



Al-Qaida

after Ten Years of War

**A Global Perspective of Successes,
Failures, and Prospects**



Edited by

Norman Cigar and Stephanie E. Kramer

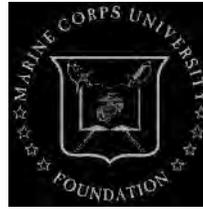
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Al-Qaida and Terrorism in the Arab East:

Rise, Decline, and the Effects of Doctrine Revisions and the Arab Revolutions

Amr Abdalla and Arezou Hassanzadeh

This paper assesses the presence and influence of Al-Qaida and like-minded groups in the Arab East (Mashriq) in the last 10 years, with particular focus on that presence and influence in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt. Using a framework based on the degree of links between Al-Qaida and operatives in those countries, we examine the changes that may have occurred within the groups and the resultant effects on security. We follow our country analyses with an argument that two major processes—Doctrine Revisions (*Muragaat Fikriya*, or *Muragaat Fiqhiya*)¹ among the jihadist activists and the 2011 Arab Awakening—are making significant contributions to the eradication of the root religious, cultural, and political underpinnings of terrorism in the name of Islam, as well as attenuating the influence of Al-Qaida and similar groups in the Arab East. The recent Arab revolutions, along with the Doctrine Revisions that have been implemented widely in Egypt and elsewhere, constitute the most effective preventive measures for reducing the recruiting pool for radical terrorist groups at all levels.

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1 The term “Doctrine Revisions” refers to the process that leaders of militant Egyptian groups, especially Islamic Jihad and Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya, embarked on in the 1990s to reflect upon the religious interpretations that had justified committing acts of violence against governments and civilians threatening their efforts to establish their version of an Islamic state and society. The process succeeded in transforming the beliefs and approaches of several of the leaders of those organizations who later, with the support of the Egyptian government, produced literature proving the fallacy of their violent interpretations and invited militants to repent and resort instead to peaceful means to achieve their objectives. The process was later replicated in other countries such as Libya, Yemen, and Indonesia.

A major assumption in this paper is that militant Muslim movements worldwide, including in the Arab East, are more often than not loosely connected organizationally, while members of such groups usually share similar ideologies and opt for similar militant approaches against their enemies. They do not always develop direct organizational links, but occasionally link with each other to conduct specific militant acts. One important implication for security and legal counterterrorism efforts is that attempts to establish direct organizational links among those groups—which is usually needed to prosecute those who had committed acts of terror—fail to bring about convictions in courts of law because such linkage is easily contested. Security counterterrorism efforts also run the risk of failing to detect large numbers of such groups when the search is focused on groups that are organizationally tied to Al-Qaida or other known organizations.

Accordingly, we apply a framework that proposes that militant Muslim movements in the Arab East vary in their degree of relation and connection to Al-Qaida. We suggest that there are four levels of such relation and connection. The first level includes groups that are directly related to Al-Qaida organizationally. These are groups that operate with direct instructions, and with organizational support, from known Al-Qaida leaders. The organization that operated in Iraq under Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi was an example of a level one group. A second level includes groups that are relatively large and organized yet not directly connected to Al-Qaida organizationally. Instead, such groups adhere to a great extent to the same beliefs, ideologies, and modes of operation as Al-Qaida. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Yemen is an example of such a group. Level three includes groups that share the same ideologies and beliefs but that are hardly large or organized. These are usually gatherings of youths who attend neighborhood mosques and eventually become radical and militant in their interpretations of their religious duties towards society, which they define as an enemy of Islam. Such groups are usually made up of a small number of individuals and may suddenly launch an act of terror. As these bands become more radical, they may connect or coordinate their efforts with like-minded organizations or other groups of youths. These groups have been responsible for repeated acts of terror in Egypt and elsewhere over the past two decades. Finally, level four groups are primarily composed of outlaws who, for example, deal in illegal drugs or arm smuggling. They take on a religious disguise that gives them legitimacy in their communities, and at times they may collaborate with level one and level two groups to trade protection in return for financial support.

Depending on several factors, especially the degree of damage inflicted on organized level one and two groups by security and legal agencies, groups may move along the continuum of connectedness to Al-Qaida. For example, Al-Qaida in Iraq is moving away from level one towards a level two connection after sustaining severe blows to their infrastructure. Level three groups usually remain at that stage and continue to be the ones that elude security efforts to the greatest extent, as they are often homegrown and have little detectable linkage to level one and two groups. Level four groups also usually remain connected to level one and two groups, and the continuity of their connection depends on the stability of the militant groups to which they are tied. It is worth noting that we do not find any level four groups in this specific review; however, the distinction exists in other case studies, and thus we choose to include it.

In the following sections, we will examine the state of militant Muslim movements in the Arab East using the framework of organizational proximity to Al-Qaida.

Yemen

Background

Emerging in Yemen in January 2009, Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is the best known Al-Qaida-affiliated group in the Arabian Peninsula region, and it is notably active in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The presence of Al-Qaida in Yemen, however, can be traced back to the 1990s. The presence of Al-Qaida in Yemen is distinguishable in two different phases: the first phase from May 1998 to November 2003 and the second phase from February 2006 to the present.

First Phase (May 1998–November 2003)

During this phase, the presence of Al-Qaida in Yemen can be found either in local Islamic groups' modus operandi or in operations conducted by Al-Qaida members as a part of their global jihad ideology within the territory of Yemen. Among the groups active during this period, the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA) was one of the most prominent. Abd Al-Rahim Al-Nashiri, Abu Ali Al-Harathi, and Muhammad Hamdi Al-Ahdal were the three Al-Qaida members planning and conducting terrorist operations in Yemen.

The Aden-Abyan Islamic Army

The AAIA initially was established as an informal group of “Arab Afghan” jihadists who, after their return from fighting against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, gravitated around Zayn Al-Abdin Al-Mihdhar, alias Abu Hassan.² AAIA gradually became one of the prominent independent Islamic militant organizations in Yemen in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In May 1998, AAIA declared as its main objectives deposing the Yemeni regime, establishing an Islamic state under the sharia, and eliminating all Western interests from Yemen. Earlier that month, Yemeni security forces had attacked the AAIA camp in Abyan, claiming that jihadists aimed “to train and resume their halted activities” in Yemen after their return from Afghanistan.³

AAIA engaged in some terrorist operations, such as kidnappings and bombings, in pursuit of their objectives. Two of their most significant operations included the kidnapping of 16 foreigners in December 1998, which led to the execution of their leader Abu Hasan Zayn Al-Abdin Al-Mihdhar in October 1999⁴ and his subsequent replacement by Shaykh Khalid Abd Al-Nabi (alias Khalid Abd Al-Rabb Al-Nabi Al-Yazidi) as the new AAIA leader, and the attack on the USS *Cole* (DDG 67) in the port of Aden in October 2000.

First Phase Links with the Central Al-Qaida Leadership

The relationship between AAIA and Al-Qaida is ambiguous. AAIA has declared its support to Al-Qaida in some of its statements. In its *Country Terrorism Reports* from 2004 to 2006, the U.S. Department of State reported that AAIA expressed support for Usama Bin Ladin in its early communiqués in 1998. It has also been claimed that “when the Yemeni government tried to close the Islamic Army’s training camp, a Bin Ladin representative attempted to mediate.”⁵ Later that year, AAIA announced its support and praise for Al-

2 Sheila Carapico, “Yemen and the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army,” *MERIP Press Information Note* 35, 18 October 2000.

3 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, “Yemen: Whether al-Jihad or any other terrorist organization had a presence in Yemen between 1994 and August 1995, and whether al-Jihad was active in the country before or after this period,” 12 February 2003, accessed 30 May 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,IRBC,.,YEM,3f7d4e3ce,0.html>.

4 “Tourists’ kidnapper executed in Yemen,” *Guardian* (United Kingdom), 18 October 1999, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/oct/18/yemen>.

5 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, “Yemen: Whether al-Jihad.”

Qaida's attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania,⁶ expressed its support for Usama Bin Ladin, and encouraged the Yemeni people to attack Americans and destroy their property after an American raid on Bin Ladin's camp in Afghanistan.⁷

Moreover, there are allegations of cooperation between the two groups in some of the operations conducted in Yemen. AAIA is suspected of cooperating with Al-Qaida in a number of small-scale bombings in Aden and Abyan,⁸ as well as in the October 2000 attack on the USS *Cole*,⁹ the attempted attack on the USS *The Sullivans* (DDG 68) in January 2000, and the suicide boat attack on the oil tanker MV *Limburg* in October 2002.¹⁰ AAIA renounced violence in 2003, and, as stated by its last leader, Shaykh Khalid, it cannot definitively be said "whether [the AAIA] actually exists and is effective or anything else."¹¹

While the relationship between AAIA and Al-Qaida is foggy, Al-Qaida had at least three operatives in Yemen at this time: Abd Al-Rahim al-Nashiri, Abu Ali Al-Harhi, and Muhammad Hamdi Al-Ahdal (aka Abu Issam Al-Makki).

Abd Al-Rahim al-Nashiri joined Al-Qaida officially in 1998 and functioned as Al-Qaida's commander in the entire Arab peninsula from late 2000 onward.¹²

6 "Aden-Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA) (Yemen)," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 15 October 2010, accessed 13 June 2011, <http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-World-Insurgency-and-Terrorism/Aden-Abyan-Islamic-Army-AAIA-Yemen.html>.

7 National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), "Terrorist Organization Profile: Aden Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA)," University of Maryland, accessed 30 May 2011, http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data_collections/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=4.

8 Abdu Zinah, "Qiyadat al-Jihad Dakhil al-Sujun al-Misriya Ta'kuf 'ala l'dad Bayan Mubadarat Waqf al-Unf" ("The Commanders of al-Jihad inside Egyptian Prisons Are Engaging in Preparing a Communiqué for an Initiative for Halting Violence," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, (London) 19 April 2007a, 1.

9 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Yemen: Whether al-Jihad."

10 "Aden-Abyan Islamic Army," *Global Security*, 7 June 2005, accessed 11 June 2011, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/aden-abyan.htm>.

11 Jamestown Foundation, "Al-Qaeda Usurps Yemen's Aden-Abyan Army," *Terrorism Monitor* 8, no. 41 (2010), accessed 16 June 2011, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37162&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=26&cHash=f6533561fd.

12 "Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri," *Global Jihad*, 7 December 2007, accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=304.

He had a leading role in the attempted attack on *The Sullivans* in January 2000 and the successful attack on the *Cole* in October 2000. The *Limburg* attack in October 2002 has also been one of his achievements in Yemen. About a month after the *Limburg* attack, al-Nashiri was captured in the United Arab Emirates in November 2002 and handed over to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹³

Abu Ali Al-Harhi fought alongside Usama Bin Ladin against Soviet forces in Afghanistan and later became a close associate of his in Sudan in the early 1990s. Abu Ali Al-Harhi was considered Al-Qaida's chief operative in Yemen.¹⁴ He is suspected of being involved in the attack on the *Cole* in 2000 and the *Limburg* attack in 2002. Al-Harhi is believed to have been killed in an attack by a U.S. Predator drone aircraft in November 2002.¹⁵

Muhammad Hamdi Al-Ahdal was believed to be Al-Qaida's second man in Yemen after Al-Harhi. He fought in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya and traveled to Afghanistan several times. Al-Ahdal had a significant role in "financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf or in support of [Al-Qaida] . . . supplying, selling or transferring arms and related material to [Al-Qaida] . . . [or] otherwise supporting acts or activities of [Al-Qaida]" in Yemen.¹⁶ He also participated in the attacks on the *Cole* and the *Limburg*. Al-Ahdal was arrested in November 2003.¹⁷

Second Phase (February 2006–Present)

With its most significant members killed or arrested and its supporting groups weakened, Al-Qaida's presence in Yemen became rather insignificant beginning in late 2003. On February 3, 2006, however, a new phase of Al-Qaida in Yemen

13 Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of Al Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 251–53.

14 "Profile: Ali Qaed Senyan al-Harhi," *BBC News*, 5 November 2002, accessed 7 June 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2404443.stm.

15 "CIA 'Killed Al-Qaeda Suspects' in Yemen," *BBC News*, 5 November 2002, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/2402479.stm>.

16 United Nations Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1267, *United Nations*, 29 November 2006, accessed 4 June 2011, http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/1267/1267_guidelines.pdf.

17 "Yemeni 'Al-Qaeda Chief' Captured," *BBC News*, 25 November 2003, accessed 7 June 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3238188.stm.

commenced. Twenty-three of the most wanted prisoners escaped from the Political Security Central Prison in Sanaa, 13 of whom were accused of involvement in the *Cole* and *Limburg* attacks.¹⁸ Among those escapees who proved to be the most problematic were Nassar Al-Wahishi, a former personal assistant to Bin Ladin¹⁹ and Qasim Al-Raimi.

After escaping from the prison, Al-Wahishi and Al-Raimi started to form a new generation of Al-Qaida in Yemen, consisting of both recruits and experienced jihadists returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁰ Compared to the old generation, this new generation of Al-Qaida in Yemen tends to target the government more directly. This can be linked to the statement released by Bin Ladin in July 2006, addressing President Ali Abdullah Saleh as the “traitor who is submissive to America.”²¹ According to one analyst:

The older generation, while passionate about global jihad, was more concerned with local matters, and more willing to play by the time-honored Yemeni rules of bargaining and negotiating in order to keep Saleh from destroying their safe haven. Not so with the new generation—they willingly criticize Saleh harshly, and seem immune to the lure of the negotiation room.²²

Known as Al-Qaida in Yemen, this new generation of Al-Qaida, with Al-Wahishi as its leader and Al-Raimi as its military commander, conducted several terrorist operations in Yemen before January 2009. A notable example is the attack on the U.S. embassy in Sanaa in September 2008.²³

18 “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” *Yemen Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.yementimes.com/defaultdet.aspx?SUB_ID=35571.

19 Sudarsan Raghavan, “Al-Qaeda Group in Yemen Gaining Prominence,” *Washington Post*, 28 December 2009, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/27/AR2009122702022.html>.

20 “Profile: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” *BBC News*, 14 June 2011, accessed 15 June 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11483095>.

21 “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” *Yemen Times*.

22 Brian O’Neill, “New Generation of al-Qaeda on Trial in Yemen,” *Terrorism Focus* 4 no. 39 (2007).

23 “Profile: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” *BBC News*.

Then, in January 2009, Yemeni and Saudi Islamist militant groups affiliated with Al-Qaida merged into AQAP, a group formed in early 2003 in Saudi Arabia.²⁴ On January 23, 2009, Al-Malahim Media Foundation, the media arm of AQAP, released a videotape titled as “From Here We Begin . . . And at Al-Aqsa We Meet,” in which the group announced that the Saudi jihadists pledged allegiance to its leaders “to combine the efforts of the Mojahidoon, in defense of the Muslim world, and to liberate the Noble Aqsa Mosque”; they also declared that they would now act under the name of “Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.”²⁵ In October 2010, AQAP’s military commander, Al-Raimi, announced the creation of the “Aden-Abyan Army” to free the country from “crusaders and their apostate agents.”²⁶

According to the U.S. Congressional Research Service, AQAP’s current primary goals include attacking the U.S. homeland, attacking U.S. and Western interests in Yemen, destabilizing the Yemeni government, and assassinating members of the Saudi royal family.²⁷

Current Links with the Central Al-Qaida Leadership

The links between AQAP and central Al-Qaida seem to be strong. Nasser Al-Wahishi has been a close aide to Usama Bin Ladin, and his deputy, Said Al-Shihri, is a Saudi national repatriated from the Guantanamo Bay prison camp.²⁸ Moreover, Al-Shihri’s leadership has been confirmed by Al-Qaida’s second-in-command, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, “due to his knowledge of the Yemeni tribes and his close ties to youth groups and adolescent mujahideen.”²⁹

24 Ibid.

25 “From Here We Begin and At Al-Aqsa We Meet,” *Global Islamic Media Front*, accessed 15 June 2011, <http://www.archive.org/details/Aqsaaa>.

26 “Yemen Qaeda Chief Announces Formation of Army,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 10 December 2010, 7 June 2011, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=22639>.

27 Jeremy M. Sharp, *Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations*, CRS Report for Congress RL34170 (8 June 2011), 11–13, accessed 20 June 2011, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34170.pdf>.

28 Jayshree Bajoria and Greg Bruno, “Backgrounder: al-Qaeda,” *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder*, 17 June 2011, accessed 22 June 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations/al-qaeda-k-al-qaeda-al-qaeda/p9126>.

29 Jamestown Foundation, “Former AQAP Intelligence Chief Describes Egyptian Role in Al-Qaeda,” *Terrorism Monitor* 8 no. 43 (2010): 1, accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37205&cHash=e119e7cbbe.

Significantly, in the famous videotape released by AQAP in January 2009 announcing the merger between the Yemeni and Saudi jihadist cells, Bin Ladin and Al-Zawahiri were referred to as the organization's "leaders and elders" whom AQAP's mujahidin are following to fulfill their "promise and jihad."³⁰

There are some allegations that AQAP is receiving "strategic and philosophic guidance" from Bin Ladin and other members of Al-Qaida's central leadership.³¹ According to the *Wall Street Journal*, U.S. intelligence officials have observed "increased collaboration and communion" between the AQAP and central Al-Qaida.³² In addition, AQAP shares strong global jihadist ideologies and objectives with central Al-Qaida.

Despite these links in hierarchical and organizational ties, most analysts believe that AQAP operates independently. According to Glenn Carle, former Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Transnational Threats, "Usama Bin Ladin inspires, but does not order, his brethren in Yemen."³³ In response to the question, "Are they centrally controlled by Usama Bin Ladin, wherever he is?" Carle stated, "I think the answer is, no."³⁴ And to the question "Do they receive general operation guidance?" he replied, "Probably in some ways they do. . . . There might be some [logistical] support, generally not too much."³⁵ According to one analyst:

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has eclipsed its superiors in terms of recruiting, propaganda, and military operations. Unlike many other Al-Qaida affiliates, these cadres are integrated into the indigenous society.

30 "From Here We Begin and At Al-Aqsa We Meet," *Global Islamic Media Front*.

31 American Enterprise Institute, "Pakistan Security Brief—November 5, 2010," *Critical Threats*, 5 November 2010, accessed 11 June 2011, <http://www.criticalthreats.org/pakistan-security-brief/pakistan-security-brief-%E2%80%93-november-5-2010>.

32 Adam Entous and Margaret Coker, "Pakistan al-Qaeda Aids Yemen Plots," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 November 2010, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704805204575594672841436244.html>.

33 Gary Thomas, "Al-Qaida in Arabian Peninsula Comes into Its Own," *VOA News*, 4 November 2010, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/news-analysis/Al-Qaida-in-Arabian-Peninsula-Comes-Into-Its-Own-106681868.html>.

34 Thomas, "Al-Qaida in Arabian Peninsula Comes into Its Own."

35 Ibid.

This unique mixture of global aspirations and local roots makes AQAP a more adaptive, tenacious adversary than its counterparts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and elsewhere.³⁶

Level of Connection with Al-Qaida

Overall, it seems that the presence of Al-Qaida in Yemen during the last 10 years has remained at the second level. Both AAIA and AQAP have adhered to the fundamental ideological orientation and modes of operation of central Al-Qaida, but neither of them has been directly bound by the organizational and hierarchical structure of Al-Qaida. Although during recent years, after the emergence of AQAP, the connections with Al-Qaida became stronger, both AAIA and AQAP have acted independently, and there is no indication that they were operating under the orders and instructions of the central Al-Qaida leadership.

Saudi Arabia

Background

As noted above, AQAP is the best known group affiliated with Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula region. Although revived by a merger of Saudi and Yemeni jihadist cells in January 2009, the emergence of the core of the group goes back to May 2003 in Saudi Arabia.

Different phases of AQAP's presence in Saudi Arabia can be best explained based on the briefings from Saudi Ministry of Interior's counterterrorism advisors in Riyadh and Washington, DC, in 2008. According to Saudi officials, there are three phases of Al-Qaida's campaign in Saudi Arabia; we add the fourth one to cover the current era, from January 2009 to today.³⁷

36 Christopher Swift, "Al-Qaeda after Usama bin Laden," *Christopher Swift Blog*, 1 May 2011, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://christopher-swift.com/blog/al-qaeda-after-usama-bin-laden>.

37 Christopher M. Blanchard, *Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations* CRS Report for Congress RL33533 (Congressional Research Service: 16 December 2009), 24, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/135931.pdf>.

The “Momentum” Phase (May 2003–June 2004)

Although there are some allegations that AQAP had begun to organize its initial attacks by early 2002,³⁸ the newborn network of Islamist militants did not begin its large-scale attacks until May 2003. Composed of hundreds of well-trained “Arab Afghan” veterans, AQAP in its primitive stage had “created a network of storage caches and safe houses based on the work of local and foreign operatives trained in document forgery, fund-raising, publishing, weapons and explosives use, and personal security techniques.”³⁹

The “Regrouping” Phase (June 2004–April 2005)

Following the government’s counterterrorism reactions, AQAP began to adapt a new organizational structure, comprised of small cells. While these units had their own leadership, distinct tactics, and conducted separated operations, they considered themselves a part of a whole.⁴⁰ During this period, AQAP conducted mostly small-scale attacks.

*The “Fragmentation” Phase (April 2005–January 2009)*⁴¹

Following the deaths and arrests of most of its significant members, AQAP became gradually dismantled and fragmented with significant setbacks during this period.⁴² Confident of the full success of the government’s counterterrorism campaign in confronting AQAP, King Abdullah stated in 2006 that “I can assure you that your country is well and the evil-doers are, thank God, defeated.”⁴³

38 International Crisis Group, *Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who Are the Islamists?*, Middle East Report No. 31 (2004), 12, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/saudi-arabia/031-saudi-arabia-backgrounder-who-are-the-islamists.aspx>.

39 Blanchard, *Saudi Arabia*, 24.

40 International Crisis Group, *Saudi Arabia Backgrounder*, 12.

41 It must be noted that in the original classification of phases by Saudi counterterrorism officials, this stage ranged from April 2005 to April 2008.

42 John Rollins, *Al-Qaeda and Affiliates: Historical Perspective, Global Presence, and Implications for U.S. Policy*, CRS Report for Congress R41070 (Congressional Research Service: 2011), 14, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R41070.pdf>.

43 “Saudi King Says Al-Qaeda Militants Defeated,” Reuters, 7 June 2006, accessed 12 June 2011, <http://news.oneindia.in/2006/06/07/saudi-king-says-al-qaeda-militants-defeated-1149673106.html>.

The “Revival” Phase (January 2009–Present)

On January 23, 2009, the fragmented remaining AQAP cells in Saudi Arabia pledged allegiance to Yemeni jihadists’ leaders “to combine the efforts of the Mojahidoon, in defense of the Muslim world, and to liberate the Noble Aqsa Mosque.”⁴⁴ Operating under the Yemeni jihadists’ dominance and leadership, the organization is continuing to act under the name of AQAP.

Links with Central Al-Qaida Leadership

Concerning the links between AQAP and the central Al-Qaida leadership, it is important to distinguish between the time prior to their merger with the Yemeni jihadists and the subsequent period.

The initial core of AQAP formed in Saudi Arabia following the return of hundreds of jihadists either from anti-Soviet campaigns or training camps in Afghanistan. Therefore, from the very beginning, AQAP had strong shared military expertise and ideological ties with Al-Qaida in Afghanistan. There are even some indications that some of these Islamist militants had orders from Usama Bin Ladin to carry out operations in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁵ While AQAP was breaking into small cells and becoming further fragmented, this overarching common ideological perspective played a key role in maintaining the organization’s sense of unity—both as a Saudi and as an international jihadist movement under the supreme guidance of Al-Qaida central leaders.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, leaving aside the common ideological aspects, there is no proof that AQAP at this stage had been a subdivision of central Al-Qaida, had been under its hierarchical structure, or was receiving any instruction or even communication from Al-Qaida’s central leadership. Yet, after the merger with Yemeni cells, the ties between AQAP and central Al-Qaida increased. The new leaders of the organization have close personal ties with Al-Qaida’s central

44 “From Here We Begin and At Al-Aqsa We Meet,” *Global Islamic Media Front*.

45 International Crisis Group, *Saudi Arabia Background*, 12.

46 It must be noted that this does not mean AQAP’s ideological orientation was identical with the central Al-Qaida orientation. For instance, contrary to central Al-Qaida leadership, AQAP has always concentrated on domestic matters rather than overseas concerns. See International Crisis Group, *Saudi Arabia Background*, 12.

leadership; moreover, there are some allegations that AQAP is now receiving “strategic and philosophical guidance” from Al-Qaida’s central leadership and that the level of “collaboration and communion” has increased.⁴⁷

Level of Connection with Al-Qaida

Regarding the level of connectedness to Al-Qaida, it seems that AQAP has never gotten closer to Al-Qaida than level two. Although the ties between AQAP and central Al-Qaida seem to be stronger after the merger with Yemeni cells, it has never reached the level one threshold.

Iraq

Background

Iraq is of particular importance for Al-Qaida, as it is the organization’s second front after Afghanistan.⁴⁸ The U.S. Department of State reported in 2006 that Tanzim Qaedat Al-Jihad fi Bilad Al-Rafidayn (Al-Qaida of the Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers), known as Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), was the Iraqi group most known for its affiliation with Al-Qaida.⁴⁹

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi began to form an insurgent network “composed of foreign fighters, remnants of Ansar al-Islam and indigenous Sunni extremists.”⁵⁰ By fall 2003, Al-Zarqawi was recognized as the “regional emir of Islamist terrorists in Iraq.”⁵¹

Originally known as Jamaat Al-Tawhid wa’l-Jihad (JTJ), AQI was established officially in October 2004, when Al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Usama Bin

47 American Enterprise Institute, “Pakistan Security Brief.”

48 “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” *Yemen Times*.

49 U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, “Middle East and North Africa Overview,” *Country Reports on Terrorism 2005* (2006): 126–47, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65462.pdf>.

50 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Country of Origin Information on Iraq,” 3 October 2005, 68, accessed 7 June 2011, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/096267160DEB1198802570B700594512/\\$file/Iraq+COI+October+2005.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/096267160DEB1198802570B700594512/$file/Iraq+COI+October+2005.pdf).

51 “Al-Qaeda in Iraq,” *Global Security*, 11 January 2006, accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/al-qaeda_in_iraq.htm.

Ladin as the leader of central Al-Qaida group.⁵² Best known for its extreme positions, AQI was responsible for several attacks targeting a wide variety of groups and individuals, mainly by suicide bombing. The group often claims responsibility for its operation under the name of the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella organization of Iraqi insurgent groups formed in October 2006.⁵³

In terms of structure, it is claimed that the group is composed of 15 brigades.⁵⁴ According to the International Crisis Group's report from February 2006, AQI "appears to be surprisingly well-structured; it should neither be blown up into a Leviathan nor ignored as a mirage, but rather considered as one among a handful of particularly powerful groups."⁵⁵ In addition, there were several smaller jihadist cells that had sworn allegiance to Al-Zarqawi.⁵⁶

AQI's objectives have evolved over time from part of the global jihad movement that targeted primarily Western interests around the world to a more Iraq-focused militant organization.⁵⁷ The organization has been weakened during the last few years, in particular by the loss of Al-Zarqawi in a U.S. airstrike in June 2006⁵⁸ and the death of his successor Abu Umar Al-Baghdadi in April 2010.⁵⁹ This does not mean, however, that the organization has vanished.

52 "Leaders' deaths a blow to al Qaeda in Iraq," *Washington Times*, 19 April 2010, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/apr/19/iraq-says-2-top-al-qaeda-figures-killed>.

53 John Lumpkin, "Islamic State of Iraq," *Global Security*, 22 December 2006, accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/islamic_state_of_iraq.htm.

54 International Crisis Group, "In Their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency," Middle East Report No. 50 (2006), 2–8, accessed 11 June 2011, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/iraq/050-in-their-own-words-reading-the-iraqi-insurgency.aspx>.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security*, CRS Report for Congress RL 31339 (United States Congressional Research Service: 2009), 22, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31339.pdf>.

58 Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam*, 22.

59 "Sunni militants in Iraq name new leader," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 16 May 2010, accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/Sunni_Militants_In_Iraq_Name_New_Leader/2043599.html.

According to Iraqi officials, the group is still posing “a serious challenge to the country’s stability despite recent blows to its command structure.”⁶⁰

Links with the Central Al-Qaida Leadership

From the very beginning of its emergence, JTJ (as AQI was initially called) was considered to be Al-Qaida’s branch in Iraq. In October 17, 2004, Al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Usama Bin Ladin. In his statement, Al-Zarqawi held that

our respected brothers in Al-Qaida understood the strategy of Jama’at Al-Tawhid wa Al-Jihad in the land of the two rivers [Iraq] and the caliphates and their hearts opened to their approach. . . . We deliver to the nation the news that both Jama’at Al-Tawhid wa Al-Jihad’s Amir [Al-Zarqawi] and soldiers have pledged allegiance to the sheikh of the mujahedin, Usama Bin Ladin, and that they will follow his orders in jihad for the sake of God so there will be no more tumult or oppression, and justice and faith in God will prevail.⁶¹

Shortly thereafter, on 20 October 2004, JTJ announced that it had officially joined Al-Qaida.⁶²

The links between AQI and central Al-Qaida were, in particular, highlighted in July 2005, when Al-Zarqawi sent a letter to Al-Qaida’s second-in-command, Ayman Al-Zawahiri. In the letter, which is summarized in the U.S. Department of State’s *Country Reports on Terrorism 2005*, Al-Zarqawi described his organization’s long-term goals as a four-stage plan “to expand the Iraq war to include expelling U.S. forces, establishing an Islamic authority, spreading the conflict to Iraq’s secular neighbors, and engaging in battle with Israel.”⁶³

On the other hand, Al-Qaida’s central leadership also declared its support for AQI on different occasions. For instance, Bin Ladin, in December 2004,

60 Ibid.

61 John Pike, “Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad / Unity and Jihad Group, Tanzim Qa'idat Al-Jihad in Bilad alRafidayn (Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers),” *Global Security*, 6 December 2006, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm>.

62 Pike, “Jamaat al-Tawhid.”

63 U.S. Department of State, “Middle East and North Africa,” 132.

endorsed Al-Zarqawi as his “official emissary” in Iraq.⁶⁴ Another reference can be made to a video statement released in July 2007 by Al-Qaida’s second man, Al-Zawahiri, in which he encouraged “Iraqis and Muslims in general to show greater support for the Islamic State of Iraq, an Al-Qaida insurgent front in the country.”⁶⁵

After Al-Zarqawi was killed in 2006,⁶⁶ his successor Abu Umar Al-Baghdadi also focused on strengthening the organization’s links with central Al-Qaida.⁶⁷ Al-Baghdadi’s successor, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Al-Husseini Al-Qurayshi, followed the same path. The group is still on the United Nations (UN) 1267 Committee’s list for their ties to Al-Qaida.

As stated in the Jamestown Foundation’s *Terrorism Monitor*, with the partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, the organization has fulfilled one of its main objectives and lost one of its essential reasons for existence. Accordingly, “the additional loss of local support may mean linking the ISI [Islamic State of Iraq] to the global agenda of Al-Qaida central [which] could offer a means of perpetuating the movement.”⁶⁸

Level of Connection with Al-Qaida Central

With its leaders having sworn allegiance to Bin Ladin, AQI from the very outset identified itself as Al-Qaida’s regional branch in Iraq. This has been confirmed by subsequent communications and connections between two groups, including their communication about the organization’s long-term objectives. Therefore, AQI is an example of a level one group affiliated to central Al-Qaida.

64 United Nations Committee Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, “Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 19 of the Convention,” 6 May 2005, 50, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/62175.pdf>.

65 “New al-Qaida video calls on Muslims to unite in Jihad,” Associated Press, 4 July 2007, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.wsvn.com/news/articles/world/MI53736/>.

66 Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam*, 22.

67 Murad Batal Al-Shishani, “Is the Islamic State of Iraq Going Global?,” *Terrorism Monitor* 9 no.4 (2011)

68 Ibid.

Palestine

From the very outset of the formation of Al-Qaida, Palestine has been an integral part of its ideology, and both central Al-Qaida and its offshoots have considered the liberation of Palestine to be one of their main objectives. However, compared to other Al-Qaida fronts, the presence of Al-Qaida in Palestine has always been rather insignificant. Nevertheless, sometimes there have been allegations that Al-Qaida is present in the region. In December 2002, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stated that Israel believed that Al-Qaida had established a presence in Gaza.⁶⁹ In March 2006, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas confirmed these remarks, stating, “We have signs of the presence of Al-Qaida in Gaza and the West Bank.”⁷⁰

Following the electoral victory of Hamas in 2006, the situation in Gaza provided an opportunity for some jihadist groups accused of affiliation with Al-Qaida to commence their own activities there. Among these groups, Jaysh Al-Islam (Army of Islam) was especially notable.

Background

Jaysh Al-Islam was formed by members of the Popular Resistance Committees, one of Gaza’s largest militant factions, in late 2005.⁷¹ It is led by Mumtaz Dughmush, a former member of the Palestinian Authority’s Preventive Security Organisation, “who for years allegedly had been contracted for militant operations by both Hamas and Fatah.”⁷²

The group’s first operation that attracted public attention was the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit. In this operation, which was launched on 25 June 2006, Jaysh Al-Islam joined with two other groups: the Izz Al-Din Al-

69 “Israel says al-Qaeda active in Gaza,” *BBC News*, 5 December 2002, accessed 7 June 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2546863.stm.

70 “Abbas: Al-Qaeda infiltrating West Bank, Gaza,” Associated Press, 2 March 2006, accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11634430/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/abbas-al-qaida-infiltrating-west-bank-gaza.

71 International Crisis Group, *Radical Islam in Gaza*, Middle East Report no. 104, (29 March 2011), accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Israel%20Palestine/104%20Radical%20Islam%20in%20Gaza.ashx>.

72 International Crisis Group, *Radical Islam in Gaza*.

Qassam Brigades (the military wing of Hamas) and the Salah Al-Din Brigades. This operation demonstrated the group's organizational capacities and its capability to cooperate with other armed forces in Gaza, thereby "creating new strategic possibilities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."⁷³

Jaysh Al-Islam was later involved in kidnapping several foreign journalists, including Alan G. Johnston, a BBC reporter, in March 2007. In exchange for Johnston, the group demanded the release of an Al-Qaida-affiliated cleric, Abu Qatada Al-Filastini (Umar Mahmud Uthman), who is believed to be Al-Qaida's spiritual leader in Europe.⁷⁴

Links with the Central Al-Qaida Leadership

Jaysh Al-Islam's success in operating out of Hamas and Fatah areas, on the one hand, and its reference to jihadist elements and ideologies, on the other, have raised allegations among the media and officials about its cooperation with Al-Qaida and its position as an Al-Qaida subsidiary in Palestine.⁷⁵ In a videotape attributed to the group, Jaysh Al-Islam stated that "it is not fighting 'for a piece of land' but waging a religious war aimed at restoring a religious caliphate, or government, throughout the Muslim world."⁷⁶

Jaysh Al-Islam, however, states that the group "is not part of Al-Qaida."⁷⁷ Israel, Hamas, and some other jihadist groups share this assessment.⁷⁸ According to the director of Gaza's Internal Security Service, "Jaysh al-Islam takes on the

73 Rafid Fadhil Ali, "Al-Qaeda's Palestinian Inroads," *Terrorism Monitor* 6 no. 8 (2008), accessed 7 June 2011, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4864&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=167&no_cache=1.

74 Ali, "Al-Qaeda's Palestinian Inroads."

75 LtCol Jonathan Dahoah Halevi, "Al-Qaeda Affiliate—*Jaysh al-Islam*—Receives Formal Sanctuary in Hamas-Ruled Gaza," *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 8 no. 7 (August 2008), accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=442&PID=0&IID=2408>.

76 Michael Slackman and Souad Mekhennet, "A New Group that Seems to Share Al-Qaeda's Agenda," *New York Times*, 8 July 2006, accessed 21 June 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/08/world/middleeast/08islam.html>.

77 International Crisis Group, *Radical Islam in Gaza*.

78 Ibid.

appearance of Salafi groups merely to attract new members.⁷⁹ Overall, it seems that the ties between Jaysh Al-Islam and Al-Qaida central leadership are limited to sharing some ideological orientations; there appears to be no hierarchical or operational connection.

The Level of Connection with Al-Qaida

The presence of Al-Qaida in Palestine has been highlighted during the last several years, but it has always been very limited. Adhering to elements of global jihadist ideologies, Jaysh Al-Islam is an example of a level two group affiliated with Al-Qaida.

Egypt

Background

Focusing on the last 10 years, the analysis above regarding Yemen, Iraq, and other parts of the Middle East suggests that Egyptian jihadists seemed to contribute to the buildup of Al-Qaida or Al-Qaida-like groups outside of Egypt. Yet, in their own country, a retreat from violent jihadist doctrine is gaining ground. Egypt's militant Islamists have always had a unique relationship with Al-Qaida. Starting with the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the late 1980s and 1990s, Egyptian jihadists from the Islamic Jihad Organization flocked to Afghanistan to fight the infidels. Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Mohammed Atif, both charged in the Islamic Jihad court case in the early 1980s, were among those who would later rise to leadership positions within Al-Qaida.

A new trend towards pacifying the main Egyptian jihadist groups is successfully underway. The aforementioned *Muragaat Fikriya*, or *Muragaat Fiqhiya* (Doctrinal Revisions), led by former leaders of the Islamic Jihad and Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya organizations, resulted in diverting thousands of actual and potential jihadists towards accepting nonviolence as a method of achieving their goals of establishing Islamic states and societies. Their efforts weakened the violent expressions of Islamic Jihad and of Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya, leaving the jihad scene primarily to a few level two groups from Palestine, as well as to the rare Egyptian level three groups.

79 Ibid. Salafism is a Sunni Islamic movement that views the first three generations of Muslims as models for how Islam should be practiced.

As Amr Elshobki stated, “Terror has shifted in its shape and motivation over the years. Recent attacks tend to have an individualistic touch. The perpetrators are individuals who do not belong to any of the major militant groups, are not interested in cohesive doctrines, hierarchical organizations, or centralized authority.”⁸⁰ The violent actions of level one and two groups have largely disappeared during the past 10 years, as these organizations have turned their focus on rebuilding themselves as members of a wider civil society.

The Level of Connection with Al-Qaida

Elshobki recently observed that “[t]he political scene of today differs markedly from the one in which well-organized militant groups first took shape. The Muslim Brotherhood is now the dominant force among Islamists in Egypt.”⁸¹ The success of Doctrine Revisions, as will be explained in more detail below, leads us to conclude that Egypt has witnessed a sharp decline of level two groups (which were mainly the Islamic Jihad and Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya) in terms of ideology and propensity towards violence. Individual acts of terror continue to be present, attributable to level three groups, although those too are declining, as the groups are also influenced by the growing trend, especially in the post-2011 revolution era, to join the political scene. According to Elshobki:

Exactly how many Egyptian jihadi prisoners have repented, and to which movements they belonged, remains unknown. Estimates range from 20,000 to 30,000, the majority of whom (some 12,000) are members of Al-Gama’a Al-Islamiyya [Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya], the militant organization that perpetrated much of the Islamist violence of the 1980s and 1990s. The remainder are members of smaller groups, mostly Al-Jihad [Islamic Jihad], or are independent jihadists espousing Salafi ideologies.⁸²

At the same time, the situation in Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan, coupled with more efficient Internet links to level one and two groups elsewhere,⁸³ will

80 Amr Elshobki, “The future and limitations of Jihad’s revisions,” *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), accessed 26 June 2011, <http://acpss.ahram.org.eg/eng/ahram/2004/7/5/EGYP117.HTM>.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 It is worth noting that “the availability of sophisticated internet websites to preach hatred and oppression is now seen on a wide scale. We have also seen recently how modern media and the internet have been used to widely show atrocities committed against innocent civilians” See Amr Abdalla and others, *Improving the Quality of Islamic Education in Developing Countries: Innovative*

continue to produce level three terror activities and exhort Egyptian jihadists to join and lead level one and two groups from outside of Egypt.

The Doctrine Revisions and the Deradicalization Process in Egypt

The idea of Doctrine Revisions, or deradicalization in Egypt, was hugely influential and was brought to the fore by the writings of Dr. Sayyid Imam Al-Sharif.⁸⁴ Over time, the revisions have had their successes and challenges. Revisions appeared back in the 1980s among those sentenced in connection with President Anwar Sadat's assassination after self-reflection by jihad groups to effect political change by the assassination. These revisions began as the ideas of individuals, but were adopted by larger movements in later decades—namely, by Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya in 1997 and by Islamic Jihad in 2007.

Since February 2007, after their revision's publication, Al-Sharif and other Islamic Jihad commanders have been touring Egyptian prisons to hold meetings with their followers.⁸⁵ The visits initially featured small meetings with the commanders of Islamic Jihad factions in an effort to organize a common stance. This was followed by lectures and question-and-answer periods between the Islamic Jihad leadership and the lower ranks.⁸⁶ This type of interaction was modeled after the leadership of the Islamic Groups, which held 10 months of discussions and meetings with their followers in 2002. According to political scientist Omar Ashour, the deradicalization process appeared successful: the group has seen no armed operations since 1999, no significant splits within the movement have occurred, and around 25 volumes have been authored by the Islamic Group leaders supporting their new ideology with both theological and rational arguments.⁸⁷

Approaches (Creative Associates International, 2006), 54, http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/caiistaff/dashboard_giroadmincaiistaff/dashboard_rd_caiiadminidatabase/publications/Abdula%20Paper%20FINAL%205-22-06%20_4_.pdf.

84 Dr. Sayyid Imam Al-Sharif was a chief ideologue of the Arab jihadists and jihad groups, as well as Emir of Egypt's Islamic Jihad organization. In 1988, Al-Sharif authored what is regarded as nothing short of a jihadist manifesto for all violent religious movements titled, *Al-Umda fi Idad Al-Idda [Preparation for Jihad]*. He published revisions of his previous writings in 2007.

85 Omar Ashour, "De-Radicalization of Jihad? The Impact of Egyptian Islamist Revisionists on Al-Qaeda," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2 no. 5 (2008), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/36/html>.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

Dr. Rafiq Habib,⁸⁸ commenting on the Egyptian revisions in 2008, asserted that revisions by Islamic Jihad and Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya aimed to establish visions based on peaceful change that would bring the Islamic and national powers together as a means of ending or terminating violence.⁸⁹ Further, Al-Sharif, theorist of Islamic Jihad in Egypt, says that the revisions of the two jihadist Egyptian groups have nothing to do with the security pressures or torture practiced against the members of the groups while in prisons. He suggests that the revisions are the product of an interpretation that sees the use of armed violence in the process of internal change as ineffective and that sees violence as causing harm to the “Islamic” groups and to Egyptian society as a whole. The two scholars bring to the fore the following notions:

that previous arguments that understood the Egyptian revisions as the product of torture are invalid, as torture has been a long-term practice within Egyptian prisons for decades;

that the Doctrine Revisions turned into a collective, communal operation (i.e., they became group-based, not individual ideas).

that the foundations of these revisions are a result of self-criticism by groups involved in Sadat’s assassination, who eventually came to terms with the reality that their acts had not changed the existing state of affairs in Egypt;

that Egyptian security officials have, over time, changed their attitude towards revisions, especially after the incident of the Luxor terrorist attack on foreign terrorists; and

that revisions were a product of experience itself, as the employment of violence in the process of internal change harmed all parties involved—including the jihad-oriented groups, Egyptian society, and the authorities.

According to author Marwin Shehadeh, the most important impact of the revisions on the violent jihadist Salafist movement is the creation of confusion within the movement, particularly within the mother organization Al-Qaida,

88 Dr. Rafiq Habib is one of the most prominent specialists on Islamic movements. Abdul Rahman Hashim, “Revisions Add to Islamic Moderation,” accessed 13 June 2011, <http://www.islamonline.net>.

89 Hashim, “Revisions Add to Islamic Moderation.”

which rejects these revisions.⁹⁰ Moreover, with Egyptian revisions owing their roots to persons like Sayyid Imam Al-Sharif, who has held influential positions both inside and outside Egypt, there is the potential for Egyptian revisions playing a role outside Egypt. Habib argues that Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya's revisions represent an additional support to the moderation of Islam and a peaceful approach toward change.⁹¹ This represents a success for the Islamic school to which the Muslim Brotherhood belonged from the very beginning of its emergence.

Nevertheless, Egypt's security officials did not take such revisions seriously and internal jihadi revisions were not widely known; this can be attributed largely to the refusal of security officials to have any dialogue with the Islamists and the authorities' tendency to regard violent security measures as the only solutions. Habib cautions that such policies, which close the door to peaceful change, can precipitate the recurrence of further violence.

The Prospects for Doctrine Revisions and Deradicalization

The success or failure of the revisions depends on the structural conditions of the countries or regions from which the jihadists hail. In other words, the long-term solution is more political than religious, as the Indonesian approach has demonstrated. In addition to allowing self-evaluation of detained terrorists through rehumanization processes, it might be time that Arabic regimes behaved in a humane manner towards the terrorists and became less oppressive. A lack of such a transformation could explain the reason that, through the Arabic Awakening, the jihadist groups as well as the Arabic regimes have lost so much after years of competing for survival. As the Arab Awakening continues to change the structural conditions of the Arab world, it is worth probing or researching the perceptions that new generations of jihadists have regarding revisions or deradicalization. According to Ashour, the phenomenon of deradicalization is not confined only to Egyptian militants. It has also been adopted by Algerian, Saudi, Yemeni, Jordanian, Tajik, Malaysian, and Indonesian armed Islamist movements, factions, and individuals.⁹² It should be noted here

90 Marwin Shehadeh, "Weakening al-Qaeda: Literature Review Challenges its Authority," *Arab Insight*, 2 no. 6 (2009): 25–36, accessed 13 June 2011, <http://www.arabinsight.org/pdf/Arabinsight28.pdf>.

91 Hashim, "Revisions Add to Islamic Moderation."

92 Ashour, "De-Radicalization of Jihad?"

that the deradicalization process is primarily concerned with changing the attitudes of these movements toward violence—specifically violence against civilians (terrorism). The process also touches on other issues like stances on democracy and women, but there have been no major changes regarding these issues.⁹³ Khalil Al-Anany says there is a need to tackle the belief that defectors or those who have undergone revisions have either strayed from the “right path” or have been coerced.⁹⁴ Clearly, efforts need to be made to understand the factors contributing to the rehumanization process because it is an essential component in combating the extremist subculture that defines others as less than human beings, the spilling of whose blood is *halal* (permissible).⁹⁵

The Impact of the Arab Revolutions on Muslim Militancy and Terrorism

It is perhaps safe to argue that most policy makers and intellectuals assumed and feared that Al-Qaida or its affiliates would succeed in what some of their founding fathers in Egypt failed to do in 1981: to establish autocratic Islamic states. It can also be argued that regimes in the Arab Mashriq (the East) exercised the maximum security measures to fight Al-Qaida and other forms of Islamic militancy. This was seen by many in the world as a somewhat justified approach given: 1) the level of violence inflicted by Al-Qaida and its affiliates on civilians and the economic interests of these countries; and 2) the threat that they posed should they succeed in toppling the ruling regimes of the Arab Mashriq and establishing autocratic Islamic states.

This scenario assumed that Arab countries in general faced two options: to remain under the control of their current regimes or to fall to Taliban-style Islamic militant states. The second option, strongly rejected by most Arabs and the West, seemed to increase the level of tolerance for the Arab regimes’ violations of human rights, their use of brute force and torture against opponents, their suppression of democracy, and their corruption. These practices may have succeeded in reducing the threat of Islamic militancy in

93 Ibid.

94 Khalil Al-Anany, “In Focus: Jihad Revisions: It is too Late,” *Daily Star* (Cairo), 27 November 2007, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://www.dailystaregypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=10511>.

95 Mark Woodward, Ali Amin, and Inayah Rohmaniyah, “Police Power, Soft Power and Extremist Sub-culture in Indonesia,” *COMOPS Journal*, accessed 7 June 2011, <http://comops.org/journal/2010/03/28/police-power-soft-power-and-extremist-sub-culture-in-indonesia>.

countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, but almost no one anticipated that the negative economic and political effects of these practices and policies on the wider populations would erupt into revolutions against their regimes.

The revolutions we are witnessing in the Arab world are calling for democratic changes. Religious elements, including the Muslim Brotherhood and some Salafi groups, have joined these revolutions with a clear understanding of their civic democratic nature. Will these changes have an effect on the presence of Al-Qaida, its affiliates, and the recruiting pool of like-minded gatherings of youth? The answer is yes. There is a great potential for reducing the presence and effectiveness of Al-Qaida in the Arab world. While security and military measures are always necessary and needed to prevent and combat real threats, their use should be governed by law and the UN's Declaration of Human Rights. Of course, such measures in the Arab-Islamic context will not effectively destabilize Al-Qaida as an organization or as an ideology. What will destabilize them are efforts at the social, political, and religious levels. These revolutions are paving the way for applying such measures.

This analysis suggests that the revolutions in the Arab world, as the leading Egyptian Islamist lawyer Montasir Al-Zayyat said in April 2011, are creating conditions conducive to renouncing violence among Islamist militant groups such as Islamic Jihad and Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya (both strongly linked to Al-Qaida ideologically and organizationally).⁹⁶ The democratic revolutions are offering a historic opportunity to transform such organizations, and, more importantly, they are providing a foundation upon which like-minded gatherings of militant youth can move towards participation in nonviolent pluralistic modes of politics. For this to be accomplished, newly elected governments in the Arab world must allow space for the nonviolent engagement of those groups. This requires that they abandon the use of state terror and torture and resort to legal methods consistent with principles of human rights.

The United States and its allies must also rise to the historic occasion of the current events by: 1) abandoning support for dictatorial regimes that have for long justified their grip over power by the role they play in the war against terror and ensuring the security of their states; 2) supporting unequivocally (and

96 Mohamed Salah Alzahar, "The Islamic Movement in Egypt after the January Revolution: Where to? (3)" *Al-Akhbar* (Cairo) 19 April 2011, 1st edition: 12+.

without falling into double-standard politics) all the popular revolutions and their democratic transitions; and 3) encouraging the continuation and spread of Doctrine Revisions that, as explained earlier, have been used successfully in Egypt and elsewhere to convert militants' beliefs and attitudes towards renouncing violence and embracing peaceful approaches.

If these measures are carried out, Al-Qaida will lose a wide range of potential supporters and sympathizers who would opt for nonviolent democratic expressions of their values, beliefs, and grievances. Evidence in Egypt and Tunisia already supports the notion that previously militant groups, and ardent militant figures such as Abbud Al-Zumur, have abandoned publicly their militant ways in favor of engagement in the emerging political arena. A concerted effort along these lines, taking into consideration the foundational changes that are shaping countries of the Arab Mashriq, will prove to be most useful in targeting the breeding grounds of extremism and Islamic militancy.

The Way Ahead

The story in the Arab East today is not that of Al-Qaida and militant Muslim groups. Instead, it is the story of the popular uprisings and revolutions to nonviolently establish democracy and justice. The Arab revolutions are sweeping the region; already, Egypt and Tunisia are reaping the benefits of the newly attained freedom and liberties, as evident from fair referendums on constitutions and freedom to form political parties.

However, experience shows that success in toppling a dictatorial regime, introducing democratic reforms, and even building democratic institutions is no guarantee for development and prosperity. Similar experiences in the Philippines in 1986 and Bangladesh in 1991, for example, show that their successful struggles for democracy did not necessarily bring about an improvement in people's lives. Poverty is still rampant; democracy is dysfunctional, to say the least; and development has not progressed to the level of expectations that people had at the time of revolutions. Iran is another example of a popular revolution that led to a more severe autocratic regime.

On the bright side, the example of Korea provides hope to Arab revolutions, as it has seen rather successful development and institutionalization of effective democracy after the 1987 popular movement. Arab people undergoing these revolutions are at a historic crossroads. It is the first time in their histories that

people are taking real charge of their own destinies. At the same time, though, there are many issues that must be addressed, such as the distribution of resources, poverty, and development. The Arab people also continue to be influenced by international dynamics in light of the unsettled conflict with Israel and the strong sense of injustice regarding Palestinian rights.

How will the newly elected governments in the “free” Arab world respond to these challenges? It is anyone’s guess. But based on observations of the events of the past few months, especially in Egypt, we are optimistic. The spirit of hope, the amount of determination, and the will to improve the conditions of the country are unprecedented. Youth, not the old guard, holds the key to success. Lastly, an amazing outcome of these revolutions is the revival of Pan- Arabism. Arab people finally see a hope for a true Arab unification—a dream that many feel they can almost touch!