqawism: Its Three Essential Elements
- "Neo-Zarqawism": The Birth and Declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq (*Dawlat Al'Iraq Al-Islamiyyah)*, and Rise of the New Emirs
- Creedal/Doctrinal/Policy Comparision of ISO and AQO
- Apocalypticism and Mahdism in Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir and Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi
- The History, Doctrines, and Worldview of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's "Caliphate": May 2010-Present
- From ISI to the Caliphate: Brief Organizational History
- Self-Proclaimed Emir Al-Muminin Abu Bakr Al-Hussaini Al-Qurayshi Al-Baghdadi: A Brief History

Current ISO Worldview, Beliefs, Creed, and Doctrine
ISO's *Differentia Specifica*: Four Essential Categorical Divergences from AQO
The Imminence of the End Times (Apocalypticism and Eschatology)
The Caliphate Now!
The "Final Solution" to the "Shia Problem"
The Nearest Enemy is the *Ummah's* Truest Enemy!
ISO Relative Divergences from AQO

2. Terrorist Modus Operandi
I. Introduction.
Terrorist Quadrangle Analysis(TQA)

II. The Al-Qaeda Organization (*Tanzim Qa'idat Al-Jihad*)
TQA, I: The "Classical" Base First Bin Ladenist "Far Enemy" Strategy
TQA, II: The AQAP "Lone Mujahid" "Far Enemy" Strategy

III. Islamic State Organization (*Tanzim Al-Dawla Al-Islamiyya*)
TQA: The ISO "State/Caliphate-First" Strategy

3. Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations for U.S. Government Policy and Strategy
I. Key Findings
Macro-Level Conclusion
Belief-Systems, Worldviews, Doctrines, Creeds

Strategies and Terrorist Modus Operandi

II. Implications for U.S. Government Policy and Strategies
Implications for Existing USG Policy and Strategy to Permanently Defeat AQO and its Affiliates
Implications for Existing USG Policy and Strategy to Permanently Defeat the ISO

III. Recommendations
Recommendations for Senior Military Leaders, Planners, and Strategists
Recommendations for Leader Development and Education

FOREWORD

Table of Contents

Dr. Kamolnick's book is a meticulously documented investigation and comparison of the al-Qaeda Organization (AQO) and the Islamic State Organization (ISO) across three key strategically relevant dimensions: essential doctrine, beliefs, and worldview; strategic concept, including terrorist modus operandi; and in the final chapter, specific implications, and recommendations for current U.S. Government policy and strategy. Through this comparison, he supplies far greater clarity on, incisive analysis of, and potential answers for such key questions as: How is each terrorist entity related historically and doctrinally to the broader phenomenon of transnational Sunni "jihadism"? What is the exact nature of the ISO? How, if at all, does ISO differ in strategically relevant ways from AQO? What doctrinal differences essentially define these entities? How does each understand and operationalize strategy? What critical requirements and vulnerabilities characterize each entity? Finally, what implications, recommendations, and proposals are advanced that are of particular interest to U.S. Government strategists and professional military educators?

Dr. Kamolnick's book substantially advances the knowledge and strategy pertinent to combating these

terrorist entities more effectively. I highly recommend it.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute and
U.S. Army War College Press

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Table of Contents

PAUL KAMOLNICK is a professor of sociology at East Tennessee State University, USA, where he teaches courses in classical and contemporary sociological theory, and the sociology of global terrorism. He has published articles and reviews in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism; Terrorism and Political Violence; Perspectives on Terrorism;* and *The Small Wars Journal*. Dr. Kamolnick is also the author of two previous Strategic Studies Institute monographs focused on countering al-Qaeda-based anti-American mass casualty terrorism: *Delegitimizing Al-Qaeda: A Jihad-Realist Approach* (2012), and *Countering Radicalization and Recruitment to Al-Qaeda: Fighting the War of Deeds* (2014). He holds a Ph.D. from Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA.

SUMMARY

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

It is declared U.S. Government (USG) policy to degrade, defeat, and destroy two transnational adversaries that conduct terrorism in the name of Sunni Islam: the al-Qaeda Organization (AQO) and the Islamic State Organization (ISO). The present book has been written to assist policymakers, military planners, strategists, and professional military educators to more effectively accomplish that objective. Chapter 1 documents the distinct history and doctrinal beliefs of each organization; Chapter 2 examines AQO's and ISO's basic strategic concept and terrorist modus operandi; and Chapter 3 recapitulates chief conclusions, considers strategic implications, and supplies select recommendations.

AQO and ISO claim to represent the true and abiding interests of the world's Sunni Muslims *(Ahl-us Sunnah),* estimated to number 1.4 billion persons. This book finds that this is unsupported by the evidence. Instead, AQO and ISO may be conceived in the very terms of the Sunni Islam they themselves profess, as deviant criminal terrorist organizations guilty of committing reprehensible and forbidden acts, undermining Islamic interests, and besmirching rather than elevating Islam in the eyes of the non-Muslim world. A more optimistic prognosis for the

future destruction of each entity is therefore warranted. The world's Sunni Muslims must make that determination, however, and define for themselves where the bounds of faith, godly fear (*taqwa*), and righteous conduct begin and end; who may or may not legitimately claim to speak and act in **their** name; and who may or may not be deemed a genuine ally, fellow soldier, friend, or enemy in this historic endeavor.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite their common genus as violent transnational Sunni "jihadist" organizations, AQO and ISO are distinct species that substantially diverge in conceptions of doctrine and creed, strategy, and terrorist modus operandi. Doctrinally, the original AQO "idea" first arises in opposition to Palestinian-Jordanian Shaykh Dr. Abdallah Azzam's conception of Sunni global jihadism. AQO shares with "Azzamism" a Sunni pan-Islamic ecumenical approach embodied in Azzam's Muslim Brotherhood-Salafi-Wahhabi fusion. This mission is originally one of lumping, **not** splitting, Church **not** sect, openness **not** exclusivity, and emphasizes intra-Sunni solidarity, unity, community, brotherhood, and the tolerance of differences among all fighting elements willing to serve as force multipliers and allies within broader alliances in a now-fermenting Arab Muslim world.

AQO differs from Azzamism in two key respects. Osama bin Laden sought to create an autonomous

bin Laden-led army; whereas Azzam viewed his role as one of assisting, complementing, and subordinating Arabic volunteers to the Afghan-led Islamic forces fighting against the Communist-installed and backed Afghan regime. Second, for Azzam, Palestine occupied a privileged theater of future near-term operations, whereas the original AQO, instead, de-privileged Palestine and conceived itself as an Arab-led transnational military expeditionary force, a type of Arabic jihadi Foreign Legion, serving as a force multiplier. Consequently, they deployed high-quality operatives with advanced training possessed of the AQO worldview, belief-system, and a desire to co-opt localized insurgencies into various AQO nodes, fighting to first win Islamic lands with the intent of reestablishing an Islamic Caliphate, and eventually launching a future offensive jihad against the original infidels.

The AQO idea's second chief opponent was *jihadi takfirism*, i.e., rigidly-extremist sectarians who extravagantly accuse other Muslims of apostasy (*Ridda*). Though bin Laden's emergent "Base of the Jihad Organization" (*Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad*) viewed the Shia as a wayward and deviant sect, it did not at any time privilege a war against Shi'ism per se as the essential starting point for the purification and revivification of Sunni orthodoxy as a ruling imperium. Moreover, AQO in its training camps deliberately policed and opposed *takfirism,* and in its stead supplied indoctrination into the uniquely ecumenical AQO pan-Islamist Sunni jihadist vision of a vanguard Sunni armed organization whose singular

mission was to unite disparate struggles into a broader transnational struggle to eventually restore a supranational Caliphal sovereign. The AQO idea is not exclusively Salafist, though it includes a significant number. It is not exclusively Salafi-Wahhabi or Wahhabi, though it also includes their number; it is not exclusively inspired by Sayyid Qutb, though he is recognized and honored as a pioneering jihadi thinker. It is rather a broad, transnational Church-like conglomerate whose vision, values, and mission statement prohibit extremely strict "Muslimness" tests or other instruments designed to split into ever-smaller numbers those considered virtuous enough to wage a united Sunni war against the occupying "Crusaders" of Muslim lands.

This original AQO idea was eventually transformed into a terrorist entity controlled by bin Laden and focused nearly exclusively on orchestrating highly symbolic mass casualty attacks against all Americans — civilian and military — wherever they may be found. Five key elements, according to AQO chief spokesman Adam Yahiye Gadahn, characterize this "bin Ladenism": its global/international reach and membership as a type of "Islamic Internationale"; its exclusive focus on fighting America, the Crusader West, and the Jews; its lack of a written religious creed, doctrine, or specific strategy that every prospective member must agree to before joining; emphasis on the critical role of Muslim popular support for an enduring, long-term victory; and its unique privileging of, and subordination to, the

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (i.e., the Afghan Taliban).

Bin Ladenism is characterized by a unique mixture of profound ignorance, delusion, resentment, and hubris. It rests on a deeply flawed analogy between the United States and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and a grossly caricatured understanding of the civil society foundations of enduring American power. Moreover, there is no precedent in Sunni Islam for bin Ladenism's signature "Far Enemy" doctrine. It was never embraced by the vast majority of existing Sunni Islamist insurgents. Bin Laden was deeply criticized from within his own ranks for having caused the practical extinction of a decade's long effort to recruit, train, deploy, and create a global Sunni jihadist movement, and by other Salafi-Jihadists as unlawful and at the very least imprudent. 9/11 may be usefully viewed as a "lone wolf" terrorist attack and AQO's first and last great "one-off" based in treachery, criminality, and the USG's unpreparedness for that plot's unprecedented use of American civil aviation as a weapon of mass destruction.

AQO's most lethal affiliate, *Qa'idat al-Jihad* in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), has amended but not ended classical bin Ladenism. There is no discernible difference from classical bin Ladenism as doctrine, and its accompanying "Far Enemy" economic attrition conception of collapsing the American economy and forcing its withdrawal from Islamic lands.

ISO, in stark contrast, is that very type of extreme ultra-sectarian *jihadi takfiri* organization AQO

opposes. ISO's "idea" originates in Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's "Zarqawism," and is characterized by three principal doctrines: ultra-sectarianism, an abiding fundamental commitment to annihilate in masse all Shia Muslims, leader and lay; an unprecedented conduct of ultraviolence as a media-based spectacle; and focus on the immediate creation of an Islamic State as a base for the prophesied return of the Caliphate. Zarqawi's original notions are later extended to "Neo-Zarqawism," and its current incarnation as "Baghdadism." Four doctrines uniquely characterize the present ISO's "idea," each of which starkly contrasts with the AQO's species of Sunni global jihadism: apocalyptic and eschatological beliefs informing its sense of temporality and morality; its doctrine proclaiming the mass annihilation of all Shia Muslims; its prioritizing of the "Nearest" and "Near Enemies," and postponement of jihad against the "original *Kufr";* and, its belief in its right to monopolize and immediately declare the Islamic State/Caliphate. These key elements of ISO's worldview and doctrine place it on the remote fringes not just of Sunni Islam generally, but also of the vast majority of Sunni global jihadist organizations.

AQO and ISO exhibit similarities as transnational terrorist entities, but as the author's Terrorist Quadrangle Analysis (TQA) heuristic confirms, they substantially diverge in their respective conceptions of strategy and terrorist modus operandi. Bin Ladenism's sequenced strategy requires the removal of U.S. and allied militaries from the Arab Muslim world and territories, thus undermining U.S. military

presence, power projection, and access to energy reserves; the overthrow of so-called apostate pro-Western regimes and replacing them with orthodox Sunni Muslim governments that adhere to strict Islamic legal orthodoxy; uniting Muslim states into a supra-state caliphate that shall serve as a religio-political base for further amassing Muslim power and conducting offensive jihad to confront the remaining world of infidelity (*dar al-Kufr*); and, a sustained, permanent offensive jihad to be fought until all other forms of worship and polity are overthrown.

The USG, while still focused on AQO external operations, intentions, and capacities, has practically decimated AQO. Assisted by recent upheavals in the Arab Muslim world, AQO has apparently shifted to focus far more on the Near rather than Far Enemy. This new direction suggests a more gradual, evolutionary insurgent strategy involving a greater emphasis on preaching (*da'wa*); embedding within various ongoing rebellions and working within and through the various nationalist-Islamist currents often dominant in these theaters; and rebranding as local supporters/helpers for the rule of Islamic law (*Ansar al-Sharia*), such as has appeared in Tunisia, Yemen, and Egypt.

AQO's affiliate AQAP, while maintaining deep doctrinal affinities to AQO, has substantially departed in practice from the classic Bin Ladenist, top-down model for carefully planned, long-term, high-visibility, strategically symbolic "Far Enemy" targeting. AQAP's terrorist modus operandi is based in what it calls "lone jihad" or the "lone mujahid" strategy. In its

essence, it combines media and non-media terrorist operations to incite, galvanize, mobilize, train, and deploy individual persons — glorified in its media operations as “lone mujahids” whose martyrdom (*Shuhada*) destines them for the highest reaches of Paradise — to commit what the vast majority of Muslims consider forbidden terrorist acts, such as sabotage, targeted assassination, mass arson, mass-casualty bombings, and a vast array of highly deviant acts generally classified within religious law as major sins and crimes, and within secular law as intentional acts of malicious, felonious criminal conduct.

The ISO’s strategy and terrorist modus operandi is carefully outlined in its inaugural online publication *Dabiq*, and ideally comprises five key stages: (1) emigration from a hostile milieu to one where sanctuary exists or can be created through terrorist acts (*Hijra*); (2) creation of the nucleus jihadist organization (*Jama’ah*); (3) destabilization of the existing “infidel” regime through inflicting mass injury (*Nikayah*) eventuating in the collapse of existing authority, and thereby fomenting chaos and mayhem (*Tawahhush*); (4) creation and consolidation of a territory, resources, and base accompanied with the immediate declaration of the Islamic State (*Tamkin*); and (5) further consolidation and expansion of the Islamic State with the immediate declaration of the Caliphate (*Khilafa*).

However, this idealized five-stage blueprint for restoring the Caliphate (*Khilafa*) was **not** followed in practice. The very nature of the ISO as an ultra-sectarian *jihadi takfiri* organization led it to hereticize

(*takfir*) virtually all other organizations, tendencies, groups, and movements. As a result, the stage of *Fitnah* (conflict, strife) — a stage not specified in their ideal model — has accompanied ISO from its beginnings in Abu Musab al-Zarqawi through each of its metamorphoses. Further, the ISO's blueprint exhibits ambiguity regarding the precise timing for declaring a State and later Caliphate. ISO's achievements have been substantially assisted by its fearsome and highly professional military leadership cadre, comprised of former Ba'athist military and intelligence officers, and by the revengeful anti-Sunni policies pursued by former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Kamil Mohammed Hasan al-Maliki in the context of a dramatically changed regional dynamic enervated by the "Arab Spring."

Our findings largely support existing USG policy and strategy vis-à-vis classic bin Ladenism. What arose in its wake, however — though AQO classic "Far Enemy" attacks must still be countered — was an alternative "lone mujahid" terrorist modus operandi currently employed by AQO's most lethal affiliate, AQAP. Current policy and strategy are sufficient to meet that latter challenge. Findings also substantially support current USG policy and strategy to degrade, defeat, and destroy ISO, though further recommendations are suggested by the present author to address its specific "stateness" dimension. Our findings also strongly support current USG explicit repeated declarations that the USG could **temporarily defeat** ISO within a brief period; however, the **permanent defeat** of the ISO idea will

only occur when Iraqis themselves make the choice to create a new social compact in which its Sunni citizens are respected, represented, and protected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Doctrine-independent recommendations include advocating well-known methods for combating terrorism. Doctrine-dependent recommendations include developing a deeper understanding of Sunni Islam, of AQO's and ISO's extreme deviance in relation to Sunni Islam, and of how Sunni Islamic orthodoxy, including some militant strands, may be leveraged to more effectively delegitimize, marginalize, and implode these unlawful criminal terrorist entities.

PROLOGUE

Table of Contents

RELEVANCE

The present book holds relevance for military planners, strategists, and professional military educators whose mission demands a deep understanding of the strategically relevant differences between two transnational terrorist entities, the al-Qaeda Organization (AQO) and the Islamic State Organization (ISO). The only investment required is one's willingness to sequester an afternoon or two for careful reading and reflection. It is presumed that a significant sub-set of readers do not possess requisite knowledge of Islam generally, and militant Islamic politics specifically; therefore, brief expository asides and explanatory notes clarifying key Islamic religious and religio-political concepts are sprinkled throughout.

INTRODUCTION

This book analyzes the AQO (*Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad*) and the ISO (*Tanzim al-Dawla al-Islamiyya*) and proposes U.S. Government (USG) strategies for their permanent defeat.[1] AQO and ISO claim to represent the true and abiding interests of the world's Sunni Muslims (*Ahl-us-Sunnah*), estimated to number 1.4 billion persons.[2] It is the argument of this book,

however, that grounds exist for why this need not be the case. AQO and ISO may be conceived in the theology they themselves profess as two deviant organizations guilty of committing major sins and besmirching the Islamic Call. I believe a more optimistic prognosis for the future destruction of each entity is warranted. It will be for the world's Sunni Muslims (*Ahl-us Sunnah*) to make that determination; to define for themselves where the bounds of faith, godly fear and piety (*taqwa*), and righteous conduct begin and end; and who may or may not legitimately claim to speak in **their** name.

AQO and ISO have distinct doctrines, methodologies, and strategies of victory. Each entails distinct implications for USG strategy. This book is organized as follows. Chapter 1 documents the distinct history and doctrinal beliefs of each organization. In Chapter 2, AQO's and ISO's basic terrorist modus operandi is examined. Lastly, in Chapter 3, a summary of conclusions is first supplied, and implications and recommendations are then offered for further enhancing USG policy, strategy, and professional military educators' effectiveness in expediting the demise of these two terrorist entities.

[1.] Describing each of these terrorist entities as "organizations" (*Tanzim*) is justifiable on the following grounds. First, this is actually the full and proper name chosen by "al-Qaeda" for itself in its original documents and nomenclature, despite the much-cited abbreviated form. Second, it is an accurate way to characterize how

Sunni Muslims, including militant Sunni advocates of jihad who dissent from the Islamic State Organization's (ISO's) doctrine and methods, choose to describe this entity. The Islamic State (IS) is a terrorist organization that has declared itself the exclusive caliphate of the world's Sunni Muslims. Until this self-designation triumphs more generally, its existence as an organization (*Tanzim*) should be recognized, yet owing to the centrality of its state-centered doctrine and methods, it is advisable to retain the concept "State" as well. The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was self-declared on October 15, 2006; the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham/Levant (ISIS), was self-declared on April 7, 2013; and the IS was self-declared on June 29, 2014. Each self-declaration was made exclusively by a single terrorist organization and, despite pretensions otherwise, has not received recognition beyond a relatively small circle of adherents. For this notion that the IS is an organization, and not a state, in the writings of a highly-influential Salafi-jihadi, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, see Pieter Van Ostaeyen, "Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi: The Case of ISIS and the Position of the Duty Toward It," pietervanostaeyen, blog entry, posted May 27, 2014, available from *pietervanostaeyen.com/2014/05/27/abu-muhammad-al-maqdisi-the-case-of-isis-and-the-position-of-the-duty-toward-it/*, accessed on December 9, 2014; For discussion on the naming conventions for this terrorist entity, see Zack Beauchamp, "ISIS, Islamic State or ISIL? What to call the group the US is bombing in Iraq and Syria," September 17, 2014, available from *www.vox.com/2014/9/17/6259923/isis-isil-the-islamic-state-daesh-what-is-isis-why-does-obama-use-isil*, accessed on September 19, 2014; Hamid Lellou, "Lost in Translation: ISIS's Intention Was in Their Name, But We Missed It," August 4, 2014, available from

smallwarsjournal.com/print/15998, accessed on August 4, 2014.

2. Pew Research Center, “Mapping the Global Muslim Population,” October 7, 2009, available from *www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/*, accessed on October 4, 2013. The global total is estimated at 1.57 billion Muslims, with 87-90 percent affiliated as Sunni. The phrase “Defending *Ahl-us Sunnah”* (People of the Sunnah, or “Right Path”); or less frequently, *Ahl-us-Sunnah wa’l-Gama’at* (People of the Sunnah and Community), is frequently encountered in this terrorist literature.

CHAPTER 1
BELIEF-SYSTEM, CREED, WORLDVIEW, DOCTRINE

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION

Table of Contents

The concept “doctrine” as used throughout refers to a more or less presumed “worldview” or “ideology” rooted in a set of core beliefs about how the world works, and in particular, about a presumed reality that describes the factual state of Islam and Muslims in the present socio-political, socio-cultural world. Doctrine is rooted in belief-systems: it is about what is true or false, real or unreal. Belief-systems are about statements of fact; and for their adherents, about what they take to be the definite factual reality of the world as it is. Belief-systems are not knowingly rooted in the will or intention to deceive others; they are Truth, and a Truth to be known and shared. Beliefs are not therefore deceptive, manipulative, or intentionally distorted propaganda — a form of communication, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. One can refer to an adherent as a believer, ideologue, or doctrinaire, but not a deceiver, or not an intentional deceiver at least.

The term “doctrine” is similar but distinct from the term “creed” *(aqida)* in that doctrine extends beyond orthodox beliefs that cannot be denied if one is to maintain one’s status as an orthodox adherent of a particular faith. They include religious faith but extend beyond to beliefs about past and current history as it pertains to the origins, development, rise and fall, and the current status of Sunni Muslims in

the present world. In other words, it also involves certain fundamental beliefs about the how, why, and "what for" of politics, culture, power, and violence that encompass and extend beyond the articles of creedal faith that makes one an "orthodox Sunni Muslim," a term that seems to encompass both worldview or *weltanschauung* — literally "world picture" — captures these elements in a simple phrase and will be used interchangeably with belief-system in this course of exposition.

II. THE AL-QAEDA ORGANIZATION
(TANZIM QA'IDAT AL-JIHAD)

Table of Contents

SUNNI ISLAMIC ORTHODOXY

Table of Contents

AQO's worldview or doctrine has been consistently propounded over the course of nearly 30 years and is contained in a number of publicly available sources. Relative to the ISO, it has been subject to extensive scholarly analysis, and a more or less rough consensus has been reached regarding its essential premise. Though simplified, the following is an accurate depiction. First, a Perfect and Final faith was revealed by the seal of the prophet, Prophet Muhammad. Second, the one and almighty sovereign, Allah (God), blessed this singular faith to conquer the Earth and eventually to establish Allah's rule, manifest especially in the maintaining of essential legal requirements and punishments contained in Allah's Divine word, the Quran and other sources and principles deemed essential to a proper legal judgment; for example, the Traditions of the Prophet (*ahadith*), consensus of the learned scholars and jurisprudents (*ijma*), and use of analogical reasoning to infer to new cases from past judgments (*qiyas)*. Third, Allah's rule on Earth as manifest in conquered lands ruled by an imperial Muslim religio-political sovereign, the Caliph, represented the singular triumph and exclusive example of Allah's word, law, and sovereignty. That Islam is the perfected final faith — revealed through the perfected final prophet and his immediate

companions and successors; blessed by the singular sovereign Allah to conquer and rule; and to be manifest in an earthly Caliphal imperium charged with upholding and further spreading the worship of Allah — is an essential starting point for discerning the AQO worldview. Contained here is an inarguable premise within Sunni orthodoxy that Allah is the one and only God, and that Muhammad is his final messenger.

SUNNI SALAFISM/“FUNDAMENTALISM”

Table of Contents

A “Salafist” sub-set of Sunnism is also key, however. Salafism as a genus — despite its varieties — is manifest in the belief that Islam reached its noblest and purest expression in Prophet Muhammad’s own exemplary conduct (*Sunnah*), and those of his closest companions and the first three generations of his successors known collectively as *al-salaf al-salih* (the pious ancestors).[3] Salafists seek to emulate these truest and most faithful exemplars of the Prophet’s Message, and believe that genuine Islam — Prophet Muhammad’s Islam — requires that one adhere as faithfully as possible to what is known of their sayings and doings, without amendment. To introduce innovation (*bida*) to what is believed to be the Prophet’s own exemplary path (*Sunnah*), or “the prophetic methodology” (*manhaj*), is to insinuate an imperfect present into the perfected past.

[3.] For a comprehensive recent analysis, see Roel Meijer, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.