

The Salafi-Jihadi movement – an internal discourse between Al-Maqdisi's ideology and Al-Zarqawi's way

Background

The Salafi-Jihadi stream burst into the consciousness of the Arab and Western world after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 which were orchestrated by the Al-Qaeda organization, a part of the movement. The movement believes that the form of Islam which was widespread during the first three generations of Islam, should be taken as the role model and be the expression of the pure and refined faith to which Muslims should strive, with one of its main elements being strict adherence to the Sunna and the Quran. The movement's name combines two phrases: a) the word "Salafia", which is taken from "Salaf", i.e. the forefathers of Islam – an expression which reflects the utopian yearning to return to this glorious period; b) the word "Jihad", which expresses the desire to advance this faith model and impose it upon all the Muslim population, including the use of force and violence.

This movement, in actual fact, is the belated result of the "old" Salafi movement which initially appeared towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. This followed the crisis which afflicted the Islamic world with the penetration of western influences, and the panic caused due to the decline in Islam's status.¹

The "old" Salafi movement claimed that the return to the pure original Islam and the explanation of its sources – the Quran and the Sunna – according to the spirit of the times, were the key to the rehabilitation of Islam's status. In the beginning, it was prominent as a movement of reformed thinking, which strived to revise the religion in order to return to its former glory. However, after the First World War, there was a sharp turn in its character. It began to exhibit a puritanical side and to define itself in the interpretations of the Quran and the Sunna. In other words, if the "old" Salafi movement was characterized in its openness to reform, in its later versions there was no sign of this.

¹ The main spokesmen of the "old" Salafi movement were Muhammad Abduh 1849-1905 and Rashid Rida 1865-1935. See: Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

Today, the Salafi movement includes a number of sub-factions and various groups which can be divided into three main groups:

1. The political or pragmatic Salafi stream which, due to the circumstances, prefers to operate within the boundaries of the existing political system and to build bases of influence and sources of power within the existing system, until the conditions for the beginning of Sharia become optimal. One example of a group taking this line is the pragmatic Salafi group in Iraq led by Manar Al-Alami, which claims that the use of violence is unnecessary and that the presence of the Americans in Iraq must be accepted for the time being. This group permitted the recruiting of Iraqi security and police personnel, as a means for rehabilitating the country's institutions. The group was declared to be non-Muslim by the Jihadi Salafis and it was stated that it was the personal obligation of every Muslim to attack it.² Additional examples of the existence of the political Salafi stream can be seen in Iraq, Kuwait and Yemen.
2. The second Salafi stream is the puritanical one. This movement advances Da'awa activity and the revival of Salafi Islam in Muslim society as a component of the plan to resurrect Sharia. Due to current circumstances it operates within the law and the political system. Its believers support the struggle against the western presence on Islamic land, which is the faraway enemy in the first stage.

One can point, for example, to the Salafi association "Jamiyyat Al-Hidaya w-Al-Ihsan" (the Association of Guidance and Charity) as part of the puritanical Salafi movement.³ This association operates in northern Lebanon, mainly in Tripoli and the surrounding area. The association was founded in 1988⁴ by **Sheikh Da'i Al-Islam Al-Shaal**, who heads it and is considered to be one of the most prominent founders of the Salafists in Lebanon.⁵ Al-Shaal himself clarified that his association prefers to stay away from the political life in

² Al-Alami, head of the Salafi group in Iraq, was arrested by the Americans following a report by Kurdish Intelligence which said Al-Alami was involved in terrorist attacks in Iraq, killing over 150 people. However, there is no verification of these accusations towards Al-Alami, and in the pan-Arab and Iraqi media he is mentioned mainly as the person who has prepared the ground for cooperation between the local population and the country's nascent institutions, and as someone preaching against displays of violence towards the coalition forces.

³ For the association's homepage see: <http://www.hedayaonline.net>.

⁴ In 1989 the association received government authorization to operate legally.

⁵ For the Sheikh's homepage see: <http://www.daielislam.net/display/arabic/index.aspx>

Lebanon and focus on Da'awa alone for the spreading of the Salafi ideology in Lebanon, considered to be the most reliable and true expression of Islam.⁶

It should be noted that the said association is somewhat immersed in the Wahabi influence due to the background of its founder, Da'i Al-Islam Al-Shaal. In 1984 Al-Shaal graduated from his studies at the Al-Medina University in Saudi Arabia and under the influence of prominent Wahabi religious clerics such as Bin Baz (1909-1999), he returned to Lebanon in order to spread the Salafi Da'awa there, and to protect the Sunni population from the influence of foreign doctrines such as the Shiite doctrine.⁷



Da'i Al-Islam Al-Shaal



The homepage of the "Jamiyyat Al-Hidaya w-Al-Ihsan" website

⁶ The researcher Omayma Abdel-Latif doubts the veracity of Al-Shaal's statement and claims that despite the attempts of the Salafi and the puritans in Lebanon to outwardly display an image of focus on Da'awa and staying away from political life, a certain affiliation with Lebanese politics is evident, such as making alliances with various political groups in Lebanon. See: Omayma Abdel-Latif, "Lebanon's Sunni Islamists—A Growing Force", Carnegie Papers, No. 6, Jan 2008, pp. 11-13.

http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/CMEC6_abdellatif_lebanon_final.pdf

⁷ For the interview with the Sheikh on the beginning of the Salafia in Lebanon, see: Muhammad Aloush, "Al-Shaal: Thus the Salafi work has begun in Lebanon", Al-Islam Al-Yaum, March 11 2007. <http://www.islamtoday.net/nawafeth/artshow-89-8800.htm>

3. The Jihadi Salafi stream believes in the Jihadi way to achieve its goals, with no compromises – this includes action against the non-Islamic rulers (the close enemy), against the faraway enemy, or against the Shiites.

For example, one can mention at this juncture the Salafi-Jihadi group "Al-Tawhid w-Al-Jihad" founded by Al-Zarqawi in Iraq in April 2003. The group did not shy away from carrying out severe terrorist acts both against the western coalition forces in Iraq and against the Muslims, in particular against the Shiites. In October 2004 the group swore allegiance to bin Laden's Al-Qaeda organization and from that time became known as "the Al-Qaeda Organization in Iraq". This group was characterized by especially cruel acts of violence, with an emphasis on decapitation.

Alongside this division, Wahabism should also be mentioned, which is considered to also be an organic part of the Salafi movement. Although the historical context and background in which it was formulated differed from the "old" Salafia movement, there are basic significant similarities between the two, in particular in connection to the desire to recreate the spirit of primal Islam. However, the Wahabia has also experienced changes and transformations from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, following the arrival of Islamists from Egypt and Syria. These individuals were mainly from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, who escaped oppression by the secular regimes and integrated into the Wahabi educational system. They brought with them a heritage of Islamic activism, combined with the ideas of the religious resurrection of Abd Al-Wahab. This created a unique model of Islamic activism which was expressed politically during the Gulf crisis, and afterwards.⁸

According to the Salafi Jihadists, there are two types of Salafis that have evolved from the Wahabia: one, establishment Salafis who are loyal to the Saudi Royal Family - their ideologist is Abd Al-Aziz bin Baz; two, the non-establishment Salafi Jihadists, whose leading ideologists are the Saudi preachers Hawali and Auda.⁹

⁸ Yehoshua Teitelbaum, *A Country Struggling for its Life: the Islamic opposition in Saudi Arabia*, Ramat-Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle East and African Studies, 2005, page 13.

⁹ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 220

This document will focus more on the Jihadi Salafi stream. One of its prominent figures, who characterized the way of thinking and in particular its radical modus operandi, was Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi – the Al-Qaeda emir in Iraq (assassinated in 2006).

Between the Al-Maqdisi school of thought and that of Al-Zarqawi

It would seem that the Jihadi Salafi stream also experienced upheavals and internal disputes. It is still too early to assess the full significance of the consequences of these disputes. At the beginning of the year, the Jihadi forum “Midat Al-Suyuf”, which is a media channel for the Jihadi-Salafi stream, gave a rare opportunity see inside the movement, thanks to its lengthy coverage of the ideological tension between the traditions of the two leading Salafi-Jihadi sheikhs: Sheikh Al-Maqdisi, born in 1958 and considered to be the founder of the Jihadi-Salafi stream in Jordan and its prominent ideologist,¹⁰ and Sheikh Al-Zarqawi (born in 1966), known for his position as the former Al-Qaeda leader in Iraq. The other Jihadi forums avoided dealing with this tension, presumably so as not to intensify it and to show that there was unity inside the ranks of the Salafiya. This issue was given widespread coverage by the documentary television series “The Death Industry” (Sina'at Al-Mawt), which was broadcast on February 27th 2009 on Al-Arabiya.¹¹ A day before the broadcast, Al-Maqdisi angrily referred to the topic of the program during a debate held by Paltalk,¹² which lasted for six minutes. He declared that there was no tension between his tradition and that of Al-Zarqawi and he denied any contentions that this was so.

¹⁰ He was imprisoned in Jordan due to his public denunciation of the Jordanian regime as being illegitimate, as it did not respect the Sharia. Today he is under house arrest in Jordan and preaches Salafiya by peaceful means. He directs the website Minbar Al Tawhid w-Al-Jihad which is a huge data base of Jihadi literature. See:

Minbar Al-Tawhid w-Al-Jihad: <http://www.tawhed.ws>

http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=269

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/m/abu_muhammad_al_maqdisi/index.html

W. McCants and J. Brachman, *Militant Ideology Atlas*, West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, November, 2006, p. 333.

¹¹ http://www.alarabiya.net/save_print.php?print=1&cont_id=67515

¹² Paltalk is a service that allows users to communicate via instant messaging, voice and video chat.

He also criticized the participants in the program, claiming that it was strictly forbidden to be interviewed by reporters who seek to blacken the image of the Mujahideen.¹³

Abu Muhammad Al-Maqqisi, is considered to be the father of the Salafi-Jihadi stream in Jordan. He was born in 1959 in the village of Barqa in the West Bank, near Nablus. In 1966 he left for Kuwait with his family, where he went to elementary school. Upon finishing his studies, and at his father's request, he studied sciences at the Mosul University in Northern Iraq. In Iraq, he made connections with various groups and movements, including the reform stream of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafis, Qatabists and others. However, he was mainly influenced by the Juhaiman Al-'Uteibi group, which became well-known after its take-over of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in November 1979.¹⁴ In the 80s and 90s, he traveled between Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Jordan. At the beginning of the 1990s, Al-Maqqisi established a Salafic group in Jordan, together with Al-Zarqawi, called Jama't Al-Tawhid, known as Bay'at al Imam. However, they and the rest of the group were arrested by the authorities as they were considered a security risk.

At the end of the 1990s he was released from prison with Al-Zarqawi. After his release he was sent to prison on several more occasions for short periods of time, again due to the Jordanian authorities' concerns for the state's security. Today, Al-Maqqisi is under house arrest and focuses mainly on Da'awa – he is careful not to speak out against the authorities, due to his experiences of imprisonment.

An important component of Al-Maqqisi's way of thinking was the idea of Al-Wala' a-Al-Bara', i.e. every Muslim who is not loyal to the Sharia and who does not practice it, is considered to be a non-believer and must be ostracized. Utilizing this principle, he also determined that the Saudi Arabian government and the Saudi Royal Family should also be considered to be non-believers.¹⁵

¹³ <http://Al-shouraa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=22653>

¹⁴ The leader of the group, Al Uteibi, was caught by Saudi Arabian security forces some time after the takeover, and was executed. For more information see: Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, "Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia: The Story of Juhayman Al-'Utaybi Revisited," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2007, pp. 103-122.

¹⁵ For more information on Al-Maqqisi's ideology, see: Joas Wagemakers, "A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad Al-Maqqisi", *BJMES*, August 2009, 36:2, pp. 281-297.

Ahmad Fadel Al-Khalaylah, known as **Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi**, was born in 1966 in Zarqa, Jordan. He didn't finish his studies and in his youth he had a tendency towards delinquency. In 1984, he was sent to prison for the first time for drug possession and sexual assault. Upon his release, his mother enrolled him in religious studies at the Al Hussein Bin Ali mosque.

In 1989, Al-Zarqawi arrived in Afghanistan to fight in the war against the Soviets, but he was unable to participate in it as it ended upon his arrival. He then returned to Jordan together with Al-Maqdisi, who was his spiritual father. However, he got into trouble with the authorities when he organized a Salafi group which was perceived to be a security threat by the state. In 1994 he was arrested, together with the remaining members of the group including Al-Maqdisi, and was sentenced in 1995 to 15 years imprisonment for possession of arms and membership of an illegal Jihadi cell. In 1999 he was released from prison, together with Al-Maqdisi, in a gesture made by the King of Jordan, Abdullah II. In 2000, Al-Zarqawi escaped to Pakistan after his conspiracy to blow up tourist sites in Jordan was exposed during the millennial festivities in the Kingdom. After the Iraqi occupation by the allied forces, he headed the Al-Qaeda organization in Iraq which perpetrated murderous terrorist attacks against Muslims and western forces alike. In 2006, Al-Zarqawi was killed in a bombing by the allied forces.¹⁶

The bond between Al-Zarqawi and Al-Maqdisi was formed in the 1990s in Jordan, and led to the formation of a Salafi organization called Bay'at Al-Imam. The organization, which had a negative view of the Hashemite Royal Family and accused them of not respecting the Sharia, did not last long due to these views. The Jordanian authorities did not hesitate in its firm response against the members of the organization, and imprisoned the two in the Kafkafa jail for several years.¹⁷ The connection between the two was not severed due to this, and was even strengthened during the course of their stay in prison. Al-Zarqawi soon stood out as a devoted and studious pupil amongst Al-Maqdisi's students and adhered strictly to his doctrine. Cracks began to appear between the two upon Al-Zarqawi's release from prison in 1999, when Al-Zarqawi wished to leave Jordan in order to go to "the killing fields, either to Afghanistan or Kurdistan." Al-Maqdisi did not approve of his pupil's decision, preferring the Salafi activists in

¹⁶ For more details, see: George Michael, "The Legend and Legacy of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi", *Defence Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (September 2007), pp. 338-357.

¹⁷ The Jordanian security forces found explosives which had been smuggled into Jordan from Kuwait by Al-Maqdisi, which he then hid in the home of one of his friends, Abu Al-Muntasir. In an interview on Al-Jazeera, the latter stated that he also hid Al-Maqdisi and Al-Zarqawi for three months during the security forces' hunt for them.

Jordan to concentrate their efforts and activities in Jordan's provinces, and to focus on the propaganda side or Da'awa. However, Al-Zarqawi did not heed Al-Maqdisi's wishes and the breach between them widened further, particularly in light of the establishment of the Al-Qaeda organization in Iraq, which was headed by Al-Zarqawi and employed violent terrorist acts against Muslims, including Shiites.

In the "The Death Industry" broadcast on the Al-Arabiya station, a number of commentators explained that Al-Maqdisi sent an irate letter to Al-Zarqawi in July 2004 in response to the pressure which the government brought to bear on Salafiya circles in Jordan, in order to thwart the influence of Al-Zarqawi's militant attitude on these circles. This was due in particular to the media coverage of the showcase attacks and shocking executions carried out by Al-Zarqawi. In the letter, entitled: "Al-Zarqawi: Munasara wa Munashaha" (Al-Zarqawi: Support and Consultation"), Al-Muqdasī urged Al-Zarqawi to stop perpetrating suicide attacks and killing Muslim civilians, including Shiites and Christian civilians:

"I say and stress this, as I hear and follow the chaos raging today in Iraq, which is being utilized to defame the Jihad and its honored image, by blowing up cars or placing explosive bombs on roads, firing mortars in streets and marketplaces and other Muslim sites. The hands of the Jihad fighters must remain clean, so that they are not bloodied by those whom it is forbidden to harm, even if they are unbridled sinners [...]"¹⁸

Al-Maqdisi claimed in his letter that foreign intelligence agents had succeeded in penetrating Al-Zarqawi's organization. His call was supported by 26 additional Jordanian Salafi sheikhs, who published a manifesto which they named: "Rejecting the group which accuses of heresy".¹⁹ However, Al-Maqdisi's call did not help and Al-Zarqawi preferred not to respond, claiming that there were other sheikhs who agreed with his modus operandi and who expressed a positive attitude towards his way of thinking.

Against the backdrop of this tension, posts on the "Midad Al-Sayuf" online forum, consisting of eight long missives, endeavored to present Al-Zarqawi's way of

¹⁸The letter can be found on Al-Maqdisi's site: <http://www.abu-qatada.com/r?i=dtwiam56>

¹⁹http://www.alarabiya.net/save_print.php?print=1&cont_id=67515

thinking as a role model and as the ideal heritage which the Jihadi Salafiya should adopt. The forum claimed that Al-Zarqawi's way of thinking combined the Da'awa and the Jihad, whilst Al-Maqdisi's ideology concentrated on the Da'awa alone, and was therefore lacking. Moreover, the value of his Da'awa was impaired as its administration did not emanate from pure motives, but rather from the narrow interest of strengthening his position and personality cult. During the entire debate there is a clear trend to doubt the authority and religious legitimacy of Al-Maqdisi and his worthiness to rule on religious matters, thereby lessening his influence in Salafi Jihadi circles.

The posts emphasize the perceived existing faults in Al-Maqdisi's personality, and systematically refute the ideas and contentions raised in his letter to Al-Zarqawi and in his books. For example, his claim that Western intelligence agents succeeded in penetrating Al-Zarqawi's organization is presented in a grotesque and ridiculing manner: "Sheikh Al-Maqdisi has made unjustified exaggerations. We are unaware of the well-informed sources mentioned by Al-Maqdisi?.." Another example can be seen in the efforts to show that Al-Maqdisi had a poor understanding of the value of Jihad:

"Al-Maqdisi is suffering from a lack of real understanding of the nature of the Jihad because he has not experienced the real Jihad, which could have helped him to understand its value. It would be fitting for Al-Maqdisi to know what his position is regarding the Jihad and to know how to understand its true value. What connections have you with the Mujahideen. Leave them to their own affairs. You take care of your own affairs and may Allah have mercy upon you! When the Mujahideen leave on their way, they do not look back, they do not listen to the advice of preachers and they ignore the ban to go on Jihad and the call to leave the struggle. They leave on Jihad and fight and see the opposite picture to that which you see. The ideas of Al-Maqdisi are a distortion of the history of Jihad in Afghanistan and of reality. Moreover, they distort the Sharia. Al-Maqdisi is interested in Jihad through diplomacy."

The posts state that by not fulfilling the Jihadi commandments, Al-Maqdisi is assisting the crusaders in their war against Islam. It is further stated that Al-

Maqdisi is a religious cleric with no vision or strategic plan for the liberation of Afghanistan from the hands of the American occupier.

The posts also exhibit anger towards those Muslims who believe that Al-Maqdisi's ideology is important and who feel that his lengthy stay in the Jordanian prison gave him a sharp, pure and correct perception of the religion. According to his detractors, this assumption is basically mistaken and Al-Maqdisi is not entitled to belong to the intellectuals of the Salafi movement.

Another criticism appearing in the debate is directed at the media. It is accused of supporting Al-Maqdisi in his claim of being a religious cleric who is knowledgeable on the sources of Islam and who has the appropriate qualifications to write about Islamic intellectual matters. For example, the writer comes out against the documentary television program "The Death Industry", following the presentation of Al-Maqdisi in a positive light and of his being "one of the pillars of the Jihad and an intellectual of the Salafi Jihad movement."

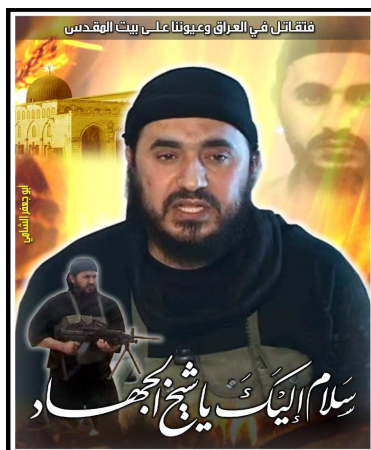
In contrast to the criticism of Al-Maqdisi, the discourse includes support of the positions and ideology of Al-Zarqawi, who according to the writers, succeeded in combining the fulfillment of the Jihadi commandment with the Da'awa. The authors emphasize that Al-Zarqawi experienced the true nature of the Jihad. His behavior in the Iraqi arena and his statements at the beginning of the 1990s in justification of the Jihad against the Russians in Afghanistan, were said to be excellent proof of this. Abu Qudama, Al-Zarqawi's brother-in-law, is also quoted as a supporter of Al-Zarqawi's ideology and as a critic of Al-Maqdisi's way: "Al-Maqdisi's way, his beliefs and his preaching, are in direct contrast to Islam's Sharia. He and others have invented obscene innovations to the religion, the faith and particularly the Tawhid".²⁰

As far as can be understood from everything written about these two figures, it would appear that the writers are trying to convince their readers to ignore Al-Maqdisi's ideology, as Al-Zarqawi himself had done. This presumption is also supported in the interpretation of one of the experts who participated in the

²⁰ The correspondence also criticizes other Jihadi forums, such as Shumukh Al-Islam, for showing a negative attitude towards Abu Qudama's persona.

television series "The Death Industry". He claimed that there is a great likelihood that the Salafi model which Al-Zarqawi left behind him, still exists amongst Salafi-Jihadi circles. Nevertheless, his disciples prefer to suppress this at the present time due to the prevailing circumstances, and then to raise it again when the circumstances are ripe.

Notwithstanding these controversies, one should remember that the ideologies of Al-Maqdisi and Al-Zarqawi are similar, even though Al-Maqdisi does not express this openly. Both of them believe that the Shiites constitute the antithesis to the Salafi way, and that they must be contained. However, in contrast to Al-Zarqawi, Al-Maqdisi believes (like a number of other Al-Qaeda intellectuals) that most of the resources and efforts must be directed to fighting the Crusader enemy, and the fight against the Shiites must be postponed to a later stage. An additional overlapping point relates to the issue of toppling the oppressive Arab regimes which, according to Al-Maqdisi, is imperative and legitimate, but is the second priority after the struggle against the "distant enemy". Hassan Abu Haniyeh, a researcher of Islamic groups, referred to this issue and claimed that due to the prevailing circumstances, Al-Maqdisi prefers to focus on the Da'awa throughout Jordan and to avoid a direct confrontation with the regime.²¹



Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi



Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi

²¹ http://www.alarabiya.net/save_print.php?print=1&cont_id=67515

The struggle for the Salafiya image in Iraq

Dr. Muhsin Al-Jamili, Professor of Islamic Traditional Law at the Islamic University in Baghdad, states that the term Salafiya is a source of confusion for many people. He contends that the Iraqi Salafi movement is not composed of one element, but there are a great many people who, to all intents and purposes, see it as a radical militant stream. He believes that a deeper look will show that in Iraq there are two types of Salafiya: a) The pragmatic Salafi stream, which claims that the use of violence is not necessary; b) Other Salafis, including Al-Qaeda, who believe that a militant approach must first and foremost be taken against the occupiers. The tension amongst the Salafi movement in Iraq was the main issue dealt with in the episode of "The Death Industry" which was broadcast on the Al-Arabiya station on 31st October, 2008.

From the start of the Iraqi occupation in 2003, the pragmatic Salafis in Iraq (who mostly live in the Salah Al-Din region) felt that a moderate approach should be taken towards the foreign forces. Moreover, they even encourage the local population to join the ranks of the army and the police in order to rehabilitate Iraq's institutions. A Salafi sheikh in Iraq, Abu Manar Al-Alami, is mostly responsible for this trend. He explained to the television program how he was recruited into the political process in his country, and of his strong wish to participate in the rebuilding and rehabilitation of its institutions. He stated that he had issued a fatwa during the first days of Iraq's occupation, permitting Iraqis to hold government positions. He also published a book entitled: "Dahr Al-Muthalib 'ala Tawliat Al-Muslim 'ala Al-Muslim min Kafir Mutaghalib," (*دحر المثلب على تولية*) - *المسلم على المسلم من كافر متغلب* - Defeating those slandering the appointment of a Muslim to rule Muslims on behalf of a conquering infidel), which was intended to deflect the criticisms of the slanderers against the participation of the local inhabitants in the new government. He claimed that the book provided legitimacy to many Iraqis to hold Iraqi government positions, but he clarified that notwithstanding the provision of this permit, the moderate Salafis prefer to stay away from political life due to their beliefs.

Sheikh Abu Manar Al-Alami (in his fifties) presides as head of the "Awareness, Guidance and Da'awa Council" (Majlis Al-Taw'iyaa, Al-Irshad wa-l-Da'wa) of the Salafi movement in Iraq. He is considered to be a tough Al-Qaeda opponent, as well as an opponent of militant Islamic groups taking terrorist actions against the country and even against the Americans themselves.²² He also rejects the use of the "Takfir" principle as a tool to goad political adversaries.²³

In the book "Defeating those slandering the appointment of a Muslim to rule Muslims on behalf of a conquering infidel", Al-Alami refers to four main issues raised by his critics from Al-Qaeda and other militant movements. The book is divided into four chapters according to these issues: A) The question of loyalty and shirking. This is with regards to a Muslim who is operating alongside the conquering establishments - should loyalty be given to the conqueror or to the Muslims? B) Is the government of a Muslim ruler, appointed by the conquering forces, considered legitimate? C) Should Iraq be deemed both as a "Dar Al-Harb" (a house of war) and as a "Dar Al-Kufr" (a house of disbelief) at the same time? D) The issue of Takfir.

Al-Alami's stance is clear in this book, and he provides many quotations from the sources in order to prove that a Muslim ruler appointed by an infidel conqueror to rule over his Muslim brothers, is a legitimate government to all intents and purposes. As an example he quotes the story of Joseph, who was appointed ruler of Egypt on behalf of the infidel Egyptian king.

In the book, Al-Alami published several additional fatwas allowing Salafi Muslims to join the security forces and to carry weapons. Under his influence several Salafis joined the Iraqi security forces, including Nida Abbas, who joined the police Counter-Terrorism Force Unit. According to Nida, there is a moral duty (as stated in the fatwa) to serve in the military and police forces in order to maintain public peace and the state's security.

In fact, the integration of the moderate Salafi into the Iraqi state's security forces has not been well received by Al-Qaeda, which views them as a legitimate target for terrorist attack, as they are considered heretic Muslims. According to Al-Alami, one of the manifestations of this hostility is the recurring attacks of Al-Qaeda proponents on mosques identified with the moderate Salafia in Iraq.

²² Lui Al-Mahmud, "The Sunni Islamic Forces in Iraq and their Stance Towards the Occupation", Islam On-Line, August 13 2008.

http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout&cid=1203758980232

²³ <http://www.almadapaper.com/sub/06-412/p03.htm>

According to him, he himself fell victim to one of these terrorist attacks and was almost killed when at the mosque during the time of prayer. He was saved but several of his family members were killed in this murderous attack. According to Nida, Al-Qaeda followers, or as he calls them – “Al-Khawarij”,²⁴ are quick to pronounce any Muslim who does not agree with them as an infidel, and then act towards his elimination. In September 2007 he was also caught in a terrorist attack, during which a grenade was thrown at him. According to him, these brutal acts show the ugly face of the Salafi Jihadists, who corrupt Iraq with their acts of violence. Nida added that the moderate Salafi sheikhs vehemently refuted a request made by Al-Qaeda supporters to issue a fatwa allowing attacks on Muslims, due to the sheikhs’ belief that the blood of any Muslims is not to be abandoned and cannot be spilled.

According to Ahmad Al-Fahl, commander of the counter-terrorism unit in the Salah Al-Din district, the tension between the two Salafia groups in Iraq already existed at the time of Baath rule. The rulers did not differentiate between the two groups, and therefore displayed a unified rigid attitude towards them which was expressed through prolonged incarcerations etc. According to Al-Fahl, Al-Qaeda began spreading its militant ideology throughout Iraq as early as 1998, in particular within the Salah Al-Din district. An Al-Qaeda devotee in Iraq received large sums of money from Osama bin Laden for the spreading of the Al-Qaeda ideology. In contrast, Al-Fahl testifies that during his time of incarceration at the time of the Baath regime, he met Abu Manar Al-Alami’s Salafi group, which was tolerant and preached to adherence to God in peaceful ways. There was a dialogue between the moderate Salafia and Al-Qaeda, but with the American occupation this dialogue turned into a physically violent confrontation, and was especially intensified with the call of Al-Qaeda supporters to murder Muslims who did not conform to their ideology. According to him, this militant idea is also seen in the identification of the “Muslim Brotherhood” with Al-Qaeda’s way, while the moderate Salafia disagrees completely with this principle.

Notwithstanding, Dr. Muhsin Al-Jamili believes that the pragmatic Salafi movement prefers postponing the confrontation with the conqueror to a later

²⁴ An ancient Muslim cult from the early days of Islam that pronounced those Muslims who did not conform to its way, as infidels, so as to allow their execution.

time, as it understands that its power is no match to the conqueror's in the present time, "that is, the acceptable fighting conditions are that they have military equipment and technology of an adequate level etc". According to Al-Jamili the pragmatic Salafi movement agreed to cooperate with the occupying forces as it sees this as a significant contribution to the elimination of the corruption prevalent in the Iraqi society, and as a contribution for helping the rehabilitation of the country's institutions. Once these are rehabilitated and corruption is eliminated, an easier absorption and reception of the Salafi ideology will be possible, as well as their preaching for the uniqueness of God etc. Al-Jamili adds that the pragmatic Salafi movement will fight the occupation as soon as it sees that the face of Iraq has turned in a more positive direction. That is, a transition from the phase of the realization of the rehabilitation of Iraq to the driving out of the outside enemy. According to Al-Jamili, Al-Qaeda has failed in winning over the sympathy of the Iraqi street to its actions and ideology.²⁵

The nature of Salafism

On 28th February 2009, the views of Nabil Al-Awdhi²⁶ (born in 1970) regarding the nature of Salafism, were posted on the "Al-Tahadi" Jihadi online forum. In the post, Al-Awdhi bemoans the perversion of the true nature of Salafism, in the face of the tendencies of many groups to attribute themselves to the Salafi movement. In his eyes, this trend contributes to the many different facets of the Salafi movement and the great confusion amongst the Muslims regarding the true nature of Salafism.

According to him, Salafism is a mirror to the way of pure faith based on the Quran and the Sunna. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the following generation, this way was kept. However, there is "a problem that there are Muslims who attribute themselves to this way and distort it without noticing". According to him, these Muslims use the term Salafism in a misleading and crude way:

"Unfortunately you will find that these "scholars" renounce the Islamic groups that preach for Allah, guide those straying and teach people, more

²⁵ "The Industry of Death: Moderate Salafia in Iraq", Al-Arabiya, November 2 2008.

http://www.alarabiya.net/save_print.php?print=1&cont_id=59367

²⁶ Born in Kuwait. An Imam and preacher for Islamic affairs and a Sharia teacher at the Kuwait University. Supervisor of the <http://www.emanway.com> <http://www.mohazarat.net.qa/index21.htm> website.

than they renounce the Jews and the Christians!! At times they scream that these preachers and righteous people are more dangerous than the Jews and the Christians!! In the name of the oppressed Salafia they preach to people to fanaticism and imitation. Salafism (according to them) has come out in order to liberate the people and guide them in the way of the Quran and the Sunna [...]. Salafism is reduced today amongst some of the people to a small number of issues and the understanding of religious clerics, whose number does not exceed the number of fingers on one hand. Those who agree with them are considered to be saved from wandering and from obscene innovation. Those who do not agree with them, even if on one matter only, are considered lost, innovators and doomed to be eliminated [...]. In the name of Salafism they forced on people fanaticism and imitation [...] in the name of Salafism they frightened people from Jihad for Allah, and set for them conditions that cannot be met. One of them even said that there is no Jihad unless the Muslims agree to one Caliph!! And of course, that Caliph must give his permission!! Furthermore, even defensive Jihad is treated as wrong and forbidden”.

Al-Awdhi adds that these same Muslims presenting themselves as Salafi, curse the Mujahideen brothers and prefer defending the infidels, such as the United States. At the conclusion of his argument, Al-Awdhi emphasizes that “what is important is that you be a faithful Muslim worshipping God in the right manner and have good attributes”.²⁷



Nabil Al-Awdhi

²⁷ <http://www.atahadi.com/vb/showthread.php?t=3748>

Summary

The Islamic Salafi movement is not composed of one entity - it has undergone structural and ideological transformations since its inception in the 19th century. It includes three main sub-movements based on the same common denominator of sharing the vision of establishing Islamic Caliphates, but differing in the modus operandi and priorities required for the establishment. The Salafi discourse takes place between the two extremes of the desire to achieve the objectives - through activity within the boundaries of the political system and subject to temporary constraints (such as the presence of a foreign occupying force in Iraq), or the desire to achieve the objective through violence against all those who do not share the Salafi way, including: foreign occupiers, corrupt Muslim leaders and Shiites.

This document reveals the internal discourse surrounding the issues occupying the Salafi Jihadists that is occurring on the global Jihadi websites. This discussion shows the existence of internal arguments amongst radical Salafi ideologists such as Bin Al-Maqdisi and Zarqawi and their followers.

The discourse also sheds light on the importance of recruitment to the Salafi Jihadi movement. For example, in correspondence posted at the "Hanein" online forum, one of the online surfers wished to discuss Al-Qaeda's popularity versus the popularity of the Palestinian Hamas movement and that of the Lebanese Hezbollah organization. The author complains that Hamas' and Hezbollah's popularity is greater than Al-Qaeda's, simply because few Muslims choose to go the Salafi way. Furthermore, he claims that the Salafi Al-Qaeda followers are few in numbers, in particular in Islamic societies where there is Sufi influence. He claims that "in order to be an Al-Qaeda supporter you must walk the Salafi way (that is, follow the Quran and the Sunna and the religious clerics without interpretation) and deny all the tyrants and the gods, who are worshipped [...] afterwards you must shoot at the world and wish for a martyr's death". However, the surfer stated that the Al-Qaeda organization succeeds in recruiting supporters to its ranks due to the religious adherence embodied in the Salafi way.²⁸

²⁸ <http://hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=95299>

To conclude, there exists internal discourse and tension between the various movements of the Salafia and within the Salafi-Jihadi movement itself. This discourse is expressed both in the publication of fatwas and in the remarks of prominent leaders, and in the remarks and correspondence of Salafis in Jihadi websites and online forums. It is apparent that those encouraging the discourse wish to recruit supporters to the ideas of the Salafi-Jihadi movement.