

IN THEIR
OWN
WORDS

Voices of Jihad

COMPILATION AND COMMENTARY

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Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



Preface

It must be stated at the outset that this book is not about Islam as it is practiced in its many varieties in Muslim communities throughout the world. It is not about Islamic fundamentalism or the various Islamist political movements. Rather, it is about a small group among the 1.2 billion Muslims on earth that carries out and promotes terrorism in the name of Islam. Respecting the difference is crucial if the terrorists are to be defeated. This can sometimes be difficult, because parts of the terrorists' messages resonate with the perceptions and experience of many Muslims. Nonetheless, the distinction is crucial, and the first step in making it is to listen to what the terrorists are actually saying. Their statements are often more appalling and more profoundly revealing than the accounts in many of the books that have been written about jihadi terrorism. This book offers unfiltered access to a broad range of the stories, rationales, ideas, and arguments of jihadi terrorists and those who support them. It presents a selected compendium of the actual words of jihadis expressing their views on virtually every subject relevant to their cause. A minimum of introductory and contextual material is provided, so that the reader may experience the full impact of what they are saying—to each other and to the world. It is hoped that this will provide greater insights into the motives, plans, and participants in jihadi terrorism, as well as the nature of the threat they pose. Further material is available at the RAND Voices of Jihad Database at http://www.rand.org/research_areas/terrorism/database/.

This book should be of interest to both students and researchers and to informed readers seeking a deeper understanding of jihadi terrorism. It may require more of the reader than other works on the subject, because it does not try to explain what is being said, nor does it speculate on why; rather, the jihadis speak for themselves.

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Note on Sources

This book consists largely of quotations from jihadi leaders and writers drawn from their books, manuals, fatwas, communiqués, interviews, web postings, and articles, as well as excerpts from the Qur'an, Hadith,¹ and earlier Islamic writers and scholars. The amount of primary material related to jihad is vast. In addition to the Qur'an and the Hadith quoted by jihadis, the Internet has exponentially increased the amount of available jihadi material. By one count, the number of terrorist-related web sites grew from 12 in 1997 to 4,500 by 2005 (Weimann, 2005). The subject of al-Qaeda in itself has generated hundreds of thousands of Internet postings.

Translated material is taken from a variety of sources, ranging from translations by the authors or publishers to the Open Source Center (OSC) (formerly the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)) and the BBC, to private organizations such as the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) and SITE.² Several excerpts have been translated by RAND and are so noted.

Some of these sources are controversial and have been criticized for being biased. We have not attempted to present a balanced collection of Muslim views in this book. Because the book comprises original jihadi writings, the issue of balance is not germane, except as it pertains to conflicting jihadi views. These are fully reflected in this work. Moreover, the sheer volume and repetitiveness of jihadi statements help to ensure consistency and minimize misconstrual. Thus, while the translations may differ in quality and may even reflect particular agendas, they are more than adequate to capture the intent of the jihadi authors.

It should also be noted that, for brevity, we have included little jihadi poetry and few Qur'anic statements. This has the unfortunate effect of failing to convey the sense of fervor and even rapture contained in these excerpts or the extent to which jihadis seek to tap into the religious and emotional roots of Islamic culture.

Many Internet citations can be located only with difficulty or not at all. The web sites come and go, closed down by various authorities or abandoned by their

¹ Collections of reports on the sayings, decisions, and life of the Prophet.

² Previously a nonprofit service monitoring terrorist Web sites, SITE has become a for-profit organization called SITE Intelligence Group.

creators, who may switch to password-protected sites. According to Jane's, authors frequently hijack existing URLs and move sites regularly to avoid attracting the attention of hackers or Internet service providers (Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, 2004). Aliases are common among authors of militant manuals and pamphlets who wish to hide their true identity from security forces (al-Zaydi, 2005).

The authors of jihadi statements may adopt multiple pseudonyms and *noms de guerre*. Complicating things still further, the names are translated from the Arabic, and many are spelled differently in different sources.

Not all the excerpts in this book are from prominent jihadis. Some have been selected because they are representative, others because they are contradictory, and still others because they provide a unique insight into the jihadi mentality.

Comments or insertions by the editor are enclosed within braces, while material in brackets and parentheses is from the selected text and may have been inserted by the source, the translator, or both.

Introduction

In the 20th century, the West confronted three totalitarian revolutionary movements: nazism, communism, and fascism. Now the world is under assault from a fourth such movement whose members operate under many labels—Islamic terrorists or extremists, Salafi militants, Islamo-Fascists, and jihadis, to name a few. In this book, I use the term jihadi, because the movement is focused on carrying out “holy war,” which is one of the meanings of jihad.¹

The four movements share an important characteristic: Their adherents go to great lengths to explain what they stand for and what they intend to do. Nazism followed the course laid out in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*; the Bolsheviks pursued the dreams of Marx and Engels and the plans of Lenin; fascism was fed by more than a decade of editorials by Benito Mussolini in his newspaper *Il Popolo d’Italia* (“*The People of Italy*”)² before he came to power. Interestingly, the societies targeted by these movements paid little heed to their murderous blueprints until late in the movements’ development.

Before 9/11, the jihadis, who avowedly seek the destruction of Western democracy and the conversion of the world to their concept of Islam, were also given scant attention, although they had widely broadcast their intentions and had carried out numerous terrorist acts. Since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., jihadis have redoubled their outreach efforts, increasingly exploiting the Internet to propagate their vision of the world, their interpretation of Islam, their version of the history of the Middle East, their grievances, their rationale for terror, their strategy, and even their tactics.

It can be argued that jihadism is more difficult for Americans to fathom than the earlier totalitarian movements, which originated in Europe, because jihad comes out of a culture largely unfamiliar to us and does not speak with a single voice. To bridge this gap in understanding, much has been written by analysts of the jihadi move-

¹ The literal definition of jihad is “struggle in the way of God.” For a fuller description of various meanings of jihad, see pp. 5–7 and 79.

² *Il Popolo d’Italia* was founded by Mussolini and was published from November 15, 1914, through July 24, 1943. Its masthead bore the motto “A revolution is an idea that has found bayonets.”

ment. This book takes a different approach, offering the actual words of the jihadis so that the reader can get closer to their thinking and mindset. It creates, in effect, a self-portrait of jihadism. Instead of describing what jihadis stand for, it presents their own descriptions. I have attempted to include as little editorial comment as possible, using it only to draw attention to the key points and put the material in context. This asks a bit more of the reader, but the unfiltered impact of the jihadi statements may lead to deeper and more powerful insights.

From Glory to Decline

Making sense of the rage and ruthlessness that characterize jihadism requires peering into the abyss of loss and humiliation felt by some Muslims over the collapse of Islamic civilization over the past 400 years.

After conquering and converting the largely pagan tribes of the Arabian Peninsula by the time of Muhammad's death in 632 CE,³ the followers of Islam burst onto a world scene dominated by the empires of Persia and Byzantium. In slightly more than 100 years, the Muslims had vanquished the Persians, and the Islamic empire soon stretched from the Pyrenees Mountains in Spain to the foothills of the Himalayas. A magnificent civilization emerged at a time when Europe was frozen in the Dark Ages. Medicine, mathematics, and science flourished in the Muslim lands and provided the kindling for the Renaissance of Europe.

The Muslims repelled the onslaught of the Crusaders in the 12th century, and the absorption of the Turkish and Mongol invaders into Islam in the 10th and 13th centuries, respectively, was a testament to the religion's power and appeal. In 1453, the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople and put an end to the last vestige of the Roman Empire. They then spread into southeastern Europe, occupying what are now Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Macedonia, and parts of Ukraine. By the end of the 17th century, the crescent flag was planted outside the walls of Vienna. Had the Turkish armies succeeded in capturing the city, they might have rolled through much of Christendom. But they were driven back, and many historians mark that event as the beginning of the Muslim decline.

By the 19th century, industrializing Europe was picking apart pieces of the Ottoman Empire, which came to be known as the "sick man of Europe." World War I finished it off. The Versailles Peace Conference divided up the Ottoman caliphate, which had been on the losing side, and parceled it out to the European powers, which became colonialists in all but name.

The sense of loss and humiliation that resulted from the decline of the Ottomans and the ensuing colonialist period fueled a reform movement that had begun in the 19th century. It was aimed at overcoming the desuetude of Muslims, and in particu-

³ Common Era, the term now frequently used instead of AD.

lar, of the Arab world. The movement marched in at least three ranks: the modernizers, who felt that Islam needed to be modified and adapted to the contemporary world by adding elements from the West; the secularists, from which Arab socialism, Arab nationalism, and Pan-Arabism derived; and the Salafis, a term currently used to describe fundamentalists who want to return to the pure Islam of the Prophet and the first four “rightly guided” caliphs⁴ (the Salaf).⁵ Today, Salafis seek to replace the civil institutions that were imported from or imposed by the West with Islamic or shari’a⁶ law. Jihadism has its roots in this movement.

Since World War II, the region has been decolonized, but the birth of Israel and its repeated defeats of Arab armies, the failures and corruption of postcolonial secular Arab governments, and the repression of Islamic organizations all fed the growth of Salafi extremism. The invasion of Muslim Afghanistan by the “godless communists” of the former Soviet Union provoked the fundamentalists to unfurl the banner of jihad. At the time, they were supported by the United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. After the Soviets were driven out, it became clear that the war had been a catalyst for turning a handful of small, scattered terror groups into an extensive, coherent, and skilled jihadi network that was not going to simply fade away. Al-Qaeda was, and remains, an important node in that network, even though it has metastasized into subgroups such as al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Holy Places (Saudi Arabia) and al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (Iraq), and it has spawned cells around the world that are inspired by its ideology.

Today, the targets of jihad are the secular regimes and monarchies that jihadis regard as apostate and the nations of the West that support them. Hence, 9/11. Additionally, the war in Iraq has become fertile ground for further jihadi recruitment, training, propaganda, and networking.

Who Are the Jihadis?

The term “war on terror” has produced significant confusion about how to define the enemy. Terrorism is, of course, a tactic, not an ideology. It has been used by the Irish

⁴ The first caliph, Abu Bakr (632–634 CE); the second caliph, ‘Umar (634–644 CE); the third caliph, Uthman (644–656 CE); and the fourth caliph, Ali (656–661 CE).

⁵ Ironically, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Salafis were reformists who allied with secular modernists, in notable contrast to their current fundamental ideological manifestation. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* attributes this reformist mindset to the leadership of Egyptian Mufti Muhammad Abduh but states that after Abduh’s death, his disciple Rashid Rida turned the movement toward conservatism and orthodoxy. This later, fundamentalist brand of Salafism is sometimes distinguished from its more moderate parent by the term “Neo-Salafism.”

⁶ The Arabic word shar’ia refers to the laws and way of life prescribed by Allah for his servants. The shari’a deals with ideology and faith, behavior and manners, and practical daily matters (“USC–MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts,” undated).

Republican Army, the Zionist Stern Gang, the Mau Mau in Kenya, the Viet Cong, the Red Brigades in Italy, and other organizations. In the Middle East, a number of Arab organizations employ terror. In Palestine, there are several such groups: the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), a secular, socialist, national liberation movement that sponsors the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade; Hamas, a Sunni⁷ fundamentalist Islamist organization committed to resistance to Israel; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a communist group. In Lebanon, Hezbollah (“Party of God”) is a Shi’a⁸ fundamentalist political party that was the first organization to use suicide bombing. And of course, there is al-Qaeda and its offshoots in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as well as other similar groups elsewhere in the Middle East, Indonesia, the Philippines, Algeria, and Europe. This book focuses largely on al-Qaeda and its offshoots.

Jihadism is utopian. It seeks nothing less than the creation of a worldwide fundamentalist Islamic state. Its adherents believe that this can be achieved only through violence. It targets both governments in Muslim lands and those in the West that support them. Most jihadis claim to belong to the Sunni sect of Islam, and some regard all others as apostates whom they may kill. Like Wahhabis and other fundamentalists, they insist that the only true Islam is that which was practiced by Muhammad and his early followers, the Salaf, and therefore they sometimes call themselves Salafis. But jihadis go further, insisting that “holy war” is the central tenet and obligation of Islam. Increasingly, jihadis are regarded by established Muslim clerics (the *ulama*) as a separate and deviant sect. They reject the authority of even the most distinguished *ulama* if they disagree with them.

Some consider certain Shi’a groups, such as Hezbollah and the Moqtadar Sadr Mahdi Army (a militia fighting in Iraq,⁹ which imitates Sunni jihadist terrorist tactics), to be jihadis as well. Although Hezbollah also follows certain jihadi doctrines (some quotes from Hezbollah members are included in this book), its agenda is focused on Lebanon, which distinguishes it from the broader jihadi movement. Moreover, the Shi’a, especially those like the Mahdi Army, have become mortal enemies of jihadis. Hamas is a Sunni organization, and much of its ideology is jihadist, but it has the more immediate objective of expelling Israel from Palestine. There are several Hamas excerpts in this book, especially relating to suicide bombing and martyrdom. Neither Hamas nor Hezbollah has the global ambitions and operations of the jihadis, although Iran appears to be using Hezbollah to expand its influence in the Middle East. All of these groups would call themselves mujahideen, the generic name for “holy warrior.”

⁷ The largest branch of Islam.

⁸ A branch of Islam that broke away from the Sunni line in 632 CE over succession to the fourth caliph.

⁹ The leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, declared war on the Shi’a, a sectarian war that rages today. He was opposed in this by Osama bin Laden’s deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri. See Chapter Eight for further elaboration of this conflict among jihadis.

Jihadis can also be categorized as Islamists, political movements that want to bring the practice of Islamic law into government. Here, too, the jihadis are at the extreme end of a spectrum. At the moderate end is the Islamist-oriented government of Turkey, a NATO ally and a nation where secularism is enshrined in the constitution. Further along the spectrum, the Muslim Brotherhood is the largest opposition group in the Egyptian Parliament. And finally, there are the Islamists in Sudan who countenance the genocide in Darfur (of non-Arab Muslims), the Taliban, and the jihadis.

The Islamic Factor

Jihadism should not be confused with Islam in general. However, it is necessary to be familiar with some of the features of the religion if one is to understand the background from which jihadism has emerged.

First, becoming a Muslim requires no ceremony, indoctrination, or blessing by a religious authority. One simply must commit oneself to the Five Pillars of Islam:

1. A declaration of faith in Allah alone and the belief that Muhammad is his Prophet
2. Praying five times a day
3. Paying alms (*zakat*)
4. Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan
5. Making the pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj)

To be a practicing Muslim, of course, entails much more. The sources of Muslim belief are based on the Qur'an, which is the revealed word of Allah, and for Sunnis, the Sunnah, the life of Muhammad, his statements, actions, and the things he approved, as set down in reports or stories called Hadith.

Second, Islam has no Pope or synods to decide what is correct doctrine. The proper interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah results from consensus among prominent Islamic scholars (the *ulama*). However, there are no hard and fast rules about who is a prominent scholar or about how many of them form a consensus.

Not surprisingly, Islam has had its share of divisions into sects, the Sunni and Shi'a being the most prominent. Jihadis claim to be orthodox Sunni Muslims, but since they do not recognize the authority of the *ulama*, they shop for scholars who will support their ideology. Osama bin Laden has declared himself able to issue fatwas,¹⁰ even though he lacks the religious qualifications. Though sometimes ambivalent, most mainstream Muslim scholars regard jihadis as "deviants." These scholars, and some

¹⁰ Contrary to popular understanding, fatwas are not legally binding under Islamic law; they are "guidance."

fundamentalist leaders as well, criticize jihadi terrorists for exalting jihad above the Five Pillars of Islam.

Third, this somewhat unstructured system produces tolerance of divergence (*irja*—literally, “suspending judgment”—or, more colloquially, *tasamuler* (toleration) or *taqarub* (reapproachment)), as well as declarations by Muslims of excommunication (*takfir*) against one another. Jihadis have taken *takfir* to the point of declaring that all the governments in the Muslim world are *kuffar* (non-believers). This enables them to ignore traditional Islamic injunctions to not kill fellow Muslims and to obey authority. One seminal jihadi writer has claimed that the entire world is steeped in the pagan ignorance that existed before Islam. Jihadis thus feel justified in taking revolutionary action against their rulers and perpetrating violence against individuals they have declared to be heretics.

Fourth, the literal translation of jihad is “struggle in the way of Allah.” The Qur’an, Hadith, and Sunnah all make reference to jihad as armed struggle. Yet the “struggle” that is jihad also has a meaning that involves introspection and preaching, aspects that predominate for most Muslims. Jihad in the sense of fighting is usually construed as the collective duty of the Muslim community as a whole (*fard kifayah*), rather than as an individual duty. That is, according to Islam, a Muslim ruler determines when and how to engage in jihad or to desist from it. It is not an individual religious duty, such as prayer or fasting, to be discharged by every Muslim (*fard ‘ayn*). Only when infidels invade the lands of Islam does armed jihad become an individual religious duty.

Jihadis, however, incessantly hammer the alarm bell, claiming that Islam is under attack and therefore jihad is now a war of defense and as such has become not only a collective duty but an individual duty. That is, jihad is a total, all-encompassing duty to be carried out by all Muslims—men and women, young and old.

Fifth, Islamic law (*shari’a*) is referred to by jihadis as if it were a consistent and standardized compilation of laws, like the U.S. Federal Code. However, it is not. While *shari’a* is based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah, what it contains is not fixed. *Shari’a* is the product of centuries of commentaries by scholars and decisions by judges, reasoning by analogy and deduction. *Ijtihad*¹¹ interpretation of the Qur’an was common in the early days of Islam as it tried to come to grips with circumstances that differed from those on the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century. In the 10th century, the door of *ijtihad* in Sunni Islam was closed by the consensus of scholars, and interpre-

¹¹ *Ijtihad* is the use of reasoning to interpret God’s will in new situations, from the words of the Qur’an and Hadith of the Sunnah. This reasoning is usually done by analogy (equating an aspect of a new problem or situation with one for which a ruling already exists). Seyyed Hossein Nasr says that in the Sunni world, the gate of *ijtihad* was closed in the 10th century AD, and many authorities have been seeking to open it since the end of the 19th century. Jihadis both condemn and use *ijtihad*, for example, arguing that the use of nuclear bombs is permitted, because the Koran approves the use of catapults, which are also indiscriminate. According to Nasr, in the Shi’ite world, the gate of *ijtihad* has always been open, and it is considered essential that each generation practice it to refresh the body of the law (Nasr, 2002, pp. 79–80).

tation became a sin. Today, there are four separate schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence. Different versions of shari'a are practiced in Saudi Arabia and Central Africa, for example, and the shari'a of the Taliban is not the shari'a of the Saudis.

Sixth, Islam is strictly monotheistic, and Muslims consider Christianity to be in error because its followers believe Jesus is considered a part of God. Catholicism is denounced as polytheistic because of its devotion to the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—not to mention the Virgin Mary and the saints. The Jews are regarded as infidels because they have not accepted Muhammad as God's final prophet. Yet both Christians and Jews are considered to be "people of the book," sharing a kinship with Islam, which recognizes the prophets of the Bible, including Jesus. Muhammad believed he was "reforming" Christianity and Judaism, not creating a new religion.

Finally, Islam was born in war and conflict, unlike Christianity, which, despite the crucifixion and occasional Roman repression, generally developed within the relatively peaceful political structure of a mighty empire. Muhammad was a political and military leader as much as a prophet, while Jesus was prepared to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

In early Muslim society, there was no division of church and state, which is considered fundamental to contemporary government in the West. The early Muslim caliphates were headed by a caliph chosen by the community. He wielded authority, both temporal and religious, and ruled by a law, shari'a, that mixed together what the West would regard as civil and ecclesiastical rules. This is the system that today's jihadis are seeking to establish throughout the world.

This sketch of the historical and religious framework within which jihad has developed and operates provides some context for the excerpts that follow. It is far from a complete history or analysis, but the excerpts, which contain further context, should contribute to a fuller picture of jihadism.

Jihadism Is Not Islam

Middle East history goes far to explain the advent of jihadism. Some observers place responsibility for Muslim terrorism at the feet of Islamic fundamentalists. Certainly, jihadis constantly justify their actions and arguments by references to the verses on violence and war in the Qur'an and the Hadith. But there are also many such passages in the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testament, and Christian history is replete with wars waged in the name of God.¹² Jihadis use the term "Crusad-

¹² In Deuteronomy, book 20, verses 10 and beyond: "When you come near to a city to fight, call for peace; if it responds to your call for peace and opens its doors in front of you then all its people will be under your command and all will be your slaves. If it does not heed to your demands for peace then besiege it, and if your Lord God

ers” to mean Westerners, and none would forget the sack of Jerusalem in 1099. Is modern-day jihadi terrorism caused by or inherent in Islam? No more so than the Aryan Nations are the inevitable product of Christianity. While it is true that all jihadis consider themselves Muslim fundamentalists, few Muslims, or even fundamentalists, are jihadis. Fanaticism and violence are not unique to Islam, or even to religion.

As obvious as this point may be, it is important to stress it. This book focuses on what jihadis say and on their narrow view of Islam. As crucial as it is to understand their beliefs, they in no way represent the whole of Islam.

This book provides selected portions of jihadi writings organized to enable the reader to find quotations on particular topics. However, most of the excerpts deal with more than one topic, so the decision of where to place the quotes is inevitably subjective. For example, everything under 9/11 is about that tragic day, but not everything about 9/11 will be found in that section.

The purpose of this book is not to disseminate jihadi propaganda, but to follow the admonition to “know thine enemy” through its own words. As the following pages dramatically demonstrate, we do have an enemy, and we need to pay attention to how it thinks and what it plans to do to us.

pushes it to you then strike all its males with the edge of your sword. As for the women, children, and beasts and all that is in the city, they are all a booty for you.” In the Gospel of Matthew, in the tenth book, verses 25 and onward: “Think not that I have come to spread peace in the land, but the sword. For, I have come to separate a man from his son, and the son from his father and the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law. . . . and the animosity of the person with his household, whoever loves a son or a daughter more than I will not deserve me, and whosoever does not take his cross and follow me also does not deserve me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find me.”