



# Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

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Car of the Saudi diplomat shot at in Karachi

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## ALAWI CONTROL OF THE SYRIAN MILITARY KEY TO REGIME'S SURVIVAL

With its central doctrines carefully guarded as religious secrets, the true essence of Alawism has proved elusive to many who have tried to define it. Alawism is primarily a syncretistic belief system that incorporates large doses of Middle Eastern Christianity with significant influence from Isma'ili Islam, Shi'a "Twelver" Islam and traditional pre-Islamic beliefs. French colonial administrators attempted to classify Syrian Alawism as a separate religion despite resistance from Alawi leaders who were more interested in identifying with Islam, a trend that has been resisted by many orthodox Sunni Muslims.

The takeover of predominantly Sunni Syria by a group of Alawi military officers in 1966 and their ability to preserve Alawite rule for over four decades is truly one of the oddest political developments in the modern Middle East. Alawis represent, at best, only ten per cent of the Syrian population, yet their control of the levers of power in Damascus is almost total, including the military, internal security forces and intelligence units. Sunnis and other religious minorities participate in Syrian government institutions in large numbers, but there is no question as to which group holds ultimate power.

The political ascendancy of the Syrian Alawis has not resulted in efforts to establish Alawi religious supremacy – on the contrary, it has spurred an effort to bring Alawism into the mainstream of Shi'a Islam (at least superficially) in order to minimize sectarian grievances over the rule of a distinct religious minority. Nonetheless, such efforts have had little impact on the views of the Sunni orthodox

Muslim Brotherhood, who appear to have emerged in recent days from years of political repression to lead the armed resistance against the Alawi-dominated military.

The Brotherhood is reported to be smuggling arms from Turkey to northwestern Syrian province of Idlib (NOW Lebanon, June 7). Fighting between insurgents and army loyalists appears to be concentrated on the town of Jisr al-Shughur, where government reports describe “a real massacre” of over 120 members of the security forces (*al-Watan* [Damascus], June 5; NOW Lebanon, June 6). There are also reports of a mutiny by local members of the security forces that began after some policemen were executed for refusing to shoot on demonstrators.

The repeated failure of conventional Syrian forces in clashes with Israeli forces led to a change in strategic direction in Damascus and a greater emphasis on unconventional warfare, including the development of ballistic missile capability, Special Forces units, chemical weapons and apparently unsuccessful forays into the development of a nuclear capability, the latter being largely deterred by direct military intervention by the Israeli Air Force. Much like Libya, the bulk of the Syrian Army consists of poorly trained and equipped conscripts, with most of the military budget being devoted to training and equipping the few divisions and other units believed most loyal to the regime and under the firm control of Alawi officers.

Much of the state violence seen so far in Syria has been carried out by Interior Ministry forces and units of the heavily-Alawite secret police. There may have been some hesitance so far in deploying the most loyal divisions of the army against protestors, as these divisions are largely Alawi in composition and their deployment might turn a political confrontation into a sectarian struggle that the Alawi minority might be able to win in the short term, but would be hard pressed in sustaining their dominance in the long-term.

Though there has been some speculation that the Alawi officer corps might abandon the Assad regime, this would be more in the style of the Egyptian military jettisoning an inconvenient ruler rather than running the risk of a comprehensive political transition that would definitely not conclude with the Alawi officer corps maintaining their ranks and privileges. Potentially, even their lives could be in danger in such circumstances. At the moment, there is no international encouragement – as in Libya – for commanders to defect, and no tribal incentive, as in Yemen.

The regular Syrian Army consists of 11 divisions, of which only two can be firmly said to be reliable supporters of the regime. The Republican Guard (an armored division) and the Fourth Armored Division are under the direct command of Maher Assad, brother of Syrian president Bashar Assad. Special Forces units of roughly 15,000 men are also considered reliable and are based close to Damascus. Unlike the bulk of the army, the rank-and-file of these units is largely Alawi. Most of the Syrian officer corps is Alawi; though some Sunni officers have succeeded in rising to senior positions, their appointments rarely place significant numbers of troops under their direct command (Reuters, April 6). The Republican Guards are the only Syrian military unit allowed to deploy within Damascus, reducing the risk of mutiny by non-Alawi troops in the most politically sensitive areas.

To reduce the risk of instability within the military, the regime is making intense efforts to portray the ongoing protests as armed insurrections by Salafist extremists or as attacks by externally inspired and funded terrorist groups (Reuters, April 18; see also *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, April 22). Even if demonstrators were to succeed in winning over the Sunni rank-and-file in the military, there is every chance that we would see, as in Libya, the same reluctance of such defectors to apply their arms against loyal units they know to be superior in almost every way.

#### SENIOR MUSLIM BROTHER SAYS POLITICAL CHANGE IN ARAB WORLD COULD RESULT IN A UNIFIED INTERNATIONAL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Having just returned to his native Egypt after 23 years of exile, prominent Muslim Brother Dr. Kamal al-Helbawi has spoken optimistically of the Brotherhood being able to take advantage of the momentous political shifts in the Arab world to form a united and international movement dedicated to the furtherance of moderate Sunni Islam in the political field. His remarks appeared in an interview with a pan-Arab daily (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 1; June 5).

Al-Helbawi, who holds British citizenship, has studied in Pakistan, worked in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, and has pursued business activities while leading or playing a major role in a number of British-based institutions such as the Center for the Study of Terrorism and the Global Civilizations Study Center. He has also been a prominent member of a number of British or international Muslim

organizations while acting until recently as the Muslim Brotherhood's spokesman in the West.

Al-Helbawi notes that the Muslim Brotherhood lacks any international organization at present, though he describes this as a "Brotherhood dream," and one of the main goals of Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949). Efforts to increase international coordination have been stifled by pressure from security forces in Egypt, Syria, Libya and elsewhere in the Arab world, save for Jordan, where the movement is allowed to operate openly. However, al-Helbawi suggests that "after the revolution in Egypt, the revolutions in Libya, Tunisia, Syria and Bahrain, maybe matters could improve" and unification might be possible along the lines of "world socialism" or the "Zionist movement." "They all listen [to] and obey one amir or one official despite the particularities of each of the different countries, according to their laws and so on."

Al-Helbawi emphasizes that the Brotherhood does not seek confrontation with any regime, though unlike the Salafists, it sees a role in politics for Islam:

The "Brotherhood" does not agree with the saying: "What belongs to Caesar belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God belongs to God." It believes that everything belongs to God. Therefore, [former Egyptian president] al-Sadat's saying that "there is no religion in politics and there is no politics in religion" is ridiculous. The "Brotherhood" does not believe this. The call must continue because it is an order from God. There is also a need to participate in political action. The advantage that the "Brotherhood" sees in political action is that its members have been raised in a certain way and they have built a cultural, ideological, and jurisprudential structure that makes them different from those who have not received this education or training in the political field. This is something that is an asset to the people and the nation...

Al-Helbawi is the author of a number of Arabic language books on topics including "Global Strategies in the Afghan War," "American Politics in the Middle East" and "The Role of Muslim Youth in Reconstruction." He has also translated works by Imam al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (a leading Muslim Brotherhood ideologue and religious scholar) into English.

In 2008, al-Helbawi organized a meeting between Shaykh al-Qaradawi and a group of rabbis belonging to Neturei Karta (lit. "Guardians of the City"), an anti-Zionist Orthodox Jewish movement. The group believes the founding of Israel transformed the Jewish movement into a Zionist nationalist movement, in violation of the Torah (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 3, 2008). More recently, al-Helbawi accused Israel of foreign intervention in the Egyptian "February 25 Revolution" by destroying a gas pipeline in the hope Egypt's revolutionaries would be accused of using explosives, discrediting their peaceful protests (al-Alam TV [Tehran], February 7).

## Yemen Without President Ali Abdullah Saleh

By Michael Horton

Following the bombing of a mosque located within the walls of the Presidential Palace on June 3, Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh, along with five other ranking government officials who were also injured, was flown to the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh for surgery. [1] The president suffered burns to his face and reportedly had shrapnel from the mosque's pulpit lodged in his chest. The President's departure for Riyadh set off celebrations across Yemen in which anti-government protesters declared victory in their four month campaign to unseat the president. Yemeni Vice President Abed Rabbu Mansur al-Hadi became acting president and supreme commander of the armed forces pursuant to article 116 of the Yemeni Constitution (*Yemen Times*, June 5).

While some members of the opposition and the masses of anti-government protesters, who remain encamped in Yemen's major cities, celebrate the end of the Saleh regime, their celebrations and declarations of victory are most likely premature. President Saleh has left Yemen, at least temporarily, but his sons, nephews, and other relatives, who hold key positions within the Yemeni

armed forces, remain. President Saleh's departure is likely the first act in what will be a protracted drama in which the remnants of the Saleh regime use their considerable military assets to secure concessions from the opposition and exact revenge on those groups, most notably the al-Ahmar family, which they believe to have carried out the attack on the president (al-Jazeera, June 4).

Acting President Abed Rabbu Mansur al-Hadi is a marginal figure within the regime. As a southerner and former general officer within the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) Army, al-Hadi was never a member of Saleh's inner circle. President Saleh, who could write a treatise that would rival Machiavelli's *The Prince*, made sure that the positions with real power, military power, were filled by family members or loyal members of his tribe, the Sanhaan. Al-Hadi, who was appointed to the position of Vice President after the 1994 civil war, was merely a token appointment to assuage the anger of defeated southerners. As a member of the Saleh regime who has no tribal ties and as a southerner who is regarded by many southerners as a traitor, al-Hadi has no base of support within Yemen. Al-Hadi's future will likely be limited to that of a placeholder – though the importance of that position is not to be underestimated. The opposition and large numbers of anti-government protesters are backing the handover of power to al-Hadi. They are already framing the handover as a first step towards the formation of a transitional government (Mareb Press, June 4). Al-Hadi could play a pivotal role in the negotiations between the opposition, anti-government demonstrators, and what remains of the Saleh regime.

While al-Hadi may be the titular acting president, it is almost certain that President Saleh's sons, nephews and half-brother are continuing to head up what is left of the Saleh-led government. Brigadier General Ahmed Ali Saleh, the President's eldest son and commander of the Republican Guard, has reportedly moved into the Presidential Palace. Ahmed Ali Saleh is arguably the most capable of Saleh's sons and his Republican Guard troops, which for the most part have remained loyal, are the best equipped and trained in Yemen. Ahmed Ali Saleh was long regarded as the heir apparent but despite his father's efforts, he has never enjoyed much support beyond the troops he commands and some members of the Sanhaan tribe. [2] Brigadier General Yahya Saleh, Saleh's nephew, who commands the now much reviled Central Security Service (CSS), has retained his command and the loyalty of his troops. The CSS was

at the forefront of many of the early crackdowns on anti-government protesters. Many of the CSS troops fear reprisals from the opposition and anti-government protesters and as a consequence feel they have little to lose. Most importantly, President Saleh's half-brother, Muhammad Saleh al-Ahmar, remains in control of the Yemeni Air Force. Apart from the presidential bodyguards, air force pilots are among the most closely vetted members of the Yemeni armed forces due to the service's importance to the regime's grip on power. As individuals, the president's relatives have limited bargaining power and could most likely be neutralized, but as a unified block they have considerable power – though not enough to retain control of Yemen. Nevertheless, it is unclear as to how unified the Saleh family is. There are some indications that there are splits between what can be termed the old guard, the President's half-brother and other first generation family members, and the new guard, represented by the President's son, Ahmed Ali Saleh.

Government spokesmen have variously vowed that President Saleh will return to Yemen in a few days or within two weeks pending his recovery from surgery (SABA, June 6). In response, military forces that have sided with the opposition promised to shoot down Saleh's plane if he dared return – not an empty threat, given the military hardware commanded by some of those officers who have defected. While the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has stated that Saleh's visit to the Kingdom is humanitarian in nature rather than political, it seems unlikely that Saudi officials would not exert considerable pressure on President Saleh to remain in Riyadh (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 5). The likelihood that Saleh will return to Yemen appears to be limited. However, his return is not necessary for the fight to continue. His sons and relatives will use all means available, largely military, to save face (an important factor in Yemen), exact revenge, and attempt to secure some role for the Saleh family, however limited, in Yemen's future.

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## Notes:

1. Saleh's Presidential Palace in Sana'a is a sprawling compound surrounded by high walls designed to foil snipers and deny views of the compound to anyone outside. Given the high walls and number of buildings in the compound, it would seem that someone within the palace who knew the President's movements had to have tipped off whatever group carried out the attack. Published photos of the mosque and accounts of the attack indicate that a bomb may have been planted within the mosque rather than the early reports of a rocket attack.
2. Despite the non-doctrinal tradition of hereditary rule established by Yemen's later Zaidi imams, many Yemenis find hereditary rule undesirable.

families of diplomats stationed at its Karachi office. The U.S. Consulate in Karachi also announced it had detected threats to its facility and urged American citizens in Karachi to keep a low profile and take precautions in their movements around the city (*Pakistan Observer*, June 3).

While it is believed that the attack on the Saudi Consulate and the murder of its staffer in Karachi might be retribution for the American May 2 Abbottabad operation that killed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, there is also speculation that the attacks may have been related to the Saudi troop deployment in Bahrain to suppress Shiite-led protests against the kingdom's Sunni royal family. As such, one Karachi-based security official suggested they may be intended to reignite long-standing tensions between the Sunni and Shiite communities of Pakistan. [1]

This assertion was seemingly corroborated by Karachi's Crime Investigation Department (CID) when they claimed the involvement of the Shiite Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP) in the attacks on Saudi interests in Karachi. An official of the CID, which is responsible for operations against banned militant outfits in Karachi, announced the arrest of SMP militant Muntazir Imam, suspecting his involvement in the killing of the Saudi consulate officer as well as twelve other assassinations of rival Islamist leaders (*The Nation*, May 19; *Saudi Gazette*, June 8; *Express Tribune*, May 29). Local authorities said that it was impossible to rule out the diplomat's assassination was part of a dispute between rival sectarian organizations composed of supporters and opponents of Saudi Arabia (*The Nation*, May 18). Calling Imam's arrest a breakthrough, a CID official said that it would be premature to say the SMP was involved in the killing of the Saudi diplomat as the investigation is still underway (Central Asia Online, May 26).

While no group, including the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), claimed responsibility for the attacks, they might also have been related to the Saudi government's reported refusal to accept Bin Laden's body. Other reports have emerged in recent days revealing the Saudis have been providing intelligence to the United States (*Express Tribune* [Karachi], May 12). Saudi Arabia stripped Bin Laden of citizenship in 1994 after he criticized the royal family's reliance on U.S. troops to protect the Kingdom after the Iraqi invasion of neighboring Kuwait. The Saudi government has also refused to accept the repatriation of the three

## Attacks on Saudi Diplomats in Karachi May Be Part of a Saudi-Iranian Proxy War

By Zia Ur Rehman

A diplomatic staffer of the Saudi Consulate in Karachi, Hassan al-Qahtani, was killed by unknown gunmen riding two motorcycles in Karachi on May 16 (*Dawn* [Karachi], May 16). A few days earlier, unidentified assailants had thrown Russian-made HE-36 hand grenades at the Saudi Consulate in Karachi, though there were no injuries in this case (*The Nation* [Karachi], May 11; *Dawn*, May 12). In both attacks, the assailants managed to escape. The consulate was defended at the time of the grenade attack by paramilitary Rangers and officers of the Foreign Security Cell (FSC – a police unit assigned to diplomatic security), three of whom were subsequently suspended and detained (*The Nation*, May 12). Privately-hired security also failed to take any action to prevent the assault or pursue the attackers. Following the attacks, the Saudi government recalled non-essential staff and

widows and nine children of Bin Laden currently in protective custody in Pakistan. During his recent visit to Riyadh, Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik made a formal request to Saudi authorities to accept Bin Laden's family, but the Saudis declined (*Express Tribune* [Karachi], May 19).

The killing of the Saudi diplomat may not only be a mark of protest by al-Qaeda against the Saudi Kingdom's indifferent attitude toward Bin Laden's family, but also a warning to Pakistan against the possible deportation of the family to the United States. [2] One media report quoted an anonymous Pakistan security official who claimed that the murdered Saudi diplomat was an intelligence official who was looking into Saudi dissidents who have found refuge in Karachi and this is most probably why he was targeted (*New York Times*, May 16). Saudi authorities said al-Qahtani was involved in relief operations and facilitating the travel of Pakistani pilgrims taking part in the Hajj (*Pakistan Times*, June 4).

Saudi interests in Karachi have been targeted in response to the situation in the Gulf, specifically the Saudi military intervention in Bahrain. Saudi Arabia sent troops into Bahrain in March to help the royal family quell the anti-state protests in the tiny Gulf kingdom. However, the deployment angered Shiite Pakistanis, with nationwide protests condemning the Saudi involvement. [3] Shiites were also angry about local newspaper advertisements seeking to recruit hundreds of former soldiers to work for the Bahrain security forces and help with the crackdown on protestors. The Fauji Foundation, a company which has strong links to the Pakistani Army, announced it was sending 1,000 Pakistanis to join the Bahrain National Guard (*Weekly Humshehri* [Lahore], March 18).

Sunni groups have also jumped into the fray with demonstrations and rallies in support of Saudi Arabia, openly accusing Iran of being behind the unrest in Bahrain and other Gulf states. In a sign of local Shiite-Sunni tensions, walls across Karachi, Lahore and other Pakistani cities are filled with slogans and posters condemning Saudi Arabia and Iran, exacerbating the already tense atmosphere between Sunnis and Shiites. [4] In this campaign, banned sectarian organizations hailing from the both sects, including the Shiite SMP and the Sunni Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) have become active in marking walls with derisory slogans and organizing sectarian rallies.

The attack on the Saudi Consulate and the killing of its staffer clearly show that the fight for Bahrain has shifted to Pakistan and could ignite the decade-long Sunni-Shiite rivalry in the country, especially in Karachi. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have funded hard-line Sunni militants groups in Pakistan for years, angering the minority Shi'a community, while Iran has channeled money to Shiite militant groups. In the 1980s and 1990s, Pakistan was the scene of an effective proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, with Karachi being a particularly bloody battleground in the struggle. The involvement of hard-line religious groups from Afghanistan in Pakistan's internal affairs has further complicated the sectarian conflict. Since 1989, sectarian fighting has engulfed the entire country, claiming nearly 7636 lives, mostly from the Shi'a community. [5] Sectarian violence is an unpredictable menace in Pakistan, but the recent activities of Sunni and Shiite religious groups could develop into yet another phase of proxy warfare on Pakistani soil.

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#### Notes:

1. Interview with a Karachi-based security official who requested anonymity, May 26, 2011. See also Terrorism Monitor Brief, January 7, 2010.
2. Interview with Islamabad-based political analyst Zakir Hussain, May 26, 2011.
3. Interview with Karachi-based senior journalist and researcher Ahmed Wali, May 27, 2011.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Sectarian violence in Pakistan 1989-2011, South Asian Terrorist Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm>.

## Understanding Strategic Change in al-Qaeda's Central Leadership after Bin Laden

By *Murad Batal al-Shishani*

Since the leader of al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, was killed on May 2, much analysis has appeared speculating potential changes to the organization and its leadership. This article aims to answer the basic question of in which direction core al-Qaeda (based along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border) will go in the post-Bin Laden era according to the ideology of its remaining leaders. These figures include Egyptian jihadist Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, who will probably emerge as the undeclared leader, as al-Qaeda members considers themselves not an organization, but rather “vanguards” of the jihadist movement. As al-Qaeda ideologue Abdul Majid Abdul Majid put it: “Al-Qaeda is no longer just a hierarchal organization [built] on specific names, but has become a jihadi mission held [in common] by all mujahedeen of the *umma* [Islamic community].” [1]

Some indication of al-Zawahiri's emerging role can be found in his eulogy for Osama bin Laden which was released on jihadi websites on June 8. [2] In the message, entitled “The Noble Knight Alighted,” al-Zawahiri announced the renewal of al-Qaeda's *Bai'a* (oath of allegiance) to the Amir al-Mu'mineen (Commander of the Faithful) Mullah Omar, indicating that al-Zawahiri has the authority to do so on behalf of those “vanguards.”

In order to assess the future behavior of al-Qaeda this article will examine the ideology of three members of al-Qaeda's Shura council in addition to al-Zawahiri: Abu Yahya al-Libi (a.k.a. Hassan Muhammad Qaid), Abu Abdulrahman Attiya al-Libi (a.k.a. Jamal Ibrahim Shtelwi al-Misrati) and Abdul Majid Abdul Majid. A fourth Shura member, Abu Khalil al-Madani, is not included in this analysis due to a lack of information about his views.

### Saif al-Adel in the al-Qaeda Leadership

Although al-Zawahiri has been described as the deputy leader of al-Qaeda over the last 15 years, some recent reports have suggested that Egyptian commander Saif al-Adel would be appointed as the new al-Qaeda leader. However, al-Adel is a military professional, as can be noted from his writings, which means that his lack of

ideological credentials make such reports unlikely. [3] A retired Egyptian military officer, al-Adel is believed to be the leader of al-Qaeda's military committee and returned to Waziristan in 2010 after being released from detention in Iran (*Foreign Policy*, May 26). Saif al-Adel is commonly identified in reports as the alias of a retired Egyptian intelligence (or Special Forces) officer named Muhammad Ibrahim Makkawi; however, there are reasons to question this identification. Al-Adel's father-in-law, an Afghan jihad veteran named Abu Hamid al-Masri (a.k.a. Mustafa Hamid), has denied Makkawi is al-Adel's real name. In 2004, the London-based “Islamic Media Observatory” released a statement saying al-Adel and Makkawi are not the same person. [4] More recently, an Egyptian newspaper published a letter from an individual identifying himself as Muhammad Ibrahim Makkawi, a veteran of the Afghan jihad, stating that he is not Saif al-Adel and has been experiencing problems as a result of this misidentification. The author appears to also be in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, but claims to have denounced al-Qaeda since 9/11 (*al-Youm al-Sabi'i*, May 18).

It is important to note that killing Bin Laden does not mean the dismantlement of al-Qaeda. A June 16, 2010 video recording by Abu Yahya al-Libi, entitled “Our Leaders' Blood Fuels Our Battle”, eulogized the former leaders of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, who were killed in a U.S. air strike on April 19, 2010. Al-Libi's eulogy indicates the mind-set influencing the behavior of al-Qaeda post-Bin Laden: “There is no mujahid who has fought in bouts and stepped into battlefields, whether he is a leader or a soldier, [who] has not prepared himself for death; he is eagerly awaiting it, hour by hour, no, moment by moment... this worship [Jihad], which is part of our glorious religion, cannot be stopped, disrupted or delayed by the death, killing or capture of someone, whoever he is and [whatever] his status is.” [5] Abu Yahya escaped from the American detention centre in Bagram-Afghanistan in 2005. Since then he has appeared as one of the most prominent ideologues of Salafi-Jihadism after studying Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) in Mauritania. Jihadists often refer to his writings, especially his opinions on killing civilians.

### Far Enemy and Near Enemy

Bin Laden was fond of the idea of fighting against “the far enemy” (the “Crusaders and Jews”). Seventy percent of his speeches and appearances were focused on the far enemy, with 20% consisting of general advice

and instructions to jihadis, and just 10% directed at toppling local regimes of “the near enemy” (“apostate” regimes in the Muslim world). [6] These figures suggest that although Bin Laden served as a symbol for jihadis, he was a strategist more than a religious ideologue.

Unlike Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri is focused more on the near enemy, this being due to his background as leader of a national jihad group before it adopted Salafism and joined the larger international jihad movement in the 1980s, of which al-Qaeda is the prime example. Al-Zawahiri’s focus on “the near enemy” comprised 50% of his speeches; in contrast “the far-enemy” was the focus of only 15% of his speeches, the rest being comprised mainly of general advice and instructions. The works of Abu Yahya al-Libi, Abu Abdulrahman Attiya al-Libi and Abdul Majid Abdul Majid reflect a similar lack of focus on fighting the far enemy. This suggests that core al-Qaeda will focus on targeting near enemies in the future. In his June 8 eulogy for Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri made explicit calls for jihad against the near enemy in Pakistan, Syria, Yemen and Libya.

#### Ideologues and Operatives

Al-Qaeda and all its branches have a functional division between political-ideological leaders and military operatives. Switching broad strategies would increase the roles of certain leaders from both groups. For instance, al-Zawahiri will rely on operatives who prefer to target near enemies, such as his old comrade Abu Muhammad al-Masri (a.k.a. Abdullah Ahmad Abdullah). Al-Masri’s preference for targeting “near enemies” was a source of disagreement with Bin Laden himself after the 9/11 attacks (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 17, 2003). Al-Masri is an al-Qaeda operative and appears on the FBI’s most wanted list. He is accused of involvement in the August 7, 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi and is believed to be located in the area of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Al-Zawahiri will also need to rely on operatives such as al-Adel and Muhammad Ilyas Kashmiri to maintain al-Qaeda ties with local insurgents in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Kashmiri’s current status is uncertain; a statement allegedly from Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) announced his death in a June 3 drone strike in North Waziristan, although the spokesman was previously unknown, there were mistakes in the text unlikely to be made by a HuJI spokesman. Moreover, the photo of an allegedly dead Muhammad Ilyas Kashmiri was actually the dead body of Abu Ismail Khan, one of

the LeT terrorists involved in the 2008 Mumbai attack (*The News International* [Islamabad], June 7; Asia Times Online, June 8). Kashmiri is known to be an al-Qaeda commander and leader of the Waziristan-based and HuJI-associated “Brigade 313,” which is made up of members of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and allied Kashmiri groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Karachi-based Jundallah movement.

However, focusing on the near enemy could be the first challenge to al-Zawahiri’s leadership. Al-Qaeda’s rhetoric promoting violent jihad has had very little effect on the youths agitating for political change in the streets of the Arab world, which has also hurt its recruitment base.

However, if political violence were to continue to escalate in Libya, Syria and Yemen, for instance, it would provide new opportunities for a movement that has always gravitated to areas in crisis.

#### Individual Jihad

In this context, it is expected that the ideological role of Abu Abdulrahman Attiya al-Libi will increase. Attiya is a prominent al-Qaeda theorist and a leader of the jihadist movement in Libya (see *Terrorism Monitor*, August 12, 2010). A graduate of Shari’a studies in Mauritania and an expert in explosives, he is considered close to al-Zawahiri. He was also close to Bin Laden and al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi before the latter was killed in 2006. Attiya has also been described as a coordinator between al-Qaeda leaders and other Islamic groups. Looking at his writings, one notes that all of them fell into the category of “general advice and instructions” until the turmoil in Libya started last February. At that point he started to send messages more regularly denouncing Mu’ammar al-Qaddafi and NATO military operations in Libya.

Attiya al-Libi’s role as a general theorist is essential for al-Qaeda. This was indicated in a recent two-part video recording produced by al-Sahab Media Production entitled “La Tukalif ila Nafsak” (You are not tasked [held responsible] except for yourself only). The first one hour episode was devoted to encouraging *al-jihad al-fardi* (individual jihad), particularly among Muslims who live in the West. The tactic was described in the recording by both Attiya al-Libi and Abu Yahya al-Libi (as-ansar.com, June 3). [7] Attiya al-Libi stressed the importance of individual jihadi attacks being in line with “the mujahideen’s general strategy... all Western



countries are not the same.” He further urged potential jihadis to contact “the leaders of mujahideen, if that’s possible” before undertaking individual operations.

Besides its tactical advantages, individual jihad suggests that the “far enemy” remains a priority for al-Qaeda. This will increase the importance of the work of Abdul Majid, who clearly stated the priority of targeting the United States when he was asked about the strategy of jihadis: “As for the overall strategy of jihad, I think it is known to all, which is [based] on the importance of focusing on the head of *kufir* [disbelief] and corruption in the globe - America.” [8]

### Conclusion

Al-Qaeda will continue after Bin Laden by relying on its ideology, but a change will be seen in its behavior. These changes will be reflected in new roles for the movement’s leaders, particularly those involved in developing the group’s ideology.

Under al-Zawahiri’s leadership, al-Qaeda will be more near-enemy-oriented, but this will depend on developments in the Arab world and the direction of the popular opposition movements. Relying on military operatives to maintain ties with locals in the region could become a problem for core al-Qaeda if they do not dedicate an ideologue for such missions. Though al-Zawahiri will play an important role as al-Qaeda’s new leader, the increased roles of various ideologues will mean that the movement will be led in a more collective fashion than has existed previously.

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### Notes:

1. Not much is known about him or whether this is his real name. Unlike most Egyptian jihadis he has not come from al-Gama’a al-Islamiya or al-Jihad, but is rather a product of the traditional Egyptian Salafist movement. For the full text of his interview, see: <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=19061015>, June 19, 2010.

2. <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?p=193941>.

3. For Saif al-Adel’s writings, see: <http://www.tawhed.ws/a?a=nkpabwye>.

4. <http://www.aljihad.info/vb/showthread.php?t=5859>.

5. The video can be watched at this link: <http://www.archive.org/details/dema3>.

6. All figures compiled by the author.

7. For more details on the *al-jihad al-fardi* tactic, which was first encouraged by Bin Laden, see *Terrorism Monitor*, June 17, 2010.

8. <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=19061015>, June 2010.