The Intellectual Origins of al-Qaeda’s Ideology:
The Abolishment of the Caliphate through the Afghan Jihad, 1924-1989

Master’s Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies
Joseph E.B. Lumbard, Graduate Advisor

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for

Master’s Degree

by Aaron Y. Zelin

May 2010
Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis possible. I am especially grateful to Professor Joseph E.B. Lumbard, whose encouragement and guidance from the preliminary to the concluding stages of this master’s thesis enabled me to develop a deeper understanding of this subject. I am also very appreciative of Professor Jytte Klausen’s willingness to be a reader on my thesis defense committee. Lastly, I owe my deepest gratitude to both of my parents Richard and Judith Zelin, without their loving support none of this would have ever been possible.
ABSTRACT

The Intellectual Origins of al-Qaeda’s Ideology:
The Abolishment of the Caliphate through the Afghan Jihad, 1924-1989

A thesis presented to the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

By Aaron Y. Zelin

Intellectual debates spanning sixty-five years among Islamists, Salafists, and Jihadists on the most effective way to reestablish an Islamic state provided the foundation for the strategies, methods, and theoretical framework for al-Qaeda's ideology. This master’s thesis focuses on the evolution in this thought by examining the ideas of Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag and ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam. An examination of al-Qaeda's ideological origins sheds light on the inner debates over doctrine and strategy in the Jihadist movement. This thesis demonstrates that Jihadist thought is not monolithic or rigid as often assumed, but rather complex, nuanced, and diverse. It also highlights the necessity in studying Jihadism in a comprehensive and systematic manner while applying different tools from a variety of disciplines to gain a rich understanding of an intricate area of study, which is too often misunderstood or inadequately researched.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgments … iv

Abstract … v

Table of Contents … vi

Introduction … 2

Chapter 1: Hassan al-Banna … 5
Background … 5
  Intellectual Mentors … 6
  Al-Banna’s Education Post-Madrāsah … 7
  Role of Sufism … 8
  Forerunner Organizations to the Society of the Muslim Brothers … 10
  Other Influences … 12
  The Society of the Muslim Brothers … 13
Intelectual Thought … 16
  Al-Banna’s Worldview … 16
  Reading of History … 21
  Failure of al-‘Azhar … 23
  Views on the Islamic State … 24
  Non-Muslims … 26
  Jihad and Istashādīyyah … 29
Strategic Thought … 33
  Al-Afghānī … 33
  ‘Abduh … 38
  Riḍā … 40

Chapter 2: Sayyid Qutb … 50
Background … 50
  Childhood Education in Mushā … 52
  Cairo … 54
  Intellectual Changes Before America … 56
  In the Heart of Ḥāṣibīyyah … 58
  Return to Egypt and Prison Years … 60
Intelectual Thought … 64
  Views on Christianity and Judaism … 64
  al-Ḥākimīyyah … 68
  Ḥāṣibīyyah … 72
    Ibn Taymiyyah … 77
    ‘Abd al-Wahhab … 81
    Mawdūdī … 83
Jihad … 88
All-Banna and Qutb: Continuation, Rupture or Co-evolution? … 95

Chapter 3: Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag … 98
Background … 99
After Sadat’s Assassination … 100
Intellectual Thought … 101
The Islamic State … 102
History Repeating Itself … 104
Critiques of Previous Efforts to Overthrow the Government … 105
Mustafā and Takfīr wa’l-Hijrah … 108
Resolving Questions and Issues Surrounding the Jihad … 112
Strategic Thought … 118

Chapter 4: ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam … 122
Background … 122
In the Theater of War … 124
Intellectual Thought … 127
Offensive vs. Defensive Jihad … 128
The Theater of Precedence … 130
Reasons for Jihad … 133
Laying the Groundwork for Suicide Terrorism … 137
Post-Soviet Plans … 139

Conclusion … 142
Limitations and Future Research … 142
Key Elements of Each Thinkers Views … 143
Broader Implications … 145

Bibliography … 147
To kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque [Jerusalem] and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim.

– Osama Bin Laden
Introduction

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001 academics, policy makers and journalists have been conducting research on the “al-Qaeda phenomenon.” The purpose of this research on the intellectual origins of al-Qaeda’s ideology was three-fold: (1) to trace the lineage of al-Qaeda’s ideology; (2) to synthesize previous scholarship on the different thinkers to provide a systematic and comprehensive approach to the topic; and (3) to provide a more interdisciplinary approach to understanding the al-Qaeda phenomenon, using a broader array of tools from classical Islamic studies, Qur’anic studies and its sciences along with analyzing the primary sources of the thinkers covered in this thesis.

This thesis will attempt to fill this lacuna in the literature. It will examine the intellectual origins of jihadist thought, which is at the heart of al-Qaeda’s ideology. In particular, the following thinkers and individuals who had a vital role in shaping the worldview of al-Qaeda and associated movements will be thoroughly examined: Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag and ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam. In addition, other thinkers and figures, such as Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab, Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muhammad ‘Abduh, Rashīd Riḍa, ‘Abu al-Al’ā Mawdūdī, Shukrī Muṣṭafā, Šāleh Sirīyyah, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama Bin Laden will be touched upon to a lesser extent. From a methodological standpoint, this

---

1 The transliteration of Arabic in this thesis followed the rules of the American Library Association/Library of Congress. Further, Arabic names, places or terms that are common in English are not transliterated along with Arabic words that have been Anglicized, such as words ending with -ic, -ist or -ism. For further details: Randal K. Berry (ed.), “Arabic: ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts,” Library of Congress, 1997, 10-19.
thesis will provide a historical, biographical and textual analysis. This study will show:
(1) the four thinkers ushered in paradigm shifting thought or strategy and each utilized past ideas or lessons to build upon each others thought; (2) provide a more nuanced understanding of concepts and figures often misrepresented in western scholarship; and (3) jihadist ideology is a dynamic and ever changing set of thoughts, which are not monolithic.

The thesis will be divided into four chapters. Chapter one will examine Hassan al-Banna. Particular attention will be given to al-Banna’s six key tracts from Majmū’at Rasā’il al-Imām al-Shahīd Ḥassan al-Bannā: “Message of the Teachings,” “Between Yesterday and Today,” “Our Mission,” “To What Do We Summon Mankind,” “Toward the Light,” and “On Jihad.” Chapter two will focus on Sayyid Qutb. Aspects of Qutb’s books Fī Ţilāl al-Qur’ān (In the Shade of the Qur’an), al-‘Adālah al-Ijtīmā’īyyah Fī al-Islām (Social Justice in Islam) and Ma’ālim fī al-Tariq (Milestones or Signposts Along the Road) will be examined.

Chapter three will examine the thought of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag in his only work al-Jihād al-Faridah al-Ghā’ibah (Jihād: The Neglected Duty or Jihād: The Absent Obligation or Jihād: The Forgotten Pillar). Chapter four will explore ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam’s ideas. It will present ‘Azzam’s key works: al-Dafa’ ‘an Arāḍī al-Muslimīn (Defense of Muslim Lands), Ilḥāq bi-l-Qāfilah (Join the Caravan), al-Jihād Sha’īb al-Muslim (Jihād of the Muslim Peoples), Virtues of Martyrdom in the Path of Allah and Martyrs: The Building Blocks of Nations. This is a critically important chapter since it links directly to the founding of al-Qaeda.

By pulling a variety of academic and journalistic sources together one is able to
piece together a macro-understanding of how al-Qaeda’s ideology developed over a sixty-five year period. Though their work is excellent and of vital importance within the literature when one only focuses on the above thinkers separately such as Richard P. Mitchell, Brynjar Lia, Adnan A. Musallam, Sayed Khatab, Johannes J.G. Jansen or Michael Youssef one cannot truly understand the full picture by relying on micro trends within each individuals’ thought. Furthermore, those who only start focusing on the origins of al-Qaeda by starting with Qutb or the Afghan Jihad or ‘Azzam’s organization in the latter part of the Afghan Jihad cannot get to the bottom of al-Qaeda’s ideology as has been done by Lawrence Wright, Steve Coll and Bruce Riedel. Moreover, even if some have gone all the way back to al-Banna like Gilles Kepel or Mary Habeck, those scholars have not analyzed al-Banna, Qutb, Farrag or ‘Azzam’s thought as in depth or did a textual analysis as comprehensive or relied on Qur’anic sources or sciences to further understand the ideas in the broad sweep of Islamic history as was done in this study. This study has attempted to not only build upon prior scholarship, but it also was able to examine these thinkers in a new light. Together these chapters will provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the jihadi phenomenon, particularly as it relates to al-Qaeda. In the process this thesis will hopefully contribute to the growing body of academic literature on al-Qaeda and jihadist ideology.
Chapter One:
Hassan al-Banna

God is our goal; the Messenger is our model; the Qur’an is our constitution; jihad is our means; and martyrdom in the Way of God is our aspiration.¹

This study, the intellectual origin of al-Qaeda’s ideology in the twentieth century begins with an examination of Hassan al-Banna. Al-Banna is known for founding the Muslim Brothers and melding the rhetoric of Islamic populism with the apparatus of a modern social movement. He is considered by many to be the father of modern political Islam or Islamism, and he helped promote a way of thinking that created a base that later thinkers built upon or interpreted radically, which over time evolved into the ideology of the contemporary global jihadist movement. To connect these ideas it is essential to understand the man and his thought. This study will begin by providing important aspects of al-Banna’s life as well as a critical examination of his central writings. This chapter will conclude by making some general observations about al-Banna and his ideas.

Background

Al-Banna was born in October of 1906, in the town of Maḥmudīyyah in the province of Buhayrah, Egypt.² Al-Banna’s hometown is around ninety miles northwest of Cairo. He was the oldest of his siblings. Not much is known about al-Banna’s childhood until the age of nine when he entered the school Madrasat al-Rashad al-Dīnīyyah,³ which

was established by Shaykh Muhammad Zahrān, a close friend and mentor of al-Banna’s father, Shaykh Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Banna al-Saʿatī.

Intellectual Mentors

Along with Shaykh Zahrān, al-Banna’s father Shaykh Aḥmad played an important role in al-Banna’s intellectual development. As can be determined by Shaykh Aḥmad’s last name, al-Saʿatī, he was a watchmaker. Professionally, he owned a shop that fixed watches and sold gramophones. In addition, Shaykh Aḥmad was a muʾadhin, imām and teacher at his local mosque. Shaykh Aḥmad, though, was not educated at al-ʾAzhar, but rather at Ibrāhīm Pasha Mosque, which later became the Religious Institute of Alexandria.

Shaykh Aḥmad, while learning the trade of watch making, was also exposed to the ideas of the Salafiyyah movement, which were led by Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muhammad ʿAbduh. They sought – and advocated for – a return to the origins of Islam during the rāshidūn period – first four caliphs – by performing ijtihād (logical reasoning) and rejecting taqlīd (imitation), a more in depth look at these terms will be conducted later in the chapter. Along with watch making and assisting in local Islamic duties, Shaykh Aḥmad edited and wrote several books. His most famous was his classification of Imām Aḥmad Bin Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī’s traditions called Musnad al-Fāz al-Rabbānī. Shaykh Aḥmad had connections within Islamic circles, as well as with the elites of

---

5 Ibid., 22. A muʾadhin is an official authorized by a Muslim judge, qāḍī, to perform civil marriages.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 23.
Mahmudîyyah – the village chief (‘umda), local notables (a’yîn) and merchants.

According to Brynjar Lia, these contacts would become “valuable” to al-Banna when he got older and started organizing.  

Shaykh Zahrân was a local village teacher. Similar to Shaykh Aḥmad, Shaykh Zahrân did not study at al-ʿAzhar and, therefore, did not receive the al-ʿAlamîyyah degree, which was a certificate distinguishing those who are members of the ʿulamāʾ (religious scholars). Al-Banna attended Shaykh Zahran’s madrāsah until the age of twelve. According to al-Banna’s biography, Shaykh Zahran allowed him access to his library, which contained volumes of religious literature. Al-Banna also listened to discussions held between Shaykh Zahran and other ʿulamāʾ within Shaykh Zahran’s intellectual circle. Along with al-Banna’s formal religious education, at home his father educated him about Islamic sciences as well as other important aspects of Islamic literature. In sum, Lia notes: “Hassan al-Banna grew up in an environment where Islamic learning and piety were central values.”

Al-Banna’s Education Post-Madrâsah

Al-Banna’s father hoped that al-Banna following his studies at Madrasat al-Rashad al-Dînîyyah would continue his Islamic education. Instead, al-Banna opted for the Primary Teachers Training School in Damānhur in 1918. This school was based on

---

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 24.
10 Hasan al-Banna, Mudhakkîrât al-Daʿwah wa al-Daʿîyyah (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzi’ wa al-Nashr al-Islamiyyah, 1986), 13-15. For future footnotes this will be cited as al-Banna, MDD.
11 Lia, 25.
12 Ibid.
British education for peasants, focusing on practical knowledge such as reading, writing and arithmetic as well as religion, but with the same rigor as an Islamic education, although, no foreign languages were taught.\textsuperscript{13} In 1923, al-Banna graduated from the primary school first in his class.\textsuperscript{14}

Afterwards, al-Banna enrolled in \textit{Dar al- ‘Ulūm} College in Cairo. According to Gudrun Krämer, \textit{Dar al- ‘Ulūm} mixed traditional education with modern subjects. This included: Arabic, Ḥanafi fiqh, ḥadīth, tafsīr, general history, geography, mathematics, science, pedagogy and foreign languages.\textsuperscript{15} This seems to have fit well into al-Banna’s worldview because he believed it was necessary to gain a solid traditional Islamic education alongside an understanding of “modern” studies. It was not a fully secular education, but enough to grasp the modern world, which was essential to his success as founder of the Muslim Brothers (\textit{al-İkhwân al-Muslimûn}). Al-Banna graduated from \textit{Dar al-‘Ulūm} in 1927 at the age of twenty-one and decided to work in the government primary school system. His first school assignment was in the Suez Canal zone city of Ismā‘īliyyah.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Role of Sufism}

At age twelve, al-Banna became involved with Sufism after viewing his first \textit{dhikr} ceremony by the Order of the Ḥasafīyyah Brothers,\textsuperscript{17} established by Shaykh

\textsuperscript{13} Krämer, 8.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 18. \textit{Fiqh} is jurisprudence and Hanafi fiqh is one of the four Sunni Muslim legal schools. \textit{Tafsīr} is Qur’anic exegesis.
\textsuperscript{16} Mitchell, 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Krämer, 13. \textit{Dhikr} is a ceremony performed either by an individual or group who are Sufi where they repeat God’s name, verses of the Qur’ān or sections from the \textit{ḥadīth} literature.
It is believed that al-Banna’s father had been a member of the order as well. While participating with the brotherhood, al-Banna befriended Aḥmad al-Sukkarī, who would later become a significant figure within the Muslim Brothers organization. Al-Banna was officially initiated into the order as a disciple (*murīd*) in 1923 by Ḥasafī’s son, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Ḥasafī.  

This had a major impact on al-Banna’s religious and intellectual development. As Krämer observes: “If Shaykh Zahrān had shown him the way to translate faith into action, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Ḥasafī impressed another lesson on him: to eschew petty squabbles and disputes among brethren, especially in public, and to focus on practical work leading towards piety.” Moreover, as Lia notes: “Hassan al-Banna developed a strong spiritual and emotional inclination during his exposure to Sufism.” These lessons could be seen in practice later in al-Banna’s life as the leader of the Muslim Brothers, which will be further examined later in the chapter. As a member of the order, al-Banna worked to “improve his character, observed silence and fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. In addition, he called his fellow Muslims to prayer.” He also attended the weekly *ḥadra*, studied Sufi books with local Shaykhs, and visited tombs of past Sufis. Lia also mentions that al-Banna felt that sometimes he and his friends went

---

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 14.
20 Lia, 25.
21 Krämer, 14.
22 Ibid., 15.
23 Lia, 25. *Hadra* is the collective supererogatory rituals performed by Sufi orders.
too far in their religious devotion and were antagonized for their religious fervor by classmates.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Forerunner Organizations to the Society of the Muslim Brothers}

Prior to al-Banna’s founding of the Society of Muslims Brothers, he was involved in a few other organizations that helped provide him with the knowledge and experience that laid a foundation for his success and achievements later in life. While in his primary school, it is believed that one of his teachers suggested he and his friends create a group, which would be named the Group of Literary Morals (\textit{Jam\'iyyat al-Ahkl\'aq al-Adab\'yyah}), based on improving ones morality and the “Qur’anic injunction “to enjoin good and prohibit wrong,”\textsuperscript{25} where they would pray together.\textsuperscript{26} This, though, did not satiate their religious zeal since it only dealt with them internally but did not create changes in broader society. As a result, al-Banna, his younger brother ‘Abd al-Ra\'\m\'an and their friends established the Society for the Prevention of the Forbidden (\textit{Jam\'iyyat Man al-Miharram\’in}).\textsuperscript{27} One of the main activities of the group was writing, “strongly worded” letters to those they felt lapsed in following Islamic precepts. Some of the activities they looked down upon were “neglecting prayer, or by eating during the month of Ramadan. Women who were observed beating their faces during funerals [pharaonic custom] or following other pre-Islamic (\textit{j\'ahili}) customs.”\textsuperscript{28} This did not win many

\begin{flushright}
24 Ibid., 26.
25 To better understand this concept read: Michael Cook, \textit{Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
26 Krämer, 9.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 10.
\end{flushright}
sympathizers and soon they stopped this practice after a coffeehouse owner caught a
member of the group while he was leaving a note about the owner’s transgressions.29

Al-Banna later became a member of an offshoot of the Order of the Ḥasafīyyah
Brothers called the Ḥasafī Charity Society (al-Jam‘iyyat al-Khayriyyah al-Ḥasafīyyah).
According to Richard Mitchell, the society had two aims: “to fight for the preservation of
Islamic morality, and to resist the work of the Christian missionaries in town,”30 while
Krämer says its aim was to “call people to what they considered “Islamic morality,” to
correct wrongs such as alcohol, gambling and un-Islamic funerary customs, and to fight
against Christian missionaries … an enduring concern of Islamic activists.”31 At the age
of thirteen, al-Banna became the society’s secretary, while his friend al-Sukkarî was the
leader.32 According to al-Banna’s biography, the Ḥasafī Charity Society was seen as a
forerunner to the Muslim Brothers.33

While in Cairo, al-Banna joined the Islamic Society for Noble Morals (al-
Jam‘iyyat Makārim al-Akhlaq al-Islāmiyyah), which arranged lectures on various Islamic
subjects and ideas.34 According to Krämer: “It was then that the idea of training a group
of young men seems to have come up, men who would preach in public venues such as
clubs, and coffeehouses and attract people to (true) Islam.”35 He also connected with the
Young Men’s Muslim Association (al-Jām‘iyyat al-Shabāb al-Muslimīn), which would

29 Ibid.
30 Mitchell, 2.
31 Krämer, 16.
32 Mitchell, 2.
33 al-Banna, MDD, 16.
34 Lia, 29.
35 Krämer, 22.
prove crucial since it provided contacts for when al-Banna was trying to attract followers to the Society of the Muslim Brothers.\footnote{Lia, 29.}

**Other Influences**

Besides al-Banna’s education, Sufi experience, and local activism, nationalistic forces and stories of the glory days in Islamic history moved, inspired and motivated his activism. Al-Banna participated in protests and demonstrations following the revolution of 1919 against the British presence in Egypt. He also wrote and recited nationalistic poetry.\footnote{Mitchell, 3.} In addition, Mitchell explains that some of al-Banna’s favorite reading included “historical tales of heroism—defense of the “homeland,” “zealotry in the defense of religion,” and “struggle in the path of God.””\footnote{Ibid.,4.} Similarly, Krämer states that al-Banna “spoke of “patriotic duties” to be fulfilled and said that “serving the homeland is a mandatory jihad.””\footnote{Krämer, 6.} Also, Lia argues “it seems likely that the nationalistic fervor of these years must have pushed him toward an activist commitment to religion.”\footnote{Lia, 27.} Lia supports this claim by noting that after 1919, al-Banna joined the various associations and societies mentioned above. It could also be claimed that he became a member of various groups because he was starting to come of age and getting involved in society and that the 1919 revolution was not necessarily the catalyst, but instead helped solidify al-Banna’s future trajectory.
The Society of the Muslim Brothers

A year prior to founding the Muslim Brothers, while still at Dar al-‘Ulūm, he wrote an essay detailing his hopes for the future and how they could come to fruition. As detailed by Mitchell:

“I believe that the best people are those who … achieve their happiness by making others happy and in counseling them.” This, he decided, could best be achieved in either of two ways. The first was “the path of true Sufism—sincerity and work” in the service of humanity. The second was “the way of teaching and counseling, which is similar to the first in requiring sincerity and work, but distinct from it because of its involvement with people. I believe that my people, because of the political stages through which they have passed, the social influences which have passed through them, and under the impact of western civilization … materialist philosophy, and foreign traditions, have departed from the goals of their faith.” As a result, the heritage of youth has been a “corrupted” faith; “doubt and perplexity” have overwhelmed them and “rather than faith there is apostasy.” In this situation, Banna saw his mission in life as the reversal of these trends; he would become “a counselor and a teacher,” giving himself, by day to the children and by night to their parents, to the task of teaching “the objectives of religion and the sources of their well-being and happiness in life.” He would bring the mission “perseverance and sacrifice,” study and understanding, and a body willing to face hardship and a soul which he had “sold to God. That is a covenant between me and God.”

This essay provides insight into al-Banna’s thinking prior to pursuing the establishment of the Muslim Brothers a year later. Some of the themes he touches on are elaborated in more detail in his later writings. Once one reads al-Banna’s motivations in life and his experience with being involved in several groups it is not surprising that he went on to create his own movement to pursue his life goals.

The Society of the Muslim Brothers was established in March 1928 in the city of Ismā’īlīyyah, in the Suez Canal zone, where al-Banna had been assigned as an Arabic

---

41 Mitchell, 6; al-Banna, MDD, 54-57.
schoolteacher in the Egyptian state school system. The story behind the founding of the Brotherhood is of legend. Six men came to al-Banna and proclaimed:

We have heard and we have become aware and we have been affected. We know not the practical way to reach the glory ['izzā] of Islam and to serve the welfare of Muslims. We are weary of this life of humiliation and restriction. Lo, we see that the Arabs and the Muslims have no status [manzillah] and no dignity [karāmah]. They are not more than mere hirelings belonging to the foreigners. We possess nothing but this blood … and these souls … and these few coins … We are unable to perceive the road to action as you perceive it, or to know the path to service of the fatherland [watan], the religion, and the nation [ummah] as you know it. All that we desire now is to present you with all that we possess, to be acquitted by God of the responsibility, and for you to be responsible before Him for us and for what we must do. If a groups’ contracts with God sincerely that it live for His religion and die in His service, seeking only His satisfaction, then its worthiness will assure its success however small its numbers or weak its means.

Al-Banna accepted their loyalty and the six men made an oath of allegiance (bay’ah) to him. They also all made “an oath to God to be “troops” [jund] for the message of Islam.” Al-Banna also is the one who came up with the name for the group: “We are brothers in the services of Islam; hence, we are “the Muslim Brothers.”” The key activities of the Muslim Brothers in its first few years involved expanding its membership and preaching the groups’ message in mosques and cafés. By the time al-Banna was transferred to Cairo for a new teaching assignment in 1932, other branches of the society opened in Port Sa’id, Suez, Abū-Suwayr, Shubrah Khit and Cairo. When al-Banna moved to Cairo, the Cairo branch, which had been opened in 1931, became the headquarters.

---

42 Mitchell, 8.
43 Ibid.
44 Lia, 37.
45 Mitchell, 8; al-Banna, MDD, 73-74.
46 Mitchell, 9.
Al-Banna’s move to Cairo enabled the Muslim Brothers to further grow and expand its activities. This included building schools, mosques and health facilities for its members. Al-Banna also started traveling around Egypt during the weekend as well as during the summer to help spread his message. Another important aspect of the society was the creation of journals and newspapers such as, “The Guides Message” (Risālat al-Murshid) and “Journal of the Muslim Brothers” (Jarīdat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn (JIM)). The Brotherhood also held six conferences while al-Banna was alive, where it developed the group’s by-laws and voted on strategies and important issues to address.

Between al-Banna’s move to Cairo and his death not much dramatically changed or occurred in his life that would provide further detail to the scope of this chapter. The main focus of his efforts was furthering the cause of the Muslim Brothers. He still worked as an Arabic teacher, but during World War II in 1941 because of alleged collusion between the Muslim Brothers and the Nazis, the Egyptian government transferred him to teach in Qenā, a remote town in central Egypt. Members of the Muslim Brothers worried that it would hamper the group. In the end, though, the group gained strength by recruiting more support in Qenā. In June 1941 al-Banna was allowed to transfer back to Cairo as a result of actions by members of the Egyptian Parliament who were sympathetic to the Muslim Brothers.

Following World War II, the Muslim Brothers became a much more extreme and zealous organization that was involved with sabotage and assassination. As time went by,

47 Krämer., 43.
48 Ibid., 44.
49 Ibid., 62.
50 Ibid., 63.
al-Banna was unable to reign in the more radical elements of the society, leading to his death on February 12, 1949, when he was shot outside the headquarters of the Young Men’s Muslim Association by the Egyptian secret police.\(^{51}\) It is believed he was murdered in retaliation for a Muslim Brother member assassinating Egypt’s Prime Minister Maḥmūd Fāhmī al-Nuqrāshī’s on December 28, 1948.\(^{52}\)

**Intellectual Thought**

This section will serve as a reference point to compare al-Banna’s views with that of later thinkers in this thesis. It will examine al-Banna’s largest tracts, specifically focusing on his worldview, reading of history, ideas on nationalism, an Islamic state, *jihād*, martyrdom, along with comparing his ideas to prior modern Islamic revivalists – Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā. Although al-Banna’s ideas are “radical,” unlike later thinkers in this study he does not twist the Islamic sources to fit his whims.

**Al-Banna’s Worldview**

Al-Banna believed that the *ummah* was living through the second time period in Islamic history where the Islamic state had fallen: first, “in the sixth century (after *Hijrah* or AH; thirteenth century A.D./C.E.) at the hands of the Tatars [Mongols],” and second, “In the fourteenth century A.H. (twentieth century A.D./C.E.), leaving in their wake on both occasions disunited nations and small states aspiring toward unity and striving for resurgence.”\(^{53}\) Al-Banna further points to seven reasons for the failures and the collapse

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 81.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 80.

of the Islamic status quo on both occasions: (1) “political differences, partisanship and struggle for supremacy and prestige”; (2) “religious differences, sectarianism and turning away from religion”; (3) “self indulgence in luxuries and comforts and sensual joys”; (4) “the transfer of authority to non-Arabs such as Persians, Daylamites, Mamluks Turks and others”; (5) “indifference to applied sciences and natural science and waste of time and loss of energy on abstruse, speculative philosophies and unhealthy, phantasmagorical pseudo sciences”; (6) “infatuation with their authority, self deception as to their power and failure to look into the social evolution of the nations outside their fold”; and (7) “self deception through the intrigues of hostile flatterers, admiration for their works and outward forms of their way of life, and unthinking imitation of them.”

Before moving on, it is crucial to point out that the “Islamic state” al-Banna discusses from the past is different from the “Islamic state” that he as well as other revivalists envision. Islamists and jihadists conceive of an Islamic state under the institutional framework of a nation-state, in that laws are codifies and it is a totalitarian system that does not have any checks on power or law. This differs from the classical understanding, which Noah Feldman brilliantly explains in his book *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*. In it, Feldman points out that in the classical Islamic state, the ‘ulamā’ provided a check on the power of the ruler since law was not a monopoly of the state like it is in the framework of the nation-state. This legal system was ever evolving and changing since there was a separation between the state and the *shar’āh*. Therefore,

31-32. For future footnotes this will be cited as Al-Banna, “Between Yesterday and Today.”

54 Ibid., 32-34.

according to Feldman it created: “[a] crucially [important] balance between the authority of the ruler and the law itself.”

Returning to al-Banna’s thoughts on the Islamic state, even though the Mongols and European colonialism were mentioned as factors in al-Banna’s understanding of the fall of the Islamic state, in fact, it seems they are rather the consequence of deviation and internal issues within the Muslim community and political leadership. He describes this problem as a disease, which is how Sayyid Qutb expressed the phenomenon as well, which will be analyzed in the next chapter. The first six reasons listed are aimed at issues stemming from within, rather than from the outside. As such, the outside powers that physically took down the Islamic state did so under advantageous circumstances. Therefore, based on al-Banna’s logic, one could infer that once the ummah resolved their internal problems and became united in cause, they would return to living under a strong Islamic state. Indeed, the problem facing the Islamic world was not from the external powers rather, it came from within Islam itself.

This does not mean al-Banna did not take issue with Europe. His reading of European history went as follows: the Church was defeated at the hands of enlightenment thinking and the rise of science, which led Europeans to destroy religion and be influenced by earthly things: “European life and culture should rest upon the principle of the elimination of religion from all aspects of social life, especially as regards [to] the state, the law and the school … As a result, the character of this culture became purely based on materialism … [which] contradicts utterly the principles, which True Islam

56 Ibid; for further details read the rest of his book.
57 Emphasis added.
These attributes, were further explained by al-Banna as: apostasy, licentiousness, individual selfishness and usury. In the next chapter, Qutb further examines this phenomenon in a far more polemical manner.

Consequently, the advantageous atmosphere provided by the malaise within the ummah, al-Banna believes, allowed an infiltration of the Europeans’ “materialistic” lifestyle into Muslim lands. According to al-Banna, there are three levels of contamination:

1. Countries in which this has reached serious proportions, penetrating even the mind and the feelings, apart from outward forms and conventions. Among these countries are Turkey and Egypt, where even the slightest trace of Islamic ideology has disappeared from all social situations, and has been driven off to take up quarters inside the mosques and Sufi establishments and retreats.

2. Countries which have been influenced by this civilization in their official observances and convention, but in which it has not triumphed over their inward sensibilities. Such are Iran and the countries of North Africa.

3. Countries which have not been influenced by this civilization, except for a particular class consisting of the well educated and the ruling, to the exclusion of the common people and the masses. Such are Syria, Iraq, the Hijaz, many sections of the Arabian Peninsula, and the remainder of the Islamic countries.

From the above statement, al-Banna views Egypt as being completely encapsulated by Europe and their “culture.” He aims to redress this slide and turn the tide back toward the “True Islamic” culture of the past. To accomplish this, al-Banna articulates two goals: (1) to free all Islamic territory from foreign influence; and (2) to establish a “free” Islamic state that follows the precepts of Islam.

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 45.
61 Ibid., 44-45.
62 Ibid., 47.
Another aspect of al-Banna’s worldview was his ideas on “patriotism,” “nationalism” and “arabdom.” According to al-Banna, Europeans and Muslims have differing views on the concepts of patriotism and nationalism:

The bone of contention between us and them is that we define patriotism according to the standard of creedal belief, while they define it according to territorial borders and geographical boundaries.  

The Muslim Brotherhood do not believe in a nationalism containing these ideas or their like, nor do they advocate Pharaonism, Arabism, Phoenicianism, or Syrianism, or employ any of those epithets by which people are held up to insult. 

He then goes on to explain the uniqueness of Arabs and the importance of their role in reviving the ummah:

We believe that in these respects Arabdom possesses the fullest and most Abundant share, but this does not mean that its peoples should seize upon these characteristics as a pretext for aggression. Rather they should adopt them as a means of realizing the foremost task for which every people is responsible – the renaissance of humanity. 

It appears as if al-Banna is straddling a fine line with the idea of patriotism, nationalism and what he calls “arabdom.” He calls more for a hybridized version that creates a religio-trans-nationalism or “ummah-ism.” At the same time, though, he sees an Arab exceptionalism that could help bolster and lead this “ummah-ist” movement. Therefore, although al-Banna seems to be against divisions and sectarianism, he places Arabs above the rest of Muslim believers. 

---


64 Ibid., 70.

65 Ibid., 71.
In addition, al-Banna believes that one does not need to believe in ideas such as nationalism since Islam has already addressed them:

Internationalism, nationalism, socialism, capitalism, Bolshevism, war, the distribution of wealth, the link between producer and consumer and whatever is intimately or distantly tied up with discussions which preoccupy the statesmen of the nations and the social philosophers. We believe that all of these have been dealt with thoroughly by Islam and that Islam has promulgated for the world regulations, which will guarantee it the usufruct of all that is good as well as the avoidance of whatever may entail danger or adversities.⁶⁶

If the French Revolution decreed the rights of man and declared for freedom, equality and brotherhood, and if the Russian revolution brought closer the classes and social justice for the people, the great Islamic revolution decreed all that 1,300 years before.⁶⁷

This seems more of an argument for why Egyptians should join al-Banna’s organization than it being a complete rejection of the other “-ism’s.” Rather, since ideas of nationalism, liberalism and socialism had cache at the time in Egypt, al-Banna’s argument was to make individuals who were attracted to these European ideas take a second look at Islam. Whatever the case, al-Banna definitely believed that Islam had the answer to the various political and economic issues that the different “-ism’s” claimed to solve.

Reading of History

Similar to the great historian, historiographer, sociologist and philosopher Ibn Khaldūn, al-Banna’s view of history was one where civilizations rise and fall and rise again:


The leadership of the world was at one time in the hands of the East entirely, then it fell to the West after the rise of the Greeks and Romans. After that, the Mosaic, Christian, and Muhammadan dispensations brought it back to the East for a second time, but then the East fell into its long sleep, and the West enjoyed a new rebirth.68

At the time, al-Banna believed the world was in a transition where the West was once again in decline while the East is back on the rise. Al-Banna’s evidence for the West’s decline:

We assert that the civilization of the West, which was brilliant by virtue of its scientific perfection for a long time, and which subjugated the whole world with the products of this science to its states and nations, is now bankrupt and in decline. Its foundations are crumbling, and its institutions and guiding principles are falling apart. Its political foundations are being destroyed by dictatorships, and its economic foundations are being swept away by crises. The millions of its wretched unemployed and hungry offer their testimony against it, while its social foundations are being undermined by deviant ideologies and revolutions, which are breaking out everywhere. Its people are at a loss to the proper measures to be taken and are wandering far astray. Their congresses are failures, their treaties are broken, and their covenants torn to pieces: their League of Nations is a phantasm, possessing neither spirit nor influence, while their strong men along with other things, are overthrowing its covenant of peace and security.69

In addition, al-Banna foresaw the coming of World War II and believed it to be yet another opportunity for the nations of Islam to rise up against Europe and take power:

The European nations emerged from the First World War with the seeds of rancor and hatred deeply implanted within many of them. The peace conference took place and the ensuing treaties were sharp slaps in the face to some and a painful disillusionment to many others; furthermore, many new concepts and ideologies, strongly chauvinistic, made their appearance. Such a situation among these nations must lead inevitably to new antagonisms and a terrible, devastating war, which will tear them asunder and rend apart their unity, bringing them back to their senses, deterring them from injustice. And it will give the Islamic nations another opportunity to close their ranks, to unite, to finally achieve their freedom.


69 Ibid., 124-125.
and independence and to regain their state and their unity under the banner of the Prince of Believers.\footnote{60}

Interestingly, during World War II as well as its post-war aftermath is when al-Banna began pursuing a more hard line and militant agenda similar to today’s jihadists due to organizational pressures, which will be further explained later in this chapter.

\textit{Failure of al-’Azhar}

Another important aspect of al-Banna’s worldview is his scrutiny of al-’Azhar University, the most respected Sunni place of high education, and its failings towards the Muslim public. Mitchell notes that although al-Banna never stated anything harsh publicly since he tried to recruit from within al-’Azhar, he did not understand how the ‘ulamā’ could do nothing in the face of what was happening to the Muslim world.\footnote{61} The Muslim Brothers’ values were seen as a refutation of the values of al-’Azhar and how the university dealt with contemporary issues. Al-Banna believed al-’Azhar turned its backs on the Muslim nation. Al-Banna stated: “‘Azhar had persisted in a time-worn, anachronistic approach to Islam and its teachings—dry, dead, ritualistic, and irrelevant to the needs of living Muslims,” as described by Mitchell.\footnote{62}

Mitchell sums up the two problems al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers had with al-’Azhar: (1) “that the leading voice of Muslims in the world had failed in its assigned role of spokesperson for a living and dynamic Islam”; and (2) “that it had not been vigorous enough in its resistance to encroachment on the Islamic preserve by foreign

\footnote{60} al-Banna, “Between Yesterday and Today,” 40.
\footnote{61} Mitchell, 212.
\footnote{62} Ibid., 213.
ideas and values.” Therefore, “the failure of the ’Azhar was that “it graduated religious literates, not … spiritual guides.” The “’Azhar ‘ulamā’ are thus seen as inefficient teachers of an irrelevant doctrine.” Moreover, “having failed to understand their positive mission the ‘ulamā’ failed in their negative one—the “defense of Islam.””

It is no surprise then that al-Banna, similar to prior salafi thinkers, is adverse to the concept of taqīd. Salafis believe individuals who follow taqīd blindly imitate past religious precedents without using human reasoning to deduce new conclusions based on the individuals’ current historical context. At the same time, though, al-Banna’s stance on the idea of bid’ah (innovation) makes it seem as though decisions on what is “true” Islam is completely arbitrary and even contradictory to what he explains about the ideas of taqīd and bid’ah. As al-Banna says regarding bid’ah:

"Every innovation introduced by the people into the Religion of God on the grounds of their whims and without authentic foundation, whether by adding to the principles of Islam or taking from them, is considered a serious deviation from the path of truth and must therefore be fought and abolished by the best means which do not lead to worse deviations."

Views on an Islamic State

Unlike Rashīd Riḍa, a salafi thinker who came before him, al-Banna does not have a well-developed idea or theory of an Islamic state. Rather, his views are overly vague about the conception of an Islamic government. As he says:

"By Islamic government I mean a government whose officers are Muslims who perform the obligatory duties of Islam, who do not show any signs of rebellion against the evident Islamic principles, and who work and execute their plans according to Islamic teachings."

---

73 Ibid., 212.
74 Ibid., 213.
76 Ibid., 10.
The Islamic government is obliged to maintain peace and order, enforce the Islamic Law, spread education, provide military security, protect public health, oversee public utilities, develop the resources of the land, guard the public treasury, strengthen the morals of the people, and spread the call of Islam.  

Al-Banna does not explain what an Islamic government is going to look like and how it could be implemented. According to Mitchell, “The details of organization would follow from these [Islamic] principles.” Al-Banna might not have written about what an Islamic state should look like, but he did formulate ideas on how the state should provide for its citizens. For example, this would include the following: ending party politics, ending nepotism, employment opportunities in government and military, eliminating prostitution, gambling and drinking, censorship of songs and books, removing foreign influence in all areas of life, organization of zakāt (alms giving), prohibiting usury, protecting against business monopolies, exploitation of natural resources along with a number of other ideas.

At the same time, he is firmly against following non-Islamic law: “Boycott non-Islamic courts and judicial systems.” Given al-Banna’s statements, the constitution of an Islamic nation should be based on the Qur’an:

Each one of the Islamic nations has a constitution, and it is necessary that it derive the sources of its constitution from the prescriptions of the Noble Qur’an … in accordance with the basic sources of Islamic jurisprudence.

---

77 Ibid., 11.  
78 Mitchell, 246.  
81 al-Banna, “To What Do We Summon Mankind?,” 107-108.
This message has a number of implications. First, al-Banna endorses the idea of a constitution. This is in contrast to the Saudis, who, al-Banna admired, yet who do not have a constitution. Second, al-Banna does not mention which Sunni legal school the jurisprudence should derive from. Al-Banna would possibly adopt all four schools to derive the jurisprudence since later in his writing he uses all four schools to explain and justify his ideas on jihad. This is not an uncommon practice in Islam, though. As Abdal-Hakim Murad points out, following the noted titan in Islamic scholarship Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (or al-Ghazālī for short), the ‘ulamā’ agreed with al-Ghazālī’s condemnation of madhhab (legal school) fundamentalism.82

Non-Muslims

Prior to examining al-Banna’s views on non-Muslims, it is worthwhile to outline al-Banna’s idea on the seven different categories of individuals in the world: “Mujāhid Muslims, reluctant Muslims, sinning Muslims, non-Muslims living peacefully under Islamic law in a Muslim state (i.e. Dhimmīs), non-Muslims having treaties with Muslim states, neutral non-Muslims, and non-Muslims at war with Muslim states.”83 Regarding non-Muslims, al-Banna does not have a problem with other faiths as long as they are not at war with the Islamic state, which differs considerably from later thinkers in this thesis. Al-Banna then goes on to mention that Islamic law has guidance on how to treat all these types of individuals. Unfortunately, al-Banna does not go into further detail as to delineate what differences there are between a “Mujāhid Muslim,” a “reluctant Muslim” and a “sinning Muslim.” One can surmise from these categories that first, a “Mujāhid

Muslim” is one who agrees with al-Banna’s worldview and has joined the Muslim Brothers to try and change society. Second a “reluctant Muslim” is one who sympathizes with al-Banna’s message but is hesitant to join his cause due to possible repercussions. Lastly, a “sinning Muslim” would be one who does not believe in al-Banna’s outlook on how society should be governed and therefore is living in sin because they are appeasing those in power who are lackey’s of the British.

As for the place of non-Muslims in an Islamic government, al-Banna believes: “The Islamic government may utilize the services of non-Muslims, when necessary, in offices other than those of leadership.”⁸⁴ Al-Banna continues by explaining that Islam protects non-Muslims in society and provides them with full justice. The reason non-Muslims, especially ahl al-kitāb (People of the Book – Christians and Jews), should be respected is because they have revealed religions, too, as he acknowledges through the Qur’anic verses 2:136-138 and 49:10.⁸⁵

At the same time, one must recognize that the protection of non-Muslims in Islamic history is not the same as the norms and civil rights protections accorded to minorities today. Christians and Jews were considered ahl al-dhimmah (protected people), allowing them freedom to trade and the right to their own courts.⁸⁶ This term has become a source of considerable controversy in modern scholarship. The origin is from the Qur’anic verse: “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 11.
⁸⁵ al-Banna, “Toward the Light,” 138-139.
religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued” (9:29). Polemicists, such as Bat Y’eoor, Robert Spencer and Richard Pipes argue that this verse proves the Muslim subjugation of Christians and Jews since they are to be fought until they pay the jizyah tax and are aware of their humiliation. Spencer quotes Ismā’îl Ibn Kathîr as explaining that the dhimmah should be “disgraced, humiliated and belittled. Therefore, Muslims are not allowed to honor the people of the Dhimmah or elevate them above Muslims.”

Further Spencer quotes a Bedouin commander al-Mughirah Bin Sa’d, without context of who he was or the importance he held in the Islamic military, stating: “You pay it [jizyah] while you are standing and I am sitting and the whip is hanging over your head.” On the other hand, there are those who are apologists such as Mark Cohen stating: “[The Christians and Jews were] more secure than their brethren in the Christian West, the Jews of Islam took a correspondingly more conciliatory view of their masters.” As Reza Shah-Kazemi notes, this should not be taken as an argument so Islam could “score points” over Christianity. A more nuanced understanding though would point closer to a middle road. Indeed, there were times when Christians and Jews were treated well, while at other times Christians and Jews were not. This does not excuse, al-Banna, though, since if Christians and Jews were treated as dhimmīs under law they would not

88 Ibid.
have certain legal rights including: they would be mandated to wear particular clothing, they would not be able to rebuild places of worship or use a Church bell or shofar, they could not show religious symbols, they would not be allowed to ride horses or camels but rather donkeys among other restrictions. From the perspective of one in the West this does not conform to modern norms, therefore, although the dhimmī system might have been better at one point in history it does not mean it still is or it should be administered unless there are major revisions that are in line with contemporary standards. At the same time, one could refute this claim by stating that unlike the dhimmī system, which institutionalizes discrimination and all are of the same understanding, within Western systems or the global international system there are implicit discriminations.

*Jihad and Istashahādiyyah*

Later, though, in a tract titled “On Jihad,” al-Banna has a completely different view on the treatment of non-Muslims, specifically the People of the Book. As he says:

> In this tradition, there is a clear indication of the obligation to fight the People of the Book, and of the fact that Allah doubles the reward of those who fight them. *Jihad* is not against polytheists alone, but against all who do not embrace Islam.\(^91\)

Al-Banna then cites Qur’anic verse 9:29, which was mentioned above, to justify the claim to fight the people of the book. Unfortunately, ‘Ali Ibn Aḥmad al-Wahidī’s *Asbāb al-Nuzul* (occasions of revelation) does not cover this verse. But, both Ibn Kathīr, medieval jurist, and ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Abbās, companion of the Prophet, in their *tafsīr* (Qur’anic commentary) of this verse (‘ayah) explain that this verse is indeed a reference

to the Jews and Christians.\textsuperscript{92} But, Zaid Shakir contends that this is an incorrect reading of the verse, arguing that: “fighting the People of the Book is conditional on their refusal to pay [the] jizyay.”\textsuperscript{93} Al-Banna, though, sympathized with the salaf\textsuperscript{i} interpretation of the verse, therefore, even if continual fighting is not necessarily endorsed by the verse, al-Banna believed it to be the case.

To better grasp al-Banna’s understanding of jihad, it is important to highlight key passages from his different writings on what jihad means to him since many have diverging opinions about the term and its true meaning:

By (Jihad) I mean that divinely ordained obligation which is reflected in the following saying of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and which Muslims are to carry out until the Day of Judgment: “Whoever dies without struggling in the Way of God, or wishing to do so, dies a Pre-Islamic Jāhidīyyah death.” Its weakest degree is the heart’s abhorrence of evil, and its highest degree is fighting in the Way of God. Between these two degrees are numerous forms of jihad, including struggling with the tongue, pen, or hand, and speaking a word of truth to a tyrannical ruler.\textsuperscript{94}

It is evident that although al-Banna recognizes there are different forms of jihad, he holds highest place for jihad bi-l-sayf (striving through fighting or warfare). Furthermore, al-Banna is under the belief that jihad is the sixth pillar within Islam. This will be a continual theme that each successive thinker will posit in later chapters. In reference to God, al-Banna states: “He conjoins warfare with prayer and fasting, showing clearly that

\textsuperscript{92} Ismā’īl Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr.
http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=2&tTafsirNo=73&tSoraNo=9&tAyahNo=29&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2


\textsuperscript{94} al-Banna, “Message of the Teachings,” 12.
it, like these two, is one of the Pillars of Islam.”\textsuperscript{95} Al-Banna then goes on to substantiate his argument through the \textit{sunnah} traditions as well as how the four Sunni \textit{madhhab}s sanction \textit{jiham}. Al-Banna concludes:

Today the Muslims, as you know, are compelled to humble themselves before non-Muslims, and are ruled by unbelievers. Their lands have been trampled over, and their honor besmirched. Their adversaries are in charge of their affairs, and the rites of their religion have fallen into abeyance within their own domains, to say nothing of their impotence to broadcast the summons [to embrace Islam]. Hence it has become an individual obligation, which there is no evading, on every Muslim to prepare his equipment, to make up his mind to engage in \textit{jiham}, and to get ready for it until the opportunity is ripe and God decrees a matter, which is sure to be accomplished.\textsuperscript{96}

One could not make the case that al-Banna is strictly speaking of \textit{jiham bi-l-nafs} (\textit{jiham} of oneself or an internal struggle to be a better Muslim). Al-Banna even addresses this by refuting the idea of the “Greater \textit{Jihad}” (\textit{jiham al-\text{"a}kbar}) and the “Lesser \textit{Jihad}” (\textit{jiham al-\text{"a}sghar}):

The belief is widespread among many Muslims that fighting the enemy is the lesser \textit{jiham}, and that there is a greater \textit{jiham}, the \textit{jiham} of the spirit. Many of them invoke as proof of this the following narration: “‘We have returned from the lesser \textit{jiham} to embark on the greater \textit{jiham}.’” They said: “What is the greater \textit{jiham}?” He said: “The \textit{jiham} of the heart, or the \textit{jiham} of the spirit.’”’ Some of them try, by recourse to this, to divert people from the importance of fighting, preparing for combat, and resolving to undertake it and embark on God’s way.\textsuperscript{97}

Al-Banna does not buy into this argument, but rather believes that the greater \textit{jiham} would be one of warfare – and the greatest accomplishment within this battle would be to die as a martyr (\textit{shah\text{"a}diyyah}). It is critical to realize that al-Banna wrote these ideas for ideological training purposes when new members joined the Muslim Brothers. Therefore,

\textsuperscript{95} al-Banna, “On \textit{Jihad},” 156.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 175. Bolded word al-Banna’s emphasis.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 180.
it is highly likely that Sayyid Qutb was already sympathetic to these ideas prior to his radicalization in the Egyptian prison system.

The last idea to be discussed prior to an examination of al-Banna’s strategic thought is the issue of seeking martyrdom (istashahādiyyah) or as al-Banna called it, “the art of death.”98 When fighting jihad, al-Banna notes there are two outcomes: “Thus, he will come to either of two great ends – victory, or martyrdom in the Way of God.”99 Moreover, al-Banna views it as an ultimate goal that should be prepared for: “Always cherish the intention of jihad and the desire for martyrdom in the Way of God, and actually prepare yourself for that.”100 Furthermore, although the act of martyrdom is a process of death, al-Banna points to it as being a source of life: “If you gird yourselves for a lofty deed and yearn for death, life shall be given to you … If you strive for an honorable death, you will win perfect happiness. May God bestow upon us and upon you the honor of martyrdom in His way!”101

Taken from al-Banna, one could link the idea of martyrdom to dying while fighting in a jihad for a just cause. It, too, could be stated that according to al-Banna, the goal in an earthly life is to become a martyr. It is also important to note that al-Banna believes that one should prepare for martyrdom. This is crucial to understand since al-Banna endorses martyrdom in a way that could be construed as an ideal one should strive for and could lead down the road to what jihadists today would refer to as martyrdom.

98 Mitchell, 207.
100 Ibid., 21.
operations. This may not have been the intention of al-Banna, but it could be the logical conclusion of his thinking.

*Strategic Thought*

Indeed, al-Banna’s overall views are vital to gain a better understanding of the man as well as what kind of ideas he was propagating to members of the Muslim Brothers in their ideological training. It is also critical since one could take away how members of the Muslim Brothers could have become radicalized. Even more profound was the strategic innovations that al-Banna created. They would become precedents for later Islamist and jihadist organizations. It was also the first time someone organized the masses in the form of a modern social movement in the Muslim world. This is what set al-Banna apart from earlier thinkers and activists, including Jamāl ad-Din al-Afghānī, Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍa. To provide further context, here are some brief descriptions of these three men.

*al-Afghānī*

Al-Afghānī was born in 1838 in Iran. Al-Afghānī’s major legacy is that he was the first major proponent of pan-Islamism in the modern era. He believed that bringing the *ummah* together would not only unite Muslims, but would also be a far more effective way of fighting European imperialism.\(^{102}\) His vision of a united *ummah*, though, contrasts with what one sees in al-Qaeda’s preaching. Al-Afghānī believed it was not only important for Sunni’s to unite but also Sunni’s and Shi’ah to unite under one banner. Scholars such as Nikki R. Keddie have explained this current in al-Afghānī’s thought

---

because he was born a Shi’ah. Al-Afghānī later claimed he was from Afghanistan and a Sunni. Thus, allowing his message to resonate with a larger audience within the Islamic world (since more than 85% of Muslims are Sunni). Even though al-Afghānī had a different conception of bringing the ummah together, it should not belittle the importance of his idea since it sparked a new discourse and inspired other thinkers such as ‘Abdul-Rahman Riḍa.

According to Ervand Abrahamian, the seminal moment, which led al-Afghānī to this realization, was the failure of the Indian mutiny against the British. Since the British conquered India, al-Afghānī believed it was only a matter of time before the Middle East became threatened from Europe. As such, al-Afghānī had two prescriptions to ward off European encroachment. First, it was important for Muslims to adopt modern military technology that came from the West. This would be useful to combat Europe’s superiority on the battlefield. Similar to the idea of pan-Islamism or what is now referred to as transnational Islam, al-Qaeda types seek weapons systems that could cause massive damage to the West not only militarily but economically as well. Although al-Afghānī might not be their main source of influence for wanting weapons of mass destruction (WMD), al-Afghānī was the first modern Islamic thinker to call for the adoption of advanced technologies and he played a key role in emphasizing its importance.


Second, al-Afghānī argued that to fight against European imperialism it was essential to return to the essence of Islam. As a caveat, though, al-Afghānī believed that rationalism was compatible with the ideas of Islam.\footnote{Ibid., 9, 14, 18, 46, 47, 65, 67, 60, 91, 96.} This was further developed by ‘Abduh, but al-Afghānī had an important role in popularizing in the modern era the ideas that the “gates of *ijtihād* (personal reasoning)” were not closed, which is misleading as will be explained below. Some have argued since al-Afghānī grew up as a Shi’ah this idea was not groundbreaking since it was theologically in line with Twelver Shi’ism. As such, they say al-Afghānī helped reintegrate this interpretation of *ijtihād* back into the lexicon of Sunni intellectual circles.

At the same time, it was incorrect on al-Afghānī’s part to argue that the “gates of *ijtihād*” had been closed as understood by Orientalists and has become conventional wisdom in many Western scholarly and policy circles. As Murad explains: “sophisticated mechanisms were available which not only permitted qualified individuals to derive the *Sharī‘ah* from the Qur’an and *Sunnah* on their own authority, but actually obliged them to do this.”\footnote{Murad.} Further, there are different levels of *ijtihād* that a *mujtahid* (one who performs *ijtihād*) could perform. The highest level is *mujtahid fī-l-shar*, which is an individual who does not need to follow a particular *madhhab* because he is advanced in his knowledge of the Islamic sciences.\footnote{Ibid.} These were the individuals whom Abū ʿAbdullah Muhammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shafī‘ī (or al-Shafi‘ī) explained the “gates of *ijtihād*”
were closed for since a mujtahid of those heights could no longer exist. Therefore, the “gates of ījtihād” being closed was in reference to not being able to establish another madhhab outside of the established four. As such, the ‘ulamā’ were still allowed to perform ījtihād, just the lower levels. These included: (1) a mujtahid fī-l-madhhab who could perform ījtihād within a specific school on an array of legal issues; (2) a mujtahid muttabi (follower) “who follows his madhhab while being aware of the Qur’anic and hadīth texts and the reasoning, underlying its positions”; and (3) a mujtahid muqallid (emulator) “who simply conforms to the madhhab because of his confidence in its scholars, and without necessarily knowing the detailed reasoning behind all its thousands of rulings.”

It should be noted too that only those who were properly trained in the Islamic sciences performed ījtihād and not anyone could perform it as many have argued over the past century and a half. Shaykh Sa’id Ramadān al-Butī provides an excellent analogy in his book al-Lamadhhabiyyah Akhtar Bid’ah Tuhaddid al-Sharî’ah al-Islâmiyyah about performing ījtihād. As explained by Murad: “[al-Butī] likes to compare the science of deriving rulings to that of medicine. “If ones child is seriously ill,” he asks, “does one look for oneself in the medical textbooks for the proper diagnosis and cure, or should one go to a trained medical practitioner?” Clearly, sanity dictates the latter option.”

Returning to al-Afghānī, it is important to note that he was more of an activist than a thinker. As such, his revolutionary zeal aroused the masses in different countries

---


110 Murad; Sa’id Ramadān al-Butī, al-Lamadhhabiyyah Akhtar Bid’ah Tuhaddid al-Sharî’ah al-Islâmiyyah (Beirut: 1983), 107-108.

111 Ibid.
during his travels. For instance, in both Iran and Egypt, some scholars have argued that he helped influence movements, which led to political upheavals and uprisings in those societies. For one, following the Shah of Iran’s tobacco concessions to the British, Afghānī wrote a letter to Mirzā Ḥasan Shirāzī, a very influential Shi’ah mujtahid, opposing the Shah’s decision to appease to the “enemies of Islam.” This had an immediate effect since Shirazi announced a fatwā (legal judgment), which banned tobacco use. This had an influence on the Shah’s concessions and in the end led to the Shah’s reversal of his decision. Moreover, Roy Mottahedeh believes that al-Afghānī was not only one of the key agitators that led to the Shah’s reversal on the tobacco concession, but also played a key role in promoting the activism, which eventually led to the Iranian constitutional revolution in 1905 following his death.

Although not successful, with regard to Egypt, Ignā Goldziher believes al-Afghānī’s activities and message helped create the unrest that led to the ‘Urābī Revolt against the Khedive of Egypt. Therefore, al-Afghānī’s activism helped stimulate the masses in the Middle East. As a result, when al-Afghānī was in India and Istanbul, both the British and Ottomans kept a very close eye on his activities. Though al-Afghānī wasn’t calling for the overthrow of these regimes, his message resonated in a tenor, which could be interpreted in a way that would endorse such action since various Muslim regimes were conceding power to Europe and not fighting for Islam. This had a profound

---

113 Ibid., 183-184.
impact on later thought, specifically in Sunni circles, because the primary reasoning behind taqlīd (imitation) – and that the gate of ijtihād was closed – was to prevent fitnah (upheaval or anarchy) within the ummah. Therefore, standing up against what one might perceive as an unjust regime was no longer taboo.

In the modern era, al-Afghānī’s ideas and reforms of Islam lead down two paths. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam: “It is with him [al-Afghānī] that begins the reform movement which gave rise to the Salafīyyah movement and, later, the Muslim Brothers. He expresses almost all the attitudes adopted between 1900 and 1950 by Muslim apologetics.”\textsuperscript{115} The chapter will now turn to the ideas of ‘Abduh who was al-Afghānī’s main disciple. ‘Abduh steered al-Afghānī’s ideas into a less revolutionary direction, which would later serve as a model of al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers.

‘Abduh

‘Abduh was born in 1849 in the Nile Delta of Egypt. While al-Afghānī is known as the father of modern pan-Islamism, ‘Abduh is known as being the father of Islamic modernism. ‘Abduh provided a program that helped shape future thought that would not only lead to later liberal and nationalistic views but also rationalism within Islam, which laid the foundations of the Salafīyyah movement. As such, ‘Abduh’s main program had three central themes/ideas: (1) the reform of the Muslim religion by bringing it back to its original condition; (2) The renovation of the Arabic language; (3) The recognition of the

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
rights of the people in relation to the government.\textsuperscript{116} This discussion will only touch upon the first and third ideas since they are more prescient.

First, ‘Abduh called for a reform within Islam. This was based on the rationalistic ideas that al-Afghānī preached to ‘Abduh. As a result, when one thinks rationally about Islam, ‘Abduh makes the claim that one cannot rely on interpretations of the Qur’ān and sunnah by medieval scholars; rather, one must use their mind to reinterpret the texts in line with the historical context in which one is living (ijtihād). According to JL Gelvin, ‘Abduh believed that God provided humans with two important gifts. Man was given free will and independence of thought and opinion, which is maintained by the Ash’arī School as well.\textsuperscript{117} ‘Abduh believed Muslims needed to return to these ideas since it would lead to happiness. ‘Abduh also believed these two ideas were what spurred the rise of Europe. Therefore, one can see a hybridization in ‘Abduh’s thought, which was brought about by applying modern notions of rationalism to Islam. His salafi tendencies, though, would be further developed by one of his key disciples, Riḍa, as will be seen below.

Besides reforming religion, ‘Abduh called for reform within the political arena as well. Dovetailing with this idea of a hybridization in his thought, unlike al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh believed that gradual change is what would truly make a difference rather than a revolutionary movement. ‘Abduh came to this idea after the failure of the ‘Urābī Revolt. ‘Abduh thought that no political revolution could take the place of a gradual transformation of mentality and regarded a reform of education, especially moral and


religious, as the first key to progress. From this, one can see the genesis behind the strategy used by al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers. Riḍa, who succeeded ‘Abduh as the main intellectual voice of the Salafīyyah movement, would build upon Abduh’s thought but proceeded in a different direction that led Riḍa to intellectually align more with the Salafī movement as is understood today.

Riḍa

Riḍa was born in 1865 in Tripoli, Syria. Riḍa was against the abolishment of the caliphate. This led him to sympathize with the Wahhabist ideology and Saudi state, since the caliphate was no longer. As a result, he believed the Saudi state was now the only true modern Islamic society and what original Islam looked like. Riḍa is believed to be the true heir of ‘Abduh since he emphasizes the importance in following the path of the salaf, using ijtiḥād and not following taqlīd. One could argue that Riḍa’s thought is a fusing of Wahhabist and modern Islamic reformist thought and that he is the father of the various contemporary Islamist movements since his work deeply influenced al-Banna.

Interestingly, though, at an early age, Riḍa was in the Naṣṣḥbandī Sufi order (tariqah). But within Wahhabist ideology, Sufism is considered bid’ah. Riḍa’s views changed, though, as he grew intellectually and started to sympathize with the Saudis. He became suspicious of the ideas in Sufism. After a while he came to believe that Sufi practices entailed many dangers. Riḍa believed that mysticism was introduced into Islam.

---

118 Schacht.


via former Zoroastrians who wished to corrupt the Arabs and, as a consequence he thought that Sufi’s are a weakness to society and a danger to Islam.\textsuperscript{121}

Also Riḍa was polemical against the current regimes in the Middle East as well as the Shi’ah. According to Riḍa, Muslims had lost their true religion and had been encouraged to do so by bad political leaders. In his opinion, true Islam involves two things: (1) the acceptance in the unity of God (\textit{tawḥīd}) and (2) consultation in the matters of state (\textit{shurā}).\textsuperscript{122} As such, Riḍa believed the rulers of the region have tried to make Muslims forget the second by abandoning the first. To ameliorate this problem Muslims needed to be united again as a community and to follow the practices of Muhammad and the \textit{salaf}. But if unity couldn’t be achieved he believed it was the Shi’ah’s fault since it was “full of fairy tales and illegitimate innovations” and that Shi’ism came about due to Jewish converts to Islam influences.\textsuperscript{123}

When exploring Riḍa’s idea about a modern version of the caliphate, one can see rationalistic thought fused through his arguments why the caliphate is needed and his vision of what it should look like. Riḍa’s theory about the caliphate is by far the most detailed account. Riḍa condemned ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Razīq’s approval of the abolishment of the caliphate because he thought Razīq was giving fodder to the enemies of Islam.\textsuperscript{124} There are two important parts to Riḍa’s theory of the caliphate: (1) how it should be organized, and (2) how it should establish new legal judgments. With regard to the organization of the caliphate, Riḍa believed that it should be reestablished alongside what

\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid., 225-226.]
\item[Ende.]
\item[Hourani, 231.]
\item[Ibid., 241.]
\end{enumerate}

41
he calls a “real” ‘ulamā’ (religious scholars), which is further elaborated on below. Moreover, there would be a shurā between the Caliph and ‘ulamā’ who are the guardians and interpreters of the law. In the end, the Caliph would be the ultimate legislator and supreme practitioner of ijtihād (mujtahid).\textsuperscript{125}

To restore the caliphate, Riḍa believed there needed to be two steps: First, a caliphate of necessity would be set up, which would coordinate efforts between Muslim nations when foreign threats arise.\textsuperscript{126} For this to occur, Riḍa believed there needed to be a rapprochement between Arabs and Turks since they were the largest ethnic blocs (when Riḍa was creating these ideas Turkish and Arab nationalism were gaining momentum within both societies). Therefore, the most important thing was that the ummah needed to come together to work for the new caliphate. Second, during the time of the caliphate of necessity there would be a group created called the Islamic progressive party that would study and understand the modern needs of Muslims.\textsuperscript{127} They would create seminaries to educate the future ‘ulamā’ and become real masters of ijtihād. They would study international law, universal history, sociology, and organization of religious institutions like the Papacy. In Riḍa’s mind, he hoped many of these individuals should come from the Quraysh tribe and would eventually stand out and become the Caliph similar to the formative years of Islam. Riḍa was unsure, though, where the seat of power should be, but believed it should be in the middle of the Islamic world and, therefore, proposed that it should be in Mosul. As such, Riḍa believed that at that point then, the time was right for one to restore a genuine caliphate of ijtihād.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[125] Ibid., 239-240.
\item[126] Ibid., 241.
\item[127] Ibid., 243.
\end{footnotes}
With regard to creating law, Riḍa believed it should come from the Ḥanbalī School of law, most likely because he sympathized with the Saudis who derived their law from that madhhab.\footnote{Ibid., 239.} While Riḍa believed the source of Islamic law should start with the Qur’an and sunnah he deviated from traditional practice when it came to the matter of ijmā’ (consensus) and qiyās. For Riḍa, he believed that maslahah (common good) should replace qiyās (reasoning by analogy) as a source of coming to a decision.\footnote{Ibid., 233-234.} Therefore, according to Albert Hourani, this stifles ijmā’ because it creates dynamicism within Islamic law that allows one to depend on the historical circumstance to legislate in accord with the common good, instead of being a mutaqālī (imitator). As a result, Riḍa believed this would allow Muslims to create a ‘positive law’ or qānūn that supplemented the sharī’ah (Islamic law) and then when issues aren’t resolved within that framework, it was the duty of the ummah to create “a system of laws appropriate to the situation.”\footnote{Ibid., 234.} From this, Riḍa believed that’s where the shūrā of ‘ulamā’ comes into play so they can legislate on different matters instead of being mere jurists. Thus, according to Hourani, this creates a new definition of ijmā’ that no longer means a consensus and once it is made there is no further argument but rather an ijmā’ for each historical epoch and therefore stopping the process of taqlīd. He also suggested that the ‘ulamā’ of the time should craft a book of laws derived on the Qur’an and sunnah based on the needs of the time.\footnote{Ibid.}
An important idea to note, though, is that in Riḍa’s idea of the caliphate he does not hold the same beliefs on waging jihad to which jihadists ascribe. He believes a war to defend Islam is legitimate. But a war to spread Islam isn’t and can only happen through peaceful preaching because compelling someone of the book (Jews, Christians) to become a Muslim infringes on the principle of freedom of faith. As such, this is more in line with ‘Abduh’s idea of gradual change, which would later be perfected by al-Banna. From this, one can see that al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh and Riḍa laid an important intellectual framework for later thinkers including al-Banna. But unlike these previous thinkers, al-Banna put his ideas into practice by mobilizing the masses to bring about change. This differs from al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh and Riḍa who discussed their ideas more theoretically or from a top-down approach.

Returning to al-Banna’s strategic ideas, according to al-Banna there are three phases to implement his plans to achieve his goals. They include: (1) ta’rīf (introduction to the call); (2) takwīn (preparation of workers); and (3) tanfīd (implementation of the message). The first stage was implemented from 1928-1939; the second stage was initiated in 1939-1946 when al-Banna called for jihad; the third stage would then have taken place between 1946-1952 when there was a coup d’état by a group within the Egyptian military called the Free Officers with the help of the Muslim Brothers.

Al-Banna, though, was always hesitant to enter into phase three since he believed the Muslim Brothers were not ready to enter that stage and that patience was an important virtue. The main cause of this change was due to internal pressure from Brotherhood members who were anxious to fight and take power. The first sign of these tensions arose

---

132 Ende.
when a group of society members broke away in the late 1930s to start their own group called the Society of Our Master Muhammad’s Youth (Jam’iyat Shabab Sayyidinā Muhammad) or Muhammad’s Youth for short. As Lia explains: “The essential differences, however, were confined to the pace of implementation and the means of enforcement.”\(^{133}\) Al-Banna responded to this by arguing: “The nature of our Islamic mission is building, not destruction! [The Brothers] prefer peacefulness and love to confrontation and war.”\(^{134}\) This is quite interesting when one juxtaposes the ideas al-Banna discusses in his tract on jihad, which he wrote later. Lia also makes an astute observation over this disagreement: “From a longer-term perspective, the Muslim Brothers—Muhammad Youth divide has become the historical antecedents for today’s schism between moderate Islamists and radical Islamic militants [Jihadists].”\(^{135}\) One doesn’t have to look too far since in the 1970s there were similar splits within the Brotherhood such as Shukri Mustafā’s Takfīr wa’l-Hijrah and Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag’s Tanzīm al-Jihād. The significance of the three stages that al-Banna outlined is important since later groups and movements used varying notions of how to implement their plans, which all built on this idea and refined it to better achieve their goals.

Another important strategic idea al-Banna adopted had to do with the Rover Scouts (Jawwāla), Battalions (Katā’ib), Family System (Niẓām al-‘Usar) and later the Secret Apparatus (al-Jihāz al-Sirrī). The Rover Scouts were first introduced in 1935 as an effective educational tool for men between the ages of twenty and thirty.\(^{136}\) The scouts

\(^{133}\) Lia, 250.

\(^{134}\) Hasan al-Banna, Jarīdat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn, No. 1 & 4, 1937, 1-2; Lia, 250.

\(^{135}\) Lia, 250.

\(^{136}\) Lia, 101.
were fashioned similar to other Boy Scout groups run in Egypt as well as contemporary European fascist paramilitary groups. They competed in sporting events and joined a summer training camp. According to Ehud Rosen, “included [in the summer camps were] religious education, a range of social activities, and physical and military training. Each member was to be educated in such a way that he became consumed with the concept of jihad. The Rover Scouts organized marches and parades; their songs and anthems were saturated with religious themes, and celebrated jihad and martyrdom.”\textsuperscript{137}

To compliment the Rover Scouts, in 1937 al-Banna created the Battalions, which were “aimed at creating stronger organizational cohesion and enhancing the dedication of the members.”\textsuperscript{138} These Battalions ranged from ten to forty members from the ages of eighteen to forty. One had to have been a member of the society prior to joining and many were Rover Scouts beforehand. Also, each Battalion had a chief (\textit{naqīb}). Further, the Battalions divided into “companionships” (\textit{‘israḥ}), which had ten individuals and were lead by a deputy (\textit{mandūb}).\textsuperscript{139} The members of the Battalions also made an oath of allegiance: “I swear by God to [commit myself to] obedience, action and secrecy.”\textsuperscript{140} According to Lia, “the Battalions were meant to represent an advanced stage of initiation or an inner, circle consisting of the most dedicated cadres.”\textsuperscript{141}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{138} Lia, 115.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 173.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 175.
\end{flushright}
Al-Banna further refined his organizational apparatus in 1943 with the creation of the Family System. It was an even more closely held social group. These groups only had five members.\textsuperscript{142} Therefore, the organization became even further decentralized. One could argue that this system has its legacy in what many today call “sleeper cells.” Similar to the Family System, “sleeper cells” contain a handful of individuals and because of their decentralized nature, they are hard to follow and detect. As Lia explains, it allowed the Brothers to continue activities even if leaders were arrested or branches were shutdown.\textsuperscript{143} Similarly, Abū Muṣ’ab al-Sūrī, a Syrian jihadist who is currently in the custody of the United States published a book in 2004 that endorsed this more decentralized strategy compared with al-Qaeda’s more centralized structure under Osama Bin Laden.\textsuperscript{144}

Lastly, and most notoriously, the Secret Apparatus was a military wing created by al-Banna in light of the growing impatience of society members who became radicalized by the various indoctrination materials aimed at implementing the third stage. The Secret Apparatus was al-Banna’s response to the secession by those who joined Muhammad’s Youth to placate the more militant elements within the Brotherhood. No one is quite sure when the Secret Apparatus was created, but it is hypothesized that it was in the late 1930s as an outgrowth of the Rover Scouts and Battalions. According to Mitchell, the Secret Apparatus was a “concept of jihad” and “an instrument for the defense of Islam.”\textsuperscript{145} It is believed that members of the Secret Apparatus were involved in activities in the Negev

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 176.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 177.
\textsuperscript{144} For more details read: Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, \textit{Da’wat al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmīyyah al-‘Ālāmīyyah} (2004).
\textsuperscript{145} Mitchell, 32.
against the so-called Zionists prior to and during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence.\textsuperscript{146}

The Secret Apparatus is also known to have been involved in a variety of attacks against Britons and their institutions in the Suez Canal Zone.\textsuperscript{147}

The breadth of al-Banna’s legacy cannot be ignored. Not only did he create a social and political movement that has lasted to the present, but other Brotherhood branches have been established in many Muslim countries including, Bahrain, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Tunisia, Libya; as well as in the European Union and the United States. It also spawned more radical breakaway groups, such as \textit{Takfir wa’l-Hijrah}, \textit{Tanzīm al-Jihad} (later the Egyptian Islamic \textit{Jihad}), Palestinian Islamic \textit{Jihad}, and HAMAS. It also could be argued that al-Qaeda is the most radical group that made a schism from the Muslim Brothers since Osama Bin Laden was involved with the Saudi Muslim Brothers, while Ayman al-Zawahiri was the leader of the Egyptian Islamic \textit{Jihad}, which had previously split from the Muslim Brothers too for being too accommodating with the Egyptian regime.

In addition, although many of al-Banna’s critiques of Muslim society, their governments, influence of the West and apathy of the ‘\textit{ulamā’}’ had been leveled in the past by such thinkers as al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh and Riḍa, al-Banna spread these ideas to the masses in a way none of the others had. Al-Banna also created a program and an apparatus to make his goals of Islamicizing society, and eventually taking power, achievable. This gave later thinkers and groups a differing paradigm for how to rally the Muslim population. Sayyid Qutb differed, though, since instead of seeking the support of the masses, he organized an elite vanguard during his time in jail. To better understand

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 57.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 49, 75, 89.
this stance as well as how Qutb built his ideas upon al-Banna’s and other thinkers’ ideas
the thesis will now turn to Qutb.
Chapter Two: Sayyid Qutb

Islam is the declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men. Thus it strives from the beginning to abolish all those systems and governments, which are based on the rule of man over men and the servitude of one human being to another.¹

Unlike Hassan al-Banna – who was more of a community organizer that utilized the language of Islam to mobilize the masses towards a more Islamicized society as well as defeating the colonialists – Sayyid Qutb was a true intellectual who helped create a theoretical framework to justify action against Muslim rulers. This chapter will primarily focus on the most crucial aspects of his biography and thought, such as the terms jāhilīyyah, ḥākimīyyah, ‘ubūdīyyah, tawhīd, fiṭrah and jihad. This chapter will also examine the influence of Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah’s, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s and ‘Abū ‘A’lā Mawdūdī’s on Qutb’s thought. It will also posit a theory, which argues that Qutb’s thought is not a further radicalization of al-Banna’s ideas; rather, both Qutb and al-Banna conceived of their ideas independently during an era of rapid change in Egyptian society.

Background

Qutb, like al-Banna, was born in 1906, but in the town of Mushā in the province of Asyūt about 235 miles south of Cairo. Mushā was also called Balad al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ in honor of him being the towns’ Sufi walī (saint).²³ Al-Ḥājj Qutb Ibrāhīm,

---


² Walī in many cases is translated as an individual who is a saint and in the context of Sufism (mystical Islam). In fact, though, walī, when translated means one who is close to God.
Qutb’s father, was a delegate to Muṣṭafā Kāmil’s National Party (al-Ḥizb al-Waṭanī) who subscribed to al-Liwā’ (The Standard), the National Party’s journal. During Qutb’s childhood, his house was known for being at the center of political discourse in his area. Many sympathetic to Ibrāhīm’s nationalist cause would stop by their home and read al-Liwā’, discussed issues in the current edition and talked about the major political debates in Egypt at the time. Under these circumstances, at a young age Qutb became aware of many of the key sociopolitical problems in Egyptian society. This was critical to Qutb’s development since he became one of the leading social, cultural, political and religious critics in post-World War I Egypt through his death in 1966. Based on Qutb’s dedication to his father, in his book Mashāḥīd al-Qiyāmah fī al-Qur’ān (Scenes of Resurrection in the Qur’an) one can see that Ibrāhīm left a significant mark on Qutb’s life:

When I was a young child you imprinted on my senses the fear of the Day of Judgment…The image of you reciting the Fātiḥah every evening following dinner, and the dedication of the prayer to the souls of your fathers in their final abode, are vividly imprinted in my imagination.

---

4 Bergesen, 3.
5 Sayed Khatab, The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb: The Theory of Jahiliyyah (London: Routledge, 2006), 45. For future footnotes this will be cited as Khatab, PTSQ.
6 The first sura or chapter in the Qur’an: 1. In the Name of God, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. 2. All praise belongs to God, Lord of all the worlds, 3. the All-beneficent, the All-merciful, 4. Master of the Day of Retribution. 5. You [alone] do we worship, and to You [alone] do we turn for help. 6. Guide us on the straight path, 7. the path of those whom You have blessed—such as have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray. ‘Ali Quli Qara’i (trans.), The Qur’an: With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation (Clarksville, MD: Khatoons Inc., 2006), 1.
7 Sayyid Qutb, Mashāḥīd al-Qiyāmah fī al-Qur’ān (Cairo: 1966), Dedication Page; Musallam, 30.
Similarly, Qutb’s mother, Fāṭimah, played an influential role in his life, too. In Qutb’s autobiography Tīfl min al-Qaryah (Child from the Village), he explains that his mother encouraged him in religion as well as the importance of education.² By the age of ten Qutb memorized the entire Qur’ān.³ Like his father, Qutb also dedicated a book to his mother, al-Tašwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur’ān (Artistic Portrayal in the Qur’ān):

> When you sent me to primary school in the village your greatest wish was that Allah might open my heart to memorize the Qur’ān…I have memorized the Qur’ān and fulfilled a part of your wish.¹⁰

Both of Qutb’s parents played an important role in shaping his early childhood, which gave him the necessary tools later in life to write about complicated issues within Egyptian society as well as competing ideas within the global commons (Communism and Liberal-Capitalist-Democracy). His mother also impressed upon Qutb the significance of restoring his family’s prestige in light of their economic difficulties that beset them as a consequence of living beyond their means.¹¹ Though there is no direct evidence, Qutb’s ideas about the importance of justice within an economic system could have been influenced by the economic downfall of his family within Mushā, which most likely had a lasting impression on him.

**Childhood Education in Mushā**

Qutb began his education when he was six years old at a secular government primary school. This differed from the kuttāb, a religious school for younger students.¹²

---

² Sayyid Qutb, Tīfl min al-Qaryah (Beirut, 1973), 194; Musallam, 30.
¹¹ Musallam, 30.
¹² Ibid., 31.
Within Qutb’s village these two options were key fault lines in an ideological battle between either those who aspired modernism or traditionalism. Qutb’s education became enmeshed in one of these disputes. His Qur’anic teacher at the primary school, Shaykh Aḥmad, was fired because he did not understand mathematics and other areas of modern education. Therefore, he created his own *kuttāb* to which Qutb’s father transferred Qutb. The Shaykh contended that the government’s firing was an indication that it planned to cut Qur’anic education from its curriculum, which in-turn turned Qutb off to *kuttāb* education.\(^{13}\) Also, Qutb was fond of the modern education of the primary school, and after some convincing, his father allowed Qutb to return to the government school. Sayed Khatab notes: “Although this was secular, the school became a “holy place” to him [Qutb], ‘like a mosque.’”\(^{14}\) While at the primary school, there were Qur’anic competitions of memorization between the students at Qutb’s school against those at the *kuttāb*. This was a way for Qutb to prove that his education was superior and, in most cases, the primary school students succeeded more than the *kuttāb* students in these competitions. This gave Qutb a sense of vindication.\(^{15}\)

Qutb also looked back on his childhood Qur’anic education nostalgically. Qutb was upset that the Qur’an of his adult life, clouded the beauty and simplicity of the Qur’an of his childhood. During his adult life he read the *tafṣīr* (Qur’anic commentary) to gain a better understanding of its meaning, which Qutb believed bogged the text down and took away from its artistic and lyrical beauty.\(^{16}\) This could be a reason why Qutb

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Khatab, *PTSQ*, 45.

\(^{15}\) Musallam, 31.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
preferred, when he wrote a *tafsîr Fî Zilâl al-Qur'ân* (*In the Shade of the Qur’an*), to focus more on the aesthetics of the Qur’an instead of its dense ideas.

During Qutb’s childhood he was also known for his fond collection of books. He was believed to have a small collection of books on eclectic topics ranging from poetry, novels, detective stories, Islamic history, stories of heroes, astrology and magic to augury. This growing book collection was supplemented and sold by Sâlih, a traveling salesman who came to Mushâ three to four times a week to sell books. Qutb also traded books with fellow villagers, gaining the respect of the intellectuals of the town.17

*Cairo*

After completing his primary school education at the age of fourteen, Qutb’s mother encouraged him to move to Cairo to continue his education. In 1920, Qutb moved to Cairo and lived with his maternal uncle, Aḥmad Ḥussayn ‘Uthmân, who was a graduate of al-’Azhar and, at the time, worked as a teacher and journalist.18 Qutb entered a Teachers training school named *Madrasat al-Mu’allimîn al-‘Awwaliyyah*, where he studied for five years.19 Afterwards, Qutb continued his education at *Dar al-‘Ulûm*, a preparatory college, which coincidentally is where al-Banna went too. There, Qutb studied applied science, history, humanities, Arabic and Islamic studies. Following the completion of *Dar al-‘Ulûm*’s preparatory courses, in 1929, Qutb enrolled at *Dar al-‘Ulûm*’s Teachers College.20 His coursework at the Teachers College included logic, philosophy, political history, economics, Arabic, Islamic studies, scholastic theology and

17 Khatab, *PTSQ*, 46.
18 Ibid., 48.
19 Ibid., 49.
20 Bergesen, 3.
Biblical Hebrew, although he complained about the lack of opportunities to study more foreign languages. At the age of 27, Qutb graduated the Dar al-‘Ulūm Teacher’s College in 1933 with a Licentiate in Arabic Language and Literature.  

Once Qutb completed his education at Dar al-‘Ulūm, the Egyptian Ministry of Education assigned him to be an Arabic language teacher at al-Da‘udiyyah Preparatory School, which he worked at from 1933-1935. He continued teaching through 1940 at schools in the following cities: Dumyāt, Bani Sūwyif and Ḥalwān. In 1940, Qutb was promoted to supervise general education at Egypt’s Ministry of Education while also working on its administration of translation and statistics. Then, in 1944, he worked as an inspector of Egypt’s elementary education and, a year later through 1948, was the Directorate General of Culture. After a two year stint in America (which will be detailed in full below) studying its educational system, Qutb returned to the Ministry of Education, where he worked as an assistant supervisor in technical research and projects until October 18, 1952 when Qutb tendered his resignation. This was a result of a major disagreement between Qutb and the newly empowered military leadership’s conception of how education should be administered in Egyptian society. Qutb claimed the educational policies were not consistent with Islamic conceptions of education. This would turn out to be Qutb’s final official job since much of the rest of his life was spent

---

21 Khatab, *PTSQ*, 49.
22 Musallam, 43.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
in jail due at first to his affiliation with the Muslim Brothers, and later, to his controversial writings on Islam and the nature of the Egyptian state and society.

**Intellectual Changes Before America**

Qutb’s intellectual biography can be divided into three periods prior to his work and study in the United States. First, he worked as a poet and literary critic, which began in 1921 when Qutb published his first poem *al-Ḥāyat al-Jadidat (The New Life)* through 1939.\(^{26}\) The second was a Qur’anic literary stage, a time when Qutb started to examine the Qur’an in a non-religious manner through 1947.\(^{27}\) Lastly, within the year Qutb went to the United States, he was in the process of writing and completing one of his most influential works *al-‘Adālah al-Ijtīmā‘īyyah Fī al-Islām (Social Justice in Islam)*, when the crystallization of his Islamic thinking took place.\(^{28}\) This marked a significant intellectual turning point. Afterwards, Qutb became one of the most important and well-known Islamist thinkers and ideologues of the past century.

In the first phase, Qutb was influenced by the Dīwān school of poetry and literary criticism whose leading figure was ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād.\(^{29}\) Though Qutb greatly admired al-‘Aqqād, he worried that he was becoming too much like him and wanted to chart his own distinct path. Due to later interests in more spiritual matters, Qutb eventually split intellectually with al-‘Aqqād in the 1940s, although al-‘Aqqād still had an influence on him.\(^{30}\) Indeed, Qutb defended his mentor in various intellectual battles of

\(^{26}\) Khatab, *PTSQ*, 46.
\(^{27}\) Musallam, 56.
\(^{28}\) Ibid., 97.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 35.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 40.
their time. For example, in contrast to Muṣṭafā Ṣadīq al-Rafīʿi and his followers who were seen by al-ʿAqqād’s supporters as conservative and holding on to an old intellectual trend, Qutb argued that Rafīʿi’s schools’ use of the Arabic language made it difficult for them to differentiate from classical literature. While the Dīwān school of thought allowed dynamic use of the Arabic language that did not depend on certain style, which was utilized by Rafīʿi’s school.31

Qutb’s focus on secular subjects did not diminish his ties to Islam. As will be later discussed in more detail, when analyzing Qutb’s major contributions to Islamist literature, seeds of those thoughts were planted in his earlier writings, but were not yet with the discourse of radical Islam. Though Qutb was still interested in literary criticism he turned to a more spiritual path when he started to seek out ways to scrutinize past Islamic scholarship on the Qur’an. As previously mentioned, Qutb was critical of the way the Qur’an was taught and studied during his adulthood as compared to when he was a child. Therefore, Qutb likely tried to resurrect the Qur’anic mode of teaching during his childhood, focusing on true inner beauty and writing about its aesthetics. In a twist of irony, al-Banna criticized Qutb’s way of writing about the Qur’an since in al-Banna’s view, it lacked religious tone or force, but rather only focused on its artistic qualities.32 Qutb’s interests in the Qur’an cannot be taken in a vacuum, though. At the time, many intellectuals, too, were looking back to Egypt’s Islamic past in light of the failures of the liberal reforms over the previous twenty years, as well as Egypt’s march towards a confrontation with the British occupation.

31 Ibid., 46.
32 Ibid., 60.
Within this environment, Qutb started to view the Qur’ān again in more religious terms as a result of the socio-political problems of his time. In addition, it seems that Qutb’s re-immersion into reading and pondering the Qur’ān throughout the 1940s led to an epiphany of renewal and enlightenment. Qutb became a moralist, started publishing a new magazine called al-Fikr al-Jadid (Modern Thought), which gave him a platform for propagating his thoughts regarding culture, society, the West and religion in Egypt. In 1948 he also completed a manuscript of his book Social Justice in the Qur’ān, (later published in 1949 with the help of his brother after Qutb left Egypt for two-years in America) which also served as a vehicle for articulating his views.

In the Heart of Jāhiliyyah

Qutb left Egypt for America on November 3, 1948. The Egyptian palace saw this as a form of punishment and hoped-for a corrective to his thinking. Indeed, the palace was alarmed by the more radical anti-regime tone Qutb took in his essays in Fikr al-Jadid. For instance, Qutb called the government slaves of America, Russia and Britain. Instead, of arresting him the government decided that sending Qutb to the United States could be an opportunity for him to change his outlook and attitudes. This, of course did not happen; rather, Qutb’s views became hardened while in the United States. Even though the palace believed Qutb’s outlook could be changed, it is doubtful that it would have been since Qutb already harbored anti-American sentiments prior to his trip. This antipathy was not based on some petty issue, but on a more visceral reaction to President

33 Ibid., 94.
35 Khatab, PTSQ, 139.
Truman's support for the Jewish state of Israel.\textsuperscript{36} Qutb believed the United States was just as culpable as the European nations in its imperial designs on the Middle East, referring to America as having a \textit{damir muta‘affin} (rotten conscience).\textsuperscript{37}

While in the United States, Qutb traveled throughout the country including: Washington, DC; Denver; San Francisco; Palo Alto; San Diego and Greeley, Colorado, the latter of which is where he spent the most of his time.\textsuperscript{38} Drawing on his time in America, Qutb concluded the following:

America is the biggest lie known to the world.\textsuperscript{39}

Here is alienation, the real alienation, the alienation of the soul and the thought, the alienation of the spirit and the body, here in that huge workshop which they call the New World.\textsuperscript{40}

At the same time, though, Qutb admired American research and ingenuity in the “pure” sciences such as mechanics, electricity, chemistry, agriculture, physics, biology, astronomy, medicine, industry and methods of administration.\textsuperscript{41} Qutb thought that America has “virtues of production and organization but not virtues of human and social leadership, virtues of mind and hand but not virtues of taste and feelings.”\textsuperscript{42}

Two other key points need to be mentioned about Qutb’s stay prior to examining Qutb’s life after his return to Egypt. While he was in the United States, al-Banna was

\textsuperscript{36} Musallam, 86.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{39} Al-Taher Ahmad Makki, “Sayyid Qutb \textit{wa Thalâth Rasâ’il Lam Tunshâr Ba’d},” \textit{al-Hilal} (Cairo, October 1986), 127-128; Musallam, 114.
\textsuperscript{40} Al-‘Azm, 152-153; Musallam, 118.
\textsuperscript{41} Makki, 127-128; Musallam, 114; Khatab, \textit{PTSQ}, 142.
\textsuperscript{42} Sayyid Qutb, \textit{al-Risâlah}, No. 961 (Cairo, December 3, 1951): 1360; Musallam, 119.
assassinated and Qutb noticed that upon hearing this news, Americans were in a state of euphoria over his death.\textsuperscript{43} This story seems fanciful, though, since it is hard to believe most Americans in the late 1940s even knew who al-Banna was since most today would not be able to identify him. More importantly, according to Qutb this made him realize that al-Banna’s views appeared to be a threat to the West and was disappointed that he rejected past overtures from the Muslim Brothers.\textsuperscript{44} Besides his more Islamist outlook on society, this may be a reason why Qutb was more willing to work with the Muslim Brothers following his return to Egypt.

Another turning point during Qutb’s stay in America was his longing for Egypt and his homesickness. This was brought out in a poem (a rarity at this stage in his writing) titled \textit{Nidā’ al-Gharīb (Invocation of the Stranger)}.\textsuperscript{45} According to Jonathan Raban, Qutb used this loneliness to construct a figure of “heroic solitude” and seeing himself as a “secret lone agent of God’s will” observing those who were truly living in misery.\textsuperscript{46} This not only made him feel better, but also could be seen as an early crystallization of Qutb’s conception of a small vanguard of “true” Muslim individuals to change society.

\textit{Return to Egypt and Prison Years}

Following two years in the United States studying its educational system, Qutb returned to Egypt on August 20, 1950.\textsuperscript{47} He came back with renewed vigor and a mission

\begin{itemize}
  \item[43] Musallam, 121.
  \item[44] Ibid.
  \item[45] Ibid., 120-121.
  \item[46] Ibid., 121.
  \item[47] Khatab, \textit{PTSQ}, 147.
\end{itemize}
in life. Following his observations in the United States, Qutb stated: “I will devote the rest of my life to a complete social program that will engross the life of many.” Upon his return, delegates from within the Muslim Brothers welcomed Qutb back to Egypt, and soon after, Qutb started writing for their periodical *al-Daw’ah*. According to Adnan A. Musallam, though, this was just an affiliation; Qutb did not become a member of the Muslim Brothers until early in 1953 following the Free Officers coup in 1952. Qutb’s apprehension could have been as a result of his belief that the Free Officers could bring real change to Egyptian society and re-implement the *shari‘ah* (Islamic law). As noted earlier, Qutb became disappointed that this was not one of the guiding principles of the Free Officers, which led him to quit his job.

Quickly, Qutb rose to become one of the Muslim Brothers’ leading ideologues in which he helped prepare literature, gave guidance to brothers, and created a curriculum for the Muslim Brothers educational program. Qutb later became the chief editor of the Muslims Brothers new weekly journal *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (*The Muslim Brothers*). Due to the outspokenness of the Muslim Brothers and not falling in line with the Free Officers status quo and view of the way forward for Egyptian society, the Free Officers started to crack down on the Muslim Brothers activities. This eventually led to the arrest of Qutb as well as many other Muslim Brother figures, including the General Guide at the time Ḥassan al-Huḍaybī.

---

48 Ibid., 145.
49 Musallam, 130.
50 Ibid., 145.
51 Ibid., 149.
Much of the rest of Qutb’s life was spent in the Egyptian prison system. It was also the place where he propounded his most radical ideas, completing his most famous works: *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān* (*In the Shade of the Qur’an*) and *Ma’ālim fī al-Tarīq* (*Milestones or Signposts Along the Road*). While in prison Qutb started to organize his vanguard where they studied the Qur’an, Qutb’s works as well as the writings of Ismā’īl Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Shafī‘ī, Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab, Muhammad Qutb and ‘Abū ‘A’lā al-Mawdūdī. Qutb was released from prison in May 1964, but was quickly rearrested and returned to prison on August 9, 1965. This has been attributed to Qutb’s creation of an underground apparatus adopting a thirteen-year educational program to try and Islamicize seventy-five percent of Egyptian society. If their goals were not reached they would institute another block of thirteen years until they reached that marker whereby they could call for the implementation of an Islamic state.

If one closely examines Qutb’s actions, it is hard to see him as a fervent jihadist as is understood by jihadism today. Indeed, as will be later revealed when analyzing his works, Qutb had very radical ideas. But there is a difference between that rhetoric and what he tried to organize in practice. As a result, those who say al-Qaeda or like-minded organizations are following Qutb’s lead are mistaken, but they do view him as an inspirational figure. As will be further analyzed when looking at Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag in the next chapter, Qutb’s program was seen as problematic. It is crucial, then, for one to carefully distinguish Qutb’s rhetoric and writing with his actual actions.

---

52 Ibid., 165.
53 Ibid., 169.
54 Ibid., 168.
This does not mean, one should excuse his rampant anti-Western, anti-Semitic and revolutionary thought; rather, when one deals with such complicated ideas and issues, it is necessary to make sure one truly understands the phenomenon both in its theoretical framework as well as its practical application.

Indeed, in Jarret Brachman’s recent work Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice, he discusses a subset of Salafists known as “Qutubi’s,” those who follow Qub’s teachings and method. In the eyes of other Salafists, “Qutubi’s” are seen as “unacceptably radical in both their thinking and their organization.”\(^{55}\) However, Jihadists view “Qutubi’s” as “accommodationist and weak because they do not demand violent solutions.”\(^{56}\) At the same time, “Qutubi’s” don’t discount the use of violence: rather, they see jihad not solely militarily, but also economically and spiritually, which they prefer.\(^{57}\) Even if fervent jihadists disagree with “Qutubi’s” methodology that does not take away from the inspiration and theoretical framework, which Qub established since he had a tremendous effect on jihadist thought going forward. Al-Zawahiri explained Qub’s significance as such:

The meaning of this plan (overthrow of the government) was more important than its material strength. The meaning was that the Islamic movement had begun a war against the regime in its capacity as an enemy of Islam. Before that, the Islamic movement’s ethics and principles—and in which some believe until now—affirmed that the external enemy was the only enemy of Islam.\(^{58}\)

He affirmed that the issue of unification [tawḥīd] in Islam is important and that the battle between Islam and its enemies is primarily an ideological one over the


\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 39.

issue of unification. It is also a battle over to whom authority and power should belong—to God’s course and the *sharī‘ah*, to man-made laws and material principles, or to those who claim to be intermediaries between the Creator and mankind. . . . This affirmation greatly helped the Islamic movement to know and define its enemies.\(^{59}\)

Eventually, Qutb was executed by hanging on August 29, 1966. Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser saw this was the best way to deal with Qutb’s continual intransigence. In fact, though, it created yet another martyr alongside al-Banna and others whom Islamists could rally behind.

**Intellectual Thought**

One could write an encyclopedia about Qutb’s various ideas and works throughout his life. Therefore, this section will primarily focus on Qutb’s larger views on the West, Christianity, Judaism and Egyptian society. Also, this section will highlight key terms, which Qutb adopted to advance his theoretical ideas. Following this, the section will argue that Qutb’s ideas were not necessarily influenced by Mawdūdī as has been previously concluded by scholars; rather these ideas were already central to his thought prior to his radicalization. The difference is that in his earlier writings they did not manifest themselves in an Islamist discourse. Lastly, this section will assess the nature of continuity, rupture and/or differences with al-Banna.

**Views on Christianity and Judaism**

The “hideous schizophrenia” is a term used by Qutb when explaining the historical development of Christianity from the time of Jesus to the modern era. It is Qutb’s strongest attack on Christianity. Qutb wrote about this in his work *Muqāwimat al-Tašawur al-Islāmī* (*Components of the Islamic Conception*). Two key elements of Qutb’s

critique dealt with Christianity’s deviation from the Abrahamic tradition, which lead to a crisis between the sciences and religion. As a result, unlike Islam, as Qutb explains, science and religion are not at odds with one another, whereas in Christianity they are, leading to secularism in Christian society and the misery they live with today. Qutb explains:

Christianity was born in the shadow of the pagan Roman Empire. Later, when the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as the state religion, it did great violence to the teachings of Jesus, distorting them beyond recognition … when the astronomers and physicists started to correct the errors contained in these ‘facts,’ the origins of which was human rather than divine, the church took a very harsh stand against them … [and so] in order to get rid of the authority of the Church, they [European thinkers] eliminated the God of the Church.  

Moreover, Paul Berman explains that Qutb believed that this “hideous schizophrenia” led to the West’s feeling in modern society of purposelessness, seeking pleasures and alienation from the community at-large. This was a consequence of Christianity’s historical trajectory. More concerning for Qutb, though, was the enormous influence the West had on the Muslim world. Consequently, “Qutb trembled in fear at the “hideous schizophrenia,”” and was scared it was going to envelope Muslim society.

Qutb also saw the crusades of the past against Islam as the roots of imperialism in the twentieth century. There is no difference between “crusaderism” and imperialism.

Khatab explains that Qutb believes “that the imperialist mentality of the twentieth century

---

60 Bergesen, 17.
61 Berman, 75-76.
62 Ibid.
is directly descended from the mentality of the medieval crusaders. Moreover, Qutb emphasizes that the “spirit of Islam” is contrary to the “spirit of imperialism.”

Besides despising Christianity and its values, Qutb took issue with the Jews, too. The harsh anti-Semitic tone by Qutb is clearly seen in Qutb’s interpretation of surah’s (chapter) two and five in the Qur’an in his book In the Shade of the Qur’an. In it, he discusses the betrayal of the Jews to Islam ever since the beginning of their encounter:

On surah 2:
The war the Jews began to wage against Islam and Muslims in those early days has raged on to the present. The form and appearance may have changed, but the nature and means remains the same.

On surah 5:
The Muslim world has often faced problems as a result of Jewish conspiracies ever since the early days of Islam ... History has recorded the wicked opposition of the Jews to Islam right from its first day in Medina. Their scheming against Islam has continued since then to the present moment, and they continue to be its leaders, nursing their wicked grudges and always resorting to treacherous schemes to undermine Islam.

Qutb sees the Jews as conspirators and an enemy that must be defeated so that Islam can be safeguarded. Michael Ebstein states the following regarding Qutb’s ideas on the Jews:

Qutb combines Qur’anic and post-Qur’anic anti-Jewish sentiment with ideas and images derived from European anti-Semitism. According to Qutb, the sins of the Israelites against Allah and Moses, and their troublesome relationship with the Prophet Muhammad, testify to their treacherous nature, their perpetual machinations, and their eternal hatred towards Islam ... Qutb sees one line

---

63 Khatab, PTSQ, 135.
64 Ibid.
connecting the breeching of the divine covenant by the Israelites and the treachery of the Medinese Jews.\textsuperscript{67}

In addition, the Jews are trying to destroy Islam, according to Qutb, by inculcating the \textit{isrā’iḥyāyat} (classical Islamic traditions from Judaism and Christianity) into Islamic literature. Therefore, Muslims must “cleanse” the Qur’ān from these Jewish sources.\textsuperscript{68} Furthermore, the Jews are leading a modern conspiracy against Islam through an alliance of “global Zionism” (\textit{al-ṣahyūnīyyah al-ʿālamīyyah}) and “global crusaders” (\textit{al-ṣalībīyyah al-ʿālamīyyah}), “by spreading communism, and through the academic works of orientalists, many of whom have been Jews,” which has all been explained in the \textit{Protocols of the Elders of Zion} (a polemical work that explains how the Jews secretly run the world).\textsuperscript{69}

Lastly, when Qutb looks at Qur’ānic verses that are favorable or appear to be tolerable to the Jews and Christians as well as recognizing them as believers too, he simply brushes it off as being a particular instance during the life of Muhammad, no longer having sway and having been abrogated.\textsuperscript{70} As noted in the previous chapter the tone taken by Qutb is far harsher than the one al-Banna took when describing Christians and Jews and their relations with Muslims.

\textsuperscript{67} Michael Ebstein, “In the Shadows of the Koran- Said Qutb’s Views on Jews and Christians as Reflected in his Koran,” \textit{Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World} at the Hudson Institute, Research Monographs on the Muslim World Series Number 2, Paper Number 4, November 2009, 16.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{70} Mary Habeck, \textit{Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 80.
al-Hākimīyyah

Central to Qutb’s theory is the idea of ḥākimīyyah, which is translated as sovereignty in English. This differs from the post-Enlightenment understanding of the term sovereignty. Several Enlightenment figures, such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau had varying definitions of the term sovereignty, however, one can take note that in popular conception today, individuals view it as the popular will of the people. ⁷¹ In contrast, Qutb’s idea of sovereignty derives from God, and it is God’s alone. No human can have sovereignty over another human.

This, though, is not foreign within the Islamic historical literature. This is because in the Qur’an in a variety of verses it explicitly states it. For instance, in verse 2:107 it states: “Do you not know that to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the Earth?” ⁷² Qutb, though, goes even further than the classical understanding by creating a government framework behind his idea of ḥākimīyyah. ⁷³ According to Sayed Khatab, Qutb’s theory of ḥākimīyyah denotes the following ideas: (1) “the system of government in Islam is not similar to any other system”; (2) “it is distinct from all forms of government in secular democracies”; (3) “it is constitutional”; (4) “it is not inherently theocratic or autocratic”; and (5) “the form of Islamic government has no impact on the Islamic identity of the state.” ⁷⁴

---


⁷³ For a detailed linguistic understanding of the term ḥākimīyyah in its modern and Qur’ānic understanding read Khatab, PS, 15-19.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 28.
Qutb therefore, links the idea of God’s sovereignty to the concept of governance. Qutb supports his argument by referring to Qur’anic verses 3:26, 23:68, 23:84, and 23:88 whereby it shows that God is the sovereign of sovereignty.\footnote{Ibid.} In addition, the concept of \textit{ḥākimīyyah} is connected to the concept of \textit{tawḥīd} (oneness of God). As Qutb states:

\textit{Tawḥīd} is that Allah is the Lord and Sovereign of people not merely in their beliefs, concepts, consciences, and rituals of worship, but in their political affairs … There is no God but God. There is no one worthy of worship except God, there is no creator or sustainer except God … There is no one in charge of the universe or even one’s own affairs except God … Thus, Muslims worship him alone … Muslims believe that there is no true ruler above them except Allah, no legislator for them except God, no one except God to inform them concerning their relationships and connections with the universe, with other living creatures, and with their fellow human beings. This is why Muslims turn to God for guidance and legislation in every aspect of life, whether it be political governance, economic justice, personal behavior, or the norms and standards of social intercourse.\footnote{Sayyid Qutb, \textit{Khasa’is al-Tasawur al-Islāmī wa Muqawimatuḥ} (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1995), 200; Khatab, \textit{PS}, 23-24.}

When discussing the idea of Islamic governance, it was also essential for Qutb to connect the above terminologies – \textit{ḥākimīyyah} and \textit{tawḥīd} – to the \textit{sharī’ah}. Qutb contends that for one to institute the \textit{sharī’ah} one needs to first accept the idea behind \textit{tawḥīd}, which based on the above definition, lends credence to the notion of \textit{ḥākimīyyah} and one’s willingness to submit to the will of God and its laws. In other words, before one can follow the \textit{sharī’ah}, one needs to believe in the idea of \textit{tawḥīd} and \textit{ḥākimīyyah}, which is a quintessential part of joining the faith of Islam.\footnote{Khatab, \textit{PS}, 22-26.} This is because the profession of faith in Islam begins with the creed \textit{there is no God but God}, thereby institutionalizing the concepts of \textit{tawḥīd} and \textit{ḥākimīyyah}. Therefore, believing in \textit{tawḥīd} comes prior to practicing \textit{sharī’ah}. In addition, according to Mary Habeck, Qutb’s idea of
tawḥīd is “a sort of liberation theology, designed to end oppression by human institutions and man-made laws and to return God to his rightful place as unconditional ruler of the world.”

Qutb also uses the terms ‘ulāḥīyyah (divinity) and ‘ubūdīyyah (servitude) to describe the relationship between God’s ḥākimīyyah and his followers. Qutb states that ‘ulāḥīyyah is only a characteristic that can belong to God, resulting in man’s servitude to God’s divinity. As such, it connects back to the idea of ḥākimīyyah and God’s sovereignty. The only one who is divine is God; therefore, only one can be in servitude toward God. Consequently, if one were servile to anything other than God, then one is breaking God’s ḥākimīyyah. Furthermore, if one is not in line with the ḥākimīyyah of God then one is breaking a cardinal part of tawḥīd, which is the most important element of the Islamic faith. Thus, it could render one straying from the sovereignty of God.

In the Islamic context, one can utilize the term fitrah to better appreciate the fundamental idea of human nature within Islam. In its most basic understanding, fitrah or being in the fitrah is human’s primordial state. The fitrah is the state within which humans are born, meaning they received God’s covenant and come in to the world pure, in contrast to the Christian understanding of original sin. The idea behind human nature also is different from the secular conception. Khatab explains this divergence: “Islamic concepts are comprehensive and do not separate the nature of the universe from the

78 Habeck, 62.
79 Khatab, PS, 24.
80 For a detailed linguistic understanding of the term fitrah in its modern and Qur’anic understanding read Khatab, PS, 69-70.
81 Khatab, PS, 70.
nature of life or the nature of man. Rather, there ought to be a well-balanced, harmonious and firm relationship between all of them.\textsuperscript{82}

According to Qutb, there are four aspects of the fitrah that relate to its understanding in the Qur’anic context: (1) “the linkage with the concept of khilāfah (vicegerency) of man on earth”; (2) “emphasis of fitrah within the context of man’s free will”; (3) “fitrah has a direct link to man’s affairs and responsibilities for development and renewal in life”; and (4) “fitrah reflects the perfect and harmonious relationship between humanity and the universe.”\textsuperscript{83}

Khatab concludes from this: “These four dimensions complement Qutb’s comprehensive constructs of sovereignty (ḥākimīyyah), servitude (‘ubūdīyyah) and the universality of Islam. These notions are related, in turn, to what Qutb calls the ‘great unity’ (al-wahdah al-kubrā). This entails the comprehensive and integrated conception of the nature of the relationship between the creator and the creation, the universe, life and man. Qutb then, firmly binds these ideas to the concept of tawḥīd, the cornerstone of the Islamic faith.”\textsuperscript{84}

The fitrah, or the Islamic version of humans’ state of nature, therefore, cannot be deviated from. If one does deviate from the fitrah then one is going against God and his ḥākimīyyah on Earth. From this, Qutb concludes one who is in conflict with the fitrah is not in line with the precepts of Islam. In other words, one is in a state of jāhilīyyah, to which this study will now turn. The idea and theory of jāhilīyyah, is a key foundation to

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{83} Sayyid Qutb, \textit{Fi Zilal al-Qur’an} (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1992), vol. 1, 53-54; vol. 3, 1391-1396; vol. 4, 2137-2145; vol. 6, 3916-3919; Khatab, \textit{PS}, 77.

\textsuperscript{84} Khatab, \textit{PS}, 77.
Qutb’s writings about Islam and society. Indeed, ḥākimīyyah was important as a term, too, but jāhilīyyah has broader consequences in Qutb’s theoretical framework.

Jāhilīyyah

J-h-l, which is the root of the word jāhilīyyah means ignorance of divine guidance from God.\footnote{William E. Shepard, “Ignorance,” in Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, Vol 2. McAuliffe, Jane Dammen (ed.), (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 487.} It is in reference to the pagan Arabs during and prior to the time of Muhammad’s revelation. It relates to their moral corruption since they were polytheists. As a result, jāhilīyyah came to be known as a distinct time period and referred to as pre-Islamic pagan ignorance. For instance, according to the Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, ḥadīth collector Muhammad Ibn Ismā’il al-Bukhārī refers to jāhilīyyah as a “past epoch:” “The tribe of the Quraysh used to fast on the day of Ashūrā in the Jāhilīyyah.”\footnote{William E. Shepard, “The Age of Ignorance,” in Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, Vol 1. McAuliffe, Jane Dammen (ed.), (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 38.} Instead of jāhilīyyah referring to pagans of the pre-Islamic era, Qutb directed this term at fellow Muslims.\footnote{Ibid., 39.} He blamed the Arab secular leaders for aligning themselves with the West – and not implementing the sharī’ah – while at the same time violating the sovereignty of God (ḥākimīyyah).\footnote{Musallam, 151-153.} Therefore, the leaders were in a state of jāhilīyyah. Consequently, they were no longer Muslims and could be overthrown since they were seen as ṭāghūt (transgressors).\footnote{Khatab, PS, 35.} Following are a few examples of how Qutb uses the term jāhilīyyah in his seminal work Ma’ālim fī al-Tariq (Milestones or Signposts on the Road):

The whole world is steeped in Jāhilīyyah … This Jāhilīyyah is based on rebellion against God’s sovereignty on earth. It transfers to man one of the greatest
attributes of God, namely sovereignty [ḥākimīyyah], and makes some men lords over others. It is now not in that simple and primitive form of the ancient Ḥāhilīyyah, but takes the form of claiming that the right to create values, to legislate rules of collective behavior, and to choose any way of life rests with men, without regard to what God has prescribed.90

When a person embraced Islam during the time of the Prophet – peace upon him – he would immediately cut himself off from Ḥāhilīyyah.91

We are surrounded by Ḥāhilīyyah today, which is of the same nature as it was during the first period of Islam, perhaps a little deeper.92

Our mission is not to compromise with the practices of Ḥāhilī society, nor can we be loyal to it. Ḥāhilī society, because of its Ḥāhilī characteristics, is not worthy to be compromised with.93

Ḥāhilīyyah wants to find an excuse to reject the Divine system and to perpetuate the slavery of one man over another.94

Ḥāhilīyyah is one man’s lordship over another, and in this respect it is against the system of the universe and brings the involuntary aspect of human life into conflict with its voluntary aspect.95

Ḥāhilīyyah, to whatever period it belongs, is Ḥāhilīyyah; that is deviation from the worship of One God and the way of life prescribed by God.96

Qutb juxtapositions Ḥāhilīyyah and Islam:97

Ḥāhilīyyah is the worship of some people by others; that is to say, some people become dominant and make laws for others, regardless of whether these laws are against God’s injunctions and without caring for the use or misuse of their authority.

90 Sayyid Qutb, Milestones, (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2001), 11. For future footnotes this will be cited as Qutb, Milestones.
91 Ibid., 19.
92 Ibid., 20.
93 Ibid., 21.
94 Ibid., 42.
95 Ibid., 46.
96 Ibid., 129.
97 Ibid., 130.
Islam, on the other hand, is people’s worshipping God alone, and deriving concepts and beliefs, laws and regulations and values from the authority of God, and freeing themselves from servitude to God’s servants. This is the very nature of Islam, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims.

According to Qutb, in the modern era there are four groups who compromise the jāhilī system:

Included among these is communist society, first because it denies the existence of God Most High and believes that the universe was created by “matter” or by “nature,” while all man’s activities and his history has been created by “economics” or “the means of production;” second, because the way of life it adopts is based on submission to the Communist Party and not God … The Communist ideology and the communist system reduces the human being to the level of an animal or even to the level of a machine.98

All idolatrous societies are also among the Jāhilī societies. Such societies are found in India, Japan, the Philippines and Africa. Their Jāhilī character consists first of the fact that they believe other gods besides God, in addition to Him or without Him; second, they have constructed an elaborate system of devotional acts to propitiate these deities. Similarly, the laws and regulations, which they follow are derived from sources other than God and His Law, whether these sources be priests or astrologers or magicians, the elders of a nation, or secular institutions.99

All Jewish and Christian societies today are also Jāhilī societies. They have distorted the original beliefs and ascribe certain attributes of God to other beings. This association with God has taken many forms, such as the Sonship of God or the trinity; sometimes it is expressed in a concept of God, which is remote from the true reality of God … These people did not consider their priests or rabbis as divine, nor did they worship them; but they gave them the authority to make laws, obeying laws which were made by them not permitted by God.100

Lastly, all the existing so-called “Muslim” societies are also Jāhilī societies. We classify them among Jāhilī societies not because they believe in other deities besides God or because they worship anyone other than God, but because their way of life is not based on submission to God alone. Although they believe in the Unity of God, still they have relegated the legislative attribute of God to others and submit to this authority, and from this authority they derive their systems,

---

98 Ibid., 80-81.
99 Ibid., 81.
100 Ibid., 81-82.
their traditions and customs, their laws, their values and standards, and almost every practice of life.\textsuperscript{101}

To combat \textit{jāhilīyyah} and bring about a true Islamic society, Qutb said the following:

In order to bring this about, we need to initiate the movement of Islamic revival in some Muslim country. Only such a revivalist movement will eventually attain to the status of world leadership whether the distance is near or far.

How is it possible to start the task of reviving Islam? It is necessary that there should be a vanguard, which sets out with this determination and then keeps walking on the path, marching through the vast ocean of \textit{Jāhilīyyah}, which has encompassed the entire world. During its course, it should keep itself somewhat aloof from this all-encompassing \textit{Jāhilīyyah} and should also keep some ties with it.

It is necessary that this vanguard should know the landmarks and the milestones of the road toward this goal so that they may recognize the starting place, the nature, the responsibilities and the ultimate purpose of this long journey. Not only this, but they ought to be aware of their position as opposed to this \textit{Jāhilīyyah}, which has struck its stakes through the earth: when to co-operate with others and when to separate from them: what characteristics and qualities they should cultivate, and with what characteristics and qualities the \textit{Jāhilīyyah} immediately surrounding is armed; how to address the people of \textit{Jāhilīyyah} in the language of Islam, and what topics and problems ought to be discussed; and where and how to obtain guidance in all these matters.\textsuperscript{102}

In other words, Qutb believes that those who do not follow God’s \textit{ḥākimīyyah} and implement God’s \textit{sharī’ah} are defying Islam and are part of \textit{jāhilī} society. These \textit{jāhilī} societies include communists, idolaters, Jews and Christians, and Muslims that do not implement God’s law. To combat this, a vanguard of “true”\textsuperscript{103} Muslims need to come to the fore and revive Islam and turn back the \textit{jāhilī} wave and return – those who aren’t

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 82-83.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{103} According to Qutb, a “true” Muslim was to “believe in [God] in one’s heart, to worship Him Alone, and to put into practice His laws. Without this complete acceptance of “\textit{La ilaha illa Allah},” which differentiates the one who says he is a Muslim from a non-Muslim, there cannot be any practical significance to this utterance, nor will it have any weight according to Islamic law”; Habeck, 63.
even aware of this jāhilī malaise – back to Islam to bring about the reimplementation of the sharī’ah and follow the ḥākimīyyah of God.

Some have argued that Qutb’s solution is similar to that of Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Party and the Russian Revolution, who wrote in his pamphlet, *What is to be Done?*, in 1902 about the need to establish a vanguard of like-minded intellectuals to initiate a true “scientific” socialist revolution. The point of this vanguard was to educate the proletariat from its “false consciousness.”¹⁰⁴ These ideas are echoed above in Qutb’s idea of a vanguard to educate those that have been blinded by jāhilīyyah. Those who propose this argument state that the similarities are too close not to be a coincidence. During Qutb’s years as a poet and literary critic surely he was exposed to works such as Lenin’s since socialism and communism were very popular in Egypt’s intellectual class at the time. Therefore, although dressed in Islamic language, Qutb’s ideas about establishing a vanguard and waking those from the hypnosis of jāhilīyyah, could have plausibly been drawn – consciously or unconsciously – from Lenin and reintroduced in Islamic language and framework.

This argument might seem convincing to some, but throughout history there have been individuals that have articulated the idea that to form a perfect society an elite vanguard or philosopher class was needed to enable the “virtuous city.” According to Plato, suffering will only end once the philosopher’s become kings of the city, which allows happiness to reign.¹⁰⁵ Further, Islamic philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī draws upon Plato’s ideas in *The Republic* in his work *al-Madīnah al-Fādilah* (*The Virtuous City*) to


parrot Plato’s ideas but within an Islamic context. Another possibility that some have argued is that Qutb drew upon the ideas of Leo Strauss who similarly expounded ideas about an elite vanguard controlling society. As such, it is difficult to firmly argue that Qutb was influenced by Lenin.

It also has been argued by Gilles Kepel as well as other scholars that Qutb was influenced by the ideas of past Islamic thinkers, such as Ibn Taymīyyah, ‘Abd al-Wahhab and Mawdūdī, who used the term jāhilīyyah, too, to whom we will now examine.

**Ibn Taymīyyah**

Ibn Taymīyyah lived in Damascus during the time of the Mongol invasions of Islamic lands. This had a chilling effect because the Mongols sacked Baghdad, which was the seat of the Caliphate. Although the Mongols converted to Islam, Ibn Taymīyyah believed they were not true believers. Ibn Taymīyyah was an ‘alim or religious scholar who followed the teachings of the Ḥanbali Law School, which had the strictest adherence to Islamic law of the four Sunni schools of law.

Ibn Taymīyyah spoke out against the Mongols because, in his view, they did not fully implement the sharī‘ah. Instead, they used a dual system that gave more weight to Mongol traditional law, the yassa code, which was a man-made law. The Mongols

---


109 Ibid.
viewed Chinggis Khan as a sovereign and a prophet,\textsuperscript{110} which would directly deviate from the Qur’anic verse 33:40 that states: “Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of God and the Seal of the Prophets [\textit{Khātim al-Nabiyyīn}], and God has knowledge of all things.” Therefore, Ibn Taymīyyah viewed the Mongols as committing heresy and that they were introducing \textit{bid’ah} (an innovation) that was perverting Islam.\textsuperscript{111}

Ibn Taymīyyah also considered Shi’ism, certain aspects of Sufism and \textit{falsafah} (philosophy) \textit{bid’ah} as well.\textsuperscript{112} Contrary to popular belief, though, Ibn Taymīyyah was not completely against Sufism. He was a member of the Qādirīyyah Sufi \textit{tarīqah} (order), rather Ibn Taymīyyah took issue with certain aspects of Sufism such as the veneration of saints.\textsuperscript{113} Ibn Taymīyyah would have also considered them sins, but not punishable by death like ‘Abd al-Wahhab, who misrepresented many aspects of Ibn Taymīyyah’s thought. For example, Muhammad Ibn Amīr al-Ṣana’anī, originally a follower of ‘Abd al-Wahhab, once he decided to actually read ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s works he believed they were a “naïve and imperfect repetition of Ibn Taymīyyah’s doctrine.”\textsuperscript{114} Further, Hamid Alger points out that: “whatever one makes of the positions assumed by Ibn Taymīyyah, there is no doubt that he was a far more rigorous and careful thinker and an infinitely


\textsuperscript{111} Armstrong, 104.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.


prolific scholar than was Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab.”

Therefore, it could be argued that ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s selective use of Ibn Taymīyyah’s work and then later abridged versions of Ibn Taymīyyah’s works published by the Saudi state have created a misunderstanding of the corpus of Ibn Taymīyyah’s work, which is very intellectually sound compared to his caricature in much of the Western scholarship on him.

Drawing on past historical events, Ibn Taymīyyah reinterpreted the idea of jāhiliyyah and applied it to his time period. Therefore, since the Mongols adopted yassa code, they were considered by him to be in a state of jāhiliyyah. This allowed Ibn Taymīyyah to call the Mongols apostates (murtadd) and pronounce takfīr (excommunication) against them from Islam. Ibn Taymīyyah viewed the Mongols as creating fitnah (disturbance, anarchy) within the Islamic community because of their differing beliefs similar to the fitnah during the period following the Kharijites assassination of the forth Caliph ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib.

Therefore, using qīyās (analogical reasoning), Ibn Taymīyyah issued a fatwā (legal ruling) calling for an obligatory jihad (farḍ al-‘ayn) against the Mongols and those who supported them, which stated: “Every group of Muslims [in reference to the Mongols] that transgresses Islamic law [the implementation of the Mongols’ yassa code] ... must be combated, even when they continue to profess the credo.”

---

115 Algar, 9.
117 Aigle, 103.
118 Emmanuel Sivan, Radical Islam (Yale University Press, 1985), 128. Also, for a balanced perspective and further discussion of all three fatāwā (pl. of fatwā) of Ibn Taymīyyah on the Mongols see: Denis Aigle, “The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām
Before moving to ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s ideas it is worthwhile to examine two
notions that are misrepresented about Ibn Taymīyyah in the literature. First, Ibn
Taymīyyah did not promote capital punishment for apostasy as has been interpreted by
later jihadists from his thought as will be seen in the next chapter on Farrag. As
Mohammad Hashim Kamali points out: “[Ibn Taymīyyah] held that apostasy is a sin
which carries no hadd (fixed) punishment and that a sin of this kind may be punished
only under the discretionary punishment of taʿzīr (corporal).” As such, Ibn Taymīyyah
does not view apostasy as a capital crime, which jihadists do today. Indeed, Ibn
Taymīyyah called to kill the apostate Mongols, but it was only specific to that instance
since if one looked to Ibn Taymīyyah’s full collection of work, which jihadists do not do
they would realize they are completely taking his work out of context. The other
problematic interpretation of Ibn Taymīyyah is that he believed that one should rebel
against any leader who did not fully adhere to the Islamic faith. In truth, similar to the
orthodox Sunni ‘ulāmah understanding, Ibn Taymīyyah believed one should be obedient
to their leader even if they were unjust. Victor E. Makari explains Ibn Taymīyyah’s
views: “To be obedient to those in authority is not only commanded by God, but also is
itself an extension of the believer’s obedience to Him and to His Prophet.” Later
Makari explains: “Ibn Taymīyyah placed social peace above the exercise of the right to

by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyyah’s Three “Anti-Mongol” Fatwas,” Mamlūk Studies

119 Mohammad Hashim Kamali, “Punishment in Islamic Law: A Critique of the Hudud
Taymīyyah, al-Šārim al-Maslūl, Muḥāyy al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (ed.) (Beirut: Daral-

120 Victor E. Makari, Ibn Taymīyyah’s Ethics: The Social Factor (Chico, CA: Scholars
Moreover, Ibn Taymīyyah stated: “It is the duty of Muslims to obey their ruler whether he is impious or ignorant,” as long as Muslims are allowed to practice their faith without interference.122

‘Abd al-Wahhab

‘Abd al-Wahhab lived in the Najd, which is in the middle of present-day Saudi Arabia. Most scholars agree that ‘Abd al-Wahhab formulated his major ideas while studying and debating with other Islamic scholars in Basra, located in present-day Iraq.123 Although ‘Abd al-Wahhab expanded on the puritanical views of Ibn Taymīyyah, the environment within which he lived was different. Unlike the invasion of the Mongols, which Ibn Taymīyyah viewed as outsiders, ‘Abd al-Wahhab responded to the internal problems he saw in his own community. He believed that there had been deterioration in Muslim beliefs within his society. Therefore, it was imperative to return to the true ways of Islam that gave rise to its previously powerful empires.

Wahhab’s goal was to purify Islam from bid’ah. Wahhab went even further than Ibn Taymīyyah on this front. Although he was a follower of the Ḥanbali School, Wahhab "was opposed to any of the schools being taken as an absolute and unquestioned authority," and denounced taqlīd.124 Therefore, this would eliminate individuals from taking religious interpretations and relying on it as much as the Qur’an, which, in Wahhab’s, view should be the most important. Consequently, this erased 1200 years of various precedents within Islamic history. As a result, it allowed followers of Wahhab to

---

121 Ibid., 156.
122 Ibid.
123 Algar, 11.
have a narrow focus on history and use it to justify their actions. In fact, if they included actual historical developments, they would undermine their argument.

Along with Wahhab’s notion of bid‘ah, he believed that many of these innovations had led to shirk or polytheistic practices. As such, he expanded on Ibn Taymīyyah’s disproval of Sufism and Shi‘ism. This is because, in Wahhab’s view, Sufi’s put an overemphasis on praising their Sufi saints or Shī‘ah on martyrs. Wahhab also had a problem with practicing Sunnis who would celebrate Muhammad’s birthday or go to his burial place. Wahhab thought these actions broke Islam’s cardinal rule of tawhīd. As alluded to above, Wahhab deviated from Ibn Taymīyyah’s ideas on this subject.

David Commins highlights this difference:

The problem was that Ibn Taymīyyah and Ibn al-Qayyīm (a student of Ibn Taymīyyah) did not declare that these practices constituted major acts of shirk that resulted in removing one from the ranks of believers or that rendered the place where they occurred as a land of apostasy. Rather, they forbade such practices and placed them into the category of minor acts of shirk. Moreover, they maintained that these acts did not result in excommunication until individuals who performed them were presented with proof that they were guilty of shirk.

Consequently, many of Wahhab’s contemporary followers have taken this interpretation to the extreme. For instance, they have taken head stones off of graves, destroyed Shī‘ah shrines and, in the case of the Taliban in Afghanistan, they blew up the Buddha’s of the Bamyan Valley in 2001.

126 Wright, 72-73.
Wahhab’s ideas gained traction in Arabia through an alliance with the al-Saud family who went on to establishing Saudi Arabia. Followers of Wahhab’s views are called Wahhabis, but the followers of Wahhab’s version of Islam call themselves al-mūwahidīn or the monotheists.\(^{128}\) Many incorrectly describe Wahhabis as the first modern example of Salafism, which are those who follow in the path of the *salaf*, the pious followers of Muhammad. The labeling of Wahhabis as *salafis* according to Khaled Abou El Fadl did not occur, though, until the 1970s.\(^{129}\) This is when much of the intellectual sophistication of early *salafis* including Muhammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍa became non-existent so one could no longer truly distinguish between the two currents.\(^{130}\) Originally, Salafism as described in the previous chapter was a reformist and liberalizing movement that was more than anything an intellectual trend, but was slowly co-opted by the Saudis who puritanized it. As a result, original Salafism is for all intents and purposes dead.

**Mawdūdī**

Mawdūdī was born in 1903 in India. Unlike al-Banna, Mawdūdī believed it was the duty of the elite to Islamicize society doing it top-down versus bottom-up through the grassroots. As such, Mawdūdī established the political party *Jamāʿat-e Islami* in 1941, though following the independence of Pakistan it was electorally weak since it only appealed to the elites.\(^{131}\) Mawdūdī argued against the idea of nationalism and as a result

\(^{128}\) Algar, 1.


\(^{130}\) Ibid., 80.

theorized what he coined a “theo-democracy.”

The abolishment of the caliphate had an impact on Mawdūdī’s thought. Because of this, he joined the Khilāfat movement in India. Mawdūdī’s mission was clear, as he declared:

The plan of action I had in mind was that I should first break the hold which Western culture and ideas had come to acquire over the Muslim intelligentsia, and to instill in them the fact that Islam has a code of life of its own, its own culture, its own political and economic systems and a philosophy and an educational system which are all superior to anything that Western civilization could offer. I wanted to rid them of the wrong notion that they needed to borrow from others in the matter of culture and civilization.\(^{132}\)

This was the beginning of his argument against the ideas of nationalism.

Mawdūdī believed the only \(\text{ḥākimīyyah}\) (sovereignty) on Earth lied with God, therefore, only God could legislate. When sovereignty is invested in an “idol” such as a nation, military, political party or head of state and this “idol” becomes an object of mass \(\text{ʿubūdīyyah}\) (adoration) then evil and falsehood reign, which results in \(\text{jāhilīyyah}\) (ignorance).\(^{133}\) Central to Mawdūdī’s vision is the belief that God alone is sovereign; Muslims have gone astray since they accepted sovereigns other than God and the only guidance one needs is through the \(\text{ṣharīʿah}\).\(^{134}\)

Mawdūdī’s “theo-democratic” state is God's vicegerent \(\text{(khalīfah)}\) on Earth. It is a vicegerency, however, which is shared by all Muslim citizens of the state with whom, in


\[^{133}\] Ibid.

\[^{134}\] Kepel, 48.

consequence, the ruler must consult in the process of government. In this system, the ruler (amīr) is elected by whatever means are decided upon, providing that they ensure that the most qualified leader is chosen, while the legislature (mafīs-i-shurā) is also to be elected by whatever means are decided upon, so long as they have legitimacy with the local population. As for the creation of law, it should be derived from the sharī’ah by qīyās and ījtihād. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam:

The major feature of Mawdūdi’s thought is to have transformed Islam into an ideology that is an integrated and all-embracing system. He aimed to set out the ideal order of the time of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. The outcome is the most comprehensive statement of the nature of the Islamic state in modern times, and one, which, while conjuring an ideal from the past, has been shaped by contemporary concerns and modes of thought. His exposition, as might be expected from a man who was primarily a theologian, is strong on general principles but weak on detail.

In other words, Mawdūdi’s ideas would have appeal since they resonate with the “golden” age of Islam, but there are no details as to how society will be truly established or governed with the implementation of his “theo-democracy.”

Another key development in Mawdūdi’s thought is his redefinition of the term jāhilīyyah. Originally, at the outset of Islam, it meant pre-Islamic pagan ignorance, referring to those who were in Arabia at the time prior and during Muhammad’s revelation that were not following hanifīc (true monotheism) practices. Mawdūdi, though, reinterpreted the term to modern circumstances. According to Quintan Wicktorovicz, “Qutb’s solution to the modern jāhilīyyah, however, was a stark departure from Mawdūdi, who sought to work within the system. Whereas Mawdūdi formed a political

135 Ibid., 69-80.
136 Ibid.
137 Robinson.
party and social movement to promote reform, Qutb advocated jihad to establish an Islamic state. In addition, although not necessarily important in this discussion regarding the evolution of Sunni Islamic thought in the modern age, Philip Jenkins has pointed out that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as early as 1963 met Mawdūdī, translated his work into Fārsī and was influenced by his idea of a theo-democracy. Obviously, Khomeini’s theory of *velāyet e-faqīh* (guardianship of the jurists) was far more developed and within an Shi‘ah context.

It is clear, that Qutb’s ideas about *jahiliyyah* are similar to the way Ibn Taymīyyah, ‘Abd al-Wahhab and Mawdūdī utilized the concept, but in their own contexts. Sayed Khatab, though, deviates from this popular assessment, specifically with regard to Mawdūdī. Khatab argues that Qutb’s ideas regarding *jahiliyyah* can be traced back to his earlier writings and, at the time in Egypt it was common to use the word *jahiliyyah* and not in the context of the pre-Islamic era. For example, Ṭaha Ḥusayn, one of the most renowned modern Egyptian intellectuals, described the graduates of *Dar al-‘Ulūm* where Qutb graduated as *jahili*. In addition, Qutb’s early mentor al-‘Aqqād used the term *jahiliyyah* to describe injustices in Egyptian society at the time:

\[
\begin{align*}
Jahiliyyah & \text{ was widespread, atrocity overflowing} \\
& \text{The goodness and Truth were whispering} \\
& \text{but the voice of deviation was very loud.}
\end{align*}
\]

More importantly, in a 1935 poem entitled *al-Shaṭī al-Majhūl* in which Qutb utilizes the

---

138 Wicktorovitcz, 79.
140 Khatab, *PTSQ*, 49.
141 Ibid., 61.
term *al-jāhalat*, which is the plural of the singular *jāhalah*, which Khatab explains is a synonym of *jāhilīyyah*. In the poem, Qutb discusses two valleys. These valleys were *al-īmān* (belief) and *al-kufrān* (unbelief). These represented Islam and *al-jāhalat*.

Following is a key verse of the poem:

> It is not that you elements are *al-īmān* and *al-ţuhr* (pureness)?
> If not so, you belong to *al-kufrān* and *al-rijs* (enormity).
> In which valley, then, are you walking stealthily?
> And which ‘*ahd* (era) of the *al-jāhalat* is *mubham* (uncovered)?

Meanwhile, Mawdūdī’s and ‘Abū al-Hassan al-Nadawī’s works were not translated from Urdu to Arabic until the mid-1950s. Therefore, on some level, Khatab’s arguments could be plausible. The above selection from Qutb’s poem was also prior to his interest and writings on the Qur’ān. Therefore, although Qutb was yet to be an Islamist ideologue, he was still very traditionally Islamic in his thought. Furthermore, Qutb met al-Nadawī at the *Hajj* in November 1950. There, Khatab points out that al-Nadawī stated that he had been interested in Qutb’s writings ever since the 1930s. As a result, the opposite seems to be the case in that Qutb influenced al-Nadawī’s work. In addition, since, as mentioned above, that Mawdūdī’s works were translated in the mid-1950s, it is hard to believe that Qutb acquired the language of *jāhilīyyah* from either individual. Ibrāhīm Abū Rabī explains that those who explain the *jāhilīyyah*-Mawdūdī nexus are “dichotomizing” Qutb’s earlier writing from his later work.

142 Ibid., 69.
144 Khatab, *PTSQ*, 59.
145 Ibid., 147.
Qutb’s admiration of Ibn Taymīyyah and ‘Abd al-Wahhab are still valid, though. Qutb’s radicalization was motivated by both Ibn Taymīyyah and ‘Abd al-Wahhab. Qutb believed he was living in a similar situation as Ibn Taymīyyah. Instead of the Mongols advancing on Islamic lands, Qutb saw the West and its cultural values encroaching and seeping into Islamic society, especially in Egypt. Qutb also saw the threat from within, similar to ‘Abd al-Wahhab. Instead of individuals worshipping only God (tawḥīd), Qutb thought that individuals were worshipping their leaders as well as consumer products. This, though, wasn’t the individuals’ fault, because in Qutb’s mind they didn’t even realize it. He blamed the secular Arab leaders for aligning themselves with the West – and not implementing the šarī‘ah – while at the same time violating the sovereignty of God (ḥākimīyyah).

Similarly, Khatab argues that Qutb’s ideas about ḥākimīyyah and tawḥīd were a part of his earlier writings too, but were not referenced as such. It is hard to determine whether this circumstantial evidence holds, it is at least plausible. For instance, in Qutb’s early works he discusses the notion of al-wahadah al-kawmiyyah al-kubrā (the great universal unity), which could be taken as an allusion to the ideas discussed above about ḥākimīyyah and tawḥīd.¹⁴⁷ The idea of al-wahadah al-kawmiyyah al-kubrā, could be interpreted as seeds of the idea behind Qutb’s notion of ḥākimīyyah and tawḥīd.

Jihad

Before examining Qutb’s ideas on jihad, it is necessary to understand the term in its Qur‘anic context. In its raw form, the root j-h-d means striving or to struggle.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Khatab, PTSQ, 72-77.
Therefore, etymologically *jihad* does not mean holy war; rather, if one were to translate the term holy war into Arabic, it would be *al-harb al-muqaddas*. Moreover, according to the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, which wrote an authoritative study on *jihad* and Islamic law of war, the term *al-harb al-muqaddas* has no place in any part of the Islamic tradition.  

To further investigate whether *jihad* actually means holy war one must consult the Qur’anic text for specific references to the term. According to the Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, there are only ten verses connecting the term *jihad* and warfare or fighting (*qīthl*), while the other verses are in reference to: (1) “combat against one’s own desires and weaknesses”; (2) “perseverance in observing religious law”; (3) “seeking religious knowledge”; (4) “observance of the *sunnah*”; and (5) “obedience to God and summoning people to worship him.” As has been described in the exegetical literature and *hadīth*, there are two forms of *jihad*: *jihad bi-l-nafs* (struggle or striving of the self) and *jihad bi-l-sayf* (striving through fighting). Moreover, as famously cited in the *hadīth* literature, after fighting in a battle Muhammad stated: “We have returned from the lesser (āshgar) *jihad* (battle) to the greater (ākbar) *jihad* (jihad of the soul).” Therefore, it is, however, a priority at times that *jihad* does not always mean warfare. In addition, not all warfare is *jihad* since there are various verses dealing with fighting that do not mention or use

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.


152 Ibid.

derivatives of \( j-h-d \) or imply so. Therefore, the abuse of the root \( j-h-d \) and how it is used as the “sixth pillar of Islam” misrepresents the standard view of it being a far more complex and nuanced term.

Furthermore, there are specific rules with regard to waging war (\( harb \)) in the Qur’an. For example, “the Islamic law of war prohibits naked aggression, the harming of non-combatants … [and] forced conversion.”\(^{154}\) Also, as noted by Muhammad Abdel Haleem, the priority of Muslims is that they should live in peace with their neighbors and war should be waged as a last resort.\(^{155}\) Abdel Haleem also spells out the justifications and conditions of war, \( jihad \) as an obligation, cessation of hostilities and treaties. According to Abdel Haleem there must be “valid justifications and strict conditions must be followed” before waging war.\(^{156}\) One cannot wage war to change others’ religions based on the following Qur’anic verses: 2:256, 5:48, 11:118 and 12:103.\(^{157}\) Also, Abdel Haleem maintains that all battles within the Qur’an were of self-defense or pre-empting an imminent attack, which differs much from an offensive \( jihad \) as promoted by Qutb and later Farrag who will be discussed in the next chapter.\(^{158}\) Abdel Haleem further explains that war is justifiable only to protect one’s freedom of belief. But “once the believers have been given victory they should not become triumphant or arrogant or have a sense of being a superpower.”\(^{159}\) In addition, if an enemy wants to halt the fight, it is the

\(^{154}\) *Jihad and the Islamic Law of War*, 39 & 65.


\(^{156}\) Ibid., 61.

\(^{157}\) Ibid.

\(^{158}\) Ibid.

\(^{159}\) Ibid., 62.
Muslim’s duty to stop fighting. As the Qur’ān says: “And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah; but if they cease, Let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression” (2:193).\footnote{Abdullah Yusuf Ali, \textit{The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an} (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2004).}

Furthermore, when signing a treaty with an enemy one must not break it even if one believes they are superior to the other (16:92). Therefore, one could interpret this verse to mean that it would be illegal to use a treaty as a tactic and means to end.

In sum, the idea behind \textit{jihad} and warfare is far more complicated than one just stating that within the Qur’ānic framework it advocates either a peaceful or an aggressive tone; rather, the real meaning of the term depends on the circumstance; at times war will be a necessity, but if possible it is better to maintain the peace. Qutb’s thoughts on \textit{jihad}, though, are far more black and white. He views \textit{jihad} in relation to the terms hākimīyyah, sharī‘ah and jāhilīyyah. Qutb believed it was necessary for “true” Muslims to stand up against any type of government that did not have hākimīyyah. In Qutb’s view, although individuals thought that they were “free” in a jahilī society, the only true way to be free was to create a truly Islamic society and follow the sharī‘ah. To accomplish this, one needed to engage in a \textit{jihad} of combat. Like Ibn Taymīyyah, Qutb believed an offensive \textit{jihad} was the only way to solve this condition.\footnote{Qutb, \textit{Milestones}, 62.} As discussed earlier, though, this is a misinterpretation of Ibn Taymīyyah’s thought. When discussing offensive \textit{jihad}, Qutb explicitly attacks those who, in his view, are Muslim apologists. These are people who he thinks have buckled under the pressure from the Orientalists and who say that \textit{jihad} wasn’t truly offensive but in fact defensive in nature. Qutb explains that the \textit{jihad} he
discusses is jihad bi-l-sayf (striving through fighting). In a clever move, though, Qutb twists the words of his apologetic opponents by stating the following: “If we insist on calling Islamic Jihad a defensive movement, then we must change the meaning of the word “defense” and mean by it “the defense of man” against all those elements, which limit his freedom.” Thus to gain this freedom, it was important for a revolutionary vanguard to take up this duty and change society for the better through daw’ah (preaching) and, more importantly, jihad. This vanguard would continuously get bigger until there was a return to a true Islamic community or ummah. This would ultimately cure Muslims of their Jāhilī condition and defeat Western cultural imperialism.

Following are some clear examples of how Qutb uses the term jihad in his final work Ma’ālim fi al-Tarīq:

This movement uses the methods of preaching and persuasion for reforming ideas and beliefs [daw’ah]; and it uses physical power and Jihad for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the Jāhilī system.

Those who talk about Jihad in Islam and quote Qur’anic verses do not take into account this aspect [practicality], nor do they understand the nature of the various stages through which this movement develops, or the relationship of the verses revealed at various occasions with each stage. Thus, when they speak about Jihad, they speak clumsily and mix up the various stages, distorting the whole concept of Jihad and deriving from the Qur’anic verses final principles and generalities for which there is no justification. This is because they regard every verse of the Qur’ān as if it were the final principle of the religion.

When writers with defeatist and apologetic mentalities write about “Jihad in Islam,” trying to remove this “blot” from Islam, then they are mixing up two things: first, that this religion forbids the imposition of its belief by force, as is clear from the verse, “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:256), while on the

---

163 Qutb, Milestones, 55.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid., 56.
other hand, it tries to annihilate all those political and material powers which stand between people and Islam, which force one people to bow before another people and prevent them from accepting the sovereignty \([hākimīyyah]\) of God. These two principles have no relation to one another nor is there room to mix them. In spite of this, these defeatist-type people try to mix the two aspects and want to confine Jihad to what today is called “defensive war.” The Islamic Jihad has no relationship to modern warfare, either in its causes or in the way in which it is conducted. The causes of Islamic Jihad should be sought in the very nature of Islam and its role in the world, in its high principles, which have been given to it by God and for the implementation of which God appointed the Prophet.\(^{166}\)

The reasons for Jihad … [are] to establish God’s authority in the earth; to arrange human affairs according to the true guidance provided by God; to abolish all the Satanic forces and Satanic systems of life; to end lordship of one man over others, since all men are creatures of God and no one has the authority to make them his servants or to make arbitrary laws for them. These reasons are sufficient for proclaiming Jihad.\(^{167}\)

The Jihad of Islam is to secure complete freedom for every man throughout the world by releasing him from servitude to other human beings so that he may serve his God, Who is One and Who has no associates.\(^{168}\)

We ought not to be deceived or embarrassed by the attacks of the orientalists on the origin of Jihad, nor lose self-confidence under the pressure of present conditions and the weight of the great powers of the world to such an extent that we try to find reasons for Islamic Jihad outside the nature of this religion, and try to show that it was a defensive measure under temporary conditions. The need for Jihad remains, and will continue to remain, whether these conditions exist or not!\(^{169}\)

Qutb explained that the main point of jihad was to “strike terror into the hearts of God’s enemies who are also the enemies of the advocates of Islam throughout the world, be they open their hostility and known to the Muslim community, or others who may be discreet with their real feelings, not openly stating their hostile attitudes towards Islam.”\(^{170}\)

\(^{166}\) Ibid., 57.

\(^{167}\) Ibid., 70.

\(^{168}\) Ibid.

\(^{169}\) Ibid., 72.

\(^{170}\) Habeck, 132.
In other words, Qutb sees *jihad* as a way to reawaken people’s Islamic spirits. Explaining that Muslims should neither be ashamed of *jihad* nor should they buckle under the pressure of Western criticism of it since this is what they want Muslims to do. In addition, the reason for *jihad* is to reverse the trend of *jāhilīyyah* in society since governments are not implementing the *sharī‘ah*. As such, individuals’ servitude (*‘ubūdīyyah*) is to their leaders, not God. As a result, *jihad* is required to remedy these problems and to achieve ‘true’ freedom in society.

As noted in the previous section, in the early 1960s Qutb called for a thirteen-year education program, he mentions the idea of *daw‘ah* in the first quote above, along with *jihad*. Therefore, although at the time Ma‘ālim fī al-Tariq was published it appears that Qutb’s thought had further radicalized, the non-violent aspects of *jihad* and the use of *daw‘ah* was still a part of his thought. It is hard to truly know Qutb’s motivations since Ma‘ālim fī al-Tariq was his last work and he did not have time to clarify his ideas. As he says in the introduction to the book: “These writings are a first installment of a series.”\(^1\)

As such, although many Islamist thinkers as well as Western scholars and policy analysts have come to their own conclusions from Qutb’s thought, one cannot be absolutely certain of his true intentions since he was hung before being able to elaborating on his thinking. This does not excuse his radical ideas; rather, it is to expose this dilemma when examining his later thought. At the same time, Qutb understood the stages that led to an Islamic government in Muhammad’s time. The first stage was when Muhammad was in Mecca and this spanned thirteen years.\(^2\) As a result, it seems that Qutb proposes a thirteen-year educational program in light of this. Indeed, in the later stages fighting was

\(^2\) Habeck, 140.
allowed. Therefore, Qutb’s method although it eventually involves violent *jihad*, does not directly start there like al-Qaeda today. As will be seen in the next chapter, Farrag critiques Qutb’s method since Farrag does not believe there needs to be any educational or ideological training prior to engaging in violent *jihad*.

*Al-Banna and Qutb: Continuation, Rupture or Co-evolution?*

It has been argued by Ana Belén Soage, that Qutb’s thought was a logical conclusion from those of al-Banna’s. Indeed, Soage argues that they have similar conceptions of Islam as being an all-encompassing way of life, both men wanted to implement an Islamic state, both were non-intellectuals and both had similar methods to bringing about this change. Granted, they both had similar ideas about the totalitarian nature of the Islamic state. At the same time, though, al-Banna and Qutb developed their ideas at different times and under different circumstances. Rather than being a continual fluid development from al-Banna to Qutb, it is rather a co-evolution of thought through the crucible of Egyptian society at the time. Al-Banna was not exposed to Western political, economic and philosophical thought in the same manner as Qutb. In addition, al-Banna’s goal was trying to Islamicize society and fight against the colonial control of Britain, whereas Qutb’s aim was of a different nature. Qutb tried to create a framework for rebelling against a Muslim leader and government. Additionally, his ideas were far more intellectually advanced and theoretically sophisticated. This was due to the status quo in Sunni Islamic lands, which the ‘*ulamā*’ endorsed a quietist position so as not to create *fitnah* (disturbance) based on the experience of the early Islamic civil wars. Therefore, al-Banna and Qutb’s objectives were different. In addition, as mentioned

above, Qutb’s thought has many proto-ideas of jāhiliyyah, ḥakimīyyah and tawḥīd earlier in his life before even thinking of joining the Muslim Brothers. Consequently, it is not accurate to claim that Qutb was a logical conclusion to al-Banna’s thought. Rather, both men came to similar conclusions since they were both living under the same circumstances in Egypt, but they came to these conclusions separately. Therefore, their separate trajectories led to similar yet distinct thoughts on Islam and the way to solve the current problems of the day. Therefore, this shows a break between the moderate aspects of the Muslim Brothers and the radical aspects that broke away.

The latter two similarities that Soage posits do not seem to be accurate. Soage bases her argument on al-Banna and Qutb as being non-intellectuals in juxtaposition to al-Afghānī and ‘Abduh who have been portrayed as modernists while the former were fundamentalists.174 These points are well taken, yet one cannot state that Qutb was not an intellectual. He was a poet, a literary critic and he engaged in well-known intellectual debates of his time. In addition, Soage’s second point about al-Banna and Qutb having similar strategies for change is far from true too. As mentioned in the previous chapter, al-Banna created a grassroots organization, while Qutb looked to a vanguard or a small-organized group of like-minded individuals. Al-Banna’s method was one that appealed to the masses and a social movement that would be bottom-up, while Qutb’s was a program for the intellectual elites and would be implemented from the top-down.

Qutb’s legacy has many layers to it since his intellectual transformation over time has left a mark on various communities. Most individuals respect his work up until Maʿālim fī al-Tarīq. Originally Ḥassan al-Huḍaybī, the General Guide of the Muslim

174 Ibid., 299.
Brothers at the time, endorsed *Maʿālim fī al-Tarīq*, but following Qutb’s hanging, he recanted and wrote a book, *Duʿāt wa lā Quḍāt* (Preachers and Not Judges) that critiqued *Maʿālim fī al-Tarīq*. This was to try and moderate the Muslim Brothers position and gain good standing in the eyes of the Egyptian government to operate again. Nonetheless, there are those who were inspired by Qutb’s ideas in *Maʿālim fī al-Tarīq*. Today, these individuals are described as “Salafi Qutubis” as well as many jihadi’s, who espouse a different method but took note from Qutb’s theoretical ideas. According to William McCants and Jarret Brachman, “His narrow definition of true Muslim identity and broad denunciations of existing Muslim societies helped determine the takfiri or excommunicative tendencies of subsequent jihadis, who are thus sometimes known interchangeably as Qutbis and as takfiris.” Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag, who was the original leader of the *Tanzīm al-Jihād* (later the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ)), although inspired by the thoughts of Qutb was the first to analyze Qutb’s method and wrote a scathing critique of it, to which we will now turn for examination.

---

175 Musallam, 168 &178.

Chapter Three: 
Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag

It is also known that he who knows the obligations of salāt must pray, and he who knows the obligation of sawm (fasting in the month of Ramadan) must fast. Likewise he who knows the obligation of Jihad must fight in the cause of Allah.¹

Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag could be seen as the first true practitioner of jihadism, but unlike today where jihadism is viewed through the lens of fighting against the “far enemy,” – The United States, Europe, Russia, China and Israel – Farrag focused his attention on destroying the “near enemy,” Egypt. Also, whereas al-Banna and Qutb are well known thinkers, not much has been written about Farrag. Consequently, there has not been a thorough study of Farrag’s early biography prior to becoming radicalized and involved with the wave of successor jihadi groups following the death of Qutb. As a result, unlike the previous two chapters, there will be a very limited discussion of Farrag’s biography. The main focus will deal with his thought and justifications for assassinating Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in his book al-Jihad al-Faridah al-Gha’ibah, which could be translated as Jihad: The Neglected Duty, Jihad: The Absent Obligation or Jihad: The Forgotten Pillar. It will also examine why he joined the jihadi movement, as well as how Farrag came to his conclusion that jihad was the sixth pillar of Islam and why his views would be more effective at bringing about an Islamic state than would Qutb’s ideas as well as others who he perceived as failing in the past. Finally, the chapter will conclude by exploring the impact Farrag had on the development of the jihadist movement.

Background

Farrag was born in 1954, the same year that Gamal ‘ Abd al-Nasser came to power, in the province of Buḥayrah, Egypt, which is the same province al-Banna grew up in.\(^2\) His father was believed to be a member of the more radical wing of the Muslim Brothers. Farrag attended college at Cairo University and completed his degree in electrical engineering. For some time, he worked for Cairo University.\(^3\) Unfortunately, that is all we know of Farrag in the English language literature until 1978, when most academics or policy analysts began to start exploring his personal history.

In 1978, Farrag joined one of the many jihadi groups that were springing up at the time. Within a year, Egypt’s security forces broke up the group and arrested some of its members. Farrag, though, was not caught up in the arrests.\(^4\) So, he decided to start his own group where he merged various jihadi cells together and named it Tanẓīm al-Jihad (The Jihad Society or al-Jihad for short and it was later and still called the Egyptian Islamic Jihad).\(^5\) In 1980, another jihadi group, Gamma’ah al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Group), merged with al-Jihad. The Islamic Groups amīr Shaykh Omar ‘ Abd al-Raḥman, a blind al-’Azhar graduate, became al-Jihad’s spiritual leader, while Farrag focused on the political leadership.\(^6\)


\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Ibid.
In the late 1970s, Farrag penned al-Jihad’s main source of ideological inspiration al-Jihad al-Faridah al-Gha’ibah. In it, he promotes the efficacy of jihad in Islam and its prime role in Egyptian society at his time. As he saw it, jihad was a “neglected duty,” so it was necessary to rebel against the Egyptian regime of President Sadat, once this was accomplished, it was one’s obligation to create an Islamic state. This “rebellion” came to fruition on October 6, 1981, when a member of al-Jihad, Khālid al-Islāmbūlī, assassinated President Sadat and exclaimed: “I am Khālid al-Islāmbūlī, I have killed Pharoah, and I do not fear death.” Unfortunately, for al-Jihad the act of assassinating President Sadat did not lead to a mass revolution or the formation of an Islamic government in Egypt, as had been hoped for by Farrag and his cohorts.

After Sadat’s Assassination

The assassination attempt on President Sadat left a fissure in al-Jihad and led to the split between it and the Islamic Group since they did not agree with al-Jihad’s tactics. The Islamic Group ended up becoming infamous as well in the 1990s. First, the spiritual leader of the Islamic Group Shaykh Raḥman helped plan the first World Trade Center attack in 1993. He was later convicted in 1995 of seditious conspiracy and sentenced to life in prison, where he still resides today. Second, the Islamic Group started a terror campaign in Egypt, which lasted until 1997. From 1992-1997 more than 1200 people were murdered. The insurgency came to a head on November 17, 1997, when members of the Islamic Group killed sixty tourists at the Temple of Hatshepsut and the attack

---

7 Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 192. For future footnotes this will be cited as Kepel, MEE.

became known as the “Luxor Massacre.” \(^9\) This led to a significant backlash against the Islamic Group in Egyptian society. As a result, the Islamic Group was forced to renounce violence and since then the recidivism rate has been essentially zero percent.\(^{10}\)

At the same time, many of the members of *al-Jihad* were jailed following the assassination of President Sadat. One of these members was Ayman al-Zawahiri who would later resurrect *al-Jihad* or the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) as it came to be known. In light of strategic and tactical mistakes of al-Zawahiri and the EIJ, in the mid-1990s they aligned and became closer to al-Qaeda and al-Zawahiri became Bin Laden’s deputy and chief ideologue. The EIJ, though, did not formally merge with al-Qaeda until June 2001.\(^{11}\) While in jail, several members of *al-Jihad* were put on trial and sentenced to varying times in prison. But, the four accomplices in the actual assassination plot, along with *al-Jihad*’s leader Farrag, were sentenced to death, and on April 15, 1982 the five of them were executed.\(^{12}\)

**Intellectual Thought**

Farrag’s leading contribution to the *jihadi* literature was his book *al-Jihad al-Faridah al-Gha’ibah*. It laid the groundwork for *al-Jihad*’s worldview and methods for achieving change and establishing an Islamic state. Unlike al-Banna and Qutb, Farrag appears to be less worldly; rather, Farrag’s main focus is on Egypt and toppling its government. Furthermore, in comparison to al-Banna and Qutb, Farrag focuses solely on

---


\(^{10}\) Ibid., 297.


\(^{12}\) Jansen, 1.
the idea of *jihad*. An example of the singular importance he placed on this concept is when he said:

*Jihad fi sabīl Lillah* (in the cause of God), despite its overriding importance and its great influence on the future of Islam, has been neglected by present scholars, although they know that it is the only way to bring Islam back and cause it to come to the surface again.\(^{13}\)

**The Islamic State**

Even Farrag’s primary focus in *al-Jihad al-Faridah al-Gha`ibah* is the idea that *jihad* is the neglected duty and Muslims must reaffirm their loyalty to it. He begins his argument for *jihad* by citing the Qur’anic verse “Whoever does not rule by what Allah has revealed, such are the disbelievers” (5:44).\(^{14}\) Farrag goes on to quote a *fatwā* by Abū Ḣanīfah that provides three criteria for determining whether one’s state is in *dar al-Islam* or *dar al-Kufr*: (1) “When it is governed by *kafīr* laws”; (2) “When the Muslims lose their safety”; and (3) “Neighborhood.” This happens if the state has borders with the *kafīr* state in a way the latter causes danger to the Muslims and becomes the reason behind the loss of their safety.\(^{15}\) Therefore, according to Farrag, since the Egyptian state did not follow the *sharī`ah*, then Egypt was no longer in *dar al-Islam* but rather in *dar al-Kufr*. Similar to Qutb, Farrag believes that if one’s state is not following the laws of God (*hakimīyyah*) then that state is not Islamic.

Moreover, Farrag declared the Muslim rulers of his day as *kafīrs*: “The present rulers have apostatized from Islam. They have been brought up over colonial tables because they Christian, Communist or Zionist. What they carry of Islam is nothing but names,  

\(^{13}\) Farrag, 14.  
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 19.  
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 20.
even if they pray, fast and claim to be Muslims.”\textsuperscript{16} This is exactly the same line of argument that Ibn Taymīyyah used when describing the Mongols. The Mongols claimed they were Muslims and outwardly might have shown it, but since they administered the yassa code along side the sharī’ah they could not be considered true Muslims. Ibn Taymīyyah stated: “Every group which rebels against mutawātir (clear-cut), law of the Islamic sharī’ah must be fought by the consensus of all the imāms (leaders) of Muslims, even if they pronounce the shahādah (declaration of faith).”\textsuperscript{17} Ibn Taymīyyah buttressed this statement by citing the following Qur’ānic verse:

\begin{quote}
And fight then [sic] until there is no fitnah (disbelief and polytheism, worshipping others besides Allah) and the religion (worship) will all be for Allah (in the whole world) (8:39).\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Much of Farrag’s book is supported by quotes from Ibn Taymīyyah. Again, Farrag presents a quote from Majmu’at al-Fatwā (Compilation of Fatwā’s by Ibn Taymīyyah) to back up his point that those who do not follow the laws of God or shirk the responsibilities of a believer a jihad must be waged against them until the sharī’ah once again reigns supreme:

\begin{quote}
Indeed scholars of the Muslims were agreed that when the rebellious group abstains from some mutawātir (clear-cut) obligations of Islam, fighting them becomes compulsory. If they say the shahādah (declaration of faith) but refuse to pray, pay zakāt, fast in the month of Ramadan, perform Ḥajj, judge between themselves by the Qur’an and sunnah or refuse to prohibit evil deeds (such as) consuming alcohol, marrying those who are prohibited to marry, legalizing killing and stealing wealth with no cause, dealing in usury, gambling, or (failing) to fight against the disbelievers or imposing jizyah on people of the scripture or other things from the Islamic sharī’ah, they must be fought until all of the religion is for Allah.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 26.
History Repeating Itself

Showing Qutb’s influence, Farrag also points to the similarities between the situation of Muslims in his time with the time of Ibn Taymiyyah and the Mongols. Farrag believes that the Muslims in his time were worse than the Muslims in the time of Ibn Taymiyyah. As he says: “In fact, despite the fact that the Tartars [Mongols] ruled by the yassa, which was taken from various laws and many laws that he (Chinggis Khan) made up from his own desires, there is no doubt that it is less criminal than the laws laid down by the West, which have nothing to do with Islam or any religious laws.”20

Farrag points to the need to fight the jihad against the “kafirs” of his day by citing Ibn Taymiyyah’s call to fight the Mongols: “Fighting the Tartars [Mongols] who came over to Syria is obligatory by the Qur’an and sunnah.”21 Farrag presses his argument by further claiming he is following the path of the salaf (pious predecessors):

The salaf (predecessors) and the imāms are agreed upon fighting al-Khawārij. The first one ever to fight them was ‘Ali Ibn Abī Tālib and the Muslims kept on fighting them during the khilāfah of the ‘Umayyads and ‘Abbasids along with the leaders even though they were oppressors, and al-Ḥajjaaj22 and his delegates were some of those who used to fight against them.23

20 Ibid., 26-27.
21 Ibid., 32.
22 In the translation to Farrag’s book, the translator provides background to this figure in the footnotes: “He was al-Hajjaaj ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi, a governor at the time of the ‘Ummayad Khaleef ‘Abdul Maalik ibn Marwaan. Much has been said of this man, in that he fought and killed some of the companions of the Messenger of Allah, the most famous of whom was ‘Abdullah ibn az-Zubair, and it is accepted that he was a tyrant and often merciless ruler. But a fundamental point is that he never replaced Islamic laws with those from the Kuffar, neither did he implement them – rather he was known to be a strong supporter and upholder of the Shari’ah. In fact, it was him who sent his nephew Muhammad ibn al-Qasim to rescue Muslim families in Sind (present day Pakistan) that had been attacked by pirates, which led directly to the conquest and Islamization of the Western Indian sub-continent.”
23 Farrag, 34.
One could take from this quote that Farrag was calling the “kafirs” of his day Kharijites, which Muslims view very negatively since they are seen as a secessionist movement from Islam.\textsuperscript{24} In addition, if one successfully calls an individual or a group a Kharijite, such as the group Takfir wa’l Hijrah (who will be examined further below), then they become stigmatized within society. Moreover, Steven Brook explains that this was a tactic of Ibn Taymiyyah’s, too:

Farrag also borrows one of Ibn Taymiyyah’s rhetorical devices to ensure that the obligation for revolution is clear. When Ibn Taymiyyah had to persuade Muslims to attack the Mongols, he portrayed them as Kharijis, an early deviant sect of Islam. There was wide justification among early Muslims to fight the Kharijis. Farrag improves on the device when he explains that the leaders of Egypt are “more rebellious against the laws of Islam than . . . the Kharijis.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{Critique of Previous Efforts to Overthrow the Government}

To defeat the Egyptian government and reintroduce the \textit{shari’ah} in society, Farrag examined previous efforts by a variety of groups and figures to show why their method was misguided and failed. This led Farrag to reiterate the importance of jihad as the only way to bring down the Egyptian government. Farrag first critiqued those who propagated “obedience, education and intensive worship.”\textsuperscript{26} The former group is in reference to the Muslim Brothers and Qutb’s followers. As Farrag states:

There are some who say that we have to busy ourselves with obeying Allah, educating the Muslims and making effort in worshipping Allah, because the humiliation in which we live is the result of our sins, and because of our deeds it was inflicted upon us . . . The truth is that whoever thinks that his own wisdom has abrogated the obligation of Jihad and that of enjoining good and forbidding evil, he has indeed led himself and those who listen to him to destruction. Whoever

\textsuperscript{24} Ersilia Francesca, “Khārijīs,” Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), \textit{Encyclopedia of the Qur’an}, Vol. 3, (Leiden: The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 84; For further details read rest of the article on pages 84-90.

\textsuperscript{25} Brook, 206.

\textsuperscript{26} Farrag, 39.
really desires to be engrossed in the highest degree of obedience and be on the peak of worship, then let him make Jihad in the cause of Allah; but without neglecting the other pillars of Islam.\textsuperscript{27}

Farrag is not necessarily against either the Muslim Brothers or Qutb since they both argue at some point that it is necessary to fight \textit{jihad}, but their incremental method is where he thought they went wrong. Farrag did not believe in the stage of weakness; rather, Muslims were ready to fight \textit{jihad} and overthrow the Egyptian government.\textsuperscript{28}

Second, Farrag criticized the method of those who were “chasing good professions.” In this incidence, Farrag is alluding to The Islamic Group, prior to the merging of the groups in 1980.\textsuperscript{29} The Islamic Group argued that individuals in Egyptian society with the “Islamist call” should try and fill top professions, such as being an architect or doctor or governmental official.\textsuperscript{30} The Islamic Group’s hope was to Islamicize society from the inside out, eventually leading to the implementation of the \textit{shari‘ah}. Farrag’s answer to this was that “even if we manage to form Muslim doctors and architects, they will be part of the government as well, and no way will a Muslim personality hold a ministerial post unless he completely takes those in the system as friends and protectors.”\textsuperscript{31} In other words, these individuals will be co-opted by the government and would no longer hold any sort of independence that would allow them to defeat the regime from the inside out.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Kepel, \textit{MEE}, 202.
\textsuperscript{29} Farrag, 41.
\textsuperscript{30} Kepel, \textit{MEE}, 201.
\textsuperscript{31} Farrag, 41.
Third, Farrag took issue with the approach of just “giving da’wah alone.”\textsuperscript{32} Here Farrag is at odds with the view of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥāmid Kishk, a popular preacher in Egypt at the time. Kishk was a graduate of al-’Azhar University and was a proponent of the greater \textit{jihad}. According to Kishk, the greater \textit{jihad} “heals those societies which follow its guidance and are built on consciences which have been awakened and hearts which have been illuminated by the light of belief.”\textsuperscript{33} In response to Kishk’s insistence on only pursuing \textit{da’wah}, Farrag states:

Some of them say that the way to establish the (Islamic) state is by \textit{da’wah} (inviting to Islam) alone, and forming a wide base (i.e. a large number of practicing Muslims), but this will not do so. Despite that some people have based their abandonment of \textit{Jihad} on this point, the truth is that those who will establish the Islamic State are a few believers, and those who stand straight on the obligations of Allah and the \textit{sunnah} of the Messenger of Allah \textsuperscript{34}.

If a person concludes that what I have said means keeping from \textit{da’wah} (inviting people to Islam), his understanding is wrong, because the basis is to take Islam as a complete religion. This is rather a reply to the one who has taken it as his duty to create a large base, which is the reason behind his diversion from \textit{Jihad}, and which has lead him to stop and delay it.\textsuperscript{35}

To put it another way, Farrag is not necessarily against pursuing \textit{da’wah}. Instead, Farrag looks down upon those who, in his opinion, justify not fighting \textit{jihad} by simply doing \textit{da’wah}.

Fourth, Farrag takes on the ‘\textit{ulamā}’ or those who are “busy seeking knowledge.”\textsuperscript{36}

As Farrag argues:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{33} ‘Abd al-Ḥāmid Kishk, \textit{Dealing With Lust and Greed According to Islam} (London: Dar Al Taqwa, 1995), 2-9.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Farrag, 41.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 43.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 46.
\end{itemize}
There are some who say that what we should do now is busy ourselves with seeking knowledge, for how can we struggle in the cause of Allah while we are lacking the knowledge, which is *fard* (obligatory) to seek? But we have not heard anyone who says that it is permitted to abandon an Islamic order or an obligation of the obligations of Islam because of knowledge, especially if this obligation is *Jihad*. So how can we abandon a *fard ‘ayn* (individual obligation) because of *fard kifāyah* (collective obligation)? … So he who says that knowledge is *Jihad* must realize that what is *fard* is fighting … If a person wants to increase his knowledge … he could do so, because there are no restrictions on knowledge, which is available for everybody. But to delay *Jihad* because of seeking knowledge is an evidence of the one who has no evidence … However, we do not underestimate knowledge and scholars, rather we call for that. But we do not use it as evidence to abandon the obligations that Allah ordained.\(^{37}\)

Lastly, Farrag takes issue with the strategy of those who prefer “migration.”\(^{38}\) In saying this, Farrag refers to Shukrī Muṣṭafā and his group *al-Gammāʾat al-Muslimīn* (The Society of Muslims), which is different than other groups already mentioned that have a similar name. Other names Muṣṭafā’s group were referred to as were *al-Gammāʾat al-ʿUzla al-Shuʿūrīyyah* (Spiritual Detachment Group), *ahl al-Kahf* (people of the cave) or most famously *al-Takfīr waʿl-Hijrah* (Excommunication and Withdrawal), which will be the name used in this study. Before exploring Farrag’s critique of *Takfīr waʿl-Hijrah* it is worthwhile to further examine Muṣṭafā and *Takfīr waʿl-Hijrah* since this group played an important part in the development of a different form of the *jihadi* movement and interpreted Qutb’s message in another way. In addition, Farrag was in the process of writing his book when the latter history of *Takfīr waʿl-Hijrah* occurred. Therefore, it is likely Farrag wrote one of the first known critiques of Muṣṭafā’s program.

**Muṣṭafā and *Takfīr waʿl-Hijrah***

There are many misconceptions about Muṣṭafā and *Takfīr waʿl-Hijrah*. One of the primary reasons was due to the Egyptian media’s portrayal of the group in the 1970s.

---

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 46-48.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 45.
Musṭafā was born June 1, 1942 in the village of ʿAbū Khurūṣ, which was about 50 miles from Asyūṭ in Middle Egypt. The village that Musṭafā grew up in was isolated from governmental control and, therefore, Musṭafā and fellow villagers were not exposed to the outside world. Later, Musṭafā moved to Asyūṭ with his mother following his parents’ divorce. Unlike al-Banna and Qutb who were seen as brilliant students, Musṭafā had mediocre grades and barely graduated high school, a school that was funded by an Islamic charity. While in college for agriculture, Musṭafā joined the Muslim Brothers. Due to their activities, as was the case with Qutb, Musṭafā was thrown in prison at Tura in 1967. Later, he was transferred to the ‘Abū Za’bal concentration camp. There, he read Qutb and Mawdūdī and developed extreme views regarding Egyptian society. By the time Musṭafā was released on October 16, 1971, he now believed that Egyptian society was living in a state of jāhiliyyah, as described by Qutb. Therefore, in Musṭafā’s view society as a whole needed to be excommunicated (takfīr).

Originally, Takfīr wa’l-Hijrah was founded and led by Shaykh ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Ismāʿīl, an al-ʿAzhar University graduate, while in prison. But, after Shaykh Ismāʿīl read Ḥassan al-Huḍaybī’s rebuttal of Qutb’s ideas, he decided that he no longer believed in the ideology of Takfīr wa’l-Hijrah and returned to become a mainstream member of the Muslim Brothers. The group almost completely fell apart, but due to Musṭafā taking the lead and preaching for new members to his cause, the group started to gain some strength.

---

39 Kepel, MEE, 73.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 74.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 75-76.
starting in 1972, a year following Mustafà’s release from prison. After some arrests in 1973, members actually made hijrah to mountain grottoes. This is where the Egyptian media portrayed Takfir wa’l-Hijrah incorrectly. According to Kepel, members of Takfir wa’l-Hijrah only lived there temporarily and actually lived in apartments in a poor neighborhood in Cairo.

The major turning point, which led to the downfall of Takfir wa’l-Hijrah, was when they captured the former minister of waqfs (religious endowments) Muhammad al-Dahabî on July 3, 1977. The group used this as an opportunity to not only gain exposure, but to also seek concessions from the Egyptian government. This led to the state cracking down on its members, and as a response, members of Takfir wa’l-Hijrah murdered Dahabî. Consequently, members of Takfir wa’l-Hijrah were rounded up by state forces within a few days, including Mustafà. Following a quick trial, Mustafà, along with five other members, were executed, while others were sentenced to prison.

Mustafà’s main legacy was the popularization of using takfir to justify their actions. Mustafà took Qutb’s idea of declaring the leader of a Muslim state a kufr for not implementing God’s laws to a radical extreme. Unlike Qutb, who wouldn’t go this far, Mustafà preached that all Egyptians were kafirun or infidels. Mustafà had such a narrow definition of who were “true” Muslims that it was nearly impossible for an average Egyptian not to be called a kufr in Mustafà’s eyes:

45 Ibid., 76.
46 Ibid., 77.
47 Ibid., 78.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
Anyone who refused to become a member of [Takfīr wa’l-Hijrah] or wanted to leave it was declaring himself an enemy of God, and was to be treated accordingly.\(^{50}\)

The members also saw their struggle as a parallel to the plight of Muhammad, when he was weak while preaching his message in Mecca. Therefore, their “hijrah” to the caves of Egypt and later to the outskirts of Cairo, in their minds, was similar to Muhammad’s hijrah to Medina. It also had symbolic resonance because there is a sūrah in the Qur’an called “The Cave” that discusses youth who withdraw from corrupt society.\(^{51}\) So, once members of Takfīr wa’l Hijrah were strong enough, they would attack the kafīrun, just as Muhammad did when returning, fighting and defeating the Meccans. This expropriation of symbolic similarities between the plight of Takfīr wa’l-Hijrah and Muhammad’s hijrah would later be harnessed by members of al-Qaeda, when they returned to Afghanistan in 1996.

With this as a backdrop to Mustafā and Takfīr wa’l-Hijrah as well as their later influence, we return to Farrag and his critique of their method. Farrag notes: “There are some who say that the way to establish the Islamic State is to migrate … and then come back as conquerors.”\(^ {52}\) Farrag provides Qur’anic evidence for the ‘correct’ methodology: “Fighting is prescribed upon you though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing, which is good for you” (2:216); and “And fight them until there is no more Fitnah and all of the religion is for Allah” (8:39).\(^ {53}\) This means that one does not need to change

---


\(^{52}\) Farrag, 45.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 46.
one’s scenery to prepare to fight jihad and defeat the kufr government; rather, the
vanguard is ready for the fight at this moment; it does not need any education or
ideological preparation.

*Resolving Questions and Issues Surrounding the Jihad*

The first issue that comes to question in more developed jihad literature beginning
with Farrag is whether the mujāhidīn should fight the near or far (distant as Farrag calls
it) enemy. Prior to decolonization, as was the case with al-Banna, the main focus was on
forcing the colonizer out of one’s country, while following decolonization, in Qutb’s
case, he looked to create a framework for forcing the local government to apply the
shari‘ah. Later questions arose regarding which enemy would be better to fight first.
Farrag explains why it is necessary to overthrow the Egyptian government (or if one is in
another Muslim country) rather than liberating Jerusalem, as he says:

First: Fighting the enemy that is near to us comes before that which is far.

Second: The blood of Muslims will certainly flow even if victory comes, but the
question now is will this victory be beneficial for the established Islamic State?
Or will it be beneficial for the kafir system and a strengthening of the pillars of
the state that has rebelled against the laws of Allah? These rulers are but taking
advantage of the nationalistic ideas amongst some of the Muslims to achieve their
non-Islamic objectives, even though they (objectives) appear Islamic. Thus
fighting must be under an Islamic flag and leadership, and there is no
disagreement about that.

Third: Verily the main reason behind the existence of Imperialism in the Muslim
lands is these rulers. Therefore to begin with destroying the Imperialists is not a
useful action and is a waste of time. We have to concentrate on our Islamic issue,
which is to establish the laws of Allah in our land first and make the word of
Allah the highest. This is because there is no doubt that the prime field of *Jihad* is
to remove these leaderships and replace them with the complete Islamic system,
and from here we start.

In contrast, as will be seen in the next chapter, ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam disagrees with Farrag

---

54 Ibid., 50-51.
and those who endorse the strategy of fighting the near enemy first. ‘Azzam’s focus on the far enemy had deep influence – most notably with al-Qaeda – and was the reason why many regard ‘Azzam as the godfather of the global jihadist movement.

After clarifying which enemy to fight first, Farrag explains why jihad is not defensive. Like Qutb, Farrag is a proponent of offensive jihad, but he supplies different reasoning. He says:

Concerning this, it is worth giving a reply to the one who has said that Jihad in Islam is for defense and the sword did not spread Islam. This is a false saying that has been repeatedly uttered by a lot of those who are known in the domain of the Islamic da’wah … Islam was spread by the sword, but only against the leaders of kufr, who veiled it from reaching the people, and after that no one was forced to embrace it. It is obligatory upon the Muslims to raise their swords against the rulers who are hiding the truth and manifesting falsehood, otherwise the truth will never reach the hearts of the people.\(^{55}\)

Farrag supplemented his argument by drawing on the letters Muhammad sent to the various leaders of the time – Heracleus, Caesar, Najarān, Maqawquṣ, al-Mundhir Bin Sāwā, al-Hārith Ibn Abī Shamr al-Ghassānī, al-Hārith Ibn ‘Abd Kalal al-Ḥamīrī and others.\(^{56}\) In these letters, the options are as follows: join Islam, pay the jizyah or open war.

Another crucial issue that Farrag addresses is when jihad changes from being farḍ al-kifāyah (sufficient obligation) to one that is farḍ al-‘ayn (an individual obligation). According to Farrag, there are three instances where jihad becomes farḍ al-‘ayn:

First: When the two armies (the Muslims against the disbelievers) meet to fight, it is forbidden for the one who is there to leave, and staying there is incumbent upon him.

Second: When the disbelievers invade a (Muslim) country it is obligatory on its people to fight them and force them out.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 51.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 52-53.
Third: When the imâm (legitimate Muslim leader) orders a people (among the Muslims) to march forth in the cause of Allah.\textsuperscript{57}

Farrag goes on to explain how these conditions would apply under the conditions he lived in Egypt:

As for the Muslim lands, the enemy resides in their countries. In fact the enemy is controlling everything. The enemies are these rulers who have snatched the leadership of the Muslims, therefore, jihad against them is farḍ al-‘ayn. Besides, the Islamic Jihad is now in need of the effort of every Muslim. When Jihad is farḍ al-‘ayn (an individual obligation), it is not required to seek permission from one’s parents to march forth, as scholars have said: ‘it becomes like praying and fasting.’\textsuperscript{58}

To reinforce the importance of fighting, Farrag criticizes the famous hadīth in which Muhammad states after a battle that they have just completed the lesser jihad and now were to focus on the greater jihad; and when one asked what the greater jihad was, Muhammad replied that it was the jihad of oneself to be a better Muslim. Farrag states: “It is a fabrication. The reason behind the fabrication (of this hadīth) is to belittle the value of fighting by the sword so as to divert the Muslims from fighting the disbelievers and hypocrites.”\textsuperscript{59} Farrag doesn’t really present a strong argument against the idea. It appears he disregards it since he disagrees with its premise, so his argument in opposition to it is not entirely convincing.

This is where Farrag really breaks from a classical interpretation of the hadīth. Most scholars who disagree with this hadīth explain that there are other aḥadīth (pl. hadīth) that contradict it. Moreover, the hadīth about the greater jihad is considered not sahih (sound), which is the highest level of authenticity in the hadīth sciences (uluм al-

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 61-62.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 63.
hadīth) rather it is viewed as da‘īf (weak), the lowest level of authenticity. Further, neither al-Banna, Qutb or even Ibn Taymīyyah deny the veracity of this hadīth being a real hadīth as discussed in the prior chapters.

Farrag also takes issue with those who claim that they cannot take part in jihad on the grounds that there is currently no amīr or khilāfah. Farrag sees this position as misguided because of Muhammad’s saying: “When three people go on a journey they must appoint one of them as their Amīr.” Therefore, according to Farrag:

There is no excuse for those who claim that leadership is nonexistent, because they are able to spring it from among themselves, and should there be any shortcoming in the leadership, there is nothing, which cannot be acquired. But it is not permitted to lose the leadership because it is non-existent, for we could indeed find a scholar who is not aware of the current affairs, leadership and planning and vice versa. However, this does not exempt us from creating a leadership and presenting the most suitable of us to lead through the process of Shurā (consultation between the pious) and shortcomings can be perfected.

Farrag concludes by stating:

Now there is no excuse for any Muslim to abandon the obligation of Jihad, which is a burden on his shoulder. So it is necessary to do our utmost to start devising for Jihad so as to bring Islam back in this Ummah, establish the state and remove the tyrants who are but humans that have not encountered those who will convince them of the command of Allah.

Farrag makes this argument to persuade those who feel uncomfortable waging jihad when there is no leader of the faithful to join the vanguard to overthrow the kufr regime. Again, Farrag reiterates the negative consequences of not joining the jihad when he says:

“Abandoning jihad is the cause of the humiliation and division in which the Muslims live.

---

60 Ibid., 65.
61 Ibid., 66.
62 Ibid.
today." As a result, to regain Islam’s glory the only solution is jihad.

But, according to apprehensive jihadis, Muslims could be killed in the process and that goes against the precepts of Islam. Farrag counters by quoting Ibn Taymīyyah’s answer to this question: “He who doubts fighting them [Muslims] is the most ignorant of people about the religion of Islam, and as fighting them is obligatory so they must be fought, by the consensus of the Muslims.” Farrag deduces from this that Muslims who would die under such circumstances would be martyred and so jihad must not be abandoned. This is problematic, though, because Qur’anic verse 4:93 states: “Whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is to dwell in hell forever; God is angry with him, he curses him and prepares a terrible punishment for him.” More importantly, Farrag completely takes Ibn Taymīyyah’s quote out of context. According to Denise Aigle, this quote dealt with Mamlūk soldiers who were either prisoners of war and forced to fight alongside the Mongols or Mamlūk’s who defected to the Mongols. Those who were prisoners of war if they were killed they would be considered martyrs. While the Mamlūk defectors were viewed as apostates since they accepted the Mongols yassa code. Also, this was in the context of an invading military. This differs from Farrag’s situation since there is no invading military; rather, Farrag is using any justification necessary even if it is twisted to pursue his ends. Also, it should be noted that Ibn Taymīyyah’s call to

63 Ibid., 69.
64 Ibid., 72.
65 Ibid., 72-73.
kill apostates in this situation is only in the context of the Mongol invasions and therefore would be unwise to generalize this point. This is because as was detailed in the previous chapter that if one looks at Ibn Taymīyyah’s corpus of work he actually was against capital punishment for apostasy, which is a minority position in the broad sweep of Islamic historical scholarship.

Similar to Farrag, al-Qaeda has justified the killing of innocent Muslims and non-Muslims through suicide attacks. According to Mohammed Hafez: “The *jihadi salafis* reject the use of the term ‘*amalīyyat intihārīyyah* (suicide operation) and insist on the euphemistic labels ‘*amalīyyat istishhādīyyah* (martyrdom operations), ‘*amalīyyat fidaīyyah* (sacrifice operations) or ‘*amalīyyat jihādīyyah* (jihadi operations).”68 This allows al-Qaeda to frame its argument through the lens that the Qur’an glorifies individuals who die as martyrs. This, though, does not hold up since al-Qaeda misuses traditional Qur’anic interpretation of what it means to die as martyr. As Reza Shah-Kazemi notes: “To present the indiscriminate murder of Western civilians [one could conclude that Reza would say the same for non-Western Muslims too] as “*jihad,*** the values of *jihad* needed to be dead and buried. The murder of [Aḥmad Shah] Massʿud [the day prior to the September 11 attacks] was thus double symbolic: he embodied the traditional spirit of *jihad* that needed to be destroyed by those [al-Qaeda] who wished to assume its ruptured mantle.”69 Kazemi goes on to infer that this type of murder and “martyrdom” is not in the true spirit of one fighting in the way of God (*fī sabīl Allah*) and


that those who espouse those views truly don’t live up to the Qur’anic verse: “Truly my prayer and my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Good, Lord of all creation” (6:162).  

**Strategic Thought**

Unlike Qutb’s program that wasn’t fully developed due to his early execution, but akin to al-Banna, Farrag and *al-Jihad* had a strategic method for taking state power. Like al-Banna, though, *al-Jihad* had a plan but it did not work out the way they had hoped. In addition, according to Steven Brook:

Farrag’s strategies had similarities to those of Saleh Sirīyyah, and members of *Al Jihad* later testified that they saw themselves as part of an ideological line that began with Sirīyyah’s Military Technical Academy Group. Yet there were also important strategic divergences. Whereas Sirīyyah believed in a *coup d’état* that would deliberately minimize any role for the population, Farrag believed that his targeted assassination would spark a popular revolution. Because he believed that the “silent majority” of Egyptians supported him, Farrag saw his task ending with the removal of the apostate ruler. The population would do the rest. As he wrote, “when the Rule of the Infidel has fallen everything will be in the hands of the Muslims, whereupon the downfall of the Islamic State will be inconceivable.” The 1979 Iranian revolution likely proved to Farrag that the Muslim masses were sufficiently Islamic and only needed something to awaken them. The success of that event also provided Farrag with a reasonable explanation why Sirīyyah’s strategy of ignoring the population led to failure.  

Sirīyyah’s group was active in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Similar to Muṣṭafā and Farrag, Sirīyyah, a Palestinian doctor, and his followers were deeply influenced by Qutb. Sirīyyah was also a follower of the ideas behind *Ḥizb ut-Tahrīr* (The Liberation Party), a trans-national movement that hopes to restore the Caliphate. According to Musallam, Sirīyyah wrote an unpublished manuscript entitled *Risalat al-Īmān* (The Epistle of Faith),

---

70 Ibid., 144.
71 Brook, 207.
72 Khatab, *PS*, 177.
where he echoed similar views as Qutb. Sirīyyah believed society to be living in a state of jāhilīyyah while the political systems of the Muslim world were under the influence of ḥukm kafīr (infidel government).\textsuperscript{73} Unlike Qutb, though, Sirīyyah did not believe individuals needed educational or ideological training prior to jihad. Therefore, in this light, he is more in line with the method of Farrag, though, they had differing tactics for gaining state power.\textsuperscript{74} Sirīyyah’s group, the Military Technical Academy Group (or al-Gamā’at al-Shabāb Muhammad, the Youth Muhammad Group) led a failed coup d’état in April 18, 1974 against the Egyptian state.\textsuperscript{75}

Similar to al-Banna’s Muslim Brothers, al-Jihad had a centralized, yet at the same time, decentralized organizational structure.\textsuperscript{76} More importantly, though, was al-Jihad’s strategy for seizing power. Their first step was to create fear. It included two elements. First, al-Jihad would create fear by “attacking Christian stores, attacking police stations and demanding that certain laws be broken simply because they were not in accordance with the ‘law of God.’”\textsuperscript{77} They believed this would cause confusion in society. The second aspect of the first step, which was more integral to their plan to seize power, was to kill leaders. According to Michael Youssef, they planned to assassinate “President Sadat, his vice president, ministers of interior (policy, foreign affairs and defense), chief of the military staff, the speaker of parliament, head of the central security agency” as

\textsuperscript{74} Khatab, \textit{PS}, 178.
\textsuperscript{75} Musallam, 183.
\textsuperscript{76} For further details read Michael Youssef, \textit{Revolt Against Modernity: Muslim Zealots and the West} (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1985), 93-98.
\textsuperscript{77} Youssef, 100.
well as others.\textsuperscript{78} These assassinations were to occur simultaneously at night so as not to be as easily detected or to allow repressive measures to be taken against group members. The second step was to take over the military apparatus by poisoning guards in the area of the ministry of defense, which stored a weapons cache. But this did not go as planned because the drugs the chemical apparatus used when they mixed it with candy wore off the effect of the poison. Even though this did not work, their ultimate plan was to initiate a popular revolution once the cell lead by al-Islāmūlī assassinated President Sadat as well as other figures in the military parade celebrating the 1973 victory over the Israelis. As soon as this occurred, a group of al-Jihad fighters would take over the state’s radio and television communications to announce the arrival of the revolution.\textsuperscript{79}

As was detailed earlier in the chapter, none of this came to fruition and their plan failed. Much of it had to do with the grandiose notion that the Egyptian situation was similar to what occurred in Iran a few years prior. Along with this misreading, Farrag believed everything would fall into place following the assassinations. As Johannes J.G. Jansen argues: “It can be demonstrated from their [Farrag and members of al-Jihad] own testimony as written down in the Faridah that they did not think such preparations to be necessary.”\textsuperscript{80} Jansen surmises that this could have been as a result of the Qur’anic verse: “Fight them and God will punish them at your hands. God will make you victorious” (9:14).\textsuperscript{81} But Jansen does not have any substantive reason for making this claim.

From this incident al-Qaeda and, more specifically al-Zawahiri, learned that

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{80} Jansen, 16.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 15.
Farrag’s strategy for a popular revolution was ineffective. Rather, Sirīyyah’s idea of a coup d’état was a more sound idea. This led al-Zawahiri as well as al-Qaeda to focus solely on the notion of training an elite vanguard since the population could not be trusted.\textsuperscript{82} Indeed, Farrag’s influence on the overall jihadi movement is crucial to its evolution and took the form of a version that had almost adapted into the ideology and strategy that al-Qaeda holds today. Unlike al-Qaeda, though, Farrag believed in directing the jihad’s energy toward toppling the near enemy. This would change with the rise of ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam during the Afghan Jihad who broke with Farrag and created a paradigm-shifting framework for why fighting the far enemy takes precedence over the near enemy. ‘Azzam’s influence created the proto-version of al-Qaeda, which we will turn to next.

\textsuperscript{82} Brook, 210.
Chapter Four: ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam

The life of the Muslim Ummah is solely dependent on the ink of its scholars and the blood of its martyrs. What is more beautiful than the writing of the Ummah's history with both the ink of a scholar and his blood, such that the map of Islamic history becomes colored with two lines: one of them black, and that is what the scholar wrote with the ink of his pen; and the other one red, and that is what the martyr wrote with his blood.1

‘Abdullah ‘Azzam is regarded as the godfather of the global jihad movement and, based on his influence to this day, the title rings true. ‘Azzam changed course from past thinkers, such as Qutb, Sirfyyah, Mustafā and Farrag, claiming that the far enemy was the more appropriate target for the jihadis to pursue. Therefore, this aspect of his thinking will be looked at in depth, along with ‘Azzam’s propagation of defensive jihad in contrast to Qutb and Farrag’s call for offensive jihad. In addition, this chapter will focus on ‘Azzam’s background as well as the foundations he laid, which led to the creation of al-Qaeda. Although Farrag had connections to al-Zawahiri while they were both in al-Jihad, their relationship was nothing like the close connection ‘Azzam had with Bin Laden. Therefore, of the thinkers examined in this study ‘Azzam is the first who had direct links to al-Qaeda. The latter part of the chapter will also focus on ‘Azzam’s impact on al-Qaeda today as well as the overall global jihadist movement.

Background

‘Azzam was born in 1941 in the village Sīlat al-Ḥārithīyyah, which is near Jenin, a city in the Palestinian territories.2 ‘Azzam’s early education was at religious schools

---


located in Jordan. Later, in 1959 he attended the Sharī’ah College in Damascus until 1966. While in Damascus he became the Muslim Brothers representative at Sharī’ah College.\(^3\) Afterwards, ‘Azzam moved to Cairo and worked toward his Master’s degree in Islamic law in 1967 and later his PhD in Islamic jurisprudence in 1971 at al-’Azhar University.\(^4\) Egypt is where he was first exposed to the ideas of Qutb.\(^5\) Following his studies, ‘Azzam landed a teaching job at the University of Jordan, but was fired in 1980 because of his connections with the more radical elements in the Palestinian movement.\(^6\)

As a Palestinian thinker and activist, ‘Azzam participated in the 1967 Six Day War against Israel. ‘Azzam, though, was disillusioned by the lack of Islamic fervor in the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). It was too secularized for his liking. ‘Azzam officially split with the PLO’s cause in 1970, when Black September tried to overthrow the Jordanian government. This disgusted him; he thought the PLO should be focusing its attention on fighting Israel.\(^7\) Later in his career, in 1987, ‘Azzam became one of the founding spiritual leaders of HAMAS.\(^8\) ‘Azzam believed it could be a counterweight against the influence of the PLO, and as history has shown, ‘Azzam was correct.

Following his dismissal at the University of Jordan, ‘Azzam moved to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. There, he became the prayer leader at King Abdul Aziz’s University campus mosque. According to Steve Coll, while in Jeddah he became close with

---


\(^4\) Atkins, 26.


\(^6\) Atkins, 26.

\(^7\) Kepel, 145.

\(^8\) Atkins, 26.
Muhammad Qutb, Sayyid Qutb’s brother and a colleague of ‘Azzam’s at the university. That is when ‘Azzam started preaching Qutb’s ideas.\(^9\) At the same time, ‘Azzam befriended Bin Laden, who became an avid student of his.\(^10\) In response to what the Saudi regime saw as ‘Azzam’s overzealous propagation of radical *jihad*, the government in 1981 fired ‘Azzam from his post at the university. ‘Azzam believed he should put his preaching into practice by assisting the Afghans in their *jihad* against the Soviets. This was a defining moment since it set ‘Azzam apart from past theorists who did not actually go to the front lines and fight or even fire a weapon.\(^11\) He moved to Islamabad, Pakistan and was hired as an Arabic and Qur’anic teacher at the International Islamic University.\(^12\)

*In the Theater of War*

‘Azzam is viewed as one of the first Arabs to join the Afghan *mujāhidīn*.\(^13\)

Following ‘Azzam’s teaching stint in Islamabad in 1984, he moved closer to the action of the war in Peshawar. When ‘Azzam arrived in Peshawar to help the Afghans, it was a life-altering event, as he says: “I reached Afghanistan, and I could not believe my eyes … I felt reborn.”\(^14\) That year he established the *Maktab al-Khadamāt* (MAK; the Services Bureau).\(^15\) ‘Azzam also published a *fatwā*, *al-Dafa’ ‘an Arāḍī al-Muslimīn* (Defense of

---


\(^10\) Atkins, 26.


\(^12\) Atkins, 26.

\(^13\) McGregor, 11.


Muslim Lands) that argued for Muslims to help defend Afghanistan against the Soviets.\textsuperscript{16} One of the main sources of funding for this operation was Bin Laden, who had amassed a large sum of money through the wealth of his family’s business The Bin Laden Group, which helped build much of modern Saudi Arabia. Another source of funds came through ‘Azzam’s connections with the Muslim Brothers and their worldwide network.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, ‘Azzam also launched that year one of the most famous jihadi periodicals *al-Majalāt al-Jihad* (The Jihad Magazine).\textsuperscript{18} This could be regarded as a forerunner to the online jihad magazines and videos found in forums all over the Internet today. As part of ‘Azzam’s efforts to recruit volunteers to the cause as well as raise money, he toured several of the Gulf countries and the United States. They even opened a branch office of the MAK in Tuscon, Arizona in 1986.\textsuperscript{19}

In 1987, ‘Azzam wrote *Ilḥāq bi-l-Qāfilah* (Join the Caravan), an important text that urged Muslims to join him and fellow mujāhidīn in the fight against the far enemy. It also marked the origins of the usage of the term *al-Qaeda*. According to Stephen E. Atkins:

“He ['Azzam] conceptualized an Islamist vanguard, or *al-Qā'idah al-Sulbah* (the Solid Base or Solid Foundation) to carry the creation of a purified Islamist society.”\textsuperscript{20} ‘Azzam’s original explanation of *al-Qā'idah al-Sulbah* was:

> Every principle needs a vanguard to carry it forward and, while focusing its way into society, puts up with heavy tasks and enormous sacrifices. There is no ideology, neither earthly nor heavenly, that does not require such a vanguard that

\textsuperscript{16} Wright, 18.
\textsuperscript{17} Anonymous [Scheuer], 99.
\textsuperscript{19} Coll, 155.
\textsuperscript{20} Atkins, 27.
gives everything it possesses in order to achieve victory for this ideology. It carries the flag all along the sheer, endless and difficult path until it reaches its destination in the reality of life, since Allah has destined that it should make it and manifests itself. *Al-Qā' idah al-Sulbah* constitutes this vanguard for the expected society.  

Later, in 1988, prior to ‘Azzam’s death, Bin Laden started calling their group of *mujāhidin al-Qā' idah al-‘Askarīyyah* (the military base). Bin Laden began to take an active leadership role in opposition to ‘Azzam in 1986 when Bin Laden established an all-Arab training camp in Jajī, Afghanistan. This angered ‘Azzam who believed the Muslims should not compartmentalize themselves based on ethnicity; the whole point of his project was to bring all different segments of the *ummah* together. Though, many of the “Afghan Arabs” who had originally come to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets did not in fact end up joining what the world now calls al-Qaeda. The creation of the training camp created a fissure between ‘Azzam and Bin Laden that would continue to grow, leading Bin Laden closer to al-Zawahiri and his Egyptian cohorts. In reference to al-Zawahiri, ‘Azzam stated: “I don’t know what some people are doing here in Peshawar … They are talking against the *mujāhidin*. They have only one point, to create *fitnah* [anarchy] between me and these volunteers.” Another point of contention was the post-Soviet civil war that started brewing between different Afghan *mujāhidin* factions, most

---


23 Wright, 128.


25 Wright, 149.
notably, Gulbuddin Ḥekmatyar, leader of Hizb-e Islamī and Aḥmed Shah Mass‘ud, commander of the Northern Alliance. Most “Arab Afghans” sided with Ḥekmatyar, but ‘Azzam preferred Mass‘ud,26 which created even more of a rift between him, Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.

‘Azzam’s life came to an abrupt end on November 24, 1989 when he was on his way to Friday prayer. He died when a bomb exploded under his car along with two of his sons.27 To do this day, it has not been determined who actually assassinated ‘Azzam. Many have speculated and there has been a plethora of culprits, including: CIA, ISI, Mossad, General Intelligence Directorate (GID; Jordanian Intelligence), al-Zawahiri and his Egyptian followers, members of Hizb-e Islamī, KGB as well as others. ‘Azzam’s legacy still lives on in his example and writings. Indeed, Bin Laden believed he could emulate ‘Azzam and be a “lecturer-businessman, [and] an activist theologian” too. At the same time, there were those who thought that Bin Laden could never live up to the stature of ‘Azzam, as Abu Ḥamzah al-Maṣrī, who is linked to al-Qaeda stated: “‘Azzam would have been much more dangerous than Osama bin Laden because he had more credibility as the founder of the jihad movement in Afghanistan.” In the end, both Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri hold ‘Azzam in high regard even though they had different views on the direction the movement should have headed in the future.

**Intellectual Thought**

This section will explore ‘Azzam’s two main books al-Dafa’ ‘an Arāḍī al-Muslimīn and Ilhāq bi-l-Qāfīlah as well as some of his lesser well known works too. In them, ‘Azzam argues for the globalization of jihad and that the mujāhidīn should focus on the

---

26 Ibid., 163; Coll, 203.
27 McGregor, 105.
far enemy rather than the near enemy, which was the preferred method of Farrag. In addition, ‘Azzam was a proponent of defensive jihad in contrast to Qutb and Farrag. More importantly, the forthcoming analysis will provide a clear picture of ‘Azzam’s influence on al-Qaeda and how individuals look at this jihadi group today. Unlike earlier thinkers discussed, ‘Azzam gets the rubber stamp of some of the most well known and regarded ‘ulamā’ in the salafī and Wahhabi religious community. Saudi Arabia’s Grand Muftī Shaykh Bin Bāz endorsed his work as well Shaykh Muhammad al-‘Uthaymīn, Shaykh ‘Abdullah Nasih Alwan, Shaykh Sa’id Hawa and ‘Abū ‘Umar al-Sayf, the latter three writing an introduction to ‘Azzam’s work.

**Offensive vs. Defensive Jihad**

In ‘Azzam’s book *al-Dafa’a ‘an Arādī al-Muslimīn*, he explains the differences and obligations that go with fighting an offensive or defensive jihad. According to ‘Azzam, an offensive jihad is fought only in the context of when one is fighting in the kufr’s territory. Therefore, the jihad is fard al-kifāyah (a collective obligation) meaning not all Muslims need to fight. This should be done once a year so as to maintain the jīzah tax on the Christians and Jews.²⁸

More importantly, for ‘Azzam, was the defensive jihad, which was to “expel the kafir from our [Muslim] land, and it is fard ‘ayn, a compulsory duty upon all. It is the most important of the compulsory duties and arises in the following conditions: (1) if the kafir enter a land of the Muslims; (2) if the rows meet in battle and they begin to approach each other; (3) if the imām calls a person or a people to march forward then

they must march; and (4) if the kafīr capture and imprison a group of Muslims.”

‘Azzam further expands on the first point since it was a crucial topic at the time in light of the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. ‘Azzam explains:

In this condition the pious predecessors [salaf], those who succeeded them, the ‘ulamāʾ of the four Madhhabs (Mālikī, Ḥanafi, Shāfīʿī and Ḥanbalī), the Muhadithīn, and the tafsīr commentators, are agreed that in all Islamic ages, jihad under this condition becomes fard ʿayn upon the Muslims of the land which the kafīr have attacked and upon the Muslims close by, where the children will march forth without the permission of the parents, the wife without the permission of her husband and the debtor without the permission of the creditor. And, if the Muslims of this land cannot expel the kafīr because of lack of forces, because they slacken, are indolent or simply do not act, then the fard ʿayn obligation spreads in the shape of a circle from the nearest to the next nearest. If they too slacken or there is again a shortage of manpower, then it is upon the people behind them, and on the people behind them, to march forward. This process continues until it becomes fard ʿayn upon the whole world.

Therefore, the pillar of the most important of obligations is the marching forward in times of hardship as well as prosperity. As has been stated, contrary to Ḥajj, the obligation remains present in times of hardship. And this is in offensive jihad. So it is clear that defensive jihad carries a greater degree of obligation. To defend the sacred things and the religion from the aggressor is obligatory, as agreed upon by everyone. The first obligation after imān is repulsion of the enemy aggressor who assaults the religion and the worldly affairs.

In other words, based on the classical understanding of defensive jihad, it is indeed an individual obligation (fard al-ʿayn). It is so important that it takes precedence over other traditions such as the Ḥajj or imān. One’s testament of faith is only considered above defending Muslims and their land against aggressors. Interestingly, similar to Farrag, ‘Azzam distinguishes between defensive and offensive jihad. But, Farrag sees offensive jihad as necessary and the forgotten duty and an individual obligation (fard al-ʿayn). As such, Farrag no doubt had an influence on ‘Azzam, but ‘Azzam took Farrag’s

29 Ibid., 14-15.
30 Ibid., 15.
31 Ibid.
understanding of the obligation to *jihad* in a different direction: one that was more in line with a pragmatic approach. It was also an argument to which other Muslims could be more easily swayed. To support this argument, ‘Azzam supplies evidence from the four Sunni *madhhabs*, which confirms his notion of the defensive *jihad*. Therefore, as Mary Habeck notes, the imperative is to fight a defensive *jihad* against those who have occupied previous Muslim lands.

*The Theater of Precedence*

Later in *al-Dafa‘a ‘an Arādī al-Muslimīn*, ‘Azzam explains why Afghanistan should be the place where the global jihadist movement should fight and take priority over other fields of battle, such as regaining the territory from Israel. As he says:

Whoever can, from among the Arabs, fight *jihad* in Palestine, then he must start there. And, if he is not capable, then he must set out for Afghanistan. For the rest of the Muslims, I believe they should start their *jihad* in Afghanistan. It is our opinion that we should begin with Afghanistan before Palestine, not because Afghanistan is more important than Palestine, not at all, Palestine is the foremost Islamic problem. It is the heart of the Islamic world, and it is a blessed land, but there are some reasons, which make Afghanistan the starting point.

1. The battles in Afghanistan are still raging and have reached a level of intensity, the like of which have not been witnessed in the mountains ranges of Hindu Kush, nor in recent Islamic history.

---

32 Ibid., 16-17.

33 Mary Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 114. Habeck then references this quote by Azzam on page twenty-three of *The Defense of Muslim Lands*: “The sin upon this present generation, for not advancing towards Afghanistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Kashmir, Lebanon, Chad, Eritria etc, is greater than the sin inherit from the loss of the lands which have previously fallen into the possession of the *Kuffār*. We have to concentrate our efforts on Afghanistan and Palestine now, because they have become our foremost problems. Moreover, our occupying enemies are very deceptive and execute programs to extend their power in these regions. If we were to resolve these [sic] dilemma, we would resolve a great deal of complications. Their protection is the protection for the whole area.”

2. The Islamic flag being raised in Afghanistan is clear: and the aim is clear "to make Allah's words uppermost".

3. The Islamists have been the first to take control of the battles in Afghanistan. Those who lead the *jihad* in Afghanistan are the sons of the Islamic movement, the ‘*ulamā*’ and *Hāfiz* of *Qur’an* [one who has memorized the entire *Qur’an*]. While, in Palestine the leadership has been appropriated by a variety of people, of them sincere Muslims, communists, nationalists and modernist Muslims. Together they have hoisted the banner of a secular state.

4. The situation in Afghanistan is still in the hands of the *mujāhidīn*. They continue to refuse help from any *kafir* country, while Palestine depends completely on the Soviet Union, who withheld their help in Palestine's time of dire need. They were left to face their predicament by themselves in front of the world conspiracy. The situation has become a game in the hands of the great powers. Gambling with the land, the people and the ‘*ard* of Palestine, pursuing them even into the Arab states, until their military power is exhausted.

5. There are more than 3000 kms of open border in Afghanistan and regions of tribes not under political influence. This forms a protective shield for *mujāhidīn*. However, in Palestine the situation is entirely different. The borders are closed, their hands are bound, the eyes of the authorities spy from all sides for anyone who attempts to infiltrate its borders to kill the Jews.35

6. The people of Afghanistan are renowned for their strength and pride. It seems as if the Glorified and Exalted prepared the mountains and the land there especially for *jihad*.36

There are a number of considerations why the *fatah* (the opening or conquest) of Afghanistan should be the *mujāhidīn*’s main concern instead of conquering Israel. First, it appears ‘*Azzam* still has an ideological axe to grind against the various factions in the PLO. Unlike the Afghans who are fighting for an Islamic state, the Palestinians are in a coalition based on secular, nationalistic and non-Islamic ideas. Therefore, although

36 Ibid., 25.
Palestine is an important part of the ummah’s territory, the actors involved are not the right set of individuals the mujāhidin should rally behind since they have no interest in implementing the shari’ah. The other point ‘Azzam makes is more practical. The ability of the mujāhidin to succeed in Afghanistan appears to be of a greater probability because of the open borders, topography and lack of centralized governmental control. As a result, due to the convergence of ‘Azzam’s ideological position as well as pragmatic considerations of the fighting capabilities in Afghanistan versus Israel, Afghanistan became the most logical choice to fight the defensive jihad against the far enemy. In addition, he saw the Afghan fighters as a model example, saying:

The difference between the Afghan people and others is that the Afghans have refused disgrace in their religion, and have purchased their dignity with seas of blood and mountains of corpses and lost limbs. Other nations have submitted to colonization and disbelief from the first day.37

‘Azzam, by internationalizing the jihad to retake occupied Muslim lands, articulated a three-stage process, which leads to it. First, there is the hijrah, from the occupied Muslim country. Second, there is a period of ribāṭ (occupation of the front lines of Islamic countries) and, finally, combat.38 Even though ‘Azzam preferred the Afghan battlefield over the Palestinian one that does not mean he ignored it or did not have later plans for it. As Youssef Aboul-Enein explains:

All jihads in ‘Azzam’s definition are sacred warfare and are interrelated and form a singular chain from which the next operation, war or conflict will be born. In other words, ‘Azzam looks upon Afghanistan as only the start of a momentum of jihad that is perpetual conflict. ‘Azzam writes that the Soviet-Afghan War, at a minimum, gives the Palestinians something to look up to and aspire towards.39

37 ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, Join the Caravan (1987), 28. For future footnotes this will be cited as ‘Azzam, JC.
38 McGregor, 104.
Reasons for Jihad

A few years after writing al-Dafa’a ‘an Arāḍī al-Muslimīn, ‘Azzam published Ilhāq bi-l-Qāfilah, where he expands on his earlier work by calling fellow Muslims to join the jihad against the infidel invaders of Muslim lands. ‘Azzam argues that jihad is needed more than ever because “the tyrants have gained dominance over the Muslims in every aspect and in every land. The reason for this is that the Disbelievers only stand in awe of fighting.”40 ‘Azzam then provides sixteen distinct reasons Muslims need to take up the jihad:

1. In order that the Disbelievers [kufr] do not dominate.
2. Due to the scarcity of men.
3. Fear of Hell-fire.
4. Fulfilling the duty of Jihad, and responding to the call of the Lord.
5. Following in the footsteps of the Pious Predecessors [salaf].
7. Protecting those who are oppressed in the land.
8. Hoping for martyrdom.
9. A shield for the Ummah, and a means for lifting disgrace off them.
10. Protecting the dignity of the Ummah, and repelling the conspiracy of its enemies.
11. Preservation of the earth, and protection from corruption.
13. Protection of the Ummah from punishment, disfiguration and displacement.

Terrorism Center, 2008, 4-5. For future footnotes this will be cited as Aboul-Enein, Part 1. Italics Aboul-Enein’s emphasis.

40 ‘Azzam, JC, 5.
14. Prosperity of the *Ummah*, and surplus of its resources.

15. *Jihad* is the highest peak of Islam.

16. *Jihad* is the most excellent form of worship, and by means of it the Muslim can reach the highest of ranks.\(^{41}\)

It appears that all but one of ‘Azzam’s reasons relates to a religious obligation, following in the footsteps of previous Muslims or protecting the *umma*. The only reason to fight *jihad* for pragmatic and non-religious reasons is number two; due to the scarcity of men.

Although ‘Azzam colors most of his argument with religious rhetoric it seems the most plausible reason why ‘Azzam truly wants more Muslims to join his cause is because they need more bodies to fight as indicated in the second justification. Furthermore, later in ‘Azzam’s book, he explains that:

> The situation is more serious, and gravely momentous, and the Muslims in Afghanistan are in severe distress and definite, menacing peril … most of this first generation has fallen in martyrdom, and the second generation has advanced. This second generation has not been fortunate enough to receive the same share of upbringing and guidance, and have not come across a stretched-out hand showing an interest in teaching and training them. Such people are in dire need of somebody who can live amongst them to direct them toward Allah and teach them religious regulations.\(^{42}\)

‘Azzam then condemns those who argue that they should be excused from joining the *mujāhidīn* in battle. Those arguments include: (1) many of the Afghans are not at an acceptable level of Islamic training; and (2) presence in their country is necessary for the purpose of education and upbringing.\(^{43}\) At the same time, though, ‘Azzam explains that there are instances, which allow those who cannot fight *jihad* to be excused from the battlefield. Those allowed to stay home are: (1) a husband with a wife and children that

---

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 5-6.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 20.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 21.
does not have income from any other source nor anybody besides him who could support and maintain them. But if he is able to allocate provision for them for the duration of his absence, then he is sinful if he sits back. Every Muslim should reduce his spending and be frugal with his earnings until he is able to go out for *jihad*; (2) somebody who was unable, after much effort, to obtain a visa to come to Pakistan; (3) somebody whose government denied him a passport or prevented him from leaving from the airport; and (4) somebody who has parents who do not have anybody besides him to support and maintain them. For ‘Azzam, the only way one can miss the *jihad* is if one absolutely needs to take care of someone and if they have no way of getting to the battlefield. In a book published the year following ‘Azzam’s death, *Jihād al-Shaʿab Muslimīn* (*Jihad of the Muslim Peoples*), he lays out ways for those that can’t make the *jihad* in Afghanistan to help out. ‘Azzam explains the two most important ways to provide help are financially (either sending donations or housing *jihadis*) or through a media campaign to convince the rest of the world of the plight of the *mujāhidīn* as well as the Afghan fighters against the Soviets. This was to establish the *mujāhidīn* as sympathetic figures to the world stage.

But if one can get to Pakistan and Afghanistan to fight or can provide for their loved ones while they are away fighting and then decide they will stay home and not provide the assistance for the *jihad*, they will live in sin. More importantly, it would be as if they turned their backs on the *ummah* and do not care about Afghanistan falling to non-Muslims, as has happened, too often in the past. ‘Azzam thinks that if one shirks their

---

44 Ibid., 31-32.

duties to the ummah history could repeat itself:

So, the bloody tale of Bukhara, the narrative of mutilated Palestine, and blazing Eden, and enslaved peoples, the sorry stories of Spain, the terrible accounts of Eritrea, sore Bulgaria, the tragedy of Sudan, the devastated remnants of Lebanon, Somalia, Burma, Caucasus and its deep wounds, Uganda, Zanzibar, Indonesia, Nigeria. All these slaughters and tragedies are the best lesson for us. Will we take admonishment from the past before we lose the present? Or will history repeat itself over us while we swallow degradation, fall into oblivion as those before us did, and lose just as they lost?

We hope that Allah defeats the Russians in Afghanistan, and that they turn back on their heels in failure. If the latter occurs, then I wish I knew what catastrophe will befall the Muslims.46

As Andrew McGregor points out ‘Azzam’s single-minded attitude toward the importance of fighting jihad and defeating the enemy was best summed up by ‘Azzam when he said: “Jihad and the rifle alone; no negotiations, no conferences, and no dialogues.”47 ‘Azzam was so committed to the cause of jihad in Afghanistan that he couldn’t see himself leaving except under three circumstances: “Never shall I leave the Land of Jihad … Either I shall be killed in Afghanistan, killed in Peshawar, or handcuffed and expelled from Pakistan.”48 Further, in one of ‘Azzam’s most famous quotes, which is cited by jihadists he stated:

Love of jihad has taken over my life, my soul, my sensation, my heart and my emotions. If preparing [for jihad] is terrorism, then we are terrorists. If defending our honor is extremism, then we are extremists. If jihad against our enemies is fundamentalism, then we are fundamentalists.49

This reflects Qutb’s argument against Muslim apologists who say jihad is only defensive.

Both Qutb and ‘Azzam flip their arguments back on those who are critical of their

46 Ibid., 25.
47 McGregor, 92.
48 Ibid., 100.
worldview.

Although ‘Azzam was committed to jihad that does not mean there were not other issues, with which he was concerned. He did not believe the Muslim states (Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia) had banded together enough to ward off Western influence and domination. ‘Azzam saw this as a cause for concern based on his historical reading of al-Andalus (Muslim Spain). The Muslim jihad in al-Andalus failed because of the divided Muslim leadership as well as deals cut with Spanish Christians. ‘Azzam was afraid this might happen again. ‘Azzam also was worried about the idea of the greater jihad and its ability to undermine sensible Muslims from coming to fight. ‘Azzam’s argument against the greater jihad echoes part of the argument Farrag articulated in the previous chapter: “Whenever jihad is mentioned in the holy book, it means the obligation to fight. It does not mean to fight with the pen or to write books or articles in the press or to fight by holding lectures.” Again, as articulated in the previous chapter this moves away from the classical interpretation of the greater jihad.

Laying the Groundwork for Suicide Terrorism

In ‘Azzam’s book Virtues of Martyrdom in the Path of Allah he provides twenty-seven reasons for the benefit of martyrdom (istashâdîyyah). This is the first time that any of the thinkers discussed thus far has elevated the importance of istashâdîyyah since al-Banna explained its significance in the “art of death.”

---

50 McGregor, 103.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 105.
explains, though, much of the *jihadi* thought relating to suicide terrorism does not argue that suicide is legal from a theological perspective. Rather, they extol the virtues of *istashahādīyyah* and use the various arguments about who is truly a Muslim.\(^{54}\)

Farhana Ali and Jerrold Post note that ‘Azzam was the first in four successive stages of key thinkers: al-Zawahiri, Shaykh ‘Abū Muhammad al-Maqdisī, and Shaykh Yūsef al-Ayirī who promoted the cause of *istashahādīyyah*.\(^{55}\) The manner in which ‘Azzam’s book describes the advantages of pursuing one’s *istashahādīyyah* was a source of emulation as well as motivation for later *jihadis* when praising the merit of *istashahādīyyah* and performing its duty. As David Cook argues: “‘Azzam had a strong belief in the power of martyrdom to persuade and move people—a belief that probably has not been equaled in Sunni Islam since the conquests of the seventh and either centuries.”\(^{56}\) Cook then cites ‘Azzam’s graphic portrayal of the martyr:

The life of the Muslim *Ummah* is solely dependent on the ink of its scholars and the blood of its martyrs. What is more beautiful than the writing of the *Ummah’s* history with both the ink of a scholar and his blood, such that the map of Islamic history becomes colored with two lines: one of them black, and that is what the scholar wrote with the ink of his pen; and the other one red, and that is what the martyr wrote with his blood. And something more beautiful than this is when the blood is one and the pen is one, so that the hand of the scholar, which expends the ink and moves the pen, is the same as the hand, which expends its blood and moves the *Ummah*. The extent to which the number of martyred scholars increases is the extent to which nations are delivered from their slumber, rescued from their decline and awoken from their sleep.\(^{57}\)

---


\(^{57}\) ‘Azzam, *Martyrs.*
Post-Soviet Plans

Also found in ‘Azzam’s book *Jihād al-Sha’ab Muslimīn* is a section that deals with how the vanguard should proceed following the victory against the Soviet Union in the Afghan theater. In particular, he proposes the following objectives:

1. The *jihād* against the Russians must be transformed into an international Islamist movement, and then into a war against different *ummahs* such as the communist *umma*.

2. The Arabs should assist in the reconstruction of Afghan education, so they could shape the next generation of Muslims. ‘Azzam called this program *Ta‘alīm al-Mujāhidīn*. The objective was to fill the gap that had been left by the destruction of school and the death of many ‘ulamā’.

3. Mobilize Islamic military, financial, engineering, media and medical talent to continue the fight against the Soviets in other occupied lands such as the Caucus and Central Asian satellite Soviet states.

4. Resolve the disputes within the jihadist movement. This did not happen and was one of the reasons for Bin Laden drifting towards al-Zawahiri as described earlier.58

In other words, ‘Azzam proposes a never-ending *jihād* against states that had formerly been under Islamic law or jurisdiction. ‘Azzam concludes *Jihād al-Sha’ab Muslimīn* stating:

*This dīn* (religion) will triumph and must burst forth from a *al-Qā’idah al-Sulbah* (firm foundation or base). It is from here [Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Caucuses] that the Turks and their descendants emerged to rule the Ottoman Empire for five centuries, that Mahamadu Ghaznavi founded the Ghaznavid Dynasty and ruled India for centuries, destroying its pagan idols, and that Ahmad Shah Baba ruled Afghanistan, India and Eastern Iran for decades. Will the triumph over the Soviets be the seeds from where an Islamic empire that will alter world history emerge?59

Indeed, this along with the factional differences in Afghanistan was a point of contention between ‘Azzam, Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri as they had different visions of

---

58 Aboul-Enein, Part 2, 7.
59 Ibid., 8.
what should be done. Instead of ‘Azzam’s idea of retaking territories that had formerly been in *dar al-Islam*, Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri wanted to focus on toppling the “apostate” regimes in the Middle East, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, their respective home countries.⁶⁰ ‘Azzam believed this was counterintuitive because Muslims should not be waging *jihad* against one another. In addition, ‘Azzam was more pragmatic and saw the importance of not alienating Muslims and Muslim governments so they could support their cause. As Rohan Gunaratna says: “‘Azzam was against the killing of non-combatants and would never endorse al-Qaeda's current spate of terrorist tactics. In his view, *jihad* was invoked as a religious obligation in defense of Islam and Muslims against a defined enemy, and not a speculative one … ‘Azzam knew the price of such actions [*jihad* against local regime] and opposed it vehemently.”⁶¹ Not until the mid-1990s did Bin Laden and Zawahiri focus on the far enemy, but their methods differed from that of ‘Azzam.⁶² Bin Laden and Zawahiri made the calculation that to topple the near enemy one needed to first bring down the far enemy and in this case it was the United States. If the United States were eliminated, it would no longer be able to financially prop up the Arab “apostate” regimes. As Fawaz Gerges explains: “The road to Jerusalem no longer passed directly through Cairo, Algiers, Amman or Riyadh but rather through a double-lane highway including stops in Washington, New York, Madrid, London and other Western capitals.”⁶³ Therefore, in one sense their ultimate goal was to defeat the near enemy, but their strategy was a proxy *jihad*. This differed from ‘Azzam

---

⁶⁰ Musallam, 191.
⁶¹ Gunaratna.
⁶³ Ibid.
whose end goal was to free occupied Muslim land and return it to dar al-Islam.

Even though Bin Laden and Zawahiri disagreed with ‘Azzam about the priorities of
who should be fought in jihad, they still agreed with the core message regarding jihad
that ‘Azzam articulated. This would be the case with most jihadis today as ‘Azzam is
revered by many and some pay tribute to ‘Azzam by incorporating part of his name into
their nom de guerre (war name) such as, Adam Gadahn, head of al-Qaeda’s
communications department, who is referred to as ‘Azzam al-Amriki. ‘Azzam’s
contribution to the jihadist movement and its literature cannot be understated. He
provided a paradigm-shifting notion of fighting the far enemy rather than the near enemy.
‘Azzam also commanded the respect of everyone because of his reputation as a graduate
of al-’Azhar University, which differed from al-Banna, Qutb and Farrag, all of whom
attended secular institutions, as well as Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. As a result, what he
did for the global jihadist movement is still a major source of inspiration for young
jihadis to this day.
Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to expand on previous scholarship on Islamic thinkers, such as, Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Farrag and ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, as a way to analyze the origins and evolution of al-Qaeda’s ideology from 1924-1989. This thesis synthesized the various research on these leading jihadi thinkers and pieced it together to show how each individual built off the previous thinkers ideas and refined it to fit their circumstance. As such, it is an important first step in building a systematic, comprehensive literature on “Jihadist Studies” or “Jihadology.”

Limitations and Future Research

There were a number of barriers that this author encountered when doing this research. First, there was a matter of timing. If the author had more time he would have expanded on certain sections as well as written more chapters on other thinkers in greater depth. Second, the author was only able to access a limited number of sources in Arabic. This hindered his ability to obtain other perspectives than what has been written in the West or the thinkers’ work that have been translated into English. As such, a future study would greatly benefit from using more Arabic sources. This would have allowed for a more thorough treatment of this very important and timely subject.

It is the hope of this author that in the future he will have an opportunity to expand on this study especially with regard to Farrag and ‘Azzam’s backgrounds, along with adding chapters or further detail on other Islamic thinkers, including, Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymīyyah, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab, Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muhammad ‘Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, Abū al-Al’ā Mawdūdī, Shukrī Muṣṭafā, Șāleḥ Sirīyyah, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama Bin Laden. In addition, it would be vital to examine Abū Muṣa’ab
al-Sūrī, Abū Yaḥyā al-Lībī and Abū Muhammad al-Maqdisī who have further built upon the ideas traced in this thesis since 1989. This would further establish a more comprehensive understanding of the origins of al-Qaeda’s ideology and how it has evolved since the organization was created.

Key Elements of Each Thinkers Views:

1. Al-Banna, unlike previous modern Islamic revivalists (Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍa) put his ideas into action. Al-Banna harnessed a modern grassroots movement to try and change society in Egypt. Previously, a social movement with this strength, vision or lasting power was not organized; no one had attempted to do so on the scale al-Banna operated. As a result, al-Banna was the first in the Muslim world to successfully rally the masses to stand up for change (following the abolishment of the Caliphate), which they sought in society. In addition, he provided an organizational framework to better fight the colonialists (British). He also provided a voice to those who had no longer been paid attention to by the elite.

2. Qutb, in contrast to al-Banna was not concerned about the colonial presence since his major works were written post-Free Officers coup, which spelled the end for the British in Egypt. Rather, Qutb created an intellectual argument so potent that it gave credence to the notion that Egyptian leaders, along with other Arab or Muslim leaders who were not following the sharī‘ah and breaking God’s hākimīyyah, were in fact not truly Muslims but were living in a state of jāhilīyyah. Qutb drew upon the ideas of Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab and ‘Abu al-Al’ā Mawdūdī. It is possible that Qutb might not have been
as influenced by Mawdūdi’s ideas, though, as has been previously articulated in the literature since his works were not translated from Urdu into Arabic until the 1950s. Nonetheless, Qutb popularized various ideas and terms that would help establish the ideological framework for overthrowing Muslim regimes, which in the past had been taboo since members of the ‘ulamā’ were afraid of fitnah and the return of the Islamic civil wars following Muhammad’s death.

3. Farrag, on the other hand, did not disagree with Qutb on the nature of the problem within society and the necessity in overthrowing the local “Muslim” government rather Farrag took issue with Qutb’s method for establishing an Islamic state. Farrag disagreed with Qutb for promoting educational and ideological training prior to fighting jihad. Farrag also questioned the views of The Islamic Group, which thought it could Islamicize society and reinstate the shari’ah by taking important jobs in society and the government. Farrag thought Shaykh Kishk’s message of only performing daw’ah took away from the importance of waging violent jihad. Furthermore, the ‘ulamā’ were problematic since they let down Islamic society by not mobilizing Muslims to fight against kufr behavior. Lastly, Farrag believed Mustafā and Takfīr wa’l Hijrah had the wrong approach and were mistaken for migrating and preparing so that once they were strong enough they would come back to society and wage a jihad to implement God’s law. Above all was Farrag’s singular notion that other actions did not need to occur prior to the jihad. Muslims were ready and needed to fight to return God’s hākimīyyah to its rightful place.

4. Lastly, ‘Azzam took a different route than the previous thinkers. He endorsed a
strategy of fighting the far enemy rather than the near enemy. Starting with Afghanistan, ‘Azzam hoped that a vanguard would fight the kufr’s who had conquered previous Muslim lands. Therefore, reclaiming them as part of dar al-Islam. He also helped build the infrastructure and apparatus, which led to al-Qaeda. Bin Laden and Zawahiri had different ideas since both preferred following the Afghan jihad to return to the near enemy, but because of their failures by the mid-1990s, both decided to rethink their strategy and take on the far enemy, too. But unlike ‘Azzam they only fought the far enemy as a means to defeating the near enemy. Therefore, there actually are two types of far enemies. The occupying far enemy, which ‘Azzam endorsed fighting and the hegemon far enemy, to which Bin Laden and Zawahiri subscribed. Indeed, one could be an occupying and hegemon far enemy at the same time such as Russia, but the subtle differences are important. For instance, an occupying far enemy could be a nation like Spain, yet unlike the United States who would be a hegemon far enemy Spain does not give massive amounts of foreign aid to prop up Arab “apostate” regimes.

**Broader Implications**

Each of these thinkers contributed in some way that would eventually lead to al-Qaeda’s ideology. Each thinker built upon the previous thinkers ideas. Therefore, by tracing these figures one can piece together the intellectual lineage. In short, al-Banna provided the framework for organizing to try and re-implement an Islamic state. Qutb created an intellectual basis, which was religiously sanctioned to fight the local “apostate” government. Farrag endorsed a program that only promoted jihad and disregarded the necessity of preparation. Lastly, ‘Azzam changed focus from the near to
the far enemy. From this, one can see a clearer picture of the debates that these intellectuals were having and the dynamicism in their ideas, which led to the ideology of al-Qaeda. If one only focuses on narrow aspects of each thinker or an aspect of their thought then one is blinded from the broader picture, which could relay trends that could potentially provide crucial information to policy-makers who give critical advice on strategic matters related to combating jihadist ideology.

Methodologically, this study hopefully will be the beginning of a wider-array of literature that analyzes these individuals as well as others in a wider scope while utilizing tools of knowledge from a variety of disciplines especially classical Islamic and Qur’anic studies to understand this phenomenon in further detail. By doing this, it will further enhance the body of growing academic literature in “Jihadist Studies.”
Bibliography


