



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

**Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center**  
**THE PROJECT FOR THE RESEARCH OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS**  
**(PRISM)**  
**OCCASIONAL PAPERS**  
**Volume 3 (2005), Number 5 (August 2005)**  
**Director and Editor: Reuven Paz.**

The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements is part of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center. Site: [www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org). Email: [reupaz@netvision.net.il](mailto:reupaz@netvision.net.il). All material copyright Reuven Paz unless otherwise stated. Credit if quoting; ask permission to reprint. GLORIA is part of the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, ISRAEL

\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*

**Abstract:** This is a series of papers that translate and analyze articles, reports, religious decrees, and other documents, written primarily in Arabic by Islamist scholars, clerics, operatives, or intellectuals.

**‘Zarqawi’s Strategy in Iraq’ – Is there a “New Al-Qaeda?”**  
**By Reuven Paz**

**Introduction**

In the past two years the Jihadi insurgency in Iraq became the main element in the strategy of Al-Qaeda worldwide, and in the Middle East and Europe in particular. The U.S. administration and the British government are trying to reduce the importance of Iraq in the traditional global strategy of Al-Qaeda, but reality, and above all the effect of the threat of the Jihadi insurgency in Iraq over the Arab world, show the opposite.

Jihadi scholars, who analyze the insurgency from time to time, either for propaganda or indoctrination, do their best to present the Iraqi issue as part of a very well planned strategy. Moreover, there is an effort to present Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi as a strategic genius as part of his glorification, but always as integral part of Al-Qaeda. A new analysis in this series was posted on August 29, 2005 on a Jihadi forum by the ‘Indocrinal Branch’ (*Qism al-I’lam al-Taw’awi*) of Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), which is a little different from previous such analyses. The new analysis, titled “The Military Policy of Qa`idat al-Jihad in Iraq” is written by a Saudi unknown scholar—Abu



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

Abdallah Ahmad al-`Imran from Najd.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note here the focus on Najd, the cradle of Wahhabiyyah and of the Saudi kingdom in its two phases—in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries—and not on Saudi Arabia. The focus on Najd in addition to the Hijaz as a separate region appears also in another part of the document. This is an attempt, on one hand, to present the Saudi Kingdom as an illegal entity, ruled by an illegal dynasty, and also to emphasize the significant role of Najdis in the Iraqi insurgency.

### **Zarqawi – The Glorification of a Genius Strategist**

Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi left Afghanistan right after the fall of the Taleban regime to Kurdistan in order to plan and prepare the forthcoming insurgency, which he, according to the author, had anticipated. From Kurdistan he established training camps and arsenals of weapons in various parts of Iraq already during Saddam Hussein's rule, but refrained from fighting until after the fall of Saddam and the start of the American occupation. Zarqawi tried to avoid any contact with the Baathist regime and any future accusations in this field. Zarqawi wanted to start his insurgency under circumstances of a "clean sheet." Later on he took an oath of loyalty to Osama bin Laden, and became the Amir of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, but not only in Iraq—in **the entire Middle East and North Africa**. At least to his followers Zarqawi is THE leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arab world, or as the author names it in another place—"the region of Sykes-Picot."<sup>2</sup>

Zarqawi, according to the document, has sketched a well-organized strategic plan, which is in legal term with Islamic rules. The plan is as follows: -

1. Isolating U.S. forces in Iraq, through two main lines of activity:
  - Attacking Arab translators who work for the American forces and administration in Iraq, in order to prevent any understanding between the Americans and the Iraqi public; and to block intelligence information supplied by Iraqi elements. In one word—to "leave the U.S. army in Iraq 'deaf.'
  - Targeting the new Iraqi policemen and members of the National Guard, since they became a "shield" for the Americans. By doing so they make the U.S. forces more vulnerable to Jihadi attacks. This is the main present

---

<sup>1</sup> Abu `Abdallah Ahmad al-`Imran, *Al-Siyasah al-Qitaliyyah li-Qa`idat al-Jihad fi bilad al-rafidhayn*, August 29, 2005. See on-line in: <http://www.al-saf.net/vb/showthread.php?t=14567>

<sup>2</sup> The Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916 divided the Middle East into British and French areas of influence, and is the basis of the geo-political borders of modern Middle East. In the Arab World this agreement is one of the greatest symbols of Western imperialism in the region. In Islamists' eyes, this is one of the worst imperialist acts of the global conspiracy against the Muslims.



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

strategy, in addition to attacks against Iraqi military camps, in order to kill “those who prefer life in this world instead of the next one.”

2. Targeting Arab and foreign diplomats, who are not considered secured according to Islamic rules. Those diplomats are not representatives of their countries to Al-Qaeda, but to an infidel regime, and hence, should be killed. This comes to justify the killing of the Egyptian and Algerian diplomats in recent months, and a warning to all other Arab countries. “All the Arab and foreign countries should know that their diplomats are legal targets to be attacked by the Mujahidin of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, who are fighting a sacred fight against the ‘Crusader alliance.’”
3. Attacking the Shi`i groups, “the symbol of heresy of the sons of Al-`Alqami.”<sup>3</sup> The author is focusing on a new Iraqi force—Badr Brigades (*Faylaq Badr*)—“which is assisted by Iran, Syria, and other foreign elements.” He points at its dangerous role against the Mujahidin, and calls for the “elimination of this organization, its commanders, members, and clerics, including Al-Hakim and Sistani. Otherwise, this organization might be disastrous for the Sunnis and for Islam in general.” The removal of these elements should take place before the American withdrawal from Iraq, to prevent a war with the Shi`is afterwards. Fighting the “Alqamis” has two targets—revenge for the Shi`i atrocities against the Sunnis; and to clear the way for the Mujahidin, after the American withdrawal, to establish the “true Islamic Sunni government in Iraq.”

### **Iraq – The Model for Global Jihad**

According to the author, the West knows well that a victory of the Jihadi insurgency in Iraq means that “the Jihad will move to the rest of the Middle East and the other Arab countries, and from there will become worldwide in the form of a global Jihad movement.” Therefore, the Saudi government prepares itself to deal harshly with the “Iraqi veterans,” for whom they have a new term—“the new generation”—meaning Al-Qaeda members returning from Iraq, where “Even the least of them was trained in composing explosives and car bombs.”

The document ends with quite a new interesting statement:

---

<sup>3</sup> Mu`ayyed al-Din ibn al-`Alqami was a Shi`i minister of the last Sunni Khalifah of the Abbasid Empire during the Mongol occupation of Baghdad in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He was accused of high treason and of assisting the Mongol army of Hulagu. He became in Islamic Sunni history a symbol of Shi`i high treason against the Sunnis. In recent years he has had a leading role in the discourse of the Jihadi Salafis against the Shi`ah in Iraq. `Alqam in Arabic also means one of the most bitter plants – Colocynth. .



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

“Qa’idat al-Jihad in Iraq is the re-establishment of another Al-Qaeda, which will export Jihad to the rest of the world **as the mother Al-Qaeda did in Afghanistan**. Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi has such capabilities that the mind cannot imagine. He had prepared for fighting the Americans over a year prior to the American occupation in Iraq. He built the camps and arsenals, and recruited supporters from **Najd, Hijaz, and Yemen**, to be his agents in each city of these regions. In addition, he built his camps in Heart and recruited people from Al-Sham (Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan), who became his official advisers.”

### **Conclusion**

The document is interesting for several new elements. But it should be noted first that its circulation by the GIMF provides it the nature of an official statement by Al-Qaeda, and hence, increases its significance. The author is unknown, but he is a Saudi from Najd, and the focus on the “independence” of Najd and the Hijaz, and the Najdi patriotism relating the Mujahidin, is interesting too. In the opening of the document the author also emphasizes that after Zarqawi moved to Kurdistan “many brothers from “the Land of Al-Haramain” joined him in Iraq, since he was very famous in Afghanistan.” Zarqawi, the Jordanian, receives here the status of a hero, primarily by the Saudi supporters of Al-Qaeda.

Furthermore, the “official” status given to the document by GIMF is an escalation of another phenomenon, which developed in the past year—the intensive glorification of Zarqawi, sometimes even more than of Bin Laden. The latter is mentioned here only once, even though he is given a new title, which the Jihadists started to use lately—Sheikh al-Islam—a title reserved so far only to the ideological father of militant Jihad—Ibn Taymiyyah of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Zarqawi, “the Amir of Al-Qaeda all over the Middle East and North Africa” is also given here a new leading phase of the “new Al-Qaeda”—the Iraqi one—which is replacing the “mother movement in Afghanistan.” Do we witness here a change of roles in the leadership of global Jihad? Is Bin Laden thrown to the Pantheon of history by the “new generation,” as the Saudis calls it, which grew up on the stories from Afghanistan, but is eager to join or support the present Jihad in Iraq?

The enthusiasm that emerges from Iraq is also influencing another field—the Islamic debate over Takfir (excommunication), suicide bombings, and massive killing of Muslims. Zarqawi and his “military strategy” in Iraq attract harsh criticism by clerics who were regarded by the older generation of Al-Qaeda, including Zarqawi himself, as leading mentors—Abu Basir al-Tartusi, who recently published a fatwa against suicide bombings; Abu Muhammad al-Maqdesi, who criticized Zarqawi in public; Muhammad al-Mas`ari, one of the fathers of the oppositionist Saudi reform movement in London;



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL  
[www.e-prism.org](http://www.e-prism.org)

and others who advised Zarqawi and his Sunni supporters in Iraq to reconsider their strict opposition to the new Iraqi constitution, and the planned elections.

It seems that there is a developing crisis in the relations between the older generation of Jihadi-Salafi clerics and scholars and their operative protégés. Zarqawi and his colleagues in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, or Kashmir, will always find new and younger clerics to back their strategy from an Islamic point of view. Finding the ‘proper’ authority among the hundreds of graduates of Saudi Wahhabi Islamic universities should not prove too difficult. Such a split occurred for example between the two Saudi scholars, Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awdah, and their younger followers in the past three years in Saudi Arabia. In this case Hawali and al-Awdah lost their appeal and influence over the Saudi supporters of Al-Qaeda, were pushed aside, and became part of *Ulamaa al-Salatin*—the clerics of the government. They could not be divorced from the negative image Arab governments have in the eyes of the Jihadis.

The recent reactions in Jihadi forums against these debates and criticism over Zarqawi and his strategy by his supporters are in many cases insulting and disrespectful. The main motive is: “let the Mujahidin decide their policy, since they are in the front of Jihad and not the clerics.” This is a new style of discourse, if we look back to the criticizing but most respectful letters of Bin Laden to Sheikh Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, or of Sheikh Yousef al-Uyeri to Dr. Safar al-Hawali. The “new generation of Iraqi Arabs” is rude and much more self-confident than their fathers of the “Arab Afghans,” especially that they have a new kind of a king—Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi.

Above all, the strategy of Zarqawi, yet derived from Bin Laden’s, is to change the face of the “old Middle East,” the one based upon the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916. The center of the change is Iraq. What Bin Laden failed to do in Saudi Arabia against the American presence there in the 1990s, Zarqawi is implementing in Iraq in the 2000s. The splinters of his insurgency in Iraq are falling in other Arab and European countries. But, his biggest success seems to be the on-going and growing support for him in the ranks of “the new generation” despite the criticism.