

CURRENT TRENDS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY

Edited by
Hillel Fradkin
Husain Haqqani
Eric Brown

Volume 2

*Center on Islam, Democracy, and
The Future of the Muslim World*

HUDSON
INSTITUTE

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Global Jihad and WMD: Between Martyrdom and Mass Destruction

REUVEN PAZ

THE LEAD-UP TO THE WAR IN IRAQ put the issue of the potential acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by terrorist groups at the top of the list of Western priorities. More than two years after the American and British occupation of Iraq began, however, no evidence for the existence of such weapons on Iraqi soil has been found, nor is there any real proof of operational cooperation between the Saddam regime and any Islamist terrorist groups in field of WMD. Moreover, there are also no real signs that *Qa`idat al-Jihad* or affiliated Islamist groups plan to use WMD in the near future.

In a confidential, January 2004 report written for the United Nations, a panel of experts led by Mr. Michael Chandler, concluded: “The al-Qaeda terror network is determined to use chemical and biological weapons and is restrained only by the technical difficulties of doing so.” The experts added, “The risk of al-Qaeda acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction also continues to grow... Undoubtedly al-Qaeda is still considering the use of chemical or bio-weapons to perpetrate its terrorist actions...” However, what al-Qaeda lacks still today “is the technical complexity to operate (WMD) properly and effectively.” “They want to (acquire and use WMD), but have difficulties in dealing with it.”

This paper is meant to review the threat of terrorist-acquisition and use of WMD from the point of view of the terrorists themselves. It focuses in particular on the perspective of *Qa`idat al-Jihad* and its affiliates, and on recent developments in the larger discussion of WMD within what should be broadly called the “culture of Global Jihad.”

The Present Phase of *Qa`idat al-Jihad*

Today—over two years after the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the military campaign against al-Qaeda elements there, and more than two years after the toppling of the *Ba`ath* regime in Iraq—*Qa`idat*

al-Jihad is still alive and well, threatening the Western world and Western targets across the globe. In recent months, they have not only improved their abilities in Iraq, but have also carried out their first suicide bombing operations in Europe, on British soil, and a triple suicide operation in one of the most popular tourist resorts in Egypt—Sharm al-Sheikh.

While *Qa'idat al-Jihad* may not necessarily act as a cohesive and organized group, the actions undertaken in its name or linked to the movement are driven and fueled by a coherent “ideological and doctrinal umbrella.” Furthermore, through the use of the Internet—the “open university of global Jihad”—al-Qaeda has successfully enabled millions of Muslim youngsters to create a new sense of identity—as members of the worldwide Islamic Nation—the *Ummah*. One of the products of the new virtual Ummah in the past years was the emergence of a robust vision and desire for the apocalypse. These visions, which are based on early Islamic sources, derive in part from the desperate desire, shared by many Islamists, for radical change. The belief is that al-Qaeda will spearhead the advent and interpretation of the “new world order.”

Franz Fanon, one of the most popular ideologues of anti-colonialism and modern political violence, wrote in the 1960s that violence is a “cleansing force” that frees oppressed youth from “inferiority complexes,” “despair,” and “inaction,” “making them fearless and restoring their self-respect.” Although Fanon, who inspired revolutionary groups in Algeria and South-East Asia, as well as organizations such as the PLO, had secular and nationalist agendas in mind, his words fit well with the beliefs of the contemporary Islamist groups. The motivation that drives Islamist supporters toward Global Jihad can be expressed in one key word—namely, humiliation. It is for this reason that *Qa'idat al-Jihad's* message of violence resonates so well among Muslim youth, while the “new American colonialism” provides additional encouragement for radical actions.

The sense of humiliation is not simply a consequence of military occupation, such as in Iraq, Palestine, Chechnya, or Kashmir. Rather, it is primarily the feeling of American-Western cultural domination. Jihadist anti-colonialism, it is argued, should be waged not just by military or terrorist means, but also by ideological means through culture and education. Since this is an asymmetric war symbolized, in the jihadi's mind, as the struggle between David and Goliath, the key words in the terminology of the culture of global Jihad are “heroism” against “cowardice”; the search for the Hereafter against the search for peaceful life in this world; and “self-sacrifice” or martyrdom in the face of powerful and well-organized armies.

Practically speaking, Global Jihad's strategy to recruit its followers is sim-

ple: it wishes to expose the United States and its allies as the total antithesis of the Islamists. Global Jihad divides the world into two fighting regions, as a reflection of the traditional “House of Islam” (*Dar al-Islam*) and “House of War/Infidels” (*Dar al-Harb*). The United States, on the other hand, divides the world into the “House of Democracy” and “House of War.” By doing so, it secures the long-term strategy of al-Qaeda and its supporting groups, and the continuation of the war between the two sides. The permanent war is also meant to recruit as many Islamist supporters as possible, and to create, as Dr. Abdallah Azzam, the spiritual father of al-Qaeda, once put it, “the solid base (*al-Qa'idah al-Sulbah*) for new generations of proud Islamists.”

From the Islamist vantage point, this war is imbalanced, and is going to remain so for a long time. Consequently, the military or terrorist efforts by the Islamists do not have to be equal or similar to those used and possessed by the United States or its allies. Rather, the Islamists seek only to deliver frequent and increasingly more sophisticated blows in order to best enable the Islamists to undermine the West’s morale and sense of security.

One of the most popular exponents of this universal struggle today is the Saudi scholar Fares Ahmad al-Shuwayl al-Zahrani, who is more famous by his nickname Abu Jandal al-Azdi. In 2003, al-Azdi succeeded the Saudi Shaykh Yousef al-Ayiri, the leading ideologue of al-Qaeda in Arabia who was killed on May 31, 2003 by Saudi security forces. Al-Azdi, who was imprisoned by the Saudi authorities in November 2004, published on March 27, 2004 an article titled “The Al-Qaeda Organization and the Asymmetric War.”¹ The article was supposed to be the first in a series of publications. In it, Al-Azdi described several characteristics and tactics used by al-Qaeda, including a description of how the organization took and will take advantage of the American psychology and nature to be easily provoked. Hence, the United States reacts in a manner of a cowboy’s revenge, instead of taking the time to study the problem before retaliation. Al-Qaeda managed following the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania to make the huge American machinery serve it as a company for public relations. As well as following the September 11 attacks, it managed to make the United States look like it was waging a global war against Islam, and hence it managed to recruit the Islamic world against America.

In the article, Al-Azdi also favorably cited at length a report by General Henry Shilton of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff describing asymmetric warfare. The report, it would seem, describes al-Qaeda’s own strategy as well: “Asymmetry means the use by the enemy of psychological war and its implications, in order to take the lead and enjoy freedom of activity and will. It does it by

using innovated means, untraditional tactics, and weapons and technologies it acquired by thinking about the unexpected... by non-logic imagination and abilities we cannot imagine.” “This kind of war,” Al-Azdi continues to quote, “combines the material and the moral, what serves the enemy the best way.”

If these quotations are accurate, the American administration is facing the most unexpected rival in world history. The question is thus whether WMD are part of the unconventional way of thinking that characterizes the Islamist mind.

Qa`idat al-Jihad and WMD

In recent years, Qa`idat al-Jihad and affiliated groups have issued only a few pronouncements in which they threatened the use of WMD. The first direct reference appeared on December 26, 2002. Abu Shihab al-Kandahari, the then moderator of the Islamist Internet forum al-mojahedoon.net, published a short article titled “Nuclear War is the Solution for the Destruction of the United States.”

The article could be viewed as a simple threat, exploiting a number of rumors from various sources. It might have also been deliberate disinformation regarding al-Qaeda’s possession of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. Or, it could be a case of propaganda aimed at encouraging Islamists. Regardless of its ultimate aim, al-Kandahari’s article marked the first time that such a threat had been publicly issued by supporters of al-Qaeda, or at least by a figure known to have been close to the propaganda apparatus of Global Jihad.

The article was short and lacked the sweeping theoretical elements typical of the writings of Islamist scholars of jihad against the United States or the West. Yet, even though this could be a false alarm, it did seem to embody another stage in the escalation of the tone of al-Qaeda’s propaganda. As such, it could raise the expectations of Islamists for an apocalyptic “mega-operation” using WMD against the United States or Russia.²

Thus far, the main *modus operandi* of Qa`idat al-Jihad has been suicide or martyrdom operations. Martyrdom attacks are not only a tactical tool of terrorism; they have also played a central role in the indoctrination of al-Qaeda recruits. Over the past four years, the propaganda machinery of Qa`idat al-Jihad has kept asking the question posed by one of their adherents in an article titled “Has the Global Crusader Alliance Learned the Lessons of the Mujahideen?” The author wrote: “We are really puzzled to see the Americans and their followers in the Western world think that they are able to confront people who wish to die more than they [the Americans] want to live.” This idea of self-sacrifice has since been reinforced as the phenomenon of suicide

operations has spread across many parts of the world, not to mention by the worldwide increase of support of Muslim publics for the suicide attacks against civilians in Israel.

It is significant to note that this method, which was once controversial among Islamic clerics and scholars, enjoys growing support within religious and political communities alike. Thus far, in fact, it seems that radical Islam's focus has been not on mass-killings, but primarily on self-sacrifice and on the proliferation of its attacks to different regions and places across the globe. The focus on personal martyrdom and suicide attacks among the groups that adhere to the culture of Global Jihad—including Qa`idat al-Jihad, as well as groups with more local and national aspirations, such as the Chechen Islamists and the Arab volunteers there, Kashmiri groups, the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam, or the Palestinian Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—might explain why these groups have so far refrained from any large-scale use of WMD. Very rarely do the clerics, scholars, or Islamist intellectuals who supply the ideological and doctrinal support for the culture of Global Jihad mention the issue of WMD. Given the central role played by this ideological network, the relative absence of a discussion over WMD in the past is significant.

Shaykh Naser al-Fahd's Fatwa on WMD

Some recent Islamist pronouncements indicate that this past emphasis on personal sacrifice and martyrdom operations may be changing to include increased demand to acquire and use WMD. On May 21, 2003, the Saudi Shaykh Naser bin Hamad al-Fahd published the first fatwa on the use of WMD.³ The author is 40 years old, and among the younger leading clerics of the Saudi Islamist opposition that support the culture of Global Jihad, Qa`idat al-Jihad, and the militant struggle against the West. To date, Shaykh al-Fahd has published dozens of militant books and articles, some of which are viewed by the followers of Global Jihad as religious rulings that legitimate the fight against the United States.

Because of his preaching against the Saudi monarchy, Shaykh al-Fahd was arrested in June 2003 by the Saudi authorities and is still imprisoned without trial. Later on he was forced, along with two of his colleagues, to publicly renounce several of his rulings against the Saudi government. In January 2005 he rescinded from prison his former renunciation through his supporters over Islamist Internet forums.

Shaykh al-Fahd has been at the forefront of a new effort to rethink the strategy of asymmetric warfare shared by many Islamists. For example, on September 21, 2002 al-Fahd published an article titled "The Divine Verses

about the September Attack” in which he praised the execution of the 9/11 attacks, especially for its technical sophistication and use of planes.⁴ One of his arguments was that the 9/11 attacks were an air battle or “dogfight” of sorts. “If the American are using F-15 or Tornados [and they are allowed], then if the Mujahideen used Boeing or Air Bus are they not allowed?”

Shaykh al-Fahd has repeatedly used such analogy with the West to provide Islamic legal justification for terrorist tactics in his other writings. When asked, for example, by an anonymous person whether the use of WMD is allowed, his answer was straightforward: ‘yes,’ it is allowed:

If the Muslims could defeat the infidels only by using these kinds of weapons, it is allowed to use them even if they kill them all, and destroy their crops and cattle.

Following the answer, Shaykh al-Fahd wrote a long and detailed memorandum on the relevant Islamic sources that he used as the basis for his ruling. First, he disqualified any terms of international law used by the West, since they are not part of the Islamic divine law. Second, he claimed that those countries that lead the campaign against the use of WMD—the United States and the United Kingdom—have already used WMD in the past against their enemies, not to mention that they, plus “the Jews,” possess these weapons.

Third, he based his arguments on the saying of the Prophet in the Hadith: “Allah has ordered you to do everything perfectly. Hence, if you kill, do it perfectly, and if you slaughter, do it perfectly. Everyone should sharpen his blade and ease his slaughter.” He also relied on another saying of the Prophet: “If you are ordered to do something—do it according to your best ability.” In al-Fahd’s view, this principle is essential: The Muslims should act according to their abilities. If there is no other way the Mujahideen can defeat the enemy, then they should kill them, all of them, by every means possible. This principle is valid even if they have to kill women and children, or even Muslims.

In al-Fahd’s eyes, the principles of using WMD are divided into two categories. The first category concerns the general acceptance of their use in the case of Jihad. The second category concerns the legitimacy of the use of WMD in a certain period against a certain enemy—an enemy which, in al-Fahd’s eyes, clearly means the Goliath the United States.

One controversial issue among Saudi scholars following the attacks against “infidels” in Riyadh in May and November 2003, and the attacks in Istanbul in November 2003—not to mention the murderous ongoing attacks in Iraq—has been the fact that innocent Muslims are also being killed by these attacks. The case is also controversial with regard to suicide operations.

Al-Fahd unambiguously believes, however, that if the killing of Muslims is necessary and there is no other choice, then it is permissible.⁵ In his view, which is based on previous rulings of Islamic scholars such as the fourteenth century theologian Ibn Taymiyyah, there are no limits at all to using WMD against the Western “infidels.”

The ruling of Shaykh Naser al-Fahd set a precedent in the Islamist debate on the use of WMD. Since this was an answer to a question by an anonymous person, we cannot know if the question was a real one, or whether it was implanted by the Shaykh or any other element linked to *Qa`idat al-Jihad*. Yet, the clear acceptance of the use of WMD is very significant.

It is interesting to look also at the timing of the ruling by Shaykh Naser al-Fahd. Taken together with the declarations issued by Ayman Zawahiri, the ruling might constitute a campaign of threats or disinformation. Such a link, if it indeed constitutes a carefully planned campaign, does not necessarily mean that *Qa`idat al-Jihad* is already planning such an attack by using WMD, or that it has already acquired such weapons. Were *Qa`idat al-Jihad* or any affiliated Islamist group planning to use WMD, however, they have now received the necessary endorsement to do so from an Islamic point of view.

The Islamist Reaction to Shaykh al-Fahd

Shaykh al-Fahd’s ruling was not accompanied by any dispute or discussion. In fact, those who follow the many radical Jihadi websites, forums, and chat rooms—the main arena of the discourse for radical Islamists—may well have been surprised by the absence of any coherent debate on WMD of any kind among Islamists. In some cases, Islamists expressed their hopes and desires that al-Qaeda use chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons (CBRN) against the West. These expressions, however, are more reminiscent of the apocalyptic visions aroused by Bin Laden, the fall of Saddam Hussein, the occupation of Iraq, and the Islamist insurgency there. Some Islamists described WMD as “Doomsday” weapons that would accompany the end of the world. Moreover, to date neither Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, nor any other leading figure of al-Qaeda has mentioned such WMD threats—even though these individuals can publicize their worldviews and doctrines with virtually no limits, given that their first audience is not the West, but the Islamic world.

Since the ruling of Shaykh al-Fahd in May 2003, al-Qaeda and affiliated groups carried out major terrorist operations in various places. These include attacks in Riyadh, Istanbul, Casablanca, Madrid, and most recently in London and twice in Egypt/Sinai, in addition to numerous attacks against the Ameri-

can and allied troops in Iraq, and against the Iraqi Shi'is and Iraqi officials of the new elected regime. Most of these operations were suicide attacks, with the sole exception of the Madrid bombings, where remote controlled devices were used. Millions of Islamist supporters, as well as Western security and intelligence services, anticipated a "Mega Attack" on Christmas and New Year 2003. Still, the Islamist discourse on the topic has failed to mention even in one word the use of WMD against the United States or the West.

The strongest evidence of the relatively low regard for WMD within Islamist radical discourse are the military manuals that are distributed on the Internet by various global Jihadist groups. In the Arabic-language manuals or directories written by Islamists, or in those translated from other languages to Arabic, only a handful of references indicate planning for the use of such weapons.

In the instances where the manuals do refer to WMD, the emphasis is on the use of chemical weapons, which at any rate are easy to obtain and can be handled with relative ease, even in home laboratories. Indeed, Islamist websites contain a rather large number of instructions on how to make homemade bombs using chemicals.⁶ Yet, we should ask ourselves whether such chemical bombs, as dangerous as they may be, fall under the category of WMD. Ultimately, the ability of Islamist terrorist groups to kill hundreds of people by conventional means through martyrdom operations might be more attractive to them, as they are able to demonstrate their heroism.

One military-related Islamist web site, which was shut down in February 2004, contained information on how to develop weapons and ammunition (*Mawqi' al-asliyah wal-dhakhaer*).⁷ Even on this web site, however, references to WMD were rare.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and "The Call for Islamist Global Resistance"

In December 2004, a new attitude about asymmetric warfare has emerged in the Islamist discourse, one that challenges the Global Jihad's emphasis on "heroism" and its relative lack of emphasis on acquiring and using WMD.

Mustafa Sit-Maryam—aka Omar Abd al-Hakim, but better known as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri—a former leading trainer and scholar of al-Qaeda, published two significant documents calling for a new organization of Global Jihad: "The Islamist Global Resistance." One was a 9-page letter published in December 2004, and the other was a huge book totaling 1600 pages about the strategy of Global Jihad.^{8 9}

The 9-page letter, which was published on Al-Suri's new website, was a

response to the accusations made against him by the U.S. State Department, which recently listed Al-Suri as an international terrorist, and allocated \$5 million for information that would lead to his arrest. The American move was a result of suspicions by Spanish authorities that Al-Suri was linked to both the 9/11 attacks and the Madrid bombings on March 11, 2004.

Al-Suri's followers posted the huge book on his website in January 2005. In both documents, Al-Suri explained that following the collapse of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, he retired and dedicated three years to the study of the lessons of the history and strategy of the jihad movement from the 1960s to date. Al-Suri's analysis and conclusions made up the core of the new book, which has no precedence in the Jihad literature.

In many ways, Al-Suri elaborated on the familiar lines of Islamist criticism of al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups, primarily in the Iraqi arena. Al-Suri in fact returns to the original jihadi doctrines of Abdallah Azzam, the spiritual mentor of *Qa'idat al-Jihad*, and challenges some of the strategies that have been adopted by the new generation of jihadists, saying that they prefer to "jump" into holy war without first completing the long stage of ideological indoctrination (*Tarbiyyah*). Al-Suri also uses the same term that Azzam did—"the solid base"—to define the model of the jihadi group and, like Azzam, he emphasizes the quality of the mujahideen, not their quantity.

In his open letter to the State Department, Al-Suri talks at length about the importance of using WMD against the United States as the only means to fight it from a point of equality. He even criticizes Osama bin Laden for not using WMD in the September 11 attacks: "If I were consulted in the case of that operation I would advise the use of planes in flights from outside the U.S. that would carry WMD. Hitting the U.S. with WMD was and is still very complicated. Yet, it is possible after all, with Allah's help, and more important than being possible—it is vital." Al-Suri states that "the Muslim resistance elements [must] seriously consider this difficult yet vital direction."

Al-Suri also surprises his readers by sending requests to North Korea and Iran to continue developing their nuclear projects. It is most unlikely for a Jihadi-Salafi scholar to hint at possible cooperation with countries like Shi'ite Iran or Stalinist North Korea, both of which are generally regarded as infidel regimes. However, Al-Suri seems to advise that Jihadi Sunni readers should cooperate with the devil to defeat the "bigger devil."

To justify the use of nuclear bombs, he offers the example of President Harry S. Truman who said that America's use of such bombs against Japan both shortened the world war, and was also fitting retaliation for the barbaric behavior of the Japanese. According to Al-Suri, the U.S. today is no different from

Japan in World War II, and therefore deserves the use of WMD against her.

Al-Suri does not see much benefit from the guerrilla warfare waged against the U.S. by al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Hence, “the ultimate choice is the destruction of the United States by operations of strategic symmetry through weapons of mass destruction, namely nuclear, chemical, or biological means, if the mujahideen can achieve it with the help of those who possess them or through buying them.” One other option, he says, is by “the production of basic nuclear bombs, known as “dirty bombs.”

The focus on the use of WMD as the “ultimate choice” of the mujahideen is a significant feature in Al-Suri’s book, too. In about 100 pages of the book, Al-Suri sketches his jihadi military strategy, which according to him is the core of the book. One of his most significant recommendations is the need to divide the mujahideen into four different kinds of groups: Squads of popular resistance (*al-Muqawamah al-Sha`biyyah*) with limited training and facilities, military squads (*al-Saraya al-`Askariyyah al-`Ammah*) with limited training in light weapons, and squads of quality resistance (*al-Muqawamah al-Naw`iyyah*) which are well-trained for both terrorist operations and guerrilla warfare.

The fourth type of squad is for strategic operations (*al-`Amaliyyat al-Is-tratijiyyah*). These elite squads should be commanded by members who fully understand the strategic goals of the resistance. They should have plenty of financial support and good knowledge of using WMD “when there is a need to counter attack or to achieve strategic symmetry with the United States.”

Abu Mus’ab al-Suri’s pronouncement on WMD marks a new phase in the overall development of the Islamist discourse on the issue. The whereabouts of Al-Suri are still unknown, as is an answer to the question of whether his book is intended merely as a platform for better-organized global Jihad, or if there is already an organization or group behind him. Yet, his focus on well-planned, strategic operations should be noted. His best example is the Madrid bombings in March 11 2004, in which one operation by a small squad of operatives created a larger strategic effect across Europe.

Conclusion

The question that we should ask ourselves is “why are there so few references to WMD within the Islamist discourse of *Qa`idat al-Jihad* or related groups?” Although there is no single, satisfying explanation, several assessments can be made:

- WMD did receive some attention prior to October-November 2001,

when Afghanistan, under the Taliban, served as a greenhouse and safe haven for al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups. Until that time, al-Qaeda maintained better relations with regimes and scientists involved in developing WMD such as Pakistan, Sudan, the Islamic republics of Central Asia, and perhaps with Iraq. After November 2001, however, most of the al-Qaeda facilities in Afghanistan were destroyed or seized by the United States or Pakistan under President Musharraf, and the Islamist forces were pushed into certain areas in East Afghanistan. It is possible that the culture of Global Jihad embraced “heroism” and the tactics of martyrdom operations as a result of these setbacks.

- When they had a base in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda’s attempt to acquire CBRN facilities was handled in secret by a small group of operatives, the vast majority of which did not possess the capabilities of dealing with CBRN, except for crude homemade bombs. Due to the loss of their Afghan safe haven, and due to the difficulties of handling such weapons in occupied Iraq, only one arena remains where such weapons can be handled—namely, among Muslim communities in the West, especially in Europe. A hint to the possible use of such weapons in Europe is found in the fact that most of the jihadis who were arrested after being suspected of activity in this area were Algerians. The most radical among the Algerian groups are not an integral part of the al-Qaeda network, and instead adopt different doctrines in certain fields. For example, they advocate *Takfir* (refutation) of any and all secular Muslim societies. Indeed, the Algerian groups were used to carry out mass killings of innocent Muslims in Algeria, and are known to be ruthless.
- In many of the Islamist writings, the term “WMD” refers to a broad array of social diseases associated with the West, such as AIDS, cigarette smoking and drug use. It is not presented as part of the Islamist struggle, but rather as a term denoting the destructive diseases that will eventually ruin the Western societies from inside.

Following the above analysis, we should ask ourselves whether or not the threat posed by Islamist terrorist groups acquiring and using CBRN or WMD is real. Before the War in Iraq, much information about attempts by Qa` idat al-Jihad to develop such an ability was disseminated. The American insistence that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was developing such weapons, and the linkage between Iraq and al-Qaeda that the administration claimed existed helped to inflate the image of an active threat.

In the past year, meanwhile, some terrorism experts have become more

skeptical about the extent to which a CBRN threat emanates from these groups. They cite four main factors:

- The occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq prevented the continuance of earlier attempts by Islamist groups to develop or acquire such weapons.
- Islamist scholars, clerics, intellectuals, and even most ordinary Islamist extremists seem to refrain from supporting the use of WMD by Islamist groups, fearing the consequences of such use for the entire Muslim world.
- Qa'idat al-Jihad and affiliated groups, as well as Islamist scholars, tend to focus their ideology and doctrines on self-sacrifice and technical sophistication, and hence they adopt terrorist tactics like suicide operations. So far, the world has no answer to the threat of martyrdom operations.
- Martyrdom operations need no technical training at all and perfectly suit the relative lack of technical infrastructure available to the Islamists in the post-9/11 era. Islamists also use the idea of martyrdom for the purpose of indoctrinating their ranks and creating the mythology in the minds of Muslim youngsters that the battle against America is a glorious and heroic one, similar to David's fight against Goliath.

If our main source of assessment would be the mind of the present generation of Islamists, modeled by al-Qaeda, the threat of an immediate use of WMD is of low feasibility. Yet, we should bear in mind two other factors:

- Al-Qaeda is mutating on the background of the Iraqi scene, and we might face a new generation of Islamists, who are not part of "the Afghan Alumni" but are "Iraqi Alumni." The war and continuing insurgency in Iraq have possibly improved the abilities of al-Qaeda, as well as of other groups such as the Algerians, or the Jordan-influenced Tawhid groups, to recruit a new generation of operatives from among Muslim communities in Europe. This new generation of recruits is not necessarily under the control of Saudi clerics or scholars, and might reveal itself to possess fewer reservations about the acquisition and use of CBRN or WMD. Based on the Madrid bombings, perhaps this new generation will also be less willing to carry out martyrdom operations.
- A new generation of Islamists or Islamist groups might be more willing to cooperate with non-Islamic groups on one hand, or with Iran and Shi'ite groups such as Hizballah, on the other hand. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri

hints to such a possibility in his book, and even points to North Korea as a possible strategic partner. Additionally, a new generation of Islamist scholars might follow the fatwa of Shaykh Naser al-Fahd or the book of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, and encourage the use of such weapons if and when the mujahideen find they have no other alternative.

These developments could accelerate attempts made by Islamist groups to acquire and use WMD, although it is unclear how feasible this will be in the immediate term. We should, therefore, bear in mind that the will might be there, but the facilities and abilities, so far, are not.

NOTES

1 Abu Jandal al-Azdi, *Tanzim al-Qaeda wal-harb ghayr al-mutawaziyah*, 27 March 2004. See on-line in: <https://www.al-ansar.biz/vb/showthread.php?threadid=7176> The article was circulated by the "News Agency" of al-Qaeda – Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF).

2 See the translation of the article and commentary – Reuven Paz, "The First Islamist nuclear threat against the United States," January 10th 2003, at www.ict.org.il

3 Naser al-Fahd, *Risalah fi hukm istikhdam aslihat al-damar al-shamel didh al-kuffar*, Rabi` Awwal 1424H (May 2003). See online at: <http://www.al-fhd.com/rsayl/doc/rsayl.damar.doc> .

The ruling was also circulated in May 23rd by The Global Islamic Media Center. See on-line in: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/abubanan2/message/221>

For an analysis of the fatwa see: [YES to WMD: The first Islamist Fatwa on the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction](http://www.e-prism.org) on PRISM website, www.e-prism.org

4 *Ayat al-Rahman fi ghazwat* sebtember, 14 Rajab 1423. See on-line in: <http://www.al-fhd.com/mqalat/mqal.ayat.htm>

5 The justification for killing of innocent Muslims during suicide operations is based mainly upon the same writings.

6 See an example in Supplement no. 1

7 http://ad.itep.co.ae/a_alzubidi/ closed since the end of February 2004.

8 <http://www.deluxesuperhost.com/~morshid/tophacker/index.php?subject=1&rec=29>

9 <http://www.deluxesuperhost.com/~morshid/tophacker/index.php?subject=4&rec=7>

Contributors and Editors

Hillel Fradkin is director of the Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World and a senior fellow, Hudson Institute.

Husain Haqqani is an associate professor at Boston University, visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and co-chair of the Islam and Democracy Project, Hudson Institute.

Eric Brown is a research associate of the Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World and the Center for Future Security Strategies, Hudson Institute.

Shmuel Bar is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel.

Zeyno Baran is director of the International Security and Energy Programs at the Nixon Center.

Nibras Kazimi writes a weekly column on the Middle East for the *New York Sun*, and is a visiting fellow, Hudson Institute.

Reuven Paz is director of the Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM), Herzliya, Israel.

Angel Rabasa is a senior policy analyst at the Rand Corporation.

Michael Whine is Communications Director for the Community Security Trust, and Defence and Group Relations Director of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.