COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER
at West Point

Beware of Imitators

al-Qa`ida through the lens of its Confidential Secretary

Harmony Program

Nelly Lahoud

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HARMONY PROGRAM
THE COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

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'I am writing history through the lens of those who make it, not those who listen to history [being reported on their radio] or watch it as it unfolds on their [television] screens.'

Fadil Harun to his wife Halima (December 2006)

PREFACE

A draft of this report based on Fadil Harun's two-volume autobiography had been completed and reviewed by external readers when my academic home, the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, received 17 declassified documents captured from Usama Bin Ladin's compound in Abbottabad. Revising this report took a backseat as I prioritized analyzing the documents, a study that resulted in the publication of the CTC report "Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?", which accompanied the release of the documents.

Initially, I agonized about privileging Bin Ladin's files over Harun's manuscript. After all, in my view, Harun's manuscript is the richest primary source available regarding al-Qa'ida, and this report is but a modest exploration of what it has to offer. But, in hindsight, the delay in publication of this report was fortuitous as Bin Ladin's concerns about the ideology and operational conduct of regional jihadi groups echo the dominant theme that runs throughout Harun's lengthy autobiography (1,156 pages). Since Harun was a quiet al-Qa'ida operative who prioritized effectiveness while avoiding publicity, his criticism of the jihadi landscape may have been brushed aside as that of a renegade. Now that Bin Ladin's own letters articulate similar concerns to those raised by Harun, their release prior to the publication of this report lends an emphatic credibility to Harun's account.

Whereas Bin Ladin chose to restrict his worries to private communications, Harun decided to air his publicly, releasing his autobiography on a jihadi website in February 2009. In comparison with the thin volume of Abbottabad documents, Harun's manuscript is richer in information and has more to offer about al-Qa'ida's internal political culture, its ideology and the methods of its operational work. The process of revising this report in light of the documents has largely been to confirm Harun's account rather than to correct it.[1]

[1] I should admit that the Abbottabad documents caused me to delete speculation I had made in the first draft of this report which I had also included in a footnote of a published article (see Nelly Lahoud, "The Merger of al-Shabab and Qa'idat al-Jihad," *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 5, issue 2, 16 February 2012, see footnote 6). The speculation pertains to the name that "Qa'idat al-Jihad" may reflect an internal tension on the part of senior al-Qa'ida leaders. I remarked that Bin Ladin never used it, but Ayman al-Zawahiri has been using it since at least 2005. However, the name "Qa'idat al-Jihad" is mentioned in one of the declassified documents (SOCOM-2012-0000009); it is part of a longer letter that is either unavailable or still classified. While it is impossible to ascertain the identity of the author and the broader context of the letter, I nonetheless removed similar speculation from this report. If in future it is proven that this speculation is erroneous, the error would be mine, not Harun's.

INTRODUCTION

"I should write a history of the jihadis in my time as I witnessed it and not as it is perceived by the West or those who disagree with us,"[1] explains Fadil Harun regarding his motivation to publish his two-volume manuscript *al-Harb `ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun* (The War against Islam: the Story of Fadil Harun). Posted on the jihadi website *Shabakat Ansar al-Mujahidin* on 26 February 2009, the manuscript constitutes Harun's autobiography, in which he presents an intimate account of his life in the context of his career with al-Qa`ida. Harun (also known as Fazul `Abdallah Muhammad) was an al-Qa`ida operative who was killed in June 2011 by Somali government forces. Among the operations in which he played a key role are the 1998 East Africa bombings that targeted U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, following which he claims to have been appointed al-Qa`ida's "Confidential Secretary" (*amin sirr al-qa`ida*).

The spirit driving Harun's manuscript is the desire to produce a corrective history of al-Qa`ida distinguishing it from jihadi groups acting in its name.[2] He believed that unlike al-Qa`ida, many jihadi groups have deviated from the true path of jihad. In his opinion they lack a sound ideological worldview and many of their operations, particularly those which involved resorting to "*tatarrus*" (i.e., the use of non-combatants as human shields), are in breach of what he deems to be "lawful jihad."[3] He therefore decided "to write about al-Qa`ida…to make clear to everyone the sincerity and uprightness of its path with respect to jihad and other religious, worldly and political issues."[4]

Based on declassified documents captured from Usama bin Ladin's compound in Abbottabad, it is evident that Harun's sentiments were not isolated. The internal

[1] Fadil Harun, *al-Harb 'ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun* (The War against Islam: Fadil Harun's Story), Vol. 1, p. 12. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the Arabic in this report are my own.
[2] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 9.
[3] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 82, 176-7, 186.
[4] Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 12-3.

communication between a number of well-known al-Qa`ida figures indicate that they too were alarmed by the conduct of regional jihadi groups and their indiscriminate attacks against civilians.[5] Bin Ladin in particular was distressed by their conduct and, like Harun, was dismayed by their irresponsible understanding of "*tatarrus,*" which led to the unnecessary deaths of civilians and tainted the reputation of the jihadis.[6]

How different then is al-Qa`ida from other jihadi groups? "Al-Qa`ida" has become a buzz word – it tends to mean almost everything related to jihadism, and in the process, risks being denuded of all meaning. Harun's revealing account of al-Qa`ida suggests that the "original al-Qa`ida" (*al-qa`ida al-umm*), as he terms it, is not the sum of the jihadi landscape but a distinct part of its larger disjointed whole. More precisely, al-Qa`ida's role in the current jihadi landscape is either absent or, at most, based on ad hoc decisions, reflecting its inability to exert control over the groups and individuals it has inspired. This extends to al-Qa`ida's lack of control over regionally based groups, including those that call themselves al-Qa`ida and those that pledge allegiance to al-Qa`ida. Harun's account combined with Bin Ladin's 2010 proposal to bring regional jihadi groups in line with al-Qa`ida's ideology and code of conduct by getting their leaders to agree to a memorandum of understanding suggests that these groups are not organic to al-Qa`ida.[7]

Report Overview

In addition to this introduction, this report consists of three chapters and a concluding section. The opening chapter is an account of Harun's journey as an al-Qa`ida operative as he presents himself; it is also a discussion of the merits and shortcomings of the manuscript in providing reliable information about al-Qa`ida's activities. The remaining parts of the report focus on two aspects that feature prominently in Harun's account of al-Qa`ida: the first pertains to al-Qa`ida's ideology and the second to its organizational structure.

With respect to ideology, which is discussed in chapter two, the report explores Harun's insight into al-Qa`ida's worldview to show how its ideology is meant to be *consumed* by

[5] See for example the letter authored by `Atiyya and Abu Yahya al-Libi and addressed to Hakimullah Mahsud, the leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to the leader of Pakistani Taliban (TTP), SOCOM-2012-0000007; the letter assessed to have been authored by Adam Gadahn, in which he expressed concerns, particularly over the indiscriminate attacks of the Islamic State of Iraq against Christian churches, and of the TTP against Muslim civilians, targeting them in their mosques and marketplaces, SOCOM-2012-0000004.

[6] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 3-4.

[7] Ibid., 9, 14-15.

its members who were schooled in its training camps and are close to its senior leaders; how its pragmatic approach to religious interpretation and rejection of regionalism, ethnocentrism and sectarianism led to its strategic success of attracting recruits from different regions and theological persuasions and turning them into "jihadis without borders,"[8] as Harun describes himself and his fellow al-Qa`ida members; and why *takfiris*, those jihadis who are inflexible in their interpretation of religion and rush to declare fellow Muslims to be unbelievers, are a liability to al-Qa`ida and to jihadism broadly.

Harun's contention that al-Qa`ida's ideology is pragmatic and inclusive of Sunni Muslims espousing different theological orientations is corroborated by documents believed to be internal to al-Qa`ida, which are available in the Harmony Program—a database consisting of declassified captured battlefield documents.[9] These documents reveal that it is not religiosity that defines al-Qa`ida's ideology; rather it is militancy that is the central tenet of its worldview. It is no secret that al-Qa`ida's resources did not go into building mosques and religious centers, but into building military training camps, financially supporting its members and their families, and funding terrorist activities and operations.

Understanding al-Qa`ida's ideology is instructive in the context of studying radicalization and the role of religion therein. Some studies of jihadism confuse religion with religiosity and go on to suggest a causal link between religiosity and militancy when militants invoke religion to justify their actions. There is of course a link between religion and religiosity, but it should not be forgotten that prior to the emergence of the nation-state, religions served as the language of politics and religiosity was not an essential criterion for rulers. A link may also exist between religiosity and militancy. However, studies of religious militants show that Islam does not have a monopoly on inspiring militancy,[10] and studies of terrorism suggest that there is much more to the inner workings of terrorist groups than ideology.[11]

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[8] Harun, *al-Harb 'ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 146, 153.

[9] Analysis based on captured documents alone is fraught with risk. While the value of such documents is unique and invaluable, it is difficult to ascertain how representative they are of the broader jihadi corpus. Harmony documents used in this report are available on the CTC website (http://www.ctc.usma.edu). References to these documents in the report are provided according to the numbers associated with each document. They tend to start with letters, e.g., AFGP or SOCOM followed by numbers.

[10] See for example the comparative study by Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (California: University of California Press, 2003).

[11] See the eternally relevant study by Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, July 1981, 379-99.

In view of the excessive attention the Islamic faith has received in the study of terrorism, and recent efforts to counter this excess by removing religion altogether from the policy discourse on terrorism (e.g., replacing it with vague expressions such as "countering violent extremism" [CVE]), Harun's pragmatic understanding of religion sheds light on how al-Qa`ida's ideology draws on religious sources to prioritize militancy over religiosity. Put differently, studying al-Qa`ida's ideology as understood by insiders illustrates not just why religion matters, but how it is put to use by al-Qa`ida in the service of militancy and, more importantly, when religiosity does not matter.

The second key focus of this report, addressed in the third chapter, pertains to Harun's understanding of the organizational nature of al-Qa`ida, its inner workings and what sets it apart from other jihadi groups. Harun contends that al-Qa`ida can be distinguished from other jihadi groups on account of its "lawful jihad"—a *jus in bello*-like framework devised by its Legal Committee, and its "special operations" style of attacks. This contention is all the more pertinent in view of the proliferation of regional groups inserting the word "al-Qa`ida" into their names, and the dominant habit in the secondary literature to subsume virtually every jihadi group and its actions under the workings of "al-Qa`ida" (or "al-Qa`ida affiliates," "al-Qa`ida inspired," etc.). While Harun—and Bin Ladin—may refer to individual members of unrelated jihadi groups as "brothers,"[12] they are regarded as "brothers" in religion[13] but not fellow members of the same organization. Harun argues that the "original al-Qa`ida" is but "a small movement" and most of the attacks that were carried out by jihadis following the 9/11 attacks "lack the authorization of Sheikh Usama or the central leadership of al-Qa`ida."[14] As an illustration of Harun's claims, this chapter presents a synthesis of his account of the Islamic State of Iraq; his dealings with escapees from a prison in Yemen in May 2006, some of whom later formed al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); and his experience with al-Shabab in Somalia.

The concluding chapter draws on Harun's manuscript to explore how the killing of al-Qa`ida's iconic leader Bin Ladin affects the organization and whether its demise is "within reach" as some in the U.S. establishment assert. It is argued that Bin Ladin's death is not as essential to the survival of al-Qa`ida as many might assume. Rather al-Qa`ida suffered a crippling blow, not in 2011, but in 2003 when a number of what Harun designates as al-Qa`ida key "tier-two leaders," including Khalid Sheikh Muhammad and Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri, were captured. Al-Jaza'iri, Harun claims, was entrusted by al-Qa`ida to oversee its relations with Pakistani authorities; Harun

[12] Lahoud et al., *Letters from Abbottabad*, 12.
[13] cf. Q. 49:10.
[14] Fadil Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun*, Vol. 1, 523.

considered his arrest as a "catastrophe" that befell al-Qa`ida, forcing its senior leaders in Pakistan to "go underground" and cease all forms of communication for longer than three years.[15] By the end of 2006, the "brothers" in Waziristan were struggling "for their livelihood, and rely on God's grace," according to Harun's wife, Halima.[16] She had been in the protection of senior leaders in Waziristan before joining her husband in Somalia at the end of 2006.

If al-Qa`ida did suffer a crippling blow in 2003, has the world become a safer place these past nine years? Harun asserts that the post-9/11 attacks that were characterized by targeting civilians instead of military, political and economic targets were not initiated by al-Qa`ida. The reader is thus led to infer that the world would be a safer place were the "original al-Qa`ida" still powerful, rather than have to endure the current world that is at the mercy of those Harun calls the "jihadis.com,"[17] by which he means the juvenile who have assumed charge of jihadism. How close was Harun to reality? When a subject is riddled with complications that make any answer appear simplistic, a common Arabic response is to settle it with "w*allahu a`lam"* (God knows best).

[15] Ibid., Vol. 1, 536.

[16] Ibid., Vol. 2, 174.

[17] Ibid., Vol. 2, 151, 315. He uses "jihad.com" as the philosophy of the new jihadis; it makes sense to render those espousing it as "jihadis.com."

CHAPTER ONE
Al-Qa`ida's Confidential Secretary

This chapter is an introduction to Harun's manuscript and an overview of Harun's operational career in al-Qa`ida. The first section of the report consists of an analysis of the merits and shortcomings of the manuscript and its reliability as a source of information about al-Qa`ida. It argues that Harun's critical stance of the jihadi landscape combined with his commitment to al-Qa`ida's project until his death in June 2011 lends credibility to the information he relates. But the manuscript has its flaws, suffering from inconsistencies with respect to chronology and on occasions some internal incoherence. It is unlikely that these inconsistencies are designed to mislead the reader; rather in all likelihood are the result of several factors, including Harun's lapses in memory; his having to make notes while evading the authorities; and his inability to subject the manuscript to the red pen of a copyeditor. The second section is a synthesis of Harun's own account of his operational work, including his appointment to the post of Confidential Secretary. He earned this post after proving his credentials with the planning of the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa. It is a secretarial position, but one that requires non-conventional expertise such as forging travel documents. More importantly, by virtue of his role as "Confidential Secretary," Harun enjoyed regular access to al-Qa`ida's senior leaders and was privy to many of the organization's secrets, including the 9/11 attacks when still in the planning stage.

The East Africa bombings that targeted U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 7 August 1998 highlighted al-Qa`ida's militant capacity and global credentials as a non-state actor. The key al-Qa`ida operative who coordinated the planning, logistics, preparation of explosives for this attack was a native of the Comoros Islands by the name Fadil Hurun (also known as Fazul `Abdallah Muhammad).[1] He

[1] His full name is: `Abdallah b. Muhammad `Ali b. Fadil b. Hussein Al al-Mulla Fadil al-Qumari, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun*, Vol. 1,13; he was born in the Comoros Islands on 25 August 1972,: Vol. 1, 16; he is of Indian origin, his grandfather who migrated from India to the Comoros Islands is of Shi`ite origin: Vol. 1, 17; his grandfather became a Sunni before he married Harun's Sunni grandmother, `A'isha bt `Abdallah: Vol. 1, 205. Harun indicates that his grandfather is of the "Bohrawiyyun class." I suspect that he means the Bohoras, a Shi`a community of the Isma`ili sect. If this is correct, for more information about this sect, see A. A. A. Fyzee, "Bohoras," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Harun is known by the

hosted in his home two of the would-be suicide bombers whom he escorted to their destination on the day of the event. In Harun's mind, the 1998 East Africa bombings were the "spark that ignited all the heroic operations that followed and which were carried out with the knowledge [and support] of the central leadership of al-Qa`ida, unlike those random operations […] that are carried out by people in the name of al-Qa`ida and of which we are innocent."[2] He maintains that the attacks transformed al-Qa`ida into a "giant" (*`imlaq*) in the jihadi world,[3] causing many Muslim youth to travel to Afghanistan. It seems that al-Qa`ida had closed its door to new members, but the flow of jihadis to Afghanistan propelled Bin Ladin to reopen the door permitting membership of al-Qa'ida.[4]

Just as the 1998 East Africa bombings elevated al-Qa`ida's reputation in the jihadi world, they also earned it an indelible place in the collective memory of Washington's political and intelligence community. In the mind of the then National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, the attacks represented "a watershed event in the level of attention given to the bin Laden threat."[5] The simultaneous nature of the attacks reflected a "sophisticated overall planning" that few terrorist groups could master.[6] As such, Usama bin Ladin's "network" succeeded in gaining the attention of the U.S. security apparatus, which, until then, had "focused more on Iranian-sponsored groups."[7] By all accounts, the spectacular and sophisticated nature of the attacks against two embassies of the world's leading power transformed al-Qa`ida's standing, elevating it to an unrivaled status in the jihadi landscape.

On 7 June 2011 Fadil Harun was shot and killed by Somali government forces when, according to media reports, he and his companion, Musa Husayn, refused to stop at a checkpoint in Mogadishu.[8] His death occurred just over a month after that of Bin Ladin

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name Fazul, perhaps because his grandfather's Arabic name is "Fadil" but it is written and pronounced as "Fazul" in Indian: Vol. 1, 17. I use "Fadil Harun," going by how he designates himself.

[2] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 371.

[3] Ibid., Vol. 1, 378.

[4] Ibid., Vol. 1, 380.

[5] As reported by *The 9/11 Investigations*. See Steven Strasser (ed.), *The 9/11 Investigations* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 156.

[6] Ibid., 429.

[7] Ibid., 156. As early as 1996, the CIA had set up a unit specifically tasked with monitoring Usama bin Ladin; see chapter 4, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 109; http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/index.html (accessed 18 July 2011).

[8] Jeffrey Gettleman, "Somalis Kill Mastermind of 2 U.S. Embassy Bombings," *The New York Times*, 11 June 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/world/africa/12somalia.html (accessed 19 August 2011).

and, it may not have been as accidental as it was reported.[9] His distinguished role in al-Qa`ida was evident; Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton was quick to remark on his death, hailing it as a "significant blow to Al Qaeda, its extremist allies and its operations in East Africa."[10] Harun endowed the jihadi community and those who study it a two-volume autobiography detailing his al-Qa`ida career, which had been posted online two years before his death. The autobiography consists of 1,156 pages and is entitled *al-Harb `ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun* (The War against Islam: Fadil Harun's Story).[11]

The Manuscript

This report is based on the two-volume manuscript that was posted on 26 February 2009 by a certain "abdullahalyamani" on the website *Shabakat Ansar al-Mujahidin*, with links to a book entitled *al-Harb `ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun*.[12] There exist versions of the manuscript that pre-date 2009: `Abd al-Rahim `Ali, a scholar of Islamic militant movements, refers to a version of the autobiography that dates back to 2005, entitled *Jil al-Qa`ida* (The Generation of al-Qa`ida).[13] Kenya's *Daily Nation* published translated excerpts of a version that dates back to early 2007.[14] On 2 August 2008, it reported that Harun's autobiography had been captured on a laptop seized from his wife when she and "his children were captured in Kolobio village on the Kenyan side of the Kenya-Somalia border soon after US aircraft bombed the al-Qaeda base in Ras Kambonion on January 7, 2007." [15] Harun himself notes that he had published sections of the first

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[9] See Chapter three in this report concerning the possibility that the incident was planned and instigated by al-Shabab.

[10] Cited in Gettleman, "Somalis Kill Mastermind of 2 U.S. Embassy Bombings."

[11] He hoped and promised to write a third volume, vol. 2, 489.

[12] Posted by Abdullahalyamani, *Shabakat Ansar al-Mujahidin*, 26 February 2009, http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=1463 (a copy was downloaded and saved in 2009, but the link was no longer active the last time it was accessed in August 2011). A trusted colleague told me that it was originally posted on *al-Falluja* website, but it was quickly taken down.

[13] `Abd al-Rahim `Ali, "al-Zawahiri…al-Sa`id ila Qiyadat al-Qa`ida: asbab al-Tamkin wa-`Awamil al-Tarjih," *Arab Center for Research & Studies*, 2 June 2011, http://www.alkharitah.com/NewsDetails.aspx?NID=3361 (accessed 9 August 2011).

[14] See "Diary of a terrorist: Fazul's journey to Pakistan," *Daily Nation*, 4 August 2008, http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/449052/-/tj4xqd/-/index.html; "Fazul's military quest lands him in Afghanistan," *Daily Nation*, 5 August 2008, http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/452636/-/tjlr2k/-/index.html; "Fazul joins camp to begin Jihad," *Daily Nation*, 5 August 2008, http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/452640/-/tjlr3a/-/index.html (accessed on 8 August 2011). My thanks to Yoram Schweitzer for drawing these articles to my attention.

[15] David Okwembah, "Kenya Police find vital information on terror suspects," *Daily Nation*, 2 August 2008, http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/446198/-/tj2vo1/-/index.html. The information in Okwembah's article is not entirely reliable: he designates Mariam Ali Mohammad as Harun's wife when her name is Halima Badr al-Din; the name of his second wife is Amina. He also remarks that Harun was

volume on the internet and had it translated into English; he confirms that the "enemy had found the unedited version of the first volume";[16] and also expressed his intent to write a third volume.[17] At the time of writing this report, no excerpts of Harun's autobiography were found on the main Arabic jihadi websites, except for the now defunct link to the two volumes on *Shabakat Ansar al-Mujahidin*. Since the materials recovered from his vehicle, including laptops, have not been declassified, it cannot be publicly ascertained whether Harun was working on a third volume to add to his autobiography.

The manuscript is a mix of diary and autobiography. Some parts of the manuscript are composed in a reflective autobiographical style, e.g., the first part narrates his early life in the context of his native homeland, the Comoros Islands, and within the broader context of the modern history of the world of Islam; reflective statements are interspersed throughout the manuscript. While the entries for certain years have been conscientiously written in a book format, other parts are structured as if they are based on a diary, detailing accounts of his life on a daily basis, and also of his views, such that the reader gets to discern an evolution in Harun's thinking over the years. Harun states that the manuscript is based on a diary which he began writing in 1998, though he provides vivid details of events preceding that date.

Harun claims that he had not originally intended to turn his diary into a book, despite Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (KSM), the architect of the 9/11 attacks, repeatedly encouraging him to do so.[18] What finally prompted him to take this path was his concern over the increasing infighting among Muslims, unlawful acts in the name of jihad and the misunderstanding of al-Qa`ida's ideology and activities.[19] He laments how the sacrifices of the jihadis are wasted when some Muslims kill fellow Muslims using jihad as their justification. The damage is compounded, he believes, when religious preachers working in the service of corrupt governments insult the true jihadis by labeling them as rebels (*bughat*) and Kharijites (*khawarij*) but refrain from rebuking the "assaulting infidel."[20] In classical Islamic political parlance, the labels "rebels" and "kharijites" are derogatory terms used to designate those who renounce the authority of

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the father of "eight children aged from eight months to 12 years," whereas Harun and Halima only had three children.

[16] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 2, 3.

[17] Ibid., Vol. 2, 489.

[18] Ibid., Vol. 1, 391.

[19] Ibid., Vol. 1, 3.

[20] Ibid., Vol 1, 3.

the legitimate Imam and secede from the Muslim community (*jama`a*),[21] as in the case of the seventh century group that rebelled against the fourth Caliph `Ali and later assassinated him in 661 AD.[22]

It is likely that the bulk of the writing of the first volume was undertaken between 2003 and late 2004. After he assisted in the planning of the 2002 Mombasa attacks that targeted the Israeli owned Paradise Hotel and fired at, but narrowly missed an Israeli airplane that was taking off, Harun found himself constantly on the run from Kenyan authorities. Seeing that many members of his cell were either killed or arrested, he decided to leave Kenya:

> Thus, I left Kenya to take a fighter's rest (*istirahat mujahid*)…during my rest I decided and succeeded in writing this book…to explain to the readers all over the world that we are not criminal killers…. The book is a collection of all my memories based on my personal diary. I began putting the book together in my hiding place in the land of Islam and during the blessed month of Ramadan of the year 1425 h. when the massacres in Fallujah were underway. The [unfortunate] developments in Saudi Arabia led me to hasten in writing…two years have passed since the events of "Hotel Paradise."[23]

Harun began writing the second volume on 26 February 2007,[24] and continued to record events until 2 January 2009,[25] remarking on the election of president Barack Obama in November 2008. While he did not approve of Obama, he nevertheless interpreted his election as a defeat of the Bush policies and therefore a victory for the jihadis.[26] He had originally intended to keep writing until he saw president George W. Bush "leave the White House in tears, weeping like a woman, because of his failure in this war;" but Harun made the decision to stop writing.[27] Almost two months later, the two volumes were posted online on a jihadi website.

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[21] See Shaybani in Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), chapter VIII.

[22] On how the label "Kharijites" is used to denounce jihadis today, see Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*, Chapter One.

[23] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 555. Two years after Mombasa would make it November 2004. He is likely referring to events in Saudi Arabia that took place during May 2004 while the month of Ramadan and intense Fallujah fighting were late October and early November 2004.

[24] Ibid., Vol. 2, 3.

[25] Ibid., Vol. 2, 489.

[26] Ibid., Vol. 2, 482.

[27] Ibid., Vol. 2, 558-9.

It is important to note that in April 2003 Harun lost direct phone or email contact with the leadership of al-Qa`ida. He managed to reconnect once in the latter part of 2006 via proxy when he was arranging for his wife and children to travel from Waziristan to be with him in Somalia. Thus, although his views of al-Qa`ida's senior leadership between 2003 and 2006 need to be considered with reference to his lack of access, the Abbottabad documents make clear that his interpretations with respect to the ideology and conduct of regional jihadi groups were largely consistent with those of the senior leaders. Dealing with the period between 2007 and until he stopped writing in January 2009, the latter half of the second volume consists prevailingly of Harun's reflections on the state of the world, including the news of the jihadis outside Somalia, not as he experienced it, but as he analyzed it largely through following the news in the media. He was close to the Somali scene and was frustrated with the militant group Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin (see chapter three); his manuscript details the period that led to the formation of al-Shabab, the divisions that existed among its leaders and the way they handled the invasion of Somalia by Ethiopian forces. The information he recounts after approximately March 2007 has less to do with Somalia and al-Shabab and more to do with the rest of the jihadi world, relying mainly on media reports. Accordingly, it is conjectural and lacks an intimate knowledge of the operational jihadi landscape. For this reason the latter part of the second volume should not be taken as an insider's account of what is happening within the "original al-Qa`ida" (*al-Qa`ida al-umm*) under the leadership of Usama bin Ladin until May 2011.

As far as the writing style of the manuscript is concerned, Harun writes with highly expressive flair; so expressive that it is not difficult to read his emotions and at times even measure his blood pressure when he is describing events that deeply frustrate him. For analytical purposes, the reader of the original Arabic manuscript would do well to pay attention to two distinct stylistic forms that characterize most of the manuscript. First, the parts that read in diary format, i.e., sections with specific dates, generally over several consecutive days, in which Harun provides detailed accounts of the events of each day, are particularly valuable. They present events with raw immediacy, virtually as experienced. Most likely, these sections were written on the day of the event narrated (or soon thereafter); as such, the reader gets to appreciate Harun's instant and arguably unfiltered reaction to the events in question. The reader is therefore able to assess the impact of certain events on al-Qa`ida through Harun's different emotional tones, whether these reflect his level of confidence, anger, impatience or in certain entries when he is alarmed about the fate of al-Qa`ida.

Second, for the Arabist, Harun's manuscript is easy and indeed captivating to read, but one should not forget that the manuscript did not benefit from the red pen of a copyeditor. Thus, its expression and structure are often far from being internally

coherent. In some parts, especially at the beginning of the first volume, it is poor on chronology and the reader has to hazard rough guesses as to the dates of Harun's early militant journey on the basis of the world events he was narrating. The second volume also suffers from stylistic problems. For example, the section that deals with the activities of members of al-Qa`ida in East Africa during the period 2004–2007 requires repeated rereading to capture the flow of events during that period. That is because it is not always clear when Harun was personally involved in the events he is reporting: he uses "we" to describe certain events in Somalia in the first half of 2006, whereas elsewhere in the manuscript his chronology indicates that he did not arrive in Somalia until August that year.[28] Also, the same section suffers from repetition to the point that it is not always evident whether what is related in several places is in fact a single event or similar multiple events. Thus, in addition to rereading some parts of the manuscript, the reader's imagination is taxed in having to connect certain ideas together and determine what is not explicit in the text.

To his credit, Harun is forthcoming about his linguistic limitations.[29] In appealing to have the book translated, he indicated that he has no objections if the translator were to correct spelling and grammatical mistakes "for I am not thoroughly familiar (*mutabahhir*) with the rules that govern syntax." He asks, however, that in the process of translating it the content of the book must not undergo any changes to its substance. In the event that the book is sold, Harun wishes the revenue to be donated to the families of Palestinian orphans and widows.[30]

The Manuscript's Value

As will be discussed below, Harun was privy to many of al-Qa`ida's secrets. Therefore, his detailed account of his operational career with al-Qa`ida over a period of almost eighteen years—having joined al-Qa`ida in 1991 and stopped writing in 2009—the manuscript includes unparalleled insider information that presents al-Qa`ida in a new light. It consists of a wealth of information concerning the inner workings of al-Qa`ida and the various players with whom Harun interacted. It has a "wikileaks" aura to it, except that Harun is volunteering the information with the intention not of whistleblowing but of exonerating al-Qa`ida from the charges leveled against it. It offers not just an intimate account of Harun's life and his jihadi journey, but is also composed with a view to narrating his life story in the context of the history of al-Qa`ida as he

[28] This section of volume two of Harun's manuscript is discussed in chapter three of this report; when Harun's involvement in the events in question is murky, the reader is warned in the relevant footnotes.
[29] This is not to belittle Harun's linguistic abilities: he possesses a rich Arabic vocabulary, but the grammatical and spelling mistakes that are consistent throughout the manuscript suggest that he lacks a solid foundation in Arabic grammar.
[30] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 13.

experienced it: it is to serve as a "history of the jihadis in my time as I witnessed it," and in particular "about al-Qa`ida…to make clear to everyone the sincerity and uprightness of al-Qa`ida's path with respect to jihad and other religious, worldly and political issues."[31] In short, the spirit driving his autobiography is one of seeking to produce a corrective history of what is reported about al-Qa`ida, distinguishing it from the rest of the jihadi landscape;[32] in so doing, it is designed to provide an alternative account of al-Qa`ida so that readers may understand "the other [truer] face of the mujahidin."[33]

While Harun is at pains to exonerate al-Qa`ida's prosecution of jihad, he is by no means making an apology for jihadism broadly. In advancing his account of al-Qa`ida, Harun seeks not just to distinguish it, but also to dissociate it from the rest of the jihadi landscape. Accordingly, Harun does not shy away from presenting a critique of the ideological and operational landscape of jihadism: "not every drop of blood that is shed constitutes jihad but in every jihad blood is shed," he reminds fellow jihadis.[34] He sees himself engaging in a necessary self-examination of the jihadi movement; it is critical, he asserts:

> That we accept criticism and record history, as we ought to, [that is, by narrating events as they actually happened]. As a member of the jihadi movement and al-Qa`ida, I should not simply speak of its virtues and be silent on its shortcomings. Nay. Were we to do so, we would be just like the regimes that record falsified history to glorify so-and-so.[35]

It is likely that Harun's frank public criticism of the jihadi landscape led to the removal of his manuscript from jihadi websites. In light of the Abbottabad documents, his views were not isolated, but senior al-Qa`ida leaders opted to discuss them only in their private communications. Were Harun still alive, it would no doubt have disappointed him to realize that while his fellow jihadis could not handle his critique and took measures to censor his views, the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point made his work accessible to all.

The ultimate merit of Harun's critique lies in his genuine commitment to jihad: until he was killed in June 2011, he continued to believe in al-Qa`ida and its mission and he remained an active jihadi at large, much to the chagrin of U.S. and Kenyan authorities.

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[31] Ibid., Vol. 1, 12-13.
[32] Ibid., Vol. 1, 9.
[33] Ibid., Vol. 1, 53.
[34] Ibid., Vol. 1, 235. This is a beautiful (and somewhat familiar?) line; he does not attribute it to a specific person but he puts it in inverted commas.
[35] Ibid., Vol. 1, 131.

Other publicized criticisms of jihadism have largely taken the form of so-called recantations by senior jihadi ideologues who are serving prison sentences and whose writings may have been made under duress. As such, the credibility of the anti-jihadi views they now espouse is in doubt and few, if any, jihadis would take them seriously.[36] Harun, however, was writing as a free man. Further, his critique was not designed to undermine jihadism; on the contrary, his main purpose was to correct the jihadi path and exonerate al-Qa`ida from the misdeeds carried out in its name.

Notwithstanding the merits of the manuscript, there are some limitations, if not frustrations, to studying it. This author had to assume that Harun is the author of the manuscript. If an earlier version was indeed seized on his laptop, then it stands to reason that Harun is the author of the manuscript. Of course, interviewing a number of jihadi figures who witnessed him writing it, like Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, would certainly lend further credibility to Harun's authorship of the manuscript. For obvious reasons, this author could not undertake the necessary fieldwork that would satisfy the discerning mind of philologists.

The critical reader has to consider other limitations that present themselves when analyzing the manuscript. For example, why should one assume the veracity of the information recounted by Harun? What if, for example, Harun was purposely misleading his readers? Without the possibility of conducting interviews with the actors involved, not all the information recounted by Harun can be corroborated. Nonetheless, Harun's account is detailed: it is littered with names, dates and places. Since he is critical of many groups and jihadi leaders, he must have known that unless he could substantiate his claims and charges, any or all of those he is criticizing would likely refute and discredit him. He must have also reasoned that if he was presenting a distorted view of al-Qa`ida, the senior leaders who were still at large when he published it—e.g., Bin Ladin, Sayf al-`Adl and Abu Muhammad al-Misri—could have posted a communiqué on a jihadi website to disown him and refute the authenticity of his account. It is doubtful that Harun would have taken such risks and become a pariah in the jihadi world.

There are additional limitations that are more difficult to surmount when analyzing the manuscript. Was Harun's motivation to publish his manuscript as selfless as he claims? To what extent, for example, was he motivated by making his own mark on the

[36] For a critique of jihadi recantations and their credibility, see Nelly Lahoud, "Jihadi Recantations and their Significance: the case of Dr Fadl," in Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (eds.), *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2011); see also Nelly Lahoud, "The Forgotten Recantation," *Jihadica*, 8 January 2010, http://www.jihadica.com/the-forgotten-recantation (accessed 28 August 2011).

understanding of the jihadi world and that of al-Qa`ida in particular? If that is the case, to what extent is Harun's historical account of al-Qa`ida a "re-enactment of past experience," to borrow R. G. Collingwood's words; that is, an attempt at reconstructing a better and more polished experience? Though answers to these questions could not be satisfactorily addressed, they are not sufficient to dismiss the value of the manuscript. The sheer length of the work, the diversity of its content, the array of references and allusions to ideas, symbols, events as well as of the personalities of actors on the contemporary world stage and those from history that inspire them, underwrite its considerable significance.

Fadil Harun: al-Qa`ida's "Confidential Secretary" (*amin sirr*)

On the basis of his account, Harun joined al-Qa`ida in 1991, perhaps in September of that year. Given that he began his diary some eight years after the early events of his militant journey, the chronology of that part of his life is, at best, sketchy. Not only does the reader have to guess important dates in Harun's career on the basis of the political events he narrates but he or she must also settle for some curious, if not murky details. Harun left the Comoros Islands on 27 October 1990 to study in Pakistan.[37] His mother Bibi was keen for her children to acquire the best education she could afford. In 1988, she sold a farm she had inherited from her father to send her oldest daughter Amina to study in Paris.[38] She desired an equally promising education for Harun, who, at the age of 14, had enrolled in *Madrasat al-Iman* (School of Faith), a religious school run by the Saudi educated Sheikh Sadiq al-Qumari.[39] Sheikh Sadiq, Harun asserts, never called for the overthrow of the government, but Harun's description makes it clear that the

[37] The date is based on that which he mentions on p. 40 of vol. 1, where he notes that on 26 October he visited the dearest family to him in the Comoros before he left the following morning. Yet his passport, a copy of which is available in the harmony database, shows that he stopped in Mauritius on 23 November 1990 (p. 11 of his passport): AFGP-2002-800089. Mauritius, by Harun's own account, was his first stop in his journey before heading to India: see Vol. 1, 41-2. The reader might settle for the difference of one month, but Harun relates that he left the Comoros using someone else's name. he relates how he needed to get used to the new name as he was traveling: see vol. 1, 41-2 (see footnote 42 below); and that he obtained a passport in his real name after he joined al-Qa`ida: see vol. 1, 126. Other Harmony documents complicate the story in different ways. There are two school certificates: the first is a general certificate of secondary education (Brevet d'études du premier cycle du second degree) dated 1991; the other is a Baccalaureat certificate dated 1994 for the year 1993: AFGP-2012-800084. However, by then Harun had left the Comoros and had already joined al-Qa`ida's first mission in Somalia. Are these documents forged? Or did the student whose scholarship Harun's mother bought swap identities with Harun, and these certificates reflect that student's schooling in the Comoros?

[38] Ibid., Vol. 1, 25.

[39] Ibid., Vol. 1, 23-4.

teachings of the school were more conservative than the broader culture of mainstream Comoran society.[40]

Bibi reasoned that sending Harun to study in an Islamic country would be more suited to him.[41] It is possible that her decision was conditioned by the fact that she happened to have access to a file containing a list of names of Comoran students who had been awarded scholarships to study in Pakistan. Harun's name was not among them, but this was no reason for Bibi to despair; she "purchased," not only the scholarship of one of these students, but also his birth certificate so that Harun could assume his identity and travel to study in Pakistan.[42] It was then in pursuit of higher learning that Harun traveled to Pakistan; joining the caravan of jihadis came later. In March 1991 during the semester break, after a few months of studying in Karachi, at an institution which he refers to as a "university," Harun headed to Peshawar and then on Afghanistan to receive military training.[43] Harun had planned to return to complete his "degree," but when he experienced the jihadi environment in Afghanistan, he decided that jihad was his vocation and therefore only returned to collect his passport.

Harun's jihadi CV is rich. He seems to have received extensive training, perhaps the best of what al-Qa`ida had to offer in terms of kinetic (e.g., advanced military training, explosives, planting mines) and non-kinetic training (e.g., spying, topography, computer skills, forgery, etc.).[44] He even convinced Abu Hafs al-Misri to allow him to undertake a course designed for the elites (*al-nukhba*) of al-Qa`ida, those who would become trainers. Judging the course by Harun's description, it was highly sought after, conducted by Haydara and supervised by Sayf al-`Adl.[45] To Harun's knowledge,

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[40] Ibid., Vol. 1, 25-7.

[41] Ibid., Vol. 1, 33.

[42] Ibid., Vol. 1, 34. Harun does not list the name of the person whose identity he assumed. It is possible that Harun adopted the identity of Said Bakar, there is a student identity card in the Harmony database with Harun's photo on it. The ID card was issued in 1991 by Jamia Farooquia Shah Faisal: AFGP-2002-800086. It is possible that it is the same university that can be accessed on these link: http://madarisweb.com/site/play-853.html; http://www.farooqia.com/ar/a_index.php (accessed 11 December 2011).

[43] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 55. The nature of the university is questionable. If his account is credible, he was admitted without having completed his high school, and he also arrived several months after the university year had begun. And the identity card of Said Bakar lists his date of birth as: 25/12/1975, so the "university" admitted him when he was at the age of 16. He also claims that the university was funded by Saddam Husein, which may be doubtful (but not impossible), Vol. 1, 52.

[44] Ibid., Vol. 1, 60: he details the comprehensive essential basic training he received in `Umar al-Faruq camp in Jihad Wal, then a specialized course in Abu al-Shahid al-Qatari's camp, during which he was trained to use explosives, operate firearms as a sniper, plant mines and use heavy weaponry.

[45] According to Harun, when he joined al-Qa`ida, Sayf al-`Adl was the *amir* of the Faruq training camp (vol. 1, 90). Sayf had been a paratrooper in the Egyptian Army and was a key person in introducing

Haydara, the alias of Muhammad `Ali, was a former intelligence officer with the Marines who had been tasked by the U.S. Government to collect information about Islamic groups in the Arab world and was discharged from his job.[46] Harun claims that al-Qa`ida knew of Haydara's background but was happy to make use of his skills. He had given a very successful training course to the Egyptian Jihad Group in the Khalid b. al-Walid training camp and in which three al-Qa`ida members participated. The sophisticated level of the training encouraged al-Qa`ida to hire him to give a course exclusively to its members.[47]

Harun claims to have performed at the standards required of Haydara's course, but Abu Hafs made him withdraw a week before the course came to an end on account of his young age.[48] Before long, Harun himself became a trainer in the first mission that al-Qa`ida had in Somalia in 1993. Harun's commitment to teaching others what he had learnt came to define his jihadi identity whenever he was not carrying out operational tasks. In many respects, he was emblematic of what al-Qa`ida stood for; namely, when it was not preparing to strike, it was preoccupied with training not just its own

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innovations into al-Qa`ida's training curricula and battlefield tactics (vol. 1, 94). Around 1991, he replaced the "Chinese Brother" as the *amir* of Jalalabad's battle front (vol. 1, 100), and in 1998, following the East Africa bombings, he became in charge of al-Qa`ida's general security portfolio (vol. 1, 380); see footnotes 51-4 below. Harun's family was close to that of Sayf, so much so that Halima, Harun's wife, breastfed his son Khalid, and Sayf's wife, Umm Khalid, breastfed Harun's daughter, Asia (vol. 1, 245). Harun considers Sayf to be a shrewd diplomat (*diblumasi muhannak*): vol. 1, 100. After the death of Abu Hafs al-Misri, Harun states that Sayf al-`Adl became the second senior figure in al-Qa`ida (vol. 1, 94). In the second volume, when Harun is based in East Africa and is away from Afghanistan, he is less certain of Sayf al-`Adl's whereabouts. In one place, he claims that he might be fighting in Khost or Kunar (vol. 2, 217); but in another place, he claims that he (along with Abu Muhammad al-Misri) is in Iran (vol. 2, 310). It is my opinion that the information that does not pertain to East Africa in the latter part of Harun's second volume is largely premised on media reports. I therefore do not consider the latter statement to be authoritative. Sayf al-`Adl is often mistaken for another Egyptian identity (Muhammad Makkawi), see Muhammad al-Shafi`i's article in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2 April 2004, issue 9257, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=226495&issueno=9257 (accessed 23 November 2011). It is a detailed article of the identities of these two figures. Al-Shafi`i, however, claims that Sayf al-`Adl is known by the *kunya* "al-Madani." Harun does not refer to any *kunya* that Sayf used.

[46] Harun's information about Haydara is not entirely accurate. To the U.S. Government he is known as `Ali Muhammad. He was in the U.S. Army, not the Marines. For a comprehensive profile, see Benjamin Weiser And James Risen, "The Masking of a Militant: A Special report.; A Soldier's Shadowy Trail In U.S. and in the Mideast," *The New York Times*, 1 December 1 1998, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/01/world/masking-militant-special-report-soldier-s-shadowy-trail-us-mideast.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm (accessed 11 December 2011).

[47] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 121.

[48] Ibid., Vol. 1, 122-3.

members, but also other select Islamic militant groups,[49] therefore investing in human capital that could eventually be put in the service of global militancy.

It is likely that, ever since he joined al-Qa`ida, Harun exuded a sense of dependability that made him worthy of trust in the eyes of the senior leadership. It is not his military skills that earned him a post in the administrative branch of the Military Committee—the most important of all committees in al-Qa`ida[50]—but his discreet disposition qualified him to serve as the typist for many sensitive documents that al-Qa`ida needed to store electronically. He earned the modest post of a typist when the "Chinese brother"—perhaps Abu Muhammad al-Sini, who is wanted by the Chinese authorities[51]—asked Harun to do a computer typing course in order to handle the task of typing al-Qa`ida's internal organizational and training courses documents, "which are now available on websites" (that is, they became available in later years later, after the U.S. led campaign on Afghanistan in late 2001 when these documents were captured).[52] The "Chinese brother" is an intriguing and (still) mysterious figure. He appears to have been a senior al-Qa`ida leader; Harun mentions him as someone senior to Sayf al-`Adl. In the early 1990s, he was the *amir* overseeing Tora Borra, with Sayf al-`Adl as his deputy. Harun credits the "Chinese brother" with being a foundational figure in his al-Qa`ida career and "the reason of my success and progress."[53]

It was the "Chinese brother" who went to Somalia in 1992 on an exploratory mission in preparation for al-Qa`ida's training teams that arrived in 1993.[54] Harun was selected to be among the trainers during that first mission in Somalia. East Africa was where Harun's serious operational career began, which saw him coordinate with the leadership of al-Qa`ida in Sudan and also work to further al-Qa`ida's economic and militant investment in East Africa. Abu `Ubayda al-Banshiri, who acted as al-Qa`ida's first deputy leader and the head of its Military Committee, had big plans for East Africa. He had envisaged moving al-Qa`ida's economic assets there, with Somalia serving as the new Afghanistan.[55] Between 1993 and 1998, Harun split his working time between Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. During this period he also managed to visit his

[49] On al-Qa`ida's intent to devote its activities to training when fighting came to an end in Afghanistan in 1991, see Ibid., Vol. 1, 119.
[50] 'AFGP-2002-600045, 19.
[51] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 116.
[52] Ibid., Vol. 1, 119. It is possible that he might be referring to documents believed to be internal to al-Qa`ida that are available in the Harmony Database on the CTC's website.
[53] Ibid., Vol. 1, 101.
[54] Ibid., Vol. 1, 118.
[55] Ibid., Vol. 1, 146. For a background discussion on al-Qa`ida's interests in Somalia, see Clint Watts, Jacob Shapiro, Vahid Brown, Al-Qa`ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa, Combating Terrorism Center, July 2, 2007, 38-9.

native homeland in 1994 and marry his cousin, Halima Badr al-Din Fadil,[56] who would become his "*habiba*" (beloved),[57] and would bear him three children, two girls (Asia and Samiyya) and a boy (Luqman).[58]

In Somalia, as just noted, Harun served as a trainer and later (1996) liaised with militants in Luq and strengthened relations with Sheikh Hasan Turki, who would become one of the leaders of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). In Sudan, where Bin Ladin was based between 1991-1996, Harun was in charge of "al-Qa`ida's secret bureau," dealing with bureaucratic/administrative matters, mainly preparing the travel and other documents of trainers in various Islamic militant groups. This work prevented him in 1995 from being part of al-Qa`ida's trainers headed by Sayf al-Islam al-Misri, the group that was sent to Chechnya.[59] For while Bin Ladin wanted al-Qa`ida's work in Sudan to focus on what may be termed "development" (*tanmiya*), e.g., investing in construction, agriculture and welfare work,[60] he did not lose sight of investing in global militancy. In Kenya, Harun worked closely with Wadi` al-Hajj, who was in charge of al-Qa`ida's economic projects that supported its East Africa cell.[61] An American-Lebanese, born into a Maronite family and who later converted to Islam and worked in relief and aid work in Afghanistan from 1986, Al-Hajj enjoyed a senior status in al-Qa`ida.[62] His American wife, Umm `Abdallah, is also a convert to Islam, "one of the strongest sisters in al-Qa`ida" and committed to "the service of the Afghan people and the jihadis."[63]

It was in East Africa, mainly from Harun's base in Kenya, that al-Qa`ida eventually proved its militant credentials to the world and to the rest of the jihadi landscape. It is from there, thanks in large parts to Harun's planning and dedication that the bombings of the two embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 were carried out. Though Abu

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[56] Ibid., Vol. 1, 211

[57] See AFGP-2002-800261, it is a handwritten loving letter, in the form of his will (wasiyya) which Harun composed to Halima when he thought he was about to die. The same document includes a letter he composed to the senior leadership in the same spirit of a will.

[58] His endearing terms for his wife occur throughout the manuscript. See for instance, Vol. 1, 215, 225, 229, 241, 299, 353, 480. 'habiba' is also a term he uses to describe his mother. A transcript of a deposition by Halima Badr al-Din to the Court of Appeal of Moroni is available on: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/fazul/depo.html. In it, she describes, in general terms, her movements with her husband during the period between their marriage and the 1998 bombings.

[59] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 233.

[60] Ibid., Vol. 1, 229.

[61] Ibid., Vol. 1, 251. For a profile of Wadi` al-Hajj, see Oriana Zill, "A Portrait of Wadih al-Hage, Accused Terrorist," *Frontline*, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/upclose/elhage.html (accessed 11 December 2011).

[62] Ibid., Vol. 1, 195.

[63] Ibid., Vol. 1, 272.

Muhammad al-Misri was the leader (*amir*) to whom Harun answered, on the operational level Harun was in charge of virtually all the logistics that went into the operation.

Harun relates that after the East Africa bombings were carried out, he went to Kabul, Afghanistan, where he met Sayf al-`Adl: "I saw signs of satisfaction on Sayf al-`Adl's face; I knew [immediately] that Sheikh Usama and Abu Hafs [al-Misri] were happy with the outcome of the operation."[64] Sayf then drove Harun to a guesthouse (*madafa*) that must have exhibited some luxurious features since Harun wondered whether it was a "diplomatic guesthouse."[65] It was the "greatest surprise" when Harun "saw Sheikh Usama sitting with his face glowing, for he has a radiant face and Dr Ayman [al-Zawahiri] by his side as well as Sheikh Abu Hafs al-Misri and Abu al-Khayr al-Misri."[66] Harun was in no doubt that the leadership was sufficiently pleased with his achievement that Bin Ladin was worried about Harun's safety. To protect his identity from being revealed, Bin Ladin chose "Yusuf al-Sudani" as Harun's new *kunya* (alias/*nom de guerre*);[67] this was one of the many aliases that Harun used during his al-Qa`ida career. At one point, Bin Ladin even told Harun that "I shall not be remiss [concerning your security], I shall not let you leave Afghanistan; you are on the wanted list." By then, Harun's identity and his role in the 1998 East Africa bombings had

[64] Ibid., Vol. 1, 371.

[65] Ibid., Vol. 1, 371.

[66] Ibid., Vol. 1, 371. Harun describes Abu Khayr al-Misri as one of the "finest men" of *Jama`at al-Jihad*, the jihadi group led by al-Zawahiri, who served as the main liaison person between *Jama`at al-Jihad* and al-Qa`ida. See Vol. 1, 274. It is likely that Abu Khayr was one of those detained by Iran and it was reported that he was released in December 2010, see Salah Ahmad, "Iran Afrajat `an Kibar Rumuz al-Qa`ida al-Mu`taqalin fi Safqatin Ghamida," *Ilaf*, 25 December 2010 (accessed 11 June 2011).

[67] Ibid., Vol. 1, 372. It is not uncommon for Muslims to adopt a *kunya*, particularly a name of one of the Prophet's Companions in the spirit of imitating the nobility of their character (*al-tashabbuh bi-al-kiram*). Such *kunya*s often start with "Abu" (the father of), and jihadis have adopted this practice not simply to display their piety but also to adopt new identities that would enable them to evade the authorities. For example, the *kunya*s are especially useful in the event that a jihadi is captured; he would not be in a position to disclose the true identity of his fellow jihadis since he would only know them by their *kunya*s. See Muhammad al-Shafi`i, "al-Usuliyyun: Asma' wa-Kuna wa-Alqab," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 12 June 2008, Issue 10789, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=10789&article=474598&feature=/details.asp (accessed 19 August 2011). However, as early as 1993, al-Qa`ida began to use *kunya*s without the "Abu;" according to Harun, they adopted this new style because the security apparatus of many Arab states began to arrest people indiscriminately on the basis of having a *kunya* starting with "Abu." See Vol. 1, 143.

become known to the FBI and the U.S. Department of State had offered a substantial reward in return for information that would lead to his arrest.[68]

It is in the context of al-Qa`ida's rising stardom in the jihadi world as a result of its attacks in East Africa that its Advisory Council (*majlis al-shura*) met in the latter part of 1998. Following that meeting, Abu Muhammad al-Misri told Harun that "the Advisory Council selected you to become the Confidential Secretary (*amin sirr*) of al-Qa`ida."[69] By then, Harun was 26, with eight years of active commitment to al-Qa`ida and the 1998 attacks recently added to his resume. Harun accepted the title of "Confidential Secretary" with a humility befitting the role of the office he was assigned:

> I understand very well al-Qa`ida's working [philosophy]: there are no ranks (*manasib*) [assigned to high dignitaries], but rather designations (*musammayat*) [denoting specific tasks]. Al-Qa`ida values the work of the individual and his contributions to the *umma*. The harder he works to advance the interests of the *umma*, the more tasks he would be allocated and the closer he gets to the [crucial] decisions. Thanks to God's grace, from the first day I took an oath [to join al-Qa`ida], God has put me in the service of its leaders. I have worked with the Chinese [brother], who admitted me to the administrative branch of the Military Committee,[70] then I worked directly with Sayf al-`Adl as his personal secretary in Jalalabad; then I served side by side with Abu Muhammad [al-Misri] in Jihad Wal and in Mogadishu and East Africa; then with Sayf al-Islam in Ogaden, and Sheikh Abu Hafs [al-Misri] in Sudan; then I became a first-class military trainer in al-Qa`ida, then I worked directly with all the leaders in Sudan; then I worked with Sheikh Abu `Ubayda [al-Banshiri] in East Africa, and today I work as al-Qa`ida's Confidential Secretary. Praise be to God; I had not expected [that I would reach this level]. But I understood that [members of the Advisory Council] selected me on account of my reticent and secretive disposition.…I did not share with anyone that I was selected for this office, for I am first and foremost a soldier. Abu Muhammad also told me that the Advisory Council attached [the portfolio of] my office to the [activities under the purview of the] Military Committee headed by Abu Hafs al-Misri; that I would be liaising directly with Abu Hafs and that I would oversee the Office of the Interior. It is well known that Abu Hafs's Office is, without exception, one of the most important of al-Qa`ida's. I was the one who was tasked with overseeing this Office during the

[68] Harun notes that the reward was $3,000,000, but the FBI's website registers $5,000,000: Vol. 1, 375; the FBI: http://www2.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/termohammed.htm

[69] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 380.

[70] Ibid., Vol. 1, 119. For his role in the military committee. The "Chinese brother" wanted to have many documents typed and asked Harun to assist in the task.

> second phase of Afghanistan. As to Sayf al-`Adl, he was in charge of the security portfolio, which is also part of the Military Committee…, while Abu Muhammad al-Misri took charge of overseeing the management of all training camps, frontlines, and foreign/international activities. [As the Confidential Secretary], I was assigned with guarding the secrets and planning of all these operational activities.[71]

Captured battlefield documents believed to be internal to al-Qa`ida do not envisage a position of "Confidential Secretary." Judging by the description of the tasks of which Harun was in charge, the position should be understood as a secretarial one, requiring advanced computer skills, including forging documents and, more importantly, a high level of what in government circles is called "security clearance," ensuring that he is impeccably discreet about his work, hence the term "confidential." Beyond that, Harun distinguished himself by the skills he displayed during his al-Qa`ida career. His ability to evade Kenyan and U.S. intelligence services are widely documented;[72] this is no doubt helped by his advanced forgery techniques. It is reported that ten rubber stamps used to forge visas and passports were found among the belongings taken from the vehicle in which he was killed.[73] Harun's stories of evading authorities and the technical skills he is said to have mastered have assumed legendary dimensions.[74]

In view of the practical and critical services Harun was in charge of providing, all the committees involved in al-Qa`ida's operational activities had to work in one way or another with him. Among the people with whom he liaised and developed a close relationship was Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (KSM), the architect of the 9/11 attacks. KSM was not a member of al-Qa`ida; he worked on his own but made use of al-Qa`ida's resources, regularly availing himself of the services Harun's office provided. Harun was one of three people—with Bin Ladin and Abu Hafs—in whom KSM confided about the 9/11 attacks when they were still in the nascent stages of their planning in the early months of 1999.[75] With the encouragement of KSM, Harun was able to convince Bin Ladin to purchase the latest SONY digital cameras and other sophisticated machines

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[71] Ibid., Vol. 1, 380.

[72] See for instance Sean D. Naylor, "Years of detective work led to al-Qaida target," *Army Times*, 21 November 2011, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/11/army-years-of-work-led-to-al-qaida-target-112111w/ (accessed on 21 November 2001).

[73] Francis Mureithi, "How Fazul Met his Death," *Nairobi Star*, 27 June 2011, http://allafrica.com/stories/201106272427.html (link accessed through AllAfrica.com on 20 November 2011).

[74] See Jeremy Prestholdt, "Phatom of the Forever War: Fazul Abdullah Muhammad and the Terrorist Imaginary," (*Public Culture*, 21:3, 2009), 451-64.

[75] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 393.

that allowed Harun to carry out and advance his work most efficiently, including arranging and forging travel documents of jihadi leaders.

In 2000, in anticipation of the consequences of the attacks of 9/11 on al-Qa`ida, Sayf al-`Adl asked Harun to accompany him on a secret mission. It was to be an exploratory mission to identify secret places to hide the leadership of al-Qa'ida if the security situation worsened (after 9/11). A certain Sheikh Abu al-Husayn al-Misri accompanied them; he was an expert on relations with the tribes and spoke fluent Farsi. Harun could sense that Waziristan was a likely place of hiding for the leadership because it enjoyed an autonomous status and the tribes "loved Sheikh Usama a lot.'' In Jalalabad, they visited Sheikh Yunis Khalis – one of the learned scholars of Afghanistan. Khalis reiterated that "he was ready to defend Sheikh [Usama] until the last drop of his blood."[76] It was perhaps Sayf al-`Adl's shrewdness and long-term vision that prompted him as early as 1992 to task Harun with investigating the Afghan jihadis who follow Yunis Khalis in Jalalabad. According to Harun, this area had not been visited by Arabs.[77] Al-Qa`ida's investment in Yunis Khalis's group paid off in 1996, when Bin Ladin was under pressure to leave Sudan and it was Khalis' representatives who paid him a visit in Sudan and offered him protection if he settled in Afghanistan.[78]

Beyond being entrusted with sensitive operational tasks and information, Harun was also in charge of overseeing the travels of Bin Ladin's wives, including all the security arrangements that their travels entailed.[79] Harun was close to Bin Ladin's sons, in particular to `Umar and Muhammad who used to recite passages from the Qur'an to him. Harun recalled how he repeatedly urged the groom to be Muhammad to memorize the entirety of the Qur'an. Bin Ladin was keen for Harun to attend Muhammad's wedding to Fatima, Abu Hafs's daughter; Muhammad was 16, Fatima was 13.[80] The wedding was scheduled for either late December 2000 or early January 2001. As much as it pained Harun to miss it, he needed to leave Afghanistan for East Africa in preparation for the Mombasa attacks that would target an El Al plane—unsuccessfully—and an Israeli owned hotel—successfully.[81] But after Harun briefed Bin Ladin on the security concerns associated with his trip, Bin Ladin advised him not to

[76] Ibid., Vol. 1, 425.
[77] Ibid., Vol. 1, 103.
[78] Ibid., Vol. 1, 250. On the relationship between Bin Ladin and Yunis Khalis, see also, Don Rassler and Vahid Brown, *The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of al-Qa`ida*, CTC Report, 13 July 2011, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-haqqani-nexus-and-the-evolution-of-al-qaida, 32.
[79] Ibid., Vol. 1, 393.
[80] Ibid., Vol 1, 442-3.
[81] Ibid., Vol. 1, 422-3.

delay his trip. Harun's autobiography conveys a cordial but intimate relationship with UBL:

> The Sheikh [i.e., Usama] trusts me and I trust him as if he were a father to me. He used to treat me as if I were his son, not simply as a member of the [jihadi] community. Even though I used to feel very shy [in the presence] of this man, he put me at ease whenever I met with him. Sheikh Usama does not trust his head to anyone, I mean when he wanted to have it shaved; but he used to entrust me with this task. This is a source of pride for me and I am thankful to God for [honoring me in this way].[82]

It is perhaps because of his affection for Harun that Bin Ladin could not refuse his request to accompany him to visit Mullah `Umar on the occasion of `Id al-Fitr in December 2000.[83] Bin Ladin's convoy consisted of six cars and about twenty people, most of them were Bin Ladin's bodyguards led by Abu `Umar al-Maghribi.[84] Mullah `Umar had just moved to a new residence, which was designed to withstand chemical attacks; Abu Hafs al-Misri had some involvement in building it.[85] When the convoy reached the main gate, Bin Ladin left his Kalakov rifle in the car and asked everyone else to do the same. Inside the residence, modest plastic rugs were laid for them on which they sat forming a circle. Five minutes later, a man with a thick beard and an injured eye wearing a green military jacket walked in: "in view of his modest appearance," Harun admiringly relates, "it would not have been possible to recognize him as *amir al-mu'minin* [Commander of the Faithful] had we not been familiar with his physical features."[86]

It appears that customs required that Mullah `Umar remains standing while guests stand up to greet him. Bin Ladin greeted him first; when it was Harun's turn, he greeted him "verbally and with my hand and kissed him on his head like everyone else."[87] When customary greetings were done, Bin Ladin asked most of the men who accompanied him to leave the room. Mullah `Umar joined those who stayed on the carpet cross-legged; Harun was among them. In addition to Bin Ladin, the others were

[82] Ibid., Vol. 1, 393.
[83] Ibid., Vol. 1, 439.
[84] Ibid., Vol. 1, 439.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., Vol. 1, 440.
[87] Ibid., Vol. 1, 440.

Abu Hafs, Sayf al-`Adl, KSM, Hamza al-Ghamidi,[88] Abu `Umar al-Maghribi and his son. Al-Maghribi's son stayed to serve as interpreter, but after Bin Ladin spoke, he was much too overwhelmed by the presence of Mullah `Umar and could not utter a word. KSM, who was fluent in Pashtu, saved the situation. He translated Bin Ladin's gratitude to Mullah `Umar for his sincerity and "for hosting us and bearing our burdens."[89] Mullah `Umar did not speak for long, the gist of his response was: "we are doing all this in the service of God, you are our brothers and our guests. The most important thing is not to act without informing us in advance, for we are facing numerous pressures, but God shall make us victorious."[90] Harun was most content to have met Mullah `Umar before departing Afghanistan.[91]

Being the Confidential Secretary of al-Qa`ida, and in view of the administrative dimension his job entailed, Harun was probably the bearer of many of al-Qa`ida's secrets until he left Afghanistan in 2000:

> No matter how hard a [jihadi] person tried not to be identified, [given my position] I was the one [from whom he could not hide his identity], [for it was me] who [was tasked with] assisting [the most secretive operatives]…I know many of [al-Qa`ida's] classified information and the movements [and operations] of other [jihadis]; yet at the same time, and this is bizarre, I am not good at memorizing names, for I forget their *kunya* and names very quickly.[92]

Harun did not return to Afghanistan after he left in January 2001; at least he does not record this in his autobiography. He likely spent the remaining years of his life in East Africa, and for the most part in Somalia.[93] He collaborated with al-Shabab, though he refused to become a member of the group. Some media reports claimed that as of

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[88] Hamza (or Abu Hamza) al-Ghamidi had been one of the militants who fought in Tajikistan in the early 1990s: Vol. 1, 115; by 2000, he seems to have been Abu `Umar al-Maghribi's deputy, overseeing Bin Ladin's bodyguards: Vol. 1, 384, 406. It is possible that he is the same Hamza al-Ghamidi who was one of the 9/11 hijackers: Vol. 1, 446 (the context here does not make it clear that he was of the hijackers); David Firestone and Dana Canedy, "After the Attacks: The suspects; F.B.I. Documents Detail the Movements of 19 Men Believed to Be Hijackers," *The New York Times*, 15 September 2001.

[89] Vol. 1, 440.

[90] Vol. 1, 440.

[91] Vol. 1, 441.

[92] Ibid., Vol. 1, 393. The claim that he is predisposed to forgetting names easily and quickly is questionable; his book is littered with names and kunyas of various operatives. Of course, nobody can memorize all the files that he had to deal with.

[93] It is possible that he left East Africa after the Mombasa bombing, see footnote 23 in this chapter.

November 2009 (following the death of Saleh `Ali al-Nabhan), Harun served as the leader of al-Qa`ida in the Horn of Africa (AQHA),[94] presumably until his death in June 2011. Harun was not a believer in al-Qa`ida franchises; he would probably refer to his group as an al-Qa`ida cell instead. If these reports are confirmed, it is still best to think of Harun in operational rather than leadership terms, for even the same reports remark that in his inaugural speech as leader, he highlighted that "I am a military man, and in charge of the armed forces." Indeed, it is his operational and militant activities that characterize his jihadi career and are central to his autobiography which he completed in January 2009.[95] This is not to suggest that al-Qa`ida's leadership would not have entrusted him with a leadership role, it is rather to stress that Harun himself believed that he served al-Qa`ida's goals best through his clandestine operational work.

[94] BBC Monitoring: Profile Of Al-Qa`idah Leader For Horn of Africa Fazul Abdullah, 21 November 2009.
[95] The latest date mentioned in the manuscript is 2 January, 2009: vol. 2, 489. Harun indicates that he had hoped to keep writing until he saw 'Bush leaving the White House in tears' (vol. 2, 559); but he decided to stop earlier and start working on the 3rd volume—I am assuming before 20 January, the date of President Obama's inauguration. At the time of writing, a third volume is not in evidence.

CHAPTER TWO
Al-Qa`ida's Ideology

Harun's description of his own understanding of al-Qa`ida's ideology offers a unique insight into the organization's religious worldview, not least the pragmatism and inclusiveness it sought to instill in the minds of its members. Al-Qa`ida's ideological pragmatism has proven to be a double-edged sword. When al-Qa`ida's stardom was rising during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s on account of its financial edge and disciplined organizational structure, its ideological pragmatism enabled it to transcend the narrow mindedness of a jihadi landscape marred with internal strife and doctrinally-driven differences and distinguish itself through its actions. However, because al-Qa`ida's leaders did not explicitly and purposely dissociate their organization from other jihadi groups and because they, through their public statements, sought to inspire Muslims to take up jihad on their own initiative without being schooled in al-Qa`ida's camps, the difference between al-Qa`ida and other jihadis grew blurry in the minds of many. This was particularly the case after al-Qa`ida was crippled as an organization—especially after 2003, when other jihadi groups lacking al-Qa`ida's ideological pragmatism but claiming its brand and jihad motifs emerged to fill the vacuum. This unintended association has placed al-Qa`ida's ideology at the mercy of the religious rigidity and the vulgar views of jihadi groups speaking and acting in the name of jihad; the same jihad, they claim, that al-Qa`ida's leaders have championed. Thus Harun's account is also a record of the tribulations that al-Qa`ida has both endured and unwittingly caused by adopting a militant program justified exclusively on the basis of religious ideology that is open to being interpreted and applied by street jihadis in a no-less authoritative manner than learned ideologues.

Contextualizing Harun's Ideological Views

Scholars who study jihadi ideology have largely relied on a corpus of literature, consisting of treatises authored by ideologues, strategists and pundits and statements by jihadi leaders. Such a corpus generally reflects a body of principles upon which jihadism is intended to be projected to a global community of Muslims urging them to join the caravan of jihadis. When examined *in toto*, this corpus provides an understanding of shared ideological tenets among jihadis and points to issues on which

they diverge, but it does not necessarily reflect the internal ideological culture of a given group.

The spontaneous monologue-like reflections that characterize many passages of Harun's manuscript capture the internal ideological culture of al-Qa`ida in ways that formal ideological treatises do not. By virtue of his role as a trusted al-Qa`ida operative, Harun displays an intimate understanding of what jihadi ideologues should and shouldn't preach; the ideological beliefs of senior al-Qa`ida leaders based on conversations he had with many of them; and the way in which ideology is meant to be digested by members of al-Qa`ida. Even more compelling is Harun's critique of and deep concern about the way al-Qa`ida's ideology is misunderstood by many jihadis who claim to espouse its ideals. That is why ideology is a recurring theme that preoccupies Harun and is raised on virtually every page of the manuscript. For students of jihadi ideology, what is most revealing about Harun's reflections is not just what al-Qa`ida's ideology is, but more importantly what it is not. In this respect, Harun introduces the reader to an al-Qa`ida that is hardly recognizable in the minds of many, even in the minds of jihadis who are inspired by al-Qa`ida from a distance.

To be more precise, Harun is not an ideologue and he does not pretend to be anything other than an operative; that is why his manuscript lacks the sophisticated or perhaps contrived argumentation of an ideologue. He repeatedly underscores the need to listen to and respect learned religious scholars and is impatient with the opinionated jihadis, whose views betray a superficial understanding of Islam. The reader should not expect to be presented with an internally coherent theoretical discussion of al-Qa`ida's ideology drawing on classical theological and legal texts to advance a specific worldview. Instead, the reader is introduced to al-Qa`ida's ideology as understood by its members, by those in whom al-Qa`ida trusted, and in whose intellectual and militant formation al-Qa`ida heavily invested.

In an attempt to outline al-Qa`ida's ideology I rely on Harun's manuscript as well as related al-Qa`ida documents from the Harmony database. What follows is not a systematic discussion. Rather, it is an attempt to correlate a series of Harun's disconnected reflections on the topic that, when combined with the Harmony documents, paint a relatively consistent picture of al-Qa`ida's ideology.

An Internal Look at al-Qa`ida's Ideological Worldview

Harun had trained in al-Qa`ida's camps and fought alongside its members in Afghanistan before he became a member. That is why he emphatically asserts that "it is

not the case that everyone who trains in al-Qa'ida's camps is automatically a member of al-Qa'ida."[1] Harun himself only graduated from being a jihadi to an official member of al-Qa`ida in 1991. It was officiated in Peshawar by Abu Yasir al-Misri,[2] a member of al-Qa`ida's Legal Committee (*al-lajna al-shar'iyya*). Becoming a member of al-Qa`ida entailed making a commitment in the form of a covenant or an oath between the member and the group. In Harun's case, Abu Yasir first recited the terms of the covenant (*'ahd*), following which Harun agreed to "hear and obey" these terms.[3] It was on this occasion that Harun became intimately acquainted with al-Qa`ida's worldview. He came to understand that:

> Al-Qa`ida follows the path of *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a*, [its worldview is premised upon] the Qur'an and Sunna. [Its members] do not distinguish between the four schools of law [or regard adherence to any one of them as a disqualification for serving as a member of al-Qa`ida]. Unlike other Islamic groups, which have their own [rigid ideological] paths that are not open to compromise and whose members hold on to the teachings of their [political] founders as if their opinions amount to Revelations, al-Qa`ida does not have a new [doctrinal] creed…. Contrary to what others believe, al-Qa`ida is not disposed to inflexibility [in creedal or jurisprudential matters].[4]

Harun displays a clear antipathy towards religious scholars and jihadis who are inflexible in their interpretation of Islam. Al-Qa`ida, he insists, is flexible in creedal and legal matters. It embraces all schools of law (*madhahib*) and is open to *tarjih*, a legal exercise that affords the believer the option of preferring another school of law's

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[1] Fadil Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun*, Vol. 1, 71.

[2] A number of sources corroborate that Abu Yasir al-Misri was of the scholars in Afghanistan who assisted in founding the religious curriculum of the jihadis. See Yusuf al-`Uyayri, "risala maftuha ila al-sheikh Safar al-Hawali," *Minbar al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=trrei4g6; it is most likely that this Abu Yasir is the same as Rifa`i Ahmed Taha (Egyptian Islamic Group) who was a signatory to the 1998 "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders." He was either a member of both the Egyptian Islamic Group and al-Qa`ida at the same time, or just a member of al-Qa`ida by then. It is worth noting here that it was Abu Yasir who claimed responsibility for the USS Cole operation on behalf of al-Qa`ida: see the following links: (http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/rifiai_taha_in_egypt_prison.htm), (http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/cole_rifa_taha_communique.htm). It is highly likely that Abu Yasir claimed al-Qa`ida's responsibility for the attacks during the wedding of Usama b. Ladin's son (it is also possible that it was during Bin Ladin's wedding that took place in 2000). During the wedding, Bin Ladin recited a poem authored by Abu Hafs al-Mauritani about the attacks; he was standing in front of a map of the world, the same map in front of which Abu Yasir stood when he made the announcement about the USS Cole.

[3] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-*Islam, Vol. 1, 99.

[4] Ibid., Vol. 1, 99.

judgment over their own.[5] "We are not," he holds, "Wahhabiyyun, Easterners or Westerners; we are Muslims, we follow the *sunna* (path) of Muhammad; [in short] we follow *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama`a*."[6] This is a broad designation that surfaced in the ninth century when Muslims were still in the process of defining their theological and political differences. It is roughly rendered as "adherents of right practice and communal solidarity;"[7] Patricia Crone explains it as a description that "many groups were to adopt without necessarily meaning very much by it." It is in this classical spirit that al-Qa`ida uses it. In Harun's mind, "*ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama`a*" is an open-ended designation, intended to be inclusive of Muslims who may not share the same theological orientation.

Harun's understanding of al-Qa`ida's religious worldview is mirrored in al-Qa`ida's internal documents. Its "By-Laws" and its Contractual Agreement explicitly state that al-Qa`ida professes the creed of *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama`a* and the overall spirit of the Agreement reflects a worldview inclusive of all Muslims as long as they are committed to jihad. It also stresses that al-Qa`ida "rejects regionalism and fanaticism."[8] As Harun experienced it:

> Al-Qa`ida is interested in [advancing] the interests of Muslims, such that those from the Gulf, Egyptians, Yemenis, Pakistanis, Libyans, Algerians, Palestinians, Somalis, Bengalis, Muritanis, Moroccans, Lebanese [and others] all work under the same roof, follow the same path under a single direction…we were all holding different nationalities, [yet united] in one group.[9]

"Such a scene," Harun proudly observes, "can only be replicated during the Hajj."[10] Indeed, the founding documents of al-Qa`ida are void of any sectarianism; they do not reflect a preference for a specific school of law over another or for a jihadi group over another on the basis of creed: "our relationship with sincere jihadi groups and movements is premised on cooperation [to advance] righteousness and piety…our relationship with Islamic non-jihadi groups is premised upon love, friendship and advice; we acknowledge their good deeds but, if need be, make evident to them what we believe to be their shortcomings."[11] Nowhere do the documents indicate that

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[5] Ibid., Vol. 1, 24.
[6] Ibid., Vol. 1, 24.
[7] As translated by Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 126.
[8] AFGP-2002-600048, "By-Laws," 5, as translated on the Harmony database.
[9] Harun, Vol. 1, 95.
[10] Harun, Vol. 1, 76.
[11] AFGP-2002-600048, "By-Laws," 4-5. Translation amended.

cooperation with other Muslims must be conditional on conforming to a specific legal school or espousing certain theological teachings.

It is because of its intent to project an inclusive attitude with respect to theological issues that al-Qa`ida sought to establish a cordial but distant relationship with religious scholars (*`ulama'*). It is noteworthy that religious scholars do not occupy a central role in al-Qa`ida. Thus, the Legal Committee (*al-lajna al-shar`iyya*) tasked with devising religious teachings falls under the purview of the Military Committee—not vice versa.[12] Members of the Legal Committee decide whether operations mounted by al-Qa`ida meet the legal requirements from the perspective of classical Islamic laws of war, and they have the right to veto operations if they deem them to be unlawful (see chapter 3). However, religious scholars do not dictate the management or direction of the organization. As for other religious scholars who are either affiliated with specific political establishments and/or vocal in the public realm, al-Qa`ida's "By-Laws" cut them down to size: "our relationship with active/public religious scholars is love, respect and appreciation. We accept [from their teachings what we believe to advance the interests of Muslims] and we reject that which we believe to be erroneous."[13] It is with this philosophy in mind that Bin Ladin was dismissive of Muslim scholars' condemnation of the 9/11 attacks. He was categorical when he responded that "no official scholar's juridical decrees have any value as far as I'm concerned."[14]

Nevertheless al-Qa`ida appears to appreciate the value of religious scholars, including those outside the Arab world, particularly from Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan's province of Sind.[15] Harun is of the view that jihadi movements that declare the *`ulama* to be unbelievers are in error, "forgetting that the *`ulama* are the ones who mix with the masses and educate them about religious and worldly matters."[16] He suggests that al-Qa`ida is favorably inclined towards scholars who are either from or have received their religious education in Mauritania; in 1992 the Legal Committee of al-Qa`ida sent a

[12] AFGP-2002-600048, "By-Laws," 19.
[13] AFGP-2002-600048, "By-Laws,"5. Translation amended.
[14] Usama bin Ladin, "The Example of Vietnam," *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (trans. by James Howarth), (London/New York: Verso, 2005), 141.
[15] Harun, Vol. 1, 381. Though it is not directly related to Harun's point, the following letter—dated late 2001 or early 2002, from Saudi scholars addressed to their counterparts in Pakistan, acknowledging and lauding their support of the Taliban government in Afghanistan—lends credibility to Harun's point that non-Arab scholars exert a certain clout in the militant landscape. See "al-Jazira al-'Arabiyya li-Kaffat 'Ulama' Pakistan," *Shabakat Filastin li-al-Hiwar*, http://paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=2082 (accessed 9 February 2012).
[16] Harun, Vol. 1, 114.

group of young men to study there, and Abu Hafs al-Mauritani eventually became the head of the Legal Committee.[17]

Harun's attitude towards religious scholars mirrors al-Qa`ida's guidance. He believes that irrespective of what they say, religious scholars should not be criticized by the jihadis. He is respectful but also critical of jihadi ideologues who freely criticize established religious scholars. For instance, Abu Qatada al-Filastini,[18] who gave some lectures in legal studies in Peshawar, did not leave a positive impression on Harun. That is because "he used to focus [his criticism] on Imam al-Ghazali [d. 1111] … and find faults in all the ideas of this great Imam…we support Abu Qatada in so far as we endorse the value of sound criticism, but [fixating on] personal attacks and the shortcomings of religious scholars is not the solution in this time of ours."[19] Abu Qatada, he is keen to add, "is not a member of al-Qa`ida nor does he serve on its Legal Committee."[20] Despite his unequivocal respect for religious scholars, Harun is nevertheless clearly disappointed that al-Qa`ida's ongoing commitment to jihad does not meet the universal approval of Muslim religious scholars.[21] He displays an exemplary restraint at times to avoid criticizing them directly, most likely because al-Qa`ida insists that criticism of religious scholars should only be voiced through members of its Legal Committee.

Equally telling of al-Qa`ida's pragmatic ideological worldview is the emphasis it sought to place on its curriculum. Its religious instruction appears to place little focus on theology and far more on politics and militancy. In Harun's words:

> There were legal lectures held every day, preachers would discuss issues dealing with Muslims' situations around the world, most importantly occupied Palestine; [they would also lecture] about the heroism of the *sahaba* [i.e., the Companions of the Prophet], and decisive historical battles. We enjoyed

[17] Harun, Vol. 1, 120. It is worth noting that several al-Qa`ida leaders received religious education in Mauritania, among them `Atiyya (killed in 2011) and Abu Yahya al-Libi: see Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Risalat al-Amal wa-al-Bishr li-Ahlina fi Misr—8," CTC Collection compiled by Muhammad al-`Ubaydi. For a general article on religious education in Mauritania, see Ahmad Abu al-Ma`ali, "al-Mahzara al-Muritaniyya," http://fondcheikhsidiya.org/detailnews.php?id=200&categ=138 (accessed 9 February 2012).
[18] At the time of going to press, 1 June 2012, Abu Qatada was still in a British prison, resisting being deported to Jordan, see Tom Morgan, "Abu Qatada's 'Freedom' was Blocked by Judge," The Independent, 28 May 2012.
[19] Ibid., Vol. 1, 125.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., Vol. 1, 103.

> listening to the stories of martyrs and Afghan heroism. There were no lectures dedicated to partisanship (*siyasiyya*) or *hakimiyya* or any *takfiri* thought…[22]

How is al-Qa`ida Different?

In 1991, when Harun arrived in Peshawar, the place was littered with guesthouses (*madafat*). Harun relates that it was the "fashion" (*muda*) for guesthouses to be affiliated either with a specific ideological worldview or with a militant group from a particular country. For example, groups from Yemen, Eritrea, Algeria, Tunisia, Comoros and others each had their separate guesthouses. There were also guesthouses that were characterized by specific ideological orientation. These guesthouses tended to be attached to training camps inside Afghanistan that were similarly divided on the basis of ideology or nationality. As Harun saw it, "Peshawar was fuelled with disagreements and divisions;" even groups that shared the same objectives, such as the Egyptian groups, had fierce disagreements with each other.[23] When he first arrived in Peshawar, these divisions were immediately apparent to Harun and it troubled him: "we [i.e., jihadis] were heading in the wrong direction. We blame our regimes for their lack of unity and yet we divided ourselves according to the borders that the colonizer drew for us."[24]

By contrast, al-Qa`ida's guesthouses hosted those who had no ideological, sectarian or group affiliations. On arrival to Peshawar, Harun headed to *bayt al-ansar*, one of several guesthouses run by al-Qa`ida. At that time, Harun knew little to nothing about al-Qa`ida. *Bayt al-ansar* served as a center for Arab émigrés desiring to join the Afghan *mujahidin* or to receive military training.[25] As to al-Qa`ida's training camps, Harun experienced a sense of what one may term "multiculturalism" distinct from the narrow regionalism and sectarianism he witnessed elsewhere in Peshawar. He is at pains to demonstrate the inclusiveness of al-Qa`ida to his readers, so much so that he insists on enumerating the various nationalities of his military trainers. Thus: "the trainer for physical education and light weapons was from Pakistan; the trainer for heavy weapons and explosives was from Saudi Arabia; the trainer for topography was from Libya; [trainers for other military] skills were from the UAE, Yemen and Bahrain; there was also a brother from Sudan who assisted in training us."[26]

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[22] Ibid., Vol. 1, 68. I rendered "siyasiyya" as partisanship, not "political" because it lends itself to the spirit Harun is trying to communicate.
[23] Ibid., Vol. 1, 57.
[24] Ibid., Vol. 1, 56.
[25] Ibid., Vol. 1, 56. The other guesthouses were *bayt al-salam*, *al-ma'had al-shar'i* and *bayt al-ghuraba'*.
[26] Ibid., Vol. 1, 71.

Unlike other groups, al-Qa`ida, in Harun's eyes, is not modest in the way it positions or conceives of itself. He is brutally derisive of other groups that lack an understanding of the affairs of the *umma* and think of themselves as more important than they actually are. For example, in an implicit reference to the Egyptian Islamic Group (*al-jama`a al-islamiyya*), Harun scoffs at some of its members:

> There were other leading [Islamic] groups on the scene and they thought of themselves as if they represented an established Islamic state. One of them claimed that Sheikh `Umar `Abd al-Rahman cannot assume the leadership role of the Imamate since he is blind and an Imam could not be blind. Note [how foolish they are] in their conception of the situation as if they represent an established state [!] This is a small group of Muhammad's *umma*, it cannot even reveal the identity of its leaders because of the security situation and yet it presents itself as if it is a state![27]

In comparison, al-Qa`ida is much more modest about its place in the Islamic world; in Harun's eyes:

> Al-Qa`ida is but a small group of the Islamic *umma's* youth[28]….We do not have a great Imam at this time. I do not share the views of any group that calls for partisanship and seeks to impose its ideological program on others because Islam is much wider than our minds and intellectual principles. We are all groups [that should] agree upon working towards defending God's religion so long as the Caliphate/the Islamic state is absent. As to appointing someone as an Imam, this is much more complex than many appreciate.[29]

Harun is not only keen to emphasize the need for unity among Muslims, he is also concerned about jihadis who display enmity towards non-Muslims simply because they subscribe to a different religion. For example, he is disturbed by fellow Muslims who are disgusted at the sight of a Christian and cannot bring themselves to greet him or eat from his food. "Where are [their] Muhammadian principles?" he asks. He laments that "because of our love of jihad and fighting, we seem to have forgotten that the Christian, the Jew and others, are all the children of Adam and they ought to be respected; that [we have a duty] to lend support to them as the Messenger did to the people of Medina, so long as they do not harm us…the Messenger had a Jewish servant, and the person

[27] Ibid., Vol. 1, 57. Harun is clearly referring to the debate within the Egyptian Islamic Group during the 1990s.
[28] Ibid., Vol. 1, 13.
[29] Ibid., Vol. 1, 57.

who heralded the news of the Prophet's arrival to Medina was a Jewish man."[30] Harun is referring to the initial co-existence of the early Muslims with the Jews of Medina under the leadership of the prophet Muhammad. It was formalized in the form of the "Constitution of Medina" (*sahifat al-Madina*), an agreement that stipulated the duty of both groups to lend protection to each other when required.[31] The point that Harun wants to communicate is that some jihadis have taken up fighting motivated by an ideology of hatred, "an ideology that has nothing to do with religion. This is a truth that I ought to write because I ought to be objective."[32]

In contrast to the narrow-minded jihadi groups that Harun decries, both the founding documents of al-Qa`ida and Harun's account suggest that the new group wanted to rise above sectarianism, nationalism, regionalism and ethnocentrism in its early formative years. "The young men of al-Qa`ida," Harun describes, "are from all over the world, from East and West. The majority consists of Asians, from Bangladesh and Pakistan, followed by Yemen, Egypt, then the Gulf. Thus, we are not the Jihad Group or the [Islamic] Group because it is Egypt-based, for we are a global group. Those who doubt this about al-Qa`ida, [they should believe me] because I am its Confidential Secretary and I know the truth [of this matter]."[33]

This sense of jihadi cosmopolitanism was not simply an ideological worldview, but seems to have been strategically oriented. Al-Qa`ida wanted to avoid being the casualty of Afghan factionalism. According to Harun, it was al-Qa`ida's insistence on taking a neutral stance vis-à-vis the Afghan civil war that prompted Bin Ladin to disregard `Abdallah `Azzam's advice of amalgamating the Arab *mujahidin* with the Afghans.[34] Harun insists that this was a "tactical disagreement;" he is keen to highlight the deeper bond that united the two men: Bin Ladin was "very affected by Sheikh `Abdallah `Azzam's death, he was like his spiritual leader (*shaykhuhu*) and used to listen a lot to his advice."[35] Harun is of the view that `Azzam was, in principle, correct that it would be best to work under a single leadership so long as this was productive and conducive to unity, implying that al-Qa`ida's collaboration with the Taliban conforms to `Azzam's

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[30] Vol. 1, 136.

[31] Maxime Rodinson, *Muhammad: Prophet of Islam*, (London/ New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2002), see particularly 5: it deals both with the "honeymoon" period and also with the political reasons that led to the Muslims' attacks against several Jewish neighborhoods.

[32] Vol. 1, 136.

[33] Vol. 1, 97.

[34] On `Azzam's critical role in mobilizing Muslims to fight in Afghanistan, see ThomasHegghammer, "The Origins of Global Jihad: Explaining the Arab Mobilization to 1980s Afghanistan," (Policy Memo, *International Security Program, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School*, 22 January 2009). He is also presently completing a book concerning `Azzam.

[35] Harun, Vol. 1, 46.

wishes. But, when `Azzam was still alive, "the problem was that a single Afghan leadership was lacking, each [Afghan] leader segregated his own party from the others and sought to contain the Arabs [and use them to advance his interests]. That is why Sheikh Usama decided to distance himself from all of them, while at the same time collaborate with them [in matters that were in the interests of all]."[36]

Harun had not yet arrived to Afghanistan to witness first-hand the "tactical differences" between `Azzam and Bin Ladin. But Abu Walid al-Misri's account seems to corroborate and expand on Harun's view with respect to `Azzam's position. Whereas al-Misri extols the manner in which `Azzam preached the obligation of jihad and popularized it, he nevertheless thought that `Azzam lacked a basic level of political awareness when it came to assessing the long-term impact of his dealings. His political failure was most acute when it came to his dealings with Afghan groups. In the words of al-Misri: "as to [appreciating] Afghan politics, `Azzam was a catastrophe in every sense of the word…he was not cognizant or did not want to be cognizant of the conspiring role and corruption of the leaders in Peshawar, with the 'fundamentalist' leadership (*al-qiyadat 'al-usuliyya'*) at their head."[37] As will be discussed below, the "fundamentalist" groups had a disastrous effect on the Afghan jihadi scene, introducing a rigid form of sectarianism that al-Qa`ida managed to avoid.

In view of the divisions that characterized the jihadi landscape in the 1980s, al-Qa`ida's cosmopolitan worldview enabled it to succeed on at least two fronts. First, it was able to transcend the divisions that existed among jihadi groups. In other words, it is not that it experienced "cracks in the foundation," as some analysts described it;[38] rather, it was the foundation of the jihadi landscape that was cracked and al-Qa`ida was all too aware of it. It did not attempt to repair the "cracks," but wisely sought to manage and transcend them, and so to create an organization of "jihadis without borders."[39] This marks the ideological uniqueness and resilience which led to al-Qa`ida's success as an organization, until it lost its safe haven in Afghanistan—and with it its ideological uniqueness, as will be discussed below. Second, al-Qa`ida's pragmatic ideology enabled it to assume a global identity since its inception and to use its "jihadis without borders"

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[36] Vol. 1, 46. See also 113 on why al-Qa`ida was categorical in its decision not to take part in the internal fighting among Afghans.

[37] Abu Walid al-Misri, *Ma`arik al-Bawwaba al-Sakhriyya* (series: Tharthara fawqa Saqf al-`Alam), 191. Yet Abu Walid compliments `Azzam in other respects on p. 192.

[38] Vahid Brown, *Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in al-Qa`ida 1989-2006*, (Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, September 2007). The report's starting premise is the divided jihadi landscape which, in turn, it projected onto al-Qa`ida; however, in isolating al-Qa`ida from the background of jihadi disunity, one realizes how al-Qa`ida overcame divisions and maximized its militant capital.

[39] Harun, *al-Harb 'ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 146, 153.

to mount operations around the globe. Thus, through its actions—primarily its attacks against U.S. targets—al-Qa`ida established a reputation that overshadowed other jihadi groups which had enjoyed a longer jihadi pedigree. In short, it is al-Qa`ida's pragmatism and its selective ability to shed those trammels of ideological discrimination that enabled it to become the global organization that it was conceived to be at its inception.

A discussion of al-Qa`ida's uniqueness in that environment must consider the role Bin Ladin played in its early formation. Chapter three discusses al-Qa`ida's *amir* from an organizational perspective and how Bin Ladin served in that role. But for the purpose of understanding the role of leadership in al-Qa`ida's ideological framework, Harun's personal view of Bin Ladin is suggestive of deeper reflection on how al-Qa`ida portrayed itself to its members; more precisely, the way in which it positioned the status of its leader vis-à-vis its members. In this respect, al-Qa`ida appears to have emphasized the accountability of its leadership not on the basis of seniority, but on the basis of what is regarded as lawful leadership. Thus, in Harun's views and like-minded al-Qa`ida members:

> The reader may well ask me my opinion concerning Usama Bin Ladin's [position]. The answer is that I believe him to be a man like other Muslims. He is [subject] to being wrong and [open to being] right. He raised the banner of jihad against the infidels who have attacked us and occupied our countries…so we entered into a covenant with him (*ta`ahhadna ma`ahu*) [to commit to jihad]. He is not an Imam and there is no *bay`a* (pledge of allegiance) between us and him as people generally assume. It is a *ta`ahhud* (covenant). Whoever wishes to leave al-Qa`ida is free to do so. I can at any time withdraw my *ta`ahhud* if [I come to believe that] what we agreed upon has changed or if I see that the politics of al-Qa`ida's leadership no longer serves the interest of the *umma*.[40]

Bin Ladin's Abbottabad letters corroborate Harun's claim that a member of al-Qa`ida does not have to pledge a *bay`a* to Bin Ladin. In two of his letters, Bin Ladin tasks `Atiyya to request pledges of loyalty from both new members and existing ones. In one letter, he uses the term *bay`a* and in another he uses the term *`ahd*, but the pledge Bin Ladin outlines does not entail loyalty to his leadership. Rather, in line with the spirit conveyed by Harun, the pledge requires members to commit to jihad and the establishment of the Caliphate, maintaining secrecy with respect to operational work and responsibility to carry out one's tasks and providing advice to the leadership.[41]

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[40] Ibid., Vol. 1, 57.

[41] SOCOM-2012-000003, 1-2; SOCOM-2012-0000015, 3-4.

What al-Qa`ida's Creed is Not

The term "salafi" or "salafi-jihadi" is often described in secondary sources as if it is a cornerstone of al-Qa`ida's ideology and that of other jihadi groups, often implying that it is a defined doctrinal current within Islam that al-Qa`ida has adopted and adapted to advance its agenda.[42] Nowhere does Harun consider al-Qa`ida as subscribing to a "salafi" creed. As noted earlier, he repeatedly displays a deep frustration with respect to the various labels to which al-Qa`ida is purported to adhere: "'we are simply and solely Muslims,"[43] he insists. He reminds fellow believers that "It is incumbent upon Muslims to think well of all Muslim groups that work sincerely [to advance] God's religion,"[44] no doubt echoing a hadith—a report attributed to the Prophet—which preached that "reviling [fellow] Muslims is immoral and fighting them amounts to unbelief [*kufr*]."

Time and again, Harun is keen to emphasize that the various labels that are used by outsiders to describe al-Qa`ida's ideology are distortions which follow typologies devised by the West.[45] He rejects all labels, such as "Wahhabis," "salafi-jihadis," and most of all "takfiris." The latter preoccupies him most; it is "the biggest calamity (*musiba*) befalling Muslims, be they groups or states."[46] The portrait of a *takfiri* is that of a narrow-minded Muslim who is quick to declare fellow Muslims to be unbelievers whenever he disagrees with their interpretations of the Islamic creed; some *takfiris*

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[42] For a valuable critique of the secondary sources attributing different descriptions to al-Qa`ida's ideology, see Christina Hellmich, "Creating the Ideology of Al Qaeda: From Hypocrites to Salafi Jihadists," *Studies in conflict and Terrorism*, 31, 2008, 111-124. In essence, religious scholars tend to stress that they adhere to Islamic teachings following the way of *al-salaf* (the righteous predecessors). An open-minded definition of this could include all observing Muslims; the degree of emphasis on certain doctrines over others is what delineates some groups from others. My understanding of the terms "salafi" and "salafi-jihadi" on the basis of Harun's book and other jihadi treatises is not about a specific creed; it is rather an epithet that designates different degrees of emphasis on certain doctrinal issues. Even when groups self-designate themselves as "salafis," this designation means different things to different people. In my view, it is more meaningful to avoid use of the terms "salafi" or "salafi-jihadi" altogether (unless it is part of the name of a group and, when it is, explain what the group means by it). Instead, it is more productive to focus on the doctrinal issues in question, e.g., tawhid, wala', bara', hisba, etc., and how rigidly defined they are by those who invoke them to see whether religious doctrine takes precedence over strategic or military interests or vice versa.

[43] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam,* Vol. 1, 252.

[44] Ibid., Vol. 1, 149.

[45] Ibid., Vol. 1, 10.

[46] Ibid., Vol. 1, 235.

believe that such disagreements warrant shedding the blood of fellow Muslims. That is why the label *takfiri* invokes a negative connotation in the minds of Muslims.[47]

Harun asserts that those who accuse al-Qa`ida of being a *takfiri* group are mistaken. "Sheikh Usama," he asserts, "was never a *takfiri*, his enmity is directed against the occupying infidels against whom he [dedicated his life to] fighting; he [could not have] enmity for fellow Muslims, [for he sacrificed his fortune in their service]."[48] It is evident from Harun's account that he regards the *takfiris a*s representing a group separate from al-Qa`ida. The *takfiris* do not seem to have approved of al-Qa`ida's leaders or of their religious orientation; Harun's account presents them as a major threat to the fabric of jihadism. Their presence in Peshawar preceded the formation of al-Qa`ida. Because of them, he remarks, Peshawar:

> was lit with internal strife (*fitna*) and divisive and destructive ideas to Islam. The *takfiris* began spreading books that declared Sheikh `Abdallah `Azzam, Sheikh Usama, Saudi rulers and the leaders of the Afghan mujahidin all to be unbelievers.[49]

Harun relates that this acrimony reached extremes in the increasing preoccupation of jihadis with the subject of whom they wished to denounce as unbelievers. And if a jihadi should respond with "I do not declare such a regime to be one of unbelief," then it becomes lawful to shed his blood.[50] Harun claims that the same *takfiris* who attacked a mosque in Sudan in 1994 went on to attempt to assassinate Bin Ladin, but his guards managed to stop them.[51] This was not the first time that al-Qa`ida suffered from the *takfiris*. He notes that in 1992 two *takfiris* attempted to assassinate Abu `Ubayda al-Banshiri and Abu Hafs al-Misri in Miranshah in North Waziristan. Al-Qa`ida imprisoned them in a cell in Jihad Wal; they were later released on condition that they would memorize the Qur'an. "This step," Harun observes, "reflects the wisdom of al-

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[47] See Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*, London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2010), Chapter 1.

[48] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam,* Vol. 1, 88.

[49] Ibid., Vol. 1, 87.

[50] Ibid., Vol. 1, 88.

[51] Ibid., Vol. 1, 178. *The New York Times* reports several attacks by an "outlawed fundamentalist Takfir wal-Hijra group" on a mosque in Sudan, including one that was carried out in February 1994. It does not mention that an assassination attempt on Bin Ladin was averted, but that it "was carried out by an Islamist of Libyan origin who had fought in Afghanistan." It is possible that this Libyan is one of the attackers Harun refers to. See "Attack on a Mosque in Sudan by Fundamentalist Kills 20," *The New York Times*, 10 December 2000, http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/10/world/attack-on-a-mosque-in-sudan-by-fundamentalist-kills-20.html (accessed 8 February 2012).

Qa`ida's leadership, lest it be told that the jihadis kill each other."[52] In other words, al-Qa`ida did not want to descend to the same level of engagement as the *takfiris*; by releasing the prisoners it was sending a message that it is unlawful to shed the blood of fellow Muslims. From Harun's perspective, this demonstrates that "whoever accuses us of being *takfiris* must review his charge and see that we are the victims of this dark *takfiri* thinking."[53] If it is true that *takfiris* attempted to assassinate al-Qa`ida's leaders and if it is also true that they declared `Azzam to be an unbeliever, it would not be surprising if they planned his assassination, which some have blamed on Bin Ladin.

Bin Ladin never declared *takfir* against fellow Muslims in his public statements, and one of his Abbottabad letters confirms Harun's assertion that he is not a *takfiri* in private. In a letter to `Atiyya, Bin Ladin highlights the importance of writing a "treatise to make clear our position with respect to *takfir*."[54] He had been warned by a certain Sheikh Yunis of the "pitfalls of religious rigidity and *takfir*" (*mazlaq al-tashaddud wa-al-takfir*).[55] Like Harun, Yunis is weary of religious rigidity of all forms, and it is telling of al-Qa`ida's religious pragmatism that he is alarmed by the expression "Salafi-Jihadism" sweeping jihadi forums on the internet, believing it to be "a matter of utmost gravity" (*amr fi ghayat al-khutura*).[56] He seems to associate "Salafi-Jihadism" with the *takfiri* trend. Sheikh Yunis reminded Bin Ladin that "you experienced this problem [first hand] in Peshawar [in the 1980s] and you [also] saw its outcome in [Algeria]."[57] He urged Bin Ladin to call on Abu Yahya al-Libi and `Atiyya to compose a treatise in which they clarified the dangers of declaring *takfir* against individuals.[58]

Beyond the *takfiris*, Harun designates some jihadis and some groups as "Salafis," and others as "neo-Salafis." Following the spirit of his description, the former are those who display an excessive inflexibility in applying specific doctrinal rulings or prescriptions. He believes them to be insular in their outlook and harmful to Muslims: "what is the purpose," Harun asks, "of preaching to the people that a specific Salafi group will alone be saved (*al-ta'ifa al-mansura*) and the remaining billion Muslims have all committed

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[52] Vol. 1, 119.
[53] Vol. 1, 178.
[54] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 14.
[55] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 47. It is possible that "Sheikh Yunis" is Yunis al-Mauritani who was captured in Quetta, Pakistan in September 2011. See "Al-Qaeda chief Younis al-Mauritani held, says Pakistan', *BBC*, 5 September 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-14787900 (accessed 13 April 2012); see also Mazin Aman, 'al-`Arabiyya tazur usrat "Yunis al-Muritani"', *al-`Arabiyya*, 7 September 2011, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/07/165841.html (accessed 13 April 2012); see also, *al-`Arabiyya*, 5 September 2011, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/05/165522.html (accessed 13 April 2012).
[56] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 47.
[57] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 48.
[58] Ibid., 48.

idolatry [and are therefore destined to hell]."[59] The term "neo-Salafis," which he uses interchangeably with *neo-murji'a*,[60] is a designation that he applies to those who once exhorted Muslims to participate in jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan and are now declaring that the jihadis have deviated from the path of jihad into the path of unlawful terror (*irhab*) by taking up arms against the political establishment and their rulers. He obviously deplores what he believes to be the hypocrisy of "neo-Salafis," but, more importantly, he is unforgiving of their having led Muslim youth astray on the narrow path of religious rigidity. The common denominator between the "salafis" and "neo-salafis," in Harun's mind, is that they both conceive of jihad in the service of *tawhid* ahead of any other strategic concerns.[61] This is not to suggest that Harun does not consider tawhid to be a cornerstone of the faith, as any observing Muslim would, but he is implicitly referring to a strand within jihadism that is willing to sacrifice strategic objectives in the service of sectarianism.[62]

Harun's account points the reader to a group that he designates as "Salafi" that may have served as the wellspring of inflexible and *takfiri* orientation among both Arabs and Afghans. Harun relates that among the ideologically oriented guesthouses in Peshawar, there was one organized for the followers of Jamil al-Rahman (the alias of Muhammad Hussein b. `Abd al-Manan), the leader of the group *al-Da`wa ila al-Qur'an wa-al-Sunna*. His guesthouse hosted "Salafi brothers who declared Afghan leaders to be unbelievers on account of their disagreements with Sheikh al-Rahman."[63] It also had its training camp in Afghanistan's Kunar Province.[64] Though Harun does not condemn al-Rahman's group—nor, for that matter, does he condemn any other Muslim—he is not complimentary of the ideological orientation of his group. Al-Rahman's main preoccupation, Harun derisively remarks, was "to fight against idolatry and innovations in religious matters [*al-shirk bi-allah wa-al-bida`*]," implying that al-Rahman and his followers were obsessed with the minutia of detail in religious matters ahead of causes that are of more immediacy and importance to Muslims.[65]

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[59] Vol. 2, 493. *al-ta'ifa al-mansura*, which is also used interchangeably with *al-firqa al-najiya*, is meant to designate the group based on a hadith attributed to the prophet that Muslims would be divided into 73 groups and only one of them would be saved.

[60] The *murji'a* is in reference to an early group in the Islamic tradition who, when the Muslim community was marred with civil war, decided to remain neutral. Some perceive the *murji'a* to have shirked their duty to standing up to what is right, hence the pejorative connotation.

[61] Vol. 1, 56.

[62] Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*, 141-3.

[63] Vol. 1, 56.

[64] Vol. 1, 65.

[65] Vol. 1, 72.

According to the website of *al-Da`wa ila al-Qur'an wa-al-Sunna*, the group was founded in 1965 and Jamil al-Rahman was the first in Afghanistan to call for jihad in 1973. Articles on the website corroborate Harun's account as to al-Rahman's rigid views. One article describes him as committed to Islamic teachings following the strict path of the righteous predecessors (*al-salaf*), with an emphasis on *tawhid*; he preached the importance of *hisba*, the duty of each Muslim to "command right and forbid wrong." When rigidly applied, *hisba* is the equivalent of a citizen's arrest for matters threatening the purity of the faith rather than the affairs of the state; al-Rahman believed that the miseries and destructions befalling Muslims today are caused by their lax attitude in enforcing *hisba*.[66] An article on the group's website takes pride that of all Afghan groups that supported the Shi`ites' inclusion in the transitional government following the Soviet's withdrawal, al-Rahman's was alone in refusing to join on account of his commitment to the Islamic creed: "our position with respect to the transitional government is firmly grounded on the basis of the creed, it is not subject to change on account of political considerations."[67] The same article observes that al-Rahman had many enemies among Afghan political groups; some of them went so far as to say that "you are Wahhabis-unbelievers, we would rather [suffer] the Americans and the French than you…that [we would rather see] the Communists return to the Province than [endure] your presence."[68]

More research is needed to ascertain whether al-Rahman's school of thought was homegrown or whether it evolved into a religiously inflexible school following the support of religious scholars from Saudi Arabia, particularly Ibn Baz. Abu Walid al-Misri believes that al-Rahman was virtually the representative of Saudi policy in Afghanistan and that his group was popular among men from Saudi Arabia. Through al-Rahman's Salafism, Abu Walid argues, Saudi Arabia sought to create a sectarian war against Hikmatyar's Hanafism; by this it is implied that Hanafism as practiced in Afghanistan was open to Sufi practices, including the performance of prayer in a cemetery, practices that scholars who emphasize *tawhid* consider idolatrous. Abu Walid claims that Saudi Arabia was responsible for creating a sectarian war in Afghanistan: it sent its "spies" to create confrontations among jihadis by declaring a war against the idolatry of Afghans and *quburiyyat al-mujahidin*, i.e., jihadis who perform what some religiously inflexible Muslims would consider as a form of idol worship in the form of praying in a cemetery.[69] When, thanks to Saudi support, al-Rahman's group established its *imara*, an emirate, in the Kunar Province, the leaders of the Afghan parties united

[66] http://www.al3nabi.com/vb/f35/t16607.html (accessed 8 March 2011)

[67] 'Uthman 'Abd al-Salam Nuh, al-Tariq ila al-jama'a al-umm, www.jamaatudawa.org.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Abu Walid al-Misri, *Matar 90*, (series: Tharthara fawqa Saqf al-`Alam), 75.

"for the first and last time" to destroy al-Rahman's emirate, and Hikmatyar took care of assassinating al-Rahman in 1991. An Arab man was charged with the mission.[70]

Others writing in support of Jamil al-Rahman suggest that it was al-Rahman's emphasis on *tawhid* that caught the attention of Ibn Baz, not the reverse.[71] Ibn Baz is on record praising al-Rahman for his work: "Every Muslim and I are pleased with what you are doing, we are delighted by what we have learnt of your ongoing efforts in the cause of making God's Word supreme and struggling against His enemies."[72] It is not clear from the context whether Ibn Baz was pleasantly surprised to hear of al-Rahman's teachings or whether he was pleased that his donations, if he ever gave any, were yielding the desired results.

Does al-Qa`ida Have an Ideology?

Ideology is an important component of al-Qa`ida and religion defines its paradigm; but it would be a mistake to understand its ideology solely through a theological lens. Al-Qa`ida's worldview is premised on minimum religiosity and maximum militancy. By minimum religiosity I mean a meta-religious ideology; one that is capable of encompassing various jihadi groups with different theological orientations. The covenant a jihadi must "hear and obey" could not be more explicit on the primacy of jihad:

> Al-Qa`ida is an Islamic group and jihad is its path. *Jihad is the principal reason that members have joined this group to carry out*, together with observing various other Islamic duties *in so far as it is possible*. When [jihad and other religious duties] are in conflict, [members of al-Qa`ida are expected] *to give priority to the duty of jihad ahead of other duties* [emphasis added].[73]

Far from indoctrinating its members with inflexible religious teaching and demanding that they fight against those who do not observe religious duties, the covenant of al-Qa`ida advises members "to avoid differences and argumentations pertaining to religious issues; discussing religion without [firm] knowledge is prohibited."[74]

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[70] Abu Walid al-Misri, *15 Talqa fi Sabil Allah*, (series: Tharthara fawqa Saqf al-`Alam), 254.
[71] Abu `Abdallah al-Qusaymi, 'Jamil al-Rahman al-Afghani,'
http://www.kulalsalafiyeen.com/vb/showthread.php?t=23056
[72] Ibn Baz, volume 4, 26-8. His collected corpus is available on *mishkat*,
http://www.almeshkat.net/books/open.php?cat=15&book=598 (accessed 8 March 2011)
[73] AFGP-2002-600045, 1. Translation is largely amended.
[74] AFGP-2002-600045, 5. Translation is slightly amended.

The importance of maintaining a meta-religious ideology is not designed for the sole purpose of religious observance but primarily to serve as an alternative paradigm to that of the nation-state. Al-Qa`ida does not reject the nation-state simply because it represents a secular framework that governs world politics, but because it is unlawful in its eyes. In essence, al-Qa`ida believes that all the grievances befalling Muslims are a result of dividing them along borders imposed by Western Powers, e.g., Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. Further, should al-Qa`ida entertain working within the processes of the international world order, it would need to recognize the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. This would, in turn, deny al-Qa`ida the claim that its jihad is lawful. It is for this reason that while al-Qa`ida is happy to display love and respect to all Muslims, jihadis and non-jihadis, irrespective of their theological orientations, it does not extend the same respect towards Muslim groups wishing to advance their agenda as part of the political processes of the nation-state. Thus:

> Our position with respect to the idols, secular and national parties and their ilk is to dissociate from them and to declare our ongoing enmity against their unbelief until they believe in nothing but God. We shall not [compromise] with them on the basis of half-solutions, or [agree] to a dialogue with them or even flatter them [to further our agenda].[75]

Al-Qa`ida's position, as reflected in its documents and Harun's autobiography, has several implications for its own structure and its external relations. As far as its own structure and agenda are concerned, al-Qa`ida is committed to a global program of jihad and its early vision was to create a generation of "jihadis without borders," as Harun describes himself and his fellow al-Qa`ida members.[76] These are the jihadis who agree to fight anywhere irrespective of their national origins; they are faithful to the hadith that extols Muslims to leave their homes and take up jihad in the service of their religion (*siyahatu ummati al-jihad*)[77] and to serve as "God's lions on earth."[78] As far as its relation with other groups is concerned, al-Qa`ida is less selective: groups wishing to liaise with al-Qa`ida or receive its support have to commit to jihad and *ipso facto* embrace a religious paradigm, not to prove a commitment to a theological creed, but essentially to prove their jihadi—non nation-state—credentials. Beyond that, al-Qa`ida is willing to work with or lend support to jihadi groups, even if they are more inflexible than necessary in matters of faith and practice, or even if they do not conceive of

[75] By-Laws, 4. Translation largely amended.
[76] Harun, Vol. 1, 146, 153.
[77] Vol. 1, 56, 154.
[78] Vol. 1, 279.

themselves as global jihadis, e.g., Egyptian Islamic Group, Egyptian Jihad Group and others.

This was not a one-way street. Just as al-Qa`ida was willing to lend its support to other jihadis, it was also happy to benefit from them when it deemed that they could address some of its own military shortcomings. For example, al-Qa`ida benefited from the military skills of non-al-Qa`ida jihadis and hired them to provide military training in its own camps. Harun disputes allegations that Egyptians (especially al-Zawahiri's Jihad Group) exerted undue power or influence over al-Qa`ida. He explains that many of the Egyptians who volunteered for jihad in Afghanistan had military experience in the Egyptian army, they tended to have more expertise than others and al-Qa`ida was happy to draw on the human resources they were willing to share.[79] Al-Qa`ida was also happy to benefit from the expertise of a "former Marine" of Egyptian descent, Muhammad `Ali, known by the alias Haidara. In 1992 he gave an advanced military course for the Egyptian Jihad Group in Jihad Wal at the Khalid b. al-Walid training camp: three members of al-Qa`ida took part in that course. Later he gave a course exclusively for al-Qa`ida; Harun credits him with having introduced a sophisticated and specialized standard into al-Qa`ida's military curriculum.[80] Haidara seems to have been working on his own;[81] according to Harun, he was secretive and mysterious: he did not like to talk much about himself. Al-Qa`ida knew that he had worked for the U.S. military and had been let go, but this did not stop al-Qa`ida from accepting his assistance.

Beyond forging inter-jihadi relations, al-Qa`ida made a long-term investment in human capital that presumably could one day be put in the service of jihad. For example, al-Qa`ida had an open door policy that welcomed men who had little time to spend in Afghanistan and simply wished to receive basic training in its camps. It did not interrogate them as to their religious orientation. Harun relates that when his batch of volunteers arrived in Afghanistan to receive military training, they were divided into two groups. The group that had a short time period to spend would go to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Camp. The course at that camp was designed to provide basic military training in less than one week. Harun's group proceeded to the `Umar al-Faruq Camp in Jihad Wal; this camp was designed to provide a longer military course that would last

[79] Vol. 1, 77. In some skills, Harun admits that the Egyptian Jihad Group was more advanced than al-Qa`ida: it had secret courses in gliding, assassination techniques, and diving: vol. 1, 120.
[80] Vol. 1, 121.
[81] Vol. 1, 121. It is not clear to me whether he was being paid for his services. Harun portrays him as "a Muslim who wanted to help his brethren in religion" and the *umma* at large. See Chapter One in this report, footnote 46.

roughly two months.[82] Harun himself was not a member of al-Qa`ida then; he had finished his first year at what he alleged to be a university in Karachi. Harun never completed a degree; he apparently returned to Karachi only to collect his passport, and returned to Afghanistan to pursue jihad as his vocation.[83]

The indiscriminate investment al-Qa`ida made in human capital maximized the potential for global militancy. As Harun saw it, "it was a strategic plan on al-Qa`ida's part; it provided training to any Muslim even if he only had one day to spare."[84] This meant that al-Qa`ida opened its camps to provide military training to Muslims from around the world, no doubt with the hope that they would one day put their training to use.[85] For a group that envisaged itself as a global organization ever since it was founded, al-Qa`ida also invested in militant Islamic groups around the world and provided them with military training.

Al-Qa`ida the Brand Without the Organizational Structure

It is ironic that though al-Qa`ida's ideology rejects the nation-state and all the ancillaries associated with it, e.g., notions of sovereignty, nationalism, political parties, elections, etc., its success as an organization depended on the protection it once enjoyed from a number of states or segments within them, i.e., Sudan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to Harun, Bin Ladin was cognizant of the need for this protection and was willing to engage in *quid pro quo* arrangements with state authorities when the situation demanded it. Harun notes that when he was based in Sudan in 1996, Bin Ladin had to make "tactical concessions" to the Sudanese government when the authorities ordered al-Qa`ida to deport Libyans from Sudan. As Harun saw it, Bin Ladin had no choice but to comply; some of the Libyan men did not appreciate his compliance, accusing him of having compromised his principles in the service of pleasing the Sudanese government. It saddened Harun to see that "this is always the problem of the jihadis, they can only think in terms that are either black or white."[86] As a result, some of the Libyan men chose to join the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. After the Sudan phase, it was protection provided by the Taliban that enabled al-Qa`ida to enjoy a safe haven as it

[82] Vol. 1, 60.

[83] See footnote 43 in Chapter One of this report.

[84] Vol. 1, p. 60.

[85] Neither al-Qa`ida's internal documents nor Harun's autobiography suggest that people who trained in al-Qa`ida's camps had to pay a fee. Al-Qa`ida did however pay a monthly salary to its members as well as personal leave and health provisions etc.. this is explicit in its By-Laws and in Harun's autobiography (e.g., p. 248).

[86] Vol. 1, p. 238.

mounted its international operations, including the 9/11 attacks.[87] When al-Qa`ida lost its safe haven, it is possible that elements of Pakistan's ISI provided protection to its key leaders, and when this protection was lifted, al-Qa`ida lost its key operational leaders and, as an organization, suffered a crippling blow.[88]

From an ideological standpoint, so long as al-Qa`ida operated in a safe-haven, it was able to maintain a centralized channel of communications, sustain a disciplined corps of members that it called its own, and protect the brand "al-Qa`ida" from being contaminated with the ideological vulgarity that reigned over most other jihadi groups. But when al-Qa`ida's organizational structure was crippled and other jihadi groups took it upon themselves to carry the banner of jihad that al-Qa`ida's leaders championed in their public statements, the differences between al-Qa`ida and other jihadi groups became blurred in the minds of both jihadis and observers of jihadism. Many jihadis are as much captivated by the brand of al-Qa`ida as they are by jihad; the brand has thus provided jihadis the powerful illusion that they are members of an "imagined community/organization," to borrow Benedict Anderson's wordings (in his description of how nationalism was the glue that tied people to an imagined nation).[89] The fact that many analysts and the security establishments of Western states developed the habit of attributing to al-Qa`ida virtually any terrorist attack mounted by an Islamic group, or by Muslims acting on their own, served to strengthen the illusion that al-Qa`ida was not just omnipotent, it was also omnipresent. Thus, for jihadis without organizational ties to al-Qa`ida, the illusion that committing terrorist operations in the name of jihad would make them part of al-Qa`ida, has now assumed a palpable dimension, to the extent that facts pertaining to complicity and responsibility have become difficult to distinguish from delusionary jihadi claims.

The ideological disjunction between al-Qa`ida's worldview and the views of those who believe themselves to be al-Qa`ida is illustrated in Harun's own experience in Somalia, mostly with foreign fighters (*muhajirun*). After he returned to Somalia in 2006, Harun visited Talha al-Sudani, who was then suspended from al-Qa`ida; Harun witnessed a different ideological culture from that of al-Qa`ida and was disappointed that Talha was not following the "broad guidelines that have been drawn for us."[90] He quickly realized that Talha wanted to establish a group separate from that of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and declare an independent "Islamic imara," a matter which he did not

[87] On al-Qa`ida's presence in Afghanistan before the emergence of the Taliban, see the study by Don Rassler and Vahid Brown, *The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of al-Qa`ida*, Combating Terrorism Center, July 13, 2001, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-haqqani-nexus-and-the-evolution-of-al-qaida.

[88] This topic is explored further in the concluding chapter.

[89] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, New York: Verso, 1983.

[90] Vol. 2, 45.

hide from Harun.[91] When Harun met with Talha's men to determine how much they knew of al-Qa`ida's worldview and operational methods (*manhaj*) and the extent of their knowledge of the rules that govern jihad (*fiqh al-jihad*),[92] he discovered a "dangerous new creed," that was not just strange to al-Qa`ida, but one "that has nothing to do with religion."[93] He believed that it was a creed espoused by young men who were enthusiastic about taking up weapons but lacked any knowledge of legal studies.

There were too many young men, Harun observed, who did not exceed twenty years of age.[94] He took pains to explain to them "the true face of al-Qa`ida," to educate them about the virtues of "dialogue, listening to the other even if he is our enemy," to impress upon them the distinctions between "combatant, civilian, hypocrite, dhimmi."[95] When Harun investigated who had planned the killing of a foreign cameraman who had been given permission by the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) to work in Mogadishu,[96] he discovered that the culprits espoused this extreme religious worldview. He was alarmed by this "extreme current that does not accept to associate with anyone but those who share their extreme beliefs…it is a big tragedy when a man thinks that he is killing in the name of God only to find himself in hell on account of having killed innocent people."[97] Harun later learnt that the same men who killed the cameraman had also killed a Christian woman who had been working for a humanitarian agency for 30 years. It deeply troubled him that they were claiming to be al-Qa`ida and the ICU came to believe that they were.[98]

Harun appears to have alienated many people in his peripatetic education of young men regarding what is lawful according to al-Qa`ida. For example, he highlighted that Bin Ladin welcomed foreign journalists in Afghanistan and nobody in al-Qa`ida harmed them.[99] He was firm with them when discussing ideological matters; he wanted to guide them away from *takfiri* thought. They were shocked by Harun's pragmatic approach and accused him of not following Bin Ladin's path. Harun assured them that

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[91] Vol. 2, 47. For development of this topic, see Chapter Three.
[92] Vol. 2, 48.
[93] Vol. 2, 49.
[94] Vol. 2, 49.
[95] Vol. 2, 50.
[96] Harun is probably referring to the Swedish cameraman who was shot in June 2006 in Mogadishu. See Ben Dowell, "TV cameraman killed in Somalia," (*The Guardian*, 23 June 23 2006), http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/jun/23/broadcasting.internationalnews
[97] Vol. 2, 52.
[98] Vol. 2, 53. This was a pattern that continued, see Ken Menkhaus, *Somali a: A Country in Peril, a Policy Nightmare*, Enough Strategy Paper, (September 2008), 4-5.
[99] Vol. 2, 52.

"my thinking stems from that of Sheikh `Abdallah `Azzam and Usama bin Ladin."[100] Still, they were convinced that they, and not Harun, were following al-Qa`ida. It is perhaps after he witnessed first-hand how jihad developed into a criminal enterprise when carried out by irresponsible youth that Harun's own views of the obligation of jihad changed, no longer mirroring that of al-Qa`ida. This is not to suggest that Harun disavowed al-Qa`ida. But whereas he strongly believed in the first volume that jihad is the individual obligation of every Muslim today, after returning to Somalia he introduced nuanced views of the role of jihadis. He began to take account of territoriality in order to distinguish between the circumstances dictating when jihad is an individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*) and when it is a communal obligation (*fard kifaya*).[101]

Harun is silent on the role of al-Qa`ida's leaders in relation to Jihad. While al-Qa`ida dispensed its own pragmatic and disciplined religious guidance to its members, its leaders did not or could not devise a similarly disciplined ideological program to the broader Islamic landscape that they sought to jihadize. For example, in addition to serving as al-Qa`ida's leader (*amir*), Bin Ladin saw his role to be that of inciting the *umma* (*tahrid al-umma*), urging Muslims to take up jihad en masse and on their own. He and other al-Qa`ida leaders have long argued that Muslims today are engaged in defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf'*) both against their own apostate regimes which do not govern according to the justice that Islam preaches, and against the West that lends support to these regimes. Accordingly, they invoked the classical doctrine of defensive jihad to argue that under defensive circumstances, jihad becomes the individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*) of every Muslim. It is glaringly obvious, even to a casual reader of Bin Ladin's speeches, that he made it his mission to appeal especially to youth to take up jihad on their own initiative without being instructed in the ways of jihad that Harun believes to be essential. Thus, jihadi groups and Muslims who were impressed by al-Qa`ida's deeds, and as a result joined the caravan of jihadis without the benefit of receiving al-Qa`ida's internal ideological and disciplined guidance, colored al-Qa`ida's ideology with their own religious dispositions, and in many instances with their sectarianism and unsanctioned actions.

Harun claims that with al-Qa`ida's loss of a safe haven following the invasion of Afghanistan, it ceased to be responsible for the actions taking place in the jihadi landscape. As such, it is no longer responsible for random terrorist operations, which are deemed to be unlawful from al-Qa`ida's perspective, and indeed a liability to

[100] Vol. 2, 39.

[101] See for example Vol. 1, 6, 31, 55; and compare with Vol. 2, 66-8, 76. On the distinction between the two, see Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*, Chapter 4.

jihadism generally and to al-Qa`ida specifically by association—a point that is developed in Chapter three. Considering post 9/11 global militancy with reference to Harun's perspective, the reader is led to infer that the world would be rendered safer if a powerful "original al-Qa`ida" persisted instead of the current global situation in which a weakened al-Qa`ida is incapable of sanctioning or of preventing the actions of the "jihadis.com:" the juvenile actors who have taken charge of jihadism.

Harun's principled stance notwithstanding—and even if he is faithful to his own understanding of, or upbringing in, al-Qa`ida—it is difficult to excuse al-Qa`ida's leaders from the way in which global militancy is evolving. Since it was willing to adopt a militant program justified by religious ideology that is frequently interpreted and applied by street jihadis in a no-less authoritative manner than learned ideologues, al-Qa`ida—however regrettable for Harun—is in no small way responsible for these repercussions.

Concluding Remarks

An examination of al-Qa`ida's ideology from an insider's perspective is instructive not merely because it illuminates our understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, but also because it helps to correct and adjust the path of political discourse on terrorism. This is especially the case in view of the excessive attention the Islamic faith has received in the study of terrorism. Harun's account and al-Qa`ida's internal documents demonstrate that it is not religiosity that characterizes al-Qa`ida's ideology; rather it is militancy that defines it. However, recent efforts to counter the excessive emphasis on the Islamic faith by removing religion altogether from policy discourse on terrorism and replacing it with vague and meaningless expressions such as "countering violent extremism" (CVE), are at best simplistic.

It would be naïve to underestimate the role religion can play in advancing militancy when religion is properly packaged by the learned. Universal religions such as Islam and Christianity are naturally programmed to transcend borders, race and nationalities, and to accept adherents into their fold to mobilize adherents for all kinds of causes, including militant and peaceful causes. In the case of al-Qa`ida, it drew on the framework of religion to serve as an alternative to the nation-state and to legitimize a militant program. Thanks to Islam's universal reach, this militant program assumed a global dimension; and thanks to Islam's inclusiveness, non-Muslim enthusiasts wishing to embrace militancy are welcomed as converts. But there is no mistake as to the trajectory of the path of non-Muslim enthusiasts: they did not embrace jihad as their ticket to Islam; instead, they embraced Islam as their ticket to jihadism. Thus it pays to

heed not just why religion matters, but how it is put to use by al-Qa`ida and other militant groups and, more importantly, when religiosity does not matter.

CHAPTER THREE
The "Original al-Qa`ida" and its Imitators

Instead of the common view that depicts al-Qa`ida as a franchise or a network of affiliated movements, Fadil Harun speaks of an "original al-Qa`ida" (al-Qa`ida al-umm), *which, in his mind, sets it apart from other jihadi groups even if they claim to be acting in its name. According to Harun, the "original al-Qa`ida" is but "a small movement" and most of the attacks by jihadis that were carried out following the 9/11 attacks "lack the authorization of Sheikh Usama or the central leadership of al-Qa`ida." Harun describes his "original al-Qa`ida" in organizational terms and insists that, unlike jihadi groups who have been active since the fall of the Taliban at the end of 2001, al-Qa`ida follows a code of "lawful jihad"—a* jus in bello*-like framework devised by its Legal Committee, and it is to be distinguished by its "special operations" style of attacks. This chapter is a study of al-Qa`ida's organizational structure in light of both Harun's account and captured battlefield documents, including the Abbottabad documents. On the basis of these primary sources, this chapter contends that the proliferation of jihadi attacks in the post-Taliban era reflects not an evolution of al-Qa`ida, but a departure from its original vision; that al-Qa`ida's role in the current jihadi landscape is either absent or at most based on ad hoc decisions, reflecting its inability to exert control over the groups and individuals it has inspired. This lack of control on the part of al-Qa`ida includes regionally based groups, even those that call themselves—or who pledge allegiance to—al-Qa`ida. To illustrate the uneasy dynamics between al-Qa`ida and other jihadi groups, the latter part of this chapter examines the tenuous relationship between al-Qa`ida and what may be considered to be its imitators. It presents a synthesis of Harun's critical views of the Islamic State of Iraq; his dealings with escapees from a prison in Yemen in May 2006, some of whom later formed al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); and his frustrating experience with al-Shabab in Somalia.*

Harun relates that in June 1998, as the planning for the East Africa bombings had progressed to the stage that a truck loaded with a surfeit of explosives had been prepared, a new idea was raised: "Since we have enough explosive materials," an excited Abu Muhammad al-Misri asked, "why not bury the Zionist-Jews along with the Americans at the same time?" He excitedly asked. "Journalists," he added, "would have plenty to write about after such an operation." They were of course talking about the Israeli embassy in Nairobi. Abu Muhammad, who was Harun's operational *amir*

(leader), tasked him with collecting all necessary information about the embassy to study the feasibility of bombing it.[1]

Harun was familiar with the location of the Israeli embassy; it was situated on the way to the hospital where he used to take his visiting mother to receive her cancer treatment. Energized by the prospect of a simultaneous attack on the Israeli and U.S. embassies in Nairobi, he immediately proceeded to investigate the area. He was able to watch the inside of the embassy from a room on the top floor of a nearby building—which he believed belonged to a Kenyan intelligence agency—and then conducted an exploratory study of the area surrounding it. When he returned to report to Abu Muhammad, he told him that it was easy to reach the target from all directions; and emphasized that there was also a hotel across from the embassy mostly patronized by "Zionists," presumably implying that it would maximize Israeli fatalities. However, he noted also that there was one obstacle: a school for Kenyan children nearby. Harun claims that they decided against attacking the Israeli embassy because they did not deem it lawful from an Islamic perspective that children should suffer as collateral damage.[2]

In his account of the 1998 East Africa bombings, Harun is keen to convey that he—as the operative carrying out al-Qa`ida's guidance while overseeing the logistics of the operation—endeavored to minimize civilian casualties. In the following passage describing the planning in the days preceding the attacks, Harun relates:

> Around noon, I tried calling our brother Ahmad the German (*al-almani*) [i.e., the suicide bomber who attacked the U.S. embassy in Dar al-Salam] in Tanzania to confirm to him that the appointed time [of the attack] remained the same, meaning 10 am. We had chosen this time because many Muslims tend to go to the mosque around that time; thus there would not be many of them in that area which is normally packed with people. At the same time, [we also figured that] the average non-Muslim civilian would be working in his office around that time. [We therefore estimated] that the street would not be filled with pedestrians, unlike [say] 12:00 o'clock when everyone is out for lunch. We also decided that the attack would be from behind the buildings [of the embassies] to minimize Kenyans' material and human losses. We also selected a Friday since it is the last day of the week and embassy staff would all be in their offices. Let us

[1] Fadil Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam: Qissat Fadil Harun* (*War against Islam: Fadil Harun's Story*), vol. 1, 323.
[2] Ibid., Vol. 1, 324. Google Maps identifies a "Loreto College" located near the embassy: it is a school founded by the Sisters of Loreto, a Catholic religious order. Google Maps further corroborates Harun's other descriptions of the area: there is a "Fairview Hotel" and "The Nairobi Hospital" in the vicinity. My thanks to Yoram Schweitzer who has kindly confirmed, in an email exchange, that the school (and the hotel and hospital) existed in 1998.

> not forget the principal role of Khalid al-`Awhali [one of the two suicide bombers attacking the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, who survived]: he would start with a direct attack using innocuous bombs consisting of explosive materials but without shrapnel to push away as many people [i.e., civilians] from the location as possible. Then we gave `Azzam [i.e., the other suicide bomber] one minute to engage in a maneuver with the Marines using a handgun to give al-`Awhali the chance to push away the pedestrians. [We told him that] if during this time he sensed that the Marines were going to shoot him, he should use the big weapon, namely [blow up] the truck filled with explosives. We took all these measures, and God is Witness to what I am saying.[3]

The official indictment by the United States District Court, Southern District of New York, records that the attacks were, as Harun describes, from the rear of the buildings; that the time was around 10:30 to 10:40 am and that a short period of time was taken up by maneuvers on the part of both `Azzam and al-`Awhali before `Azzam exploded the truck.[4]

Refraining from bombing the Israeli embassy in Nairobi, and the above account of the planning of the U.S. embassy bombings are instances of several stories in which Harun highlights al-Qa`ida's concern to avoid, when possible, civilian casualties. Abu Muhammad, Harun insists, was in the habit of providing him and others in al-Qa`ida with a solid understanding of the rules governing jihad (*fiqh al-jihad*), often testing them using hypothetical examples. One such hypothetical is whether it would be lawful to kill an American soldier who ran out of ammunition and therefore no longer

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[3] Ibid., Vol. 1, 330. This rationale is not the same as that reported by `Ali Soufan who relates that the reason why al-`Awhali jumped out of the truck was because his mission was to detonate himself at the gates so that `Azzam (or Jihad `Ali) could get close enough to the embassy to maximize damage. See `Ali Soufan, *The Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and the War Against al-Qaeda*, (Norton, 2011), 94-5. Arie Perliger, who has studied many cases of suicide operations, told me that it is unusual for maneuvers to precede suicide operations, and the planners of the Nairobi operation could not have chosen the maneuver tactic to maximize the damage. It is the element of surprise, he explained, that would ensure as much damage as possible and prevent security guards from averting the mission. The latter explanation lends credibility to Harun's claim.

[4]See United States vs. Usama Bin Laden, which can be accessed on http://fl1.findlaw.com/news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/binladen/usbinladen1.pdf (accessed 20 December 2011). See 41-2. What follows are relevant excerpts from the indictment (emphasis added): iiiiii. On August 7, 1998, at approximately 10:30 a.m., the defendant MOHAMED RASHED DAOUD AL-*`OWHALI got out of the Nairobi Bomb Truck as it approached the rear of the Embassy building and brandished a stun grenade before throwing it in the direction of a security guard and then seeking to flee*;
jjjjjj. On August 7, 1998, at approximately 10:30 a.m., "`Azzam" drove the Nairobi Bomb Truck to the *rear* of the Embassy building and *fired a handgun* at the windows of the 42 Embassy building.

represented a physical threat to the Muslims who captured him; the answer Abu Muhammad expected is that it would not be lawful to kill him.[5]

The many such examples Harun narrates are not just for descriptive purposes. He uses them to distinguish between what he terms the "original al-Qa`ida" (*al-Qa`ida al-umm*) from what I term "imitators"—to reflect the spirit of Harun's description. Going by Harun's account, the difference between al-Qa`ida and its imitations is largely premised upon two aspects: the first pertains to "lawful jihad" (*al-jihad al-shar`i*), as defined by al-Qa`ida and understood by Harun and like-minded members of al-Qa`ida; the second concerns a qualitative difference in the operational nature and conduct of attacks that distinguish al-Qa`ida from the rest.

Lawful Jihad (*al-jihad al-shar`i*)

As noted in the previous chapter, Harun was not trained to become a preacher or an ideologue with the aim of producing theological or legal treatises. Thus, the reader should not expect him to present cogent legal arguments about jihad. Nevertheless, his thoughts on the topic must reflect al-Qa`ida's curriculum guidelines in which Harun was schooled. The manuscript is littered with repetitive and largely consistent views on what Harun believes to be lawful jihad and al-Qa`ida's conformity to the rules that govern jihad and the conduct of jihadis with respect to Muslim and non-Muslim non-combatants. Time and again, Harun is at pains to draw a moral distinction between the "original al-Qa`ida" and those whom he considers to be irresponsible jihadis. The latter consists of:

> The new generation of young men who, after the fall of the Taliban regime, have dispersed around the world;[6] those who [are in the habit of] striking in random fashion [at unlawful targets] without consulting anyone…. I wish to make clear to those who choose random targets purposely causing [innocent] casualties, be they Muslims or non-Muslims (*kuffar*): this is not our method (*nahj*)…this is also a sincere advice (*nasiha*) to [jihadi] brethren who aim their weapons directly against children; could they not find any other target to strike against other than

[5] Vol. 1, 185. This is mentioned in relation to the first al-Qa`ida cell that went to Mogadishu in 1993; Harun implies that they carried out many operations that required an understanding of legal rulings (*ta'sil shar`i*). He claims that a hotel was spared from being bombed by al-Qa`ida on account of accommodating more Somali workers than foreigners. Vol. 1, 186.

[6] This is the same sentiment Bin Ladin expresses in one his Abbottabad letters, see SOCOM-2012-0000019, 3.

> a school? [In which treatise of jihad does it say] that it was an individual duty (*fard `ayn*) to enter that school?[7]

The reader senses Harun's growing frustration with many jihadi groups, especially when his writing style at times assumes a tone of rebuking some of them. In addition to the *takfiris* whom he considers to be the biggest calamity (*al-tama al-kubra*) befalling the jihadis,[8] he is alarmed by random operations carried out by some jihadis, especially those justified on the basis of *tatarrus* (i.e., when non-combatants are used as human shields). Such attacks, he asserts, lack any lawful standing:

> We [in al-Qa`ida believe] that using a Muslim as a human shield in order to kill the infidel enemy combatant [*al-`aduw al-kafir al-asli al-muharib*] is permitted when confronting targets that are lawful according to Islamic Law. But do not plant a car bomb in an area filled with Muslims and their mosques justifying their death on the basis that you seek to kill the Muslim soldiers of the Sultan whom you deem to be apostate according to your theological orientation. Do not also use Muslims as human shields to kill an infidel combatant when you know in advance that the majority of the casualties resulting from your operation would consist of Muslims. Why not plan your operation carefully against the infidel combatant [you claim to be your target], and kill him using [for instance] a silent pistol instead of a car bomb.[9]

As the manuscript develops, one senses that Harun's view of the global jihadi community is ever more pessimistic. The narrow-minded *takfiris* whom he had witnessed in Peshawar in the 1990s are joined in the electronic age by those he calls the "jihadis.com." The latter represents yet another trend in the jihadi world, consisting of irresponsible jihadis whose thoughtless enthusiasm for jihad is made all the more dangerous when their ignorance is compounded by the *n'importe quoi* they read while surfing the Internet—their only window into their knowledge—or lack thereof—of Islam. In Harun's mind, they obsess about martyrdom without due consideration as to when and where martyrdom operations can lawfully be carried out.[10]

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[7] Vol. 1, 324. Harun is undoubtedly referring to the hostage taking of a school in Beslan, Russia, by Islamic Chechen militants. When Russian troops stormed the building, the clashes that followed with Chechen militants resulted in an excess of 250 casualties, many of them children. See C. J. Chivers and Steven Lee Myers, "250 Die as Siege at a Russian School Ends in Chaos," (*The New York Times*, 4 September 2004), http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/04/international/europe/04russia.html

[8] Vol. 1, 135; vol. 2, 51, 505.

[9] Vol. 1, 82.

[10] Vol. 2, 151, 315.

Harun is equally vexed by jihadis who believe that their jihad is against all non-Muslims, thus projecting a wholesale enmity between Muslims and members of other faiths. Harun is keen to communicate to his readers that al-Qa`ida discriminates between non-Muslims; that its enmity towards some of them is premised not on religious hatred (*kurh*) but on a sense of honor and pride (*`izza*):

> The reader of these pages should understand me [when I say] that pride is different from hatred and resentment (*hiqd*). Thanks to God's Grace, we [Muslims] do not resent or hate human beings [on account of their faith], be they Christians, Muslims, Zoroastrians and others. They are all our brethren in humanity [and our respect to them and their faith is a religious obligation upon us] and the [injunctions to that effect in the] Qur'an and Sunna are proofs. All prophets conversed with unbelieving groups using the language of humanity: [e.g., 'And unto *the tribe of* Ad *we sent their brother* Hud,' Q. 7: 65] and many others. We were commanded not to dispute with [non-Muslims] except in the mildest ways: [e.g., 'Dispute not against those who have received the scriptures, unless in the mildest manner,' Q. 29: 46]. This verse is intended to speak about non-Muslims who are not at war against us; [as to those who are], God completed the verse: ['except against such of them as behave injuriously *towards you*,' Q. 29:46]. Accordingly, those who are at war against us, we shall of course respond in kind. This is about fairness/justice (*insaf*) [not hatred]; we thank God who taught us [justice] in our religion. Thus, what happens between us and some Zionist unbelievers is a struggle between truth and falsehood in defense of our lawful rights that are recognized everywhere. We therefore ask God to receive our [jihad as] obedience [to His Just Law] and may [our struggle] be pure [with the sole motivation of longing to see] His Face.[11]

It is not surprising, then, that Harun is impatient with jihadis who are in the habit of citing, without due attention to historical and political context, Ibn Taymiyya and other classical religious scholars' teachings to justify what he believes to be their unlawful attacks against non-Muslims. In a clearly perplexed tone, Harun elevates the intellectual level of the discussion, displaying a certain erudition when he exclaims "have those who make it lawful to shed the blood of *dhimmis* [i.e., Christians and Jews] forgotten that Ibn Taymiyya refused to accept from the Tatars Muslim prisoners of war unless Jewish and Christian prisoners of war were also released on account that they all belonged to the same nation."[12]

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[11] Vol. 1, 59. Words cited in single quotation marks followed by Q references are verses from the Qur'an. Unless otherwise stated, translations of the Qur'an are based on George Sale's translation.

[12] Vol. 1, 96.

Harun's concern over the abuse of Ibn Taymiyya by some jihadis is not rhetorical: it is historical. In a study of religious rights in medieval Islam, the Islamic studies scholar Vincent J. Cornell highlights Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis on the rights of *dhimmis* (Christian and Jewish minorities) under Islamic rule. Cornell explains that when prisoners of war were captured by the Tatars against whom the Mamluks were at war, Ibn Taymiyya demanded "from the state the ransom of Christian and Jewish prisoners of war along with the ransom of Muslims," believing that it was a "most serious obligation" of the state to protect the rights of religious minorities. Thus, in his negotiation with the Tatars, Ibn Taymiyya treated the status of *dhimmi* prisoners as "full subjects of the Mamluk state of Syria."[13]

The reader who is interested in the Islamic tradition of *siyar*, the Islamic law of nations, would have much to muse about to divine whether al-Qa`ida complied with the code of conduct incumbent upon Muslims in combat as developed by classical Muslim jurists.[14] It is noteworthy, however, that an al-Qa`ida operative like Harun, who enjoys a reputation not on account of his ideological contribution to the group but solely because of his operational skills, should be exposed to Ibn Taymiyya's favorable views on the status of *dhimmis* under Islamic Law. It suggests that al-Qa`ida's curriculum, as taught to its members at least, must have introduced subtle distinctions between "infidels": who among them should be considered the "lawful" target of the jihadis and who ought to be spared.

Even if the "ethical" basis underpinning Harun's distinction between al-Qa`ida's attacks and those of other jihadis may not hold up under international law, his criticism of non-al-Qa`ida jihadis cannot be ignored. He firmly states that his views echo those of the "original al-Qa`ida," including those of its leader Usama bin Ladin and senior leaders of al-Qa`ida with whom Harun interacted over the years. Indeed, several Abbottabad documents make it clear that Bin Ladin and others in his circle disapprove of indiscriminate attacks against civilians. Bin Ladin saw them as dangerous "mistakes" that distorted "the image of the jihadis in the eyes of the *umma's* general public."[15]

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[13] Vincent J. Cornell, "Religious Orthodoxy and Religious Rights in Medieval Islam: A Reality Check on the Road to Religious Toleration," in Michael Ipgrave (ed.), (*Justice and Rights: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*), Georgetown University Press, 2009, 58.

[14] "Siyar" is what Majid Khadduri terms as the equivalent of today's "law of nations." Classical jurists defined *siyar* as "the ways of conduct of the warriors and what is incumbent upon them and for them." See Majid Khadduri, (*The Islamic Law of Nations*), 40-1.

[15] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 4.

The Abbottabad letters also allude to a certain code of lawful jihad with which they believe sincere jihadis should comply. The letter authored by `Atiyya and Abu Yahya al-Libi and addressed to Hakimullah Mahsud, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), is framed with a legal perspective in mind. They chastise the group for its indiscriminate attacks against Muslims, condemning this conduct as "clear legal errors and dangerous lapses."[16] The documents reveal that the concern of al-Qa`ida's leaders is not limited to attacks against Muslim civilians. Adam Gadahn is incensed by attacks mounted by the Islamic State of Iraq against Iraqi Christians and their churches,[17] and he demands that al-Qa`ida's leaders take a public stance against these attacks and dissociate al-Qa`ida from groups acting in its name but without its authorization.[18]

Al-Qa`ida's "Special Operations" (*`amaliyyat naw`iyya*)

Beyond asserting that al-Qa`ida's targets are decided only after its Legal Committee (*lajna shar`iyya*) deems them to be lawful according to Islamic Law, Harun writes of a qualitative feature that characterizes al-Qa`ida's attacks. Though his description lacks specificity, he provides what may be considered to be broad guidelines for his readers to distinguish the attacks carried out by the "original al-Qa`ida" from those of others through the specific nature of the attacks. For instance, Harun speaks of attacks styled as "special operations" (*`amaliyyat naw`iyya*); these, he claims, are the operations that distinguish al-Qa`ida from others "when the enemy is attacked by penetrating the enemy line without causing harm to Muslims."[19] This is not to suggest that Harun claims that al-Qa`ida's attacks do not result in innocent civilian casualties; rather, when such casualties occur—and they do—they are not caused by design but by accident. In other words, they are the collateral damage that may result from al-Qa`ida's attacks against military, economic and political institutions, which he considers to be the lawful targets of the jihadis. Harun is categorical:

> We do not accept those who are intent on sullying jihad with their unlawful actions, even if they are members of al-Qa`ida…but what is certain is that the leaders of the original al-Qa`ida are not responsible for the transgressions that are taking place around the world. There are many who use the name al-Qa`ida without authorization from the central leadership. There are indeed some stupidities committed in the name of jihad in Iraq today; we don't want to see

[16] SOCOM-2012-0000007, 1.
[17] SOCOM-2012-0000004, 6-9.
[18] SOCOM-2012-0000004, 8-9.
[19] Vol. 1, 185. The same language is used for describing training that he received (vol. 1, 97) and for describing the 9/11 attacks: vol. 1, 475.

> them repeated in Afghanistan or Palestine. What will those [so-called] students of knowledge say before God [on the Day of Judgment when they are asked to explain why they] advanced legal opinions in support of killing the children of Algeria on account that their parents worked for the regime…by God, I cannot fathom how they come to deduce such legal rulings.[20]

It is evident then that not all jihadi groups meet the approval of Harun and the standards which al-Qa`ida expects of its members, as he experienced it. He insists that al-Qa`ida's Legal Committee (*al-lajna al-shar`iyya*) carefully considers planned attacks to ensure that they are lawful from an Islamic legal stance in terms of the target, and whether the possible collateral damage is justified.[21] Accordingly, and in Harun's mind, "not all blood that gets shed constitutes jihad but in every jihad blood is shed."[22] In definitive terms, Harun states:

> I say clearly that al-Qa`ida is but a small movement, its ideology consists of defending the interests of the *umma* through jihad. There are many movements around the world today that adopt the same ideology of jihad but carry out operations against Westerners without the planning of al-Qa`ida. Most of the operations that have been carried out following the 9/11 attacks lack the authorization of Sheikh Usama or the central leadership of al-Qa`ida. One can observe that selecting very random targets does not serve the jihadi enterprise. Al-Qa`ida's operations are very specific in nature (*naw`iyya*), planned by its leadership, and aim with precision against lawful enemy targets; namely, military, political and economic targets.[23]

To what extent do al-Qa`ida's internal documents corroborate Harun's account? One finds in al-Qa`ida's "By-Laws" references to a Legal Committee (*lajna shar`iyya*); the "By-Laws" stipulate that all al-Qa`ida's operational work "must conform to the Law and its regulating devices [*ahkam al-shar` wa-dawabituhu*]." Other internal documents further suggest that senior members of al-Qa`ida are expected to meet a minimum standard of education in classical legal studies pertaining to jihad and that they need to be prudent and disciplined. For example, among the various requirements expected of the leader of the Military Committee of al-Qa`ida and other military leaders is to have a

[20] Vol. 1, 235.
[21] See Vol. 1, 186.
[22] Vol. 1, 235.
[23] Vol. 1, 523. This is in relation to the Bali bombing which he believes al-Qa`ida did not authorize.

suitable classical legal knowledge (*qadr munasib min al-`ilm al-shar`i*) and to be "rational, measured and disciplined."[24]

One document listed as "highly secretive" outlining a proposal for training the elites, including battlefield commanders, trainers and military strategists, devotes a section to educating course members in classical legal studies. This section consists of two levels, the first includes basic education in select doctrinal teachings (among others, simplified principles of the creed, including *wala'* and *bara;'* commentary (*tafsir*) on chapter 8 of the Qur'an ("The Spoils"); and the evolution of the stages of jihad (*tatawwur marahil al-jihad*). The second advanced level suggests that al-Qa`ida sought to develop further the knowledge of its senior members in classical jihad. It enumerates a considerable number of lessons to be taught in the laws governing jihad (*fiqh wa-ahkam al-jihad*).[25] While the outline of what should be taught as part of these two levels does not explicitly state that the objective is to discern what is lawful and what is not, it is nevertheless evident that al-Qa`ida was not in the business of graduating thugs or street jihadis. Indeed, al-Qa`ida's "By-Laws" stress the importance of meritocracy, stipulating that "[assigning] the right man for the right job," is a fundamental principle, "disregarding considerations pertaining to his regional, organizational or ethnic affiliations."[26] Indeed, al-Qa`ida's intention is for its military leaders and commanders to consist of warriors who have at least attained a tertiary education "not lower than a university degree, preferably graduates of a military academy."[27]

As far as Harun's claim that al-Qa`ida only engages in "special operations," this aspect could be partially corroborated. Bin Ladin uses the same terminology in one of the Abbottabad documents in his letter to Mukhtar Abu al-Zubayr, the leader of al-Shabab in Somalia. In it, Bin Ladin advises Abu al-Zubayr "to review carefully" the attacks against African forces and to avoid "carrying out operations against their compounds unless [you are capable of mounting] major special operations."[28] In the same spirit explained by Harun above about the need to penetrate enemy line while minimizing civilian casualties, Bin Ladin suggests that such a special operation could take the form of "digging tunnels to reach into their army camp at the same time as mounting an attack from the outside [so that they cannot escape from the camp]."[29]

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[24] AFGP-2002-000078 (1 of the Arabic document; however, the actual document starts on 9, so it is an excerpt of a larger document).
[25] AFGP-2002-000112 (see 13 of the Arabic hand-written document).
[26] AFGP-2002-600048 (3 of the Arabic document).
[27] AFGP-2002-000078 (first page of the Arabic document; note that the actual document starts on 9).
[28] SOCOM-2012-0000005, 3.
[29] Ibid., 3.

The internal documents also speak of "special operations" (*`amaliyyat khassa*), but they also speak of "general fighting" (*qital `amm*); the former is designed for "external [military] activities" (*al-`amal al-khariji*), implying that the latter is designed for internal military activities.[30] The reader of these documents must bear in mind that "general fighting" is to be understood with due attention to the time these documents were drafted, most likely in the late 1980s when members of al-Qa`ida were still fighting in Afghanistan and their institutional base was in Peshawar, as the content of the documents suggest. In other words, at this point in time, "general fighting" should not be confused with mounting jihad in Muslim countries to uproot the regimes. The important aspect to emphasize is that the reference to "external special operations" suggests that ever since its inception, al-Qa`ida envisaged East Africa-style attacks and trained some of its members for that very purpose. Consistent with Harun's account of "lawful jihad," it is worth noting that the member delegated with the role of overseeing "external special operations" is required to possess sound knowledge of classical legal studies.

While the internal documents largely corroborate the spirit of Harun's account and the mindset of al-Qa`ida's members, some seeming discrepancies should not be ignored: considering the various senior assignments that Harun was tasked with, including his appointment to the position of "Confidential Secretary" following the 1998 East Africa bombings, one would expect his qualifications to have met the criteria which other senior leaders in the Military Committee are expected to fulfill. It is a condition that the leader of al-Qa`ida's Military Committee should have a university degree and to be no less than 30 years of age, two conditions Harun did not meet when he became Confidential Secretary.[31] This suggests that al-Qa`ida's reality may not always correspond with its intentions, even if Harun may have been al-Qa`ida's "gifted child."

Understanding al-Qa`ida as an Organization

As noted earlier, Harun speaks of *"al-qa`ida al-umm"* as a separate and distinct entity from other jihadi groups, even though some of them may identify with al-Qa`ida as an "idea" (*fikra*). Harun's description of al-Qa`ida's training camps in Afghanistan in the 1990s makes it clear that "it is not the case that everyone who trains in al-Qa'ida's camps is automatically a member of al-Qa'ida."[32]

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[30] AFGP-2002-000078 (second and third pages of the Arabic document; note that the actual document has them on 10-11).

[31] To be fair, the leader of the Security Committee needs to be 25 years of age and required to have fulfilled his secondary education. See AFGP-2002-600046, 14 of the Arabic document. Still, given Harun's sensitive tasks, the requirements would have been more exacting than this.

[32] Vol. 1, 71.

From* ma'sadat al-ansar *to al-Qa`ida

The al-Qa`ida with which Harun identifies and of which he was a member was founded in the mountains of Jaji and was initially called *ma'sadat al-ansar*.[33] Its founders are Abu `Ubayda al-Banshiri, Usama bin Ladin and a certain Rida al-Tunisi.[34] *Ma'sadat al-ansar* is the embryonic entity from which al-Qa`ida emerged in 1988 and whose ranks Harun joined some three years later. The vitae of its founders suggest that they distinguished themselves on account of their militant credentials, not on the basis of a theological program they were preaching.[35] Little is known about al-Tunisi other than that he was Bin Ladin's personal bodyguard and exceedingly protective of his safety, suggesting perhaps that he enjoyed a certain physical prowess.[36] Abu `Ubayda, going by Harun's description, had a sturdy physique and was once a boxer before he fought alongside the Afghan *mujahidin* from as early as 1983, a year before Bin Ladin arrived in Afghanistan. His alias "al-Banshiri" stems from his military heroism, enduring the inhospitable territory of the valley of Banshir during the Afghans' war against the Soviet Union. Abu `Ubayda assumed both the leadership of the Military Committee of al-Qa`ida, the most important portfolio in the organization, as well as the position of deputy leader to Bin Ladin.[37]

The founders of *al-ma'sada* and later members of the nascent al-Qa`ida appear to have all agreed that militancy/jihad is the cornerstone that defined the new group, believing it to be the only means of liberating the *umma*. Al-Qa`ida's internal documents underline that "jihad is the principal reason that members have joined this group," and that jihad ought to be given priority ahead of religious observance, if need be.[38]

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[33] "ma'sadat al-ansar" designates a breeding grounding for powerful men, fearless as lions, who are the "helpers" of fellow Muslims. "Helpers" invokes the early generation of Muslims of Medina who helped the Prophet and the "muhajirun" (émigrés) who were persecuted in Mecca on account of their belief in the One God.

[34] Vol. 1, 109.

[35] See chapter one discussing al-Qa`ida's ideology in terms of minimum religiosity and maximum militancy.

[36] Harun writes about Rida al-Tunisi, indicating that he is in prison. He is mentioned in an article by *al-sharq al-Awsat* which discusses the unknown fate of some 30 persons believed to be members of al-Qa`ida in secret CIA prisons: 28 October 2007, Issue 10561, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=443147&issueno=10561 (last accessed 6 September 2011).

[37] Harun, vol. 1, 65, 91.

[38] AFGP-2002-600045, 1. Translation is largely amended. On this point, see also the previous chapter.

Al-Qa`ida's Committees and Leadership Tiers

When the group consolidated itself in Afghanistan, it developed a centralized structure and several committees were set up, all working to support the most important component: the Military Committee.[39] Harun explains that though al-Qa`ida is characterized by a centralized management, it is not "a dull form of centralization" (*markaziyya mumilla*), by which he means that it is not burdened with bureaucratic hurdles. "Each person in al-Qa`ida," he states, "is responsible for his own work and has complete authority to carry out his tasks." Thus, al-Qa`ida's centralized management is designed not to obstruct decisionmaking but to facilitate their implementations. By the time Harun was a member, the line of leadership was as follows, starting from the highest: Usama bin Ladin; Abu `Ubayda al-Banshiri; Abu Hafs al-Misri; the "Chinese brother"; Abu Islam al-Misri; and Abu Muhammad al-Misri—the latter, to use military jargon, served as the point of contact (POC) between the higher echelon of leadership and the commanders on the battlefield and training camps.[40]

Given its highly disciplined nature, as described by Harun, the organizational structure of al-Qa`ida is not comparable to the structural model of a franchise. Instead, he speaks of it in terms of three tiers. Though he does not specify the members making up tier-one, the reader may surmise that in its formative years, al-Qa`ida consisted of Bin Ladin, Abu `Ubayda, Abu Hafs and the "Chinese Brother". He does however list some of the names of members whom he considers to fall under tier-two (*al-saff al-thani*) and tier-three (*al-saff al-thalith*). Thus,

- Tier-Two consists of: Sayf al-`Adl, Abu Muhammad al-Misri; Abu Islam al-Misri;[41] Abu Zaid al-Tunisi;[42] Abu Ziyad al-Musali; `Abd al-Rahman al-

[39] Harun, vol. 1, 95.

[40] Vol. 1, 95. The "Chinese brother" is perhaps the same as "al-akh `Uthman al-Sini" (the Chinese brother `Uthman) that Sayf al-Islam refers to in his Ogaden File. See AFGP-2002-600104 (1 of the Arabic document).

[41] Abu Islam al-Misri's identity is unclear. According to Harun, he is one of al-Qa`ida's senior leaders who are little known and who remain hidden from the public eye. He was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1980s before he went to Afghanistan. Among his credentials, he served as the leader of the camps in Khost and Jihad Wahl–Afghanistan; he led an al-Qa`ida mission to Ethiopia as part of the 1993 East Africa mission: see vol. 1, 156-8; see also AFGP-2002-600104, and remains the leader of al-Qa`ida's mission in the Caucasus. He is married to a Chechen woman and has children: vol. 1, 94. In the second volume, Harun is under the impression that Abu Islam is still alive and notes that he is one of the leaders in Afghanistan: vol. 2, 310. However, a 2008 statement released by Qa`idat al-Jihad lists Abu Islam al-Misri among several "martyrs": see announcement on: http://www.hanein.info/vbx/showthread.php?p=543946&langid=1 (accessed 22 November 2011). Commenting on this announcement on 3 August 2008, Hani al-Siba`i of the Maqreze Center for Historical Studies, remarks that he does not know the identity of Abu Islam al-Misri: http://ladyclip.com/videos/play/115308930. A television program, entitled "al-Qa`ida al-Mahjura" (The

Muhajir;[43] Abu al-Faraj al-Libi;[44] Anas al-Libi;[45] `Abd al-Wakil (Mustafa Abu Jihad al-Nawbi, whom he speaks of as deceased); Khalid al-Habib; [46] and some "men from the Gulf who were distinguished by their superior skills." These men "made up the future elites of al-Qa`ida, most of them are from the school of Afghanistan One during which they received serious training."[47]

Abandoned Base): http://ladyclip.com/videos/play/115308930, which discusses the orphans of al-Qa`ida leaders, remarks that Abu Islam al-Misri is the son of Abu Khubab al-Misri. Harun speaks of a certain Khubab (not Abu Khubab), who is not from the "original al-Qa`ida"; he studied chemistry and was interested in explosives. Vol. 1, 441. An article in *al-Sharq al-Awsat* identifies Abu Islam al-Misri as `Uthman Khalid Ibrahim al-Samman and claims that he is one of the leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Group (al-Jama`a al-Islamiyya) who in 2004 was detained in Yemen and wanted by the Egyptian authorities on the list of those accused under "Returnees from Afghanistan" (al-`A'idun min Afghanistan): see Muhammad al-Shafi`ia, `Usuliyyun Yakshufun Qa'imat Tashmulu 113 Mu`taqalan," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 5 March 2004, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=221387&issueno=9229 (accessed 23 November 2011). Some of these detainees were handed to Egypt. A 2011 statement released by al-Maqreze Center notes that Khalid Ibrahim al-Samman is in an Egyptian prison, http://www.almaqreze.net/ar/print.php?type=N&item_id=1313 (accessed 23 November 2011).

[42] Abu Zaid al-Tunisi is `Abdallah b. `Umar, he was arrested in Pakistan in April 2002 and transferred from Guantanamo to Tunisia on 17 June 2007: see his profile on "The Guantanamo Docket," *The New York Times*, http://projects.nytimes.com/guantanamo/detainees/721-abdullah-bin-omar (last accessed 26 December 2011)

[43] He is listed as an al-Qa`ida bomb maker who was killed in April 2006: see "Hearing of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Annual Threat Assessment," 18 January 2007, http://www.odni.gov/testimonies/20070118_transcript.pdf (link accessed 17 December 2011).

[44] He was captured in Pakistan in May 2005 and is believed to be in Guantanamo: see his profile in The New York Times, updated 2 May 2011, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/abu_faraj_al_libbi/index.html (last accessed 27 December 2011)

[45] Harun also relates that Anas al-Libi (sometimes Abu Anas) used to live in Britan and had to flee as a result of the authorities chasing after him after 1998 East Africa bombings, Vol. 1, 423 (he was present during Bin Ladin's wedding in 2000). It is likely that he is `Abd al-Hamid Al-Ruqay`i. He was born in Tripoli, Libya on March 30, 1964. He lived in Manchester, and moved between Yemen, Sudan, Afghanistan and Iran. He joined al-Qa`ida in the early 1990s and later its Shura council. He was accused of playing a role in the East African embassies on 1998, and the attempt to assassinate Husni Mubarak of Egypt in 1995. He was arrested in Sudan in 2002. See `Awdat `Ai'lat Abu Anas al-Libi min Iran ila Libya" *Al-Saha `Al-Arabiya*, May 28, 2010, http://www.alsaha.com/users/abriad/entries/274745 (accessed 15 March 2012)

[46] `Abd al-Wakil and Khalid al-Habib are reported to have created a curriculum for military training for al-Qa`ida in Afghanistan, see "al-Qa'id al-Rukn alAl-Muhib Khalid al-Habib', *Ansar Al-Mujahidin*, September 13, 2010, http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=28599, (accessed 24 November 2011).

[47] Vol. 1, 120. Al-Wakil and al-Habib are listed at 400 of vol. 1; at 90 of vol. 1; al-Wakil is listed as a Tier-Three leader.

- Tier-Three consists of Dr Hamdi (Abu `Ubayda al-Misri);[48] Abu Mu`adh al-Filastini (known by the name Muhammad `Awda: Harun speaks of him as if he is in prison);[49] and Harun himself.[50]

The figures that Harun assigns to these three tiers are more likely a reflection of his subjective assessment of the relative importance of these individuals based both on the Committee in which they served and on the time period he is describing. This explains why the names making up these tiers tend to vary in different parts of the manuscript.

The internal documents of al-Qa`ida envisage an organization with rotating leaders.[51] It is not clear whether the *amir* of the organization was meant to be subject to such rotations, but at any rate, his actions are subject to scrutiny and he could conceivably be deposed.[52] The deposing of the *amir* is not explicitly discussed in Harun's account, but he repeatedly notes that if, at any time, he believes that Bin Ladin or al-Qa`ida ceases to advance the interests of the *umma*, he would not hesitate to break his covenant (*ta`ahhud*) and dissociate himself from al-Qa`ida.[53] It is in that spirit that Harun insists that his loyalty is not to Bin Ladin the person but to the ideals he espouses; that he would withdraw his support for him if he believes that his plans no longer serve the interests of the *umma*.[54] It is also in that same spirit that Harun maintains that:

> [The Zionists and Americans] should understand that the death of Usama bin Ladin does not mean that Islam and jihad come to an end. No, a thousand times no. Muslims superior to Usama bin Ladin died…all are heroes who departed [this transient world], but Islam is eternal.[55]

Harun's account is largely corroborated in al-Qa`ida's "By-Laws." Though the latter does not include a section that deals with situations in which members might display ideological disagreements with the organization, the document nevertheless speaks of

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[48] Harun notes that he was martyred in Chechnya, Vol. 2: 217; Abu Walid al-Misri relates that he was accidentally injured while he was preparing explosives, and was later killed in Jihad Wal training camp as a result of a Cruise Missile that targeted him by the United States, see his book *Tajikistan*, (series: Tharthara fawqa Saqf al-`Alam), 61.

[49] Harun uses several names for him, Nur al-Din al-Filastini, Marwan al-Filastini and Abu Yasir, Vol. 1, 143. He relates that he was captured in Karachi in 1998, he is serving a life prison sentence in the United States and was a member of the PLO, Vol. 1, 143.

[50] Vol. 1, 90.

[51] AFPG-2002-000112.

[52] AFGP- 2002- 600048, 11 of the English translation.

[53] Vol. 1, 57.

[54] Harun, vol. 1, 57.

[55] Harun, vol. 1, 265.

"dismissal" of a member by al-Qa`ida. When this happens, the organization owes the member one month notice and, if he is to be dismissed immediately, then he would be entitled to one month salary.[56]

The document detailing the oath (*`ahd*) the member of al-Qa`ida must pledge is more insightful. As Harun indicates, it is not a *bay`a* (pledge of allegiance) to a person; rather it is a *`ahd* (covenant/contract) in the service of God's cause. The al-Qa`ida leader performing the process is meant to recite the oath first, indicating that he is just as bound by the oath as the member to be. The member must then repeat the same oath and further promise to maintain secrecy regarding his work with al-Qa`ida. As noted, the oath is not between members and leaders but it is a commitment to God to serve as a soldier "to defend His religion so that His Word may reign supreme on earth." It is also to show loyalty to jihadis, not on account of their person, but on account of being committed to the same goal.[57]

It is also not evident from Harun's manuscript whether the members he identifies as Second-Tier and Third-Tier leaders of al-Qa`ida were subject to being rotated from their leadership positions. One of the internal documents highlights the importance of rotation in the context of selecting members for advanced training courses. The principle behind it evokes Aristotelian teachings of male citizens ruling at times and being ruled at other times, as a sign of equality.[58] The al-Qa`ida document states:

> A major benefit of such training courses would be to remove the leaders (*al-umara'*) and functionaries (*mas'ulun*) from the seats of responsibility and place them in the seats of studentship to pursue knowledge [and physical training]…this would give opportunities to their deputies to assume responsibilities on their own…[59]

Al-Qa`ida's amir

In relation to al-Qa`ida's internal organization and hierarchy, Harun remarks that decisions were centralized in the hands of Bin Ladin. This feature, he holds, was the "secret behind al-Qa`ida's success following the first Afghan jihad." The "Legal, Media and Economic Committees are all set up to support the Military Committee, which is

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[56] AFGP- 2002- 600048: see at 18 of the English translation.

[57] AFGP-2002-600045: see 5 of the Arabic document; 6 of the English translation. See Chapter Two of this report.

[58] Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, Bk 1, 12.

[59] AFGP-2002-000112: see article 6, the Arabic version (English translation in Harmony Database is not coherent).

the most important of them all," and all the committees discharge Bin Ladin's orders.[60] According to Harun, even the decisions of the Advisory Council (*majlis al-shura*) are not binding (*ghayr ilzamiyya*) on the *amir*, distinguishing al-Qa`ida in this regard from other Islamic groups in which the authority lies in the *shura* council of the group rather than in the hands of the leader. In Harun's view, this was the reason why many Islamic groups suffered divisions, especially when the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan concluded. Jihad in Afghanistan, he remarks, "concealed [all the vices]," by which he means that there were many problems plaguing the jihadi community and, had it not been for the Soviets serving as an enemy against whom all jihadis agreed to fight, the divisions between jihadis would not have been easily covered.

The internal documents of al-Qa`ida are not entirely consistent with Harun's description of the supportive but limited role of the *shura* council in the decision-making of the *amir*. The documents speak not of a *shura* council but of a Supreme Council (*al-majlis al-qiyadi*);[61] and, contrary to what Harun suggests, the Council has the authority to exercise oversight over the actions of the *amir*, to depose him on account of unlawful actions or incompetency and to elect a new leader.[62]

It is possible that the functions of rotating leaders and giving the Supreme Council executive authority over selecting and deposing the *amir* may not have materialized due to al-Qa`ida's perceived vulnerability at its inception immediately after the war against the Soviets and the onset of civil war in Afghanistan. As al-Qa`ida came to consolidate itself as a distinct group with its own independent global vision—not just as an ancillary to the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan—it was confronted with intense rivalries among Afghan leaders as a result of the civil war. Cognizant of its nascence relative to other jihadi groups,[63] and especially considering that some groups did not believe that al-Qa`ida would survive once the war against the Soviets came to an end, it is probable that senior leaders of al-Qa`ida explicitly determined to refrain from rotating members in leadership positions. Such a practice may have subjected the new group to vulnerabilities in the eyes of other jihadi groups or its junior members. If this logic is plausible, it might explain why Bin Ladin, as the *amir* of the group, enjoyed the prerogative of retaining ultimate authority in regard to al-Qa`ida matters.

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[60] Vol. 1, 95.

[61] There are several *shura* councils forming part of each Committee.

[62] AFGP-2002-600048: see 11 in the English translation. These documents invite the reader to speculate that the organizational structure of al-Qa`ida was not conceived with Bin Ladin as its head. It is possible that his role was initially intended as that of a financier and advisor who would not be involved with the daily concerns of the group, but who might carry a "veto" power on the Supreme Council that would give him the right to depose the *amir* of the group. After all, Bin Ladin returned to Saudi Arabia in 1990.

[63] Vol. 1, 96.

If Harun's account faithfully mirrors the internal dynamics within the organization, Bin Ladin did not exhibit an arrogant leadership style. Harun speaks of Bin Ladin serving as a fatherly figure to him.[64] As to decision-making, Harun's account suggests that Bin Ladin did not solely or arbitrarily make major decisions. Instead, the reader often encounters either "the leadership of al-Qa`ida" (*qiyadat al-Qa`ida*) or *majlis al-shura* (*al-majlis al-qiyadi*, according to the Harmony documents) to have been involved in virtually all the decisions. In other words, Bin Ladin does not appear to have arrogated to himself the sole right to make decisions. His demeanor was that of a leader who exercised authority to unite and avoid unnecessary divisions; he also appears to have been in the habit of widely consulting, particularly Abu `Ubayda, whose judgment he trusted and whose precedence in matters of jihad he respected.[65] Bin Ladin's lengthy Abbottabad letters to `Atiyya confirm that he was disposed towards consulting with his associates, rather than independently or arbitrarily making decisions.[66]

There is possibly another important reason why Bin Ladin, as the *amir* of al-Qa`ida, wanted to reserve authority in matters concerning the group. It appears that al-Qa`ida did not want to invest executive powers in a single committee. It did not, for instance, want to subject its decisions to the Legal Committee, which would likely consist of religious scholars. Harun's account suggests that concern over religious rigidity was weighing on the minds of al-Qa`ida's leaders; they appear to have been keen to ensure that members serving on the Legal Committee were pragmatic in their religious views (according to Harun, students from Mauritania fitted this description more so than others).[67] It is possible that they might have feared allowing religious scholars undue influence, as this would risk ceding priority to religiosity over militancy. While this is not explicitly stated in the internal documents of al-Qa`ida, one nevertheless encounters many references emphasizing the need to apply what is studied in the classical texts to the politics of the day. One can surmise that al-Qa`ida's leadership intended to deny religious scholars the opportunity to subject the politics of the day to medieval theological intricacies; rather, the design of the educational curriculum sought to place select classical legal and theological treatises in the service of advancing a militant political agenda. This may also explain why all of al-Qa`ida's committees are subordinated, by design, to the Military and not the Legal Committee.

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[64] Harun, vol. 1, 393.
[65] Vol. 1, 91.
[66] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 5, 15; SOCOM-2012-0000015, 5.
[67] Vol. 1, 120.

Al-Qa`ida's Imitators

Harun insists that the "original al-Qa`ida" is not responsible for the proliferation of jihadi groups acting in its name. His account suggests that since the fall of the Taliban and al-Qa`ida's loss of a safe haven, what secondary sources refer to as "al-Qa`ida Central" (AQC)—said to be based in Waziristan—is peripheral to the jihadi landscape. His personal experience in East Africa—discussed below—combined with the content of the Abbottabad documents lends credibility to this assumption, even though it may appear paradoxical in view of the plethora of acronyms beginning with "AQ," e.g., AQI, AQIM, AQAP, AQEA; or AQAM, used to designate "affiliated movements."

Pluralizing al-Qa`ida

How then does Harun reconcile his assertion of the existence of a unique and "original al-Qa`ida" in view of the many regional *al-Qa`ida*s that are said to be affiliated and acting in concert with al-Qa`ida Central? To begin with, Harun is of the view that al-Qa`ida is like "Qamis `Uthman" (the shirt of `Uthman).[68] The ironical expression historically refers to the cynical attempt by the Umayyads to further their cause by publicly displaying the bloodied shirt of the assassinated Caliph `Uthman; in common parlance it is used to denote exploitation of the misfortune of others for a selfish ulterior cause. Harun uses the expression to suggest that the United States and its allied regimes find it convenient to claim that al-Qa`ida is responsible wherever they need to intervene militarily, thereby using al-Qa`ida as the justification for their otherwise unlawful actions. In that spirit, he dismisses media reports claiming that al-Qa`ida is present wherever Muslim militants are active, e.g., Gaza and Lebanon, believing such claims to be "fabricated lies."[69]

At the same time, Harun faults jihadi groups for misusing the name al-Qa`ida. For example, though he does not dwell on al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), he expresses overwhelming sadness at the "random" and "monstrous" (*wahshiyya*) operations that occurred in Algiers, carried out "by those who call themselves al-Qa`ida in the Arab [/Islamic] Maghreb". He laments the many innocent Muslims who died as a result, remarking "that those [jihadis] do not understand the method of Usama bin Ladin who always disagreed with the Islamic Group [of Egypt] and the Preaching and Combat Group [formerly GSPC]" on the question of targeting Muslims.[70] In Harun's

[68] This Arabic expression is in reference to the bloody events that followed the assassination of the third caliph `Uthman (d. 656). His shirt that got stained with blood was used to rally his supporters during the First Civil War (656-661 AD).

[69] On Gaza, see vol. 2, 330; on Lebanon, see vol. 2, 312.

[70] Vol. 2, 357, 373. No doubt, Harun is referring to the two bomb attacks in December 2007. See "'Dozens killed' in Algeria Blasts," *BBC*, (11 December 2007), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7137997.stm (last accessed

mind, the regional al-Qa`idas are not connected with the "original al-Qa`ida," except for al-Qa`ida in Iraq, an admission to which he attaches a series of qualifications, as discussed in the following section.

What kind of operational impact might this pluralizing of al-Qa`ida have? Harun left Afghanistan in 2000 and was in no position to remain as intimately involved as he once was in the daily operational work of al-Qa`ida outside East Africa.[71] Nevertheless, as a seasoned al-Qa`ida operative, his assessment of the operational landscape and al-Qa`ida's role therein is worth noting. Harun does not include an exhaustive list of attacks; he lists the obvious ones: East Africa embassy bombings in 1998, the USS Cole in Aden–Yemen in 2000; the Mombasa bombing (Paradise Hotel and the narrowly missed Israeli airplane); and the 9/11 attacks.[72] However, among the operations he is less specific about are "attacking the Zionists in Tunisia."[73] The reader who is impressed by Harun's critical approach to random operations that target civilians would be disappointed that he should overlook critical evaluation of this attack. The Tunisia attack of April 2002 does not fit the guidelines of "lawful jihad" to which he claims al-Qa`ida adheres. It is true that Suleiman Abu Ghaith claimed responsibility for the attack on behalf of al-Qa`ida and justified it as a revenge for the plight of Palestinians, so it would have been difficult for Harun to deny it. Yet, the attack targeted an ancient synagogue, hardly a military, political or economic target, resulting in the death of 19 people: 14 German tourists; a French citizen; and four Tunisians.[74]

In addition, Harun lists "the bombings that attacked military centers—and I stress military only—in Saudi Arabia."[75] He seems to be less informed about (or shocked by) the parties behind the attacks in Saudi Arabia.[76] Nevertheless, he confirms that:

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10 January 2012). On the history of Islamic militant groups in Algeria, see Kamil al-Tawil, *al-Qa`ida wa-Akhawatuha: Qissat al-Jihadiyyin al-`Arab*, (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2007), especially chapters 4 & 8.

[71] It should be noted that Harun was in contact, even if irregular,—either in person or by email—until April 2003 with people who were close to the senior leadership of al-Qa`ida. In addition, when his family joined him in Somalia at the end of 2006, his wife Halima briefed him on the situation of the "brothers" in Waziristan—see concluding chapter—and presumably shared with him her insights regarding the situation, based primarily on what she had heard from other leaders' wives about al-Qa`ida's military activities. One should not underestimate the information to which wives of al-Qa`ida leaders are privy; Harun relates that in 1996 he was informed by his wife that Bin Ladin and other al-Qa`ida leaders were to return to Afghanistan before he received the news from the leadership: see vol. 1, 250.

[72] Vol. 1, 524.

[73] Vol. 1, 524.

[74] See "al-Qaeda claims Tunisia attack," *BBC*, Sunday, (23 June 2002), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2061071.stm

[75] Vol. 1, 524.

[76] He denies, in an authoritative manner, that al-Qa`ida was behind the 1995 attacks in Riyadh—and the 1996 attacks that targeted the Khobar Towers—even though this attack targeted U.S. military forces and

> All these attacks carry the fingerprint of the original al-Qa`ida in so far as planning [and authorization are concerned]. They differ from other operations that the original al-Qa`ida has nothing to do with even though its name was used either by the enemies seeking to promote the war on terror or by some jihadis who adopted our [militant] method but they did not completely understand our message/objective and so they affiliated themselves to al-Qa`ida but they operate on the basis of their own personal views.[77]

Elsewhere in the manuscript Harun notes that the "martyrdom operation" that targeted the embassy of Denmark in Pakistan was "embraced" by al-Qa`ida, but refrains from asserting that it was planned or authorized by al-Qa`ida.[78] Among the operations in which he denies al-Qa`ida might have played any role are the Bali bombings,[79] the Madrid bombing,[80] and an operation that targeted a theater located near a British school in Doha in March 2005 by a certain Ahmad `Umar.[81] Harun admits that `Umar was once a valuable member of al-Qa`ida and that he himself had forged `Umar's travel documents before he left Sudan in 1996. However, Harun is emphatic that al-Qa`ida had not heard from `Umar since and had no knowledge of his activities; therefore his attack could not have been authorized by al-Qa`ida.[82]

Clearly, Harun's account of the list of attacks for which he believes the "original al-Qa`ida" takes credit suffers from a certain tension between the ideals of al-Qa`ida he champions and the actions he is reporting, including those which he admits bear "the original al-Qa`ida's fingerprint." One explanation that might account for Harun's inconsistency regarding some of these attacks is that they were claimed by members of al-Qa`ida on behalf of al-Qa`ida and were not refuted by Bin Ladin. His description of such attacks betrays a sense that Harun does not think that al-Qa`ida is in control and it

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would be consistent with al-Qa`ida's targets: see vol. 1, 237-8. The U.S. indictment did not accuse al-Qa`ida of mounting this attack: see David Johnston, "Fourteen People Indicted in the Khobar Tower Bombing," *New York Times*, (21 June 2001), http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/21/world/21CND-TERR.html?pagewanted=all (last accessed 29 December 2011).

[77] Vol. 1, 524.

[78] Vol. 2, 444. Mustafa Abu al-Yazid claimed responsibility on behalf of al-Qa`ida. See "Al-Qaeda Repeats Threats to Danes," *Reuters*, (5 September 2008), http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/06/world/europe/06qaeda.html (last accessed 28 December 2011).

[79] Vol. 1, 523.

[80] Vol. 1, 556.

[81] "Car Bomb Targets Theater in Qatar," *BBC*, (20 March 2005), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4365039.stm (last accessed 29 December 2011). The report says that the name is `Umar Ahmed, not Ahmed `Umar.

[82] Vol. 1, 562.

is not difficult for the reader to discern that Harun is caught having to defend what is already a *fait accompli*. He may not have been alone in engaging in such post-facto analysis. Harun believes that Bin Ladin was in a similar situation with respect to the attacks carried out by the Islamic State of Iraq. He suspects that Bin Ladin was being informed of actions in Iraq after, not before, they were undertaken.[83] Despite his geographical distance from the senior leadership, the Abbottabad documents show that Harun's understanding of the dynamics between al-Qa`ida and al-Qa`ida in Mesopotamia (then the Islamic State of Iraq–ISI) was accurate. In Adam Gadahn's words, the ISI's actions are being taken "without the orders of or consultation with al-Qa`ida."[84]

Regardless of whether the "original al-Qa`ida" is weak on the operational front, if it is at all active the brand continues to enjoy unparalleled credibility, not least because it has become the preferred name that encompasses virtually all jihadi activities. This has in turn made the brand all the more appealing to jihadis who are poor imitators and as a result may be even more dangerous. Their eagerness to imitate and to be associated with al-Qa`ida encourages their engagement in terrorist activities, however random and poorly calculated these activities are. Even though al-Qa`ida once enjoyed preeminence as the leading brand in the jihadi landscape on account of the propaganda of its actions, it appears that the brand survives in the actions of others because it continues to captivate the imagination of jihadis and their observers alike.

What follows is a discussion of Harun's views and assessment of several regional groups that are said to be affiliated with al-Qa`ida.

- **Islamic State of Iraq**

Undoubtedly, Harun acknowledges that there is an al-Qa`ida in Iraq since it is the only regional branch whose leadership's pledge of allegiance Bin Ladin accepted.[85] But far from demonstrating similarities between al-Qa`ida in Iraq and the original al-Qa`ida, he

[83] Vol. 2, 54.

[84] SOCOM-2012-0000004, 8.

[85] Usama b. Ladin, 28 December 2004 (CTC Library: audio). It should be noted that in this audio, Bin Ladin welcomed al-Zarqawi into the fold of al-Qa`ida. After al-Zarqawi was killed, he released a statement addressing the jihadis in both Iraq and Somalia in which he indicated that "we have learnt from our jihadi brethren in al-Qa`ida that they elected Abu Hamza al-Muhajir as their amir" and went on to wish him well. It is clear from this that Bin Ladin is careful to note that even though he had assented to it, the matter was not decided by him, but by jihadis in Iraq. See his "Risala ila Mujahidi al-`Iraq wa-Somalia," *Minbar al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=dvxijo34 (last accessed 10 January 2012).

was more interested in stressing the differences, even when he was reporting the death of "God's lion," Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi (d. June 2006). Harun remarks that although he and al-Zaraqawi were in Afghanistan during the same period, "[we] were never close" and did not share the same school of thought.[86] As to his successor, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (d. April 2010), Harun remarks that he knew him to be a member of al-Zawahiri's Jihad Group and witnessed first-hand that he "leans towards rigidity" (*yamilu ila al-tashaddud*) in religion: "from the very moment that brother Hamza was elected *amir* in Iraq, I knew that there would be changes in strategies and some rigidity would surface…I expected that there would be an escalation in operations targeting those opposed to Abu Hamza's program and civilians would not be spared."[87] It did not take long, Harun continues, before Abu Hamza and Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi (d. April 2010) began to target Shi`ites indiscriminately.[88]

Harun's references to al-Qa`ida in Iraq reflects not his support, but his embarrassment, not least when the group changed its name from "al-Qa`ida in Mesopotamia" to the "Islamic State of Iraq." He chastises his Iraqi counterparts that the concept of a state is much more serious than what they seem to believe: "we all know that al-Qa`ida is much stronger in Afghanistan especially in the tribal areas." And yet, he reminded them, it did not declare itself to be a state in that region.[89] Given the level of frustration he expresses with respect to the political immaturity of al-Qa`ida in Iraq, Harun comes across more at ease supporting jihadi groups that split from al-Qa`ida.[90] In his own diplomatic way, Harun writes an apologia on behalf of Bin Ladin. He remarks that the statement Bin Ladin released on 23 October 2007 amounted to dissociating himself and al-Qa`ida "from any unlawful acts in Iraq."[91] A significant portion of that statement by Bin Ladin blames jihadis in Iraq for the divisions among their ranks and calls on their leaders to reunite. Given that Bin Ladin did not side with al-Qa`ida in Iraq and condemn the groups that split from it, Harun—not incorrectly—understood Bin Ladin to be dissociating albeit implicitly the brand of al-Qa`ida from the internal fighting conducted in its name in Iraq.[92]

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[86] The differences between al-Zarqawi's religious worldview and that of al-Qa`ida and Bin Ladin is also reported by Sayf al-`Adl, "Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi: al-Sira al-Dhatiyya," in Fuad Hussein, *Al-Zarqawi: al-jil al-thani li-al-Qa`ida*, (Beirut: Dar al-khayal, 2005), 115-42.

[87] Vol. 2, 29.

[88] Vol. 2, 29-30.

[89] Vol. 2, 54-5.

[90] Vol. 2, 311.

[91] Vol. 2, 334-5.

[92] Usama b. Ladin, "Ila Ahlina bi-al-`Iraq" (To Our People in Iraq), http://www.iraqipa.net/10_07/21_25/News/a1_25okt07.htm (last accessed 10 January 2012).

- **Yemen and Saudi Arabia**

Harun does not address by name all the regional al-*Qa`ida*s: a notable omission is al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—the outcome of a merger in January 2009 between jihadis who had been active in Saudi Arabia (QAP) and jihadis in Yemen, particularly those who fled from a prison in Yemen in 2006.[93] Harun's omission is not due to the fact that the time of the merger coincided with the period he spent completing his autobiography, but because he believes that Bin Ladin did not authorize the attacks in Saudi Arabia and maintains that jihadis from Yemen were completely independent in their decision-making. This was not a new development on the part of jihadis from Yemen; al-Qa`ida had attempted to establish a strong presence in Yemen (*tathbit wujudiha*) in 1996, having sent Sayf al-`Adl and Khalid Sheikh Muhammad there, "but [the] issue was more difficult than what we imagined."[94] Further, Harun is disturbed by the 2003–2004 series of attacks in Saudi Arabia:[95] he counts them among the alarming reasons that pushed him to publish his autobiography.[96] He is emphatic that al-Qa`ida did not authorize internal fighting in Saudi Arabia, let alone in any other Muslim country, challenging Saudi authorities to verify that it was Bin Ladin who had approved these attacks,[97] but elsewhere implies that al-Qa`ida may have been responsible for attacks against U.S. military targets in Saudi Arabia.[98]

As to the Yemeni branch that later merged with that of Saudi Arabia, Harun is adamant that the escapees were autonomous in their decision-making. He disagrees with the attacks against tourists in July 2007,[99] deeming them to be fruitless in so far as serving the causes of the *umma*.[100] And though he approves of the operation that targeted the U.S. embassy in Yemen in September 2008,[101] he does not claim that it was authorized

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[93] On AQAP and the jihadi groups that preceded it in Yemen, see Gabriel Koehler-Derrick (ed.), *A False Foundation? AQAP, Tribes and Ungoverned Spaces in Yemen*, Combating Terrorism Center report, (3 October 2011).

[94] Vol. 1, 249.

[95] See vol. 1, 555.

[96] Vol. 1, 3. For a detailed discussion of jihad in Saudi Arabia and the 2003-2004 violent campaign there, see Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Islamism since 1979*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), see particularly chapters 8-10.

[97] Vol. 2, 408.

[98] Vol. 1, 524.

[99] See "Suicide Bomber Attacks Tourists at Yemen Temple, Killing 9," *New York Times*, (3 July 2007), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/03/world/middleeast/03yemen.html (last accessed December 30, 2011).

[100] Vol. 2, 315.

[101] Robert F. Worth, "10 are Killed in Bombings at Embassy in Yemen," *New York Times*, (17 September 2008), http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/18/world/middleeast/18yemen.html (last accessed 30 December 2011).

by the original al-Qa`ida. Instead, he believes that it was carried out by Muslims who "jealously protect their religion" (*ghayurin `ala dinihim*).[102]

AQAP does not feature in the Abbottabad documents until 2010, and it is difficult to form a view as to the group's relationship with Bin Ladin prior to that year. Although Bin Ladin's letters prove that the leaders of AQAP had reached out to him, one of his own letters to `Atiyya implies that he may not have been in regular contact with the group. In this letter, Bin Ladin writes to `Atiyya that he was sending him a file containing passages that should be included in a letter to be sent to Yemen, but he asked him "to review and edit it by virtue of your having spent time with the brothers there."[103] This intimates that this was the first letter that Bin Ladin was sending to AQAP leaders; if he had done so before, it may not have been via `Atiyya, but possibly through his predecessor, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid (d. 2010).[104] Harun's account deals with an earlier period, the immediate period that followed the prison escape of May 2006.[105] While it does not offer a comprehensive view of AQAP, scholars studying the group may nevertheless benefit from a synthesis of his account.

Talha al-Sudani informed Harun that he should expect a visit by some of the Yemeni escapees. Talha later co-founded al-Shabab, and according to Harun had been suspended from the "original al-Qa`ida" (*ma`zul `an al-imara*). He wanted to merge jihadis in Saudi Arabia and Yemen with those of Somalia under his leadership.[106] Harun had many disagreements with Talha but had been cooperating with him only on certain occasions in the interests of stability in Somalia. He did not believe that Talha's plan was feasible because "they [i.e., the jihadis from Yemen and Saudi Arabia] have their complete independence when it comes to making practical decisions."

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[102] See Vol. 2, 474.

[103] SOCOM-2012-0000015, 5.

[104] He was announced as leader of al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan in 2007: see the following report concerning him by *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, (25 May 2007), Issue 10405, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=420726&issueno=10405; as to his death, see Frank Gardner, "Death of Mustafa Abu al-Yazid 'setback' for al-Qaeda," *BBC*, (June 1, 2010), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10206180 (last accessed 13 April 2012).

[105] This section is difficult to verify since the open source information is insubstantial, but it is hoped that scholars working on jihadis in Yemen might find it useful. I am grateful for the comments I received on this section from Gabriel Koehler-Derrick and from the author of the report cited above: *A False Foundation?* The author of the report told me that Harun's account of the escapees is highly credible in his eyes.

[106] Vol. 2, 56.

Not long after the escape,[107] two "brothers," Abu al-Hasan al-Yemeni and Ahad/Uhud al-Yemeni, arrived in Somalia and met with Harun, who recognized them from their time in Afghanistan. He discussed with them the escapees and promised that he would do his best to bring them to Somalia.[108] He worried that the longer they stayed in Yemen, the more likely that the government would find ways to recapture them. He was aware that the government had been seeking to enlist some of those who took part in jihad in Afghanistan in order to find the escapees. Among them he lists Abu Jandal, one of Bin Ladin's bodyguards; and Jamal Badawi, who played a role in the planning of the USS Cole attack. [109]

Harun gives the impression that it was he who initially handled the file of the escapees. He prepared or perhaps forged a passport for Ahad/Uhud al-Yemeni, enabling him to return to Sanaa and bring the escapees to Somalia.[110] The first group of escapees seems to have entered Somalia through its northern borders (Bosaso)[111] and eventually reached Mogadishu, where Harun met them for the first time in December 2006, after Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia.

Among the escapees was Abu Mansur al-Shishani, a native of Saudi Arabia who belonged to a group led by Khattab, who is known to have fought against the Russians in Chechnya.[112] Khattab was also a native of Saudi Arabia; he received military training in the Jawir Camp run by al-Qa`ida in the late 1980s, but disagreed with the leaders of that camp and absconded. Harun had heard that Khattab was courageous and eager to fight and therefore did not appreciate being stuck in the routine exercises of al-Qa`ida's camps. He received financial support from the Gulf and formed his own group, which included Abu Mansur among its members, and proceeded to Chechnya.[113] Thus, this group is separate from that of al-Qa`ida in Chechnya: the latter was headed by Abu Islam al-Misri.

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[107] He doesn't list the date, but judging by the flow of the events in the following pages, it was before September 2006: most likely a month or so earlier.

[108] Vol. 2, 56. The date is difficult to work out. Elsewhere in the manuscript, Harun claims that he arrived in Somalia in August 2006.

[109] Vol. 2, 57.

[110] Vol. 2, 95.

[111] Vol. 2, 120. It is not clear if Harun forged passports for the others or just for Ahad/Uhud al-Yemeni; it is also not clear whether they all came by sea or by air.

[112] Vol. 2, 179.

[113] Vol. 1, 77. Harun notes here that those who did not appreciate the routine of al-Qa`ida's camps used to join the Afghan camps. Khattab came to appreciate the value of training when he was in charge of his own group in Chechnya and had to deal with men who lacked military training.

It appears that Talha al-Sudani, who had been unsuccessful at making Harun join his group, used Abu Mansur to put pressure on Harun into joining. This was the time when al-Shabab was in its nascent months and Talha was one of its active leading members, with the city of Kismayo virtually under his control.[114] As will be discussed further in the following section, Harun refused to join al-Shabab, but agreed to serve as the leader of its security portfolio and made clear that he should not be considered as a member but as an assistant (*muta`awin*). In doing so, he insisted on maintaining his loyalty to the "original al-Qa`ida" while simultaneously avoiding Somali factionalism—this will be explained in the section below. Harun had initially advised Abu Mansur and the escapees to work with Talha without sharing with them his views of Talha's unruly behavior that led to his suspension from al-Qa`ida, but when Abu Mansur confronted him, implying that Harun was the one being unruly, he felt compelled to share with them his views:

> I was very clear with them and told them things that they did not know. I confirmed that I was the original al-Qa`ida's Confidential Secretary, an appointment made by its Shura Council during the meeting that took place in Kandahar following the 1998 bombings in [East] Africa. This [appointment] was announced to me by Brother Abu Muhammad al-Misri, who was at the time the leader of al-Qa`ida's foreign operations. Then I was sent to Somalia to prepare for the attack against the Zionists in Kenya [i.e., Mombasa 2002], but the martyred Sheikh Abu Hafs al-Misri took a decision to appoint Talha as the *amir* of this operation. We all worked together and carried out the operation. After that I decided to separate from everyone purely for security reasons. When I returned to Somalia to support the Islamic Courts, I was given clear guidelines from members of the original al-Qa`ida that Brother Talha is suspended from the *imara*. [I also told them] that I was not the *amir* of anyone. Brother Talha is free in his decisions and elected to join officially al-Shabab [Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin], but I did not, I merely cooperated with this group. To put it simply, I am in support of all forms of collaboration [if it serves the interests of] Muslims. I am also organizationally committed to Sheikh Usama and it is not possible for me to have two amirs at the same time. By which I mean members of al-Shabab take their orders from Brother Isma`il Arale and not Sheikh Usama.[115]

[114] Vol. 2, 189.

[115] Vol. 2, 189-90.

Abu Mansur appreciated Harun's honesty. He had promised Talha that he would help him to prepare landmines—apparently this had been his expertise in Chechnya. Harun assured Abu Mansur that such a contribution would serve the umma.[116]

It appears then that the Yemeni escapees took part in fighting in Somalia against Ethiopian forces, at least until March 2007 and possibly June of that year. According to Harun, the Yemeni escapees returned to Yemen in two groups. The first group departed Somalia in January 2007: among them was Ahad/Uhud al-Yemeni.[117] The second group consisted of other *muhajirun* (émigrés), i.e., not just Yemenis; it left by sea under the leadership of Abu Mansur in March that year.[118] It seems that many of them died, including Abu Mansur. Those who survived were later saved by jihadis from Puntland and Mogadishu who went to assist them,[119] and from there proceeded to different countries, including Yemen. Beyond this, Harun's account does not provide additional information on how jihadis in Yemen and Saudi Arabia merged to form AQAP, even if he may have disapproved of such a group.

- **Al-Shabab (Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin)**

If Harun's account is a faithful reflection of al-Qa`ida's story, then Harun's relationship with al-Shabab is a close illustration of the complex dynamics al-Qa`ida has sought to juggle with the rest of the jihadi world, and also of its limited role in shaping it. Analysts invariably point to Harun's collaboration with al-Shabab to make a case for the group's ties to al-Qa`ida, which culminated in unification, announced by al-Zawahiri in February 2012. Harun witnessed first-hand the formation of al-Shabab in 2006 and its subsequent rise on the Somali scene. Though he records that he indeed collaborated

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[116] Vol. 2, 190.

[117] Vol. 2, 205, 226, 303.

[118] The people who were with him included Abu `Abdallah al-Sudani (his kunya is `Asim); Dr `Ali al-Sudani; Dr Muhammad al-Sudani; Ziad al-Sudani; Abu Sa`id al-Suri; Abu al-Hasan al-Lubnani; Abu Hurriyya al-Amriki; `Abdallah al-Suwaydi; Dawud al-Ethiopi; Abu Layth al-Baritani (of American origin); Abu Mu`adh al-Suwaydi: vol. 2, 303. This group had to deal with a number of calamities which eventually led to the death of many of them: when their ship arrived in Kismayo, the news of this group became known to the CIA. A disagreement arose on board between Abu Mansur and Dr `Ali al-Sudani. The latter wanted the ship to stop ashore so that Abu al-Hasan al-Lubnani could receive medical treatment for Malaria, but Abu Mansur refused. He finally agreed and anchored in a location suggested by a local Somali who had failed to convince his tribe to assist the people émigrés. When Somali tribesmen began firing at the ship, many of the men fled into nearby forest.

[119] Harun was not with them: the account he relates is based on the story he was told by `Abdi Sa`id al-Sumali, who was present: see Vol. 2, 303-4. One has to assume that there were more people on the ship than the names Harun lists; otherwise it does not make much sense that two jihadi groups from Puntland and Mogadishu should undertake to rescue so few.

with them, he asserts that he did so on his own terms. Further, Harun's account suggests that at no point during the process of al-Shabab's emergence did Bin Ladin or any of al-Qa`ida's senior leaders—who were said to be based in Waziristan at the time—guide the process or influence it.

It was in October 2006, more than three years after his last communication with the senior leadership, that Harun managed to establish an indirect electronic line with Bin Ladin to arrange the travels of his family to Somalia. Halima and their children had traveled to Pakistan, then to Waziristan, in January 2002, because Harun could not afford them a stable environment in Somalia after the 9/11 attacks.[120] Harun sent the message to the email address of Yusuf al-Somali,[121] who was meant to be in charge of the communication between Waziristan and Harun—and other members of al-Qa`ida in East Africa and possibly elsewhere.[122] It is likely that only then was Bin Ladin informed of the situation in Somalia and the formation of al-Shabab. In Harun's words:

> I explained in my letter to Sheikh Usama the situation of the Islamic Courts [Union] and told him that I would assist them in military training and in devising security strategies; that I would do so through brothers Adam `Ayro, Isma`il [Arale] and Sheikh Hasan [Turki], not through the politicians and tribesmen with whom we had no relation. I explained to him everything and told him that I was the leader of the secret security portfolio during this period without letting the political wing of the Courts know about this. It was clear to us that there was a relationship between the latter and the Arab states and the United States: that's why we avoided working with them.[123]

It is evident that Bin Ladin had no involvement in the situation. If anything, Bin Ladin was eager for more information. When Harun's wife and children finally arrived in Somalia in December 2006, Harun's wife communicated to her husband a verbal message from Bin Ladin, whom she did not meet, but who was in contact with people close to him: "The Sheikh is very interested in what is happening in the [East Africa] region and would like you to send someone with details of what is happening in Somalia."[124] Halima must have been exposed to many of the jihadis' news in the region; she was able to comfort the wife of `Isa al-Tanzani, who was tasked with collecting the

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[120] Ibid., Vol. 1, 500-1.

[121] Not much is told of Yusuf al-Somali. It is possible that it is the same Abu Yusuf al-Somali who took part in the first mission in Somalia in the early 1990s: see vol. 1, 127.

[122] Vol. 2, 81-2.

[123] Vol. 2, 82.

[124] Vol. 2, 173.

explosives for the 1998 embassy bombings,[125] and captured in Mogadishu in 2003 that her husband was imprisoned in Bagram. She seems to have had either direct or indirect contact with Abu Yahya al-Libi who escaped from Bagram in July 2005.[126] Halima had been given by the "brothers" 1,500 Euros to cover her expenses for six months, and another 1,500 Euros to pay for the travel expenses of the person Harun was expected to send to meet Bin Ladin and inform him of the situation in Somalia. By the time Harun ceased writing his manuscript in January 2009, it was not clear whether an emissary had reached Bin Ladin.

What kind of ties, if any, exist between al-Qa`ida and al-Shabab? Up until January 2009, no organizational ties existed between the two. Had there been any, it is likely that Harun would have mentioned them in his manuscript. In an unverified report Harun is said to have become the leader of al-Qa`ida in the Horn of Africa (AQHA) following the death of Saleh al-Nabhan (known as Yusuf al-Tanzani), and he is reported to have said: "I will honestly perform my duties following my appointment to this new senior position by Shaykh Usamah Bin-Ladin (May God bless him). I am a military man, and in charge of the armed forces."[127] If this is true, AQHA should be understood not as a "branch" of al-Qa`ida but, consistent with Harun's terminology, it would be best to describe it as a "cell" (*khaliyya*). Two further points derive from the news report: (1) Harun managed to establish contact with Bin Ladin after January 2009; and (2) Bin Ladin's guidance did not support a merger with al-Shabab. This is now confirmed by the Abbottabad documents.[128] As will be discussed below, both al-Nabhan and Harun were unhappy about the formation of al-Shabab, deeming the group to be undermining the authority of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). It is noteworthy that although Harun was privy to the local developments in Somalia, his manuscript has little to say about al-Shabab between March 2007 and January 2009. This may well indicate that the extent of his reported involvement with the group in secondary sources is exaggerated, but this does not preclude the possibility that he was independently highly active with associates of his choosing.

Nevertheless, two dynamics that characterized Harun's activities in Somalia are worth including. The first has to do with financing members of al-Qa`ida's activities, which largely involved training local and foreign militants; the second is the gulf between the

[125] Vol. 1, 306.
[126] Ibid., Vol. 2, 186. On Abu Yahya al-Libi, see see Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, "Rising Leader for Next Phase of Al Qaeda's War," *New York Times*, 4 April 2008.
[127] BBC Monitoring Service, "Profile Of Al-Qa`idah Leader For Horn of Africa Fazul `Abdullah," (29 November 2009).
[128] SOCOM-2012-0000005.

generation of jihadis that comprise al-Shabab on the one hand, and that of al-Qa`ida on the other.

Financing Military Training

With respect to financing his activities, Harun claims that early in 2006 he was successful in reopening camps for military training which had remained inactive for longer than two years.[129] He succeeded in finding the requisite funding after he managed to forge a relationship with Somali businessmen. He explains that the businessmen"consist of a large network; nobody knows them and we did not try to find out the source of their money." His description of the "businessmen" (*tujjar*) is worth quoting:

> These businessmen who jealously protect their religion contacted us after they had been trying to find us for a long time; so I searched for some information about them and their goals/agenda while keeping my distance…after we ascertained their good intentions, some of the brothers managed to arrange a meeting for them in Dobley, located on the border with Kenya, where they would meet with the leaders. We did not want to make them any promises [without careful deliberation], especially since I was myself away from Somalia during that period. When they agreed with our proposal they departed for Dobley where they met Sheikh Hasan Turki who was very pleased with this development.

Sheikh Hasan gave the "businessmen" a tour of the region, including the area where training camps had previously been active. They also visited local schools, hospitals and mosques. After the guided tour they promised Sheikh Hasan that they would "support him in everything." That is how, "with God's grace, the area of Kaambooni entered a new era of activities" that returned life to the training camps.[130]

It is rare that the reader is forced to consider whether Harun is using code words, especially since he specifies when he is censoring information due to its sensitivity. But his description of the "Somali businessmen" is too cryptic to be taken at face value. It is unlikely that they were related to al-Qa`ida's contacts in Dubai, which Swedan gave to Harun in his last email communication with him in April 2003; if they were, Harun would not have needed to hide it, since he disclosed the information elsewhere in the

[129] It is not clear whether Harun personally organized rehabilitation of the camps. Although he notes elsewhere that he arrived in Somalia in August 2006, it is likely that he was involved from a distance in the negotiations that led to securing funding.

[130] Vol. 2, 23.

manuscript.[131] The fact that the "businessmen" received a guided tour of an area in Somalia suggests that they were unlikely to have been locals. Dealing with them seems to have been a sensitive matter. Harun notes that he normally met with only one person, who in turn would contact the "network to seek money."[132] He also notes that the agreement reached with the "businessmen" stipulated that the funding would go towards training Muslim men from across the globe and, once trained, they would be sent to fight in places where jihad is an individual duty (*fard `ayn*);[133] the priority was to send trained men to Ogaden to fight Ethiopian forces.[134] Harun records that in December 2006, after Ethiopia invaded Somalia, the businessmen promised him that they would be prepared to support the *muhajirun* (foreign fighters) and their families so long as they stayed and fought in Mogadishu.[135] It would be difficult to conceive how local businessmen would benefit from developing Somalia into either the international hub of jihadi training or a battlefield on which global jihad is fought, unless they intended to operate a jihad travel agency.

The businessmen's origin aside, it seems that they desired for Somalia to become another Afghanistan. That is, turning it into a base where militantly inclined Muslims and converts are welcomed to receive training before they take up jihad around the globe; the priority seems to have been Ogaden. As Harun's wife—who was based there in Waziristan at the time—later told Harun, the financial situation of those in Waziristan was dire, so it is unlikely that the funding for such a plan derived from the senior leadership of al-Qa`ida or was disbursed through its Economic Committee. Further, if Harun and al-Nabhan maintained their independence from al-Shabab and focused on military training, then it is probable that al-Nabhan and Harun bequeathed a generation of skilled and disciplined militants—many Europeans. Harun was always mindful that "we shall die and therefore we ought to prepare those who shall carry the burdens of jihad after us. I am one of those who is inclined to be patient; so [I endeavor to] prepare the cells of the future."[136] Indeed, Harun observed after meeting European *muhajirun* at the house of Talha al-Sudani that "since their arrival from Europe, everyone was encouraging them to commit martyrdom (*shahada*), nothing else. As for me, I urged them to receive good training (*i`dad*) before fighting or martyrdom. I wanted to make use of them to build sleeping cells around the world."[137]

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[131] See Vol. 1, 535: see this report's conclusion.
[132] Vol. 2, 23.
[133] Vol. 2, 25.
[134] Vol. 2, 26.
[135] Vol. 2, 175-6.
[136] Vol. 1, 561.
[137] Vol. 2, 72. Some reports have indicated that members of a sleeper cell in London were trained by Harun: see "London 'sleeper cell' told to carry out wave of terror attacks by Bin Laden before his death,"

Al-Qa`ida and al-Shabab[138]

As noted earlier, there were no organizational ties between al-Qa`ida and al-Shabab. Instead, by the time of the formation of al-Shabab, there were just a few al-Qa`ida members based in Somalia, so few that "one could count them on the fingers of one's hand."[139] They had been present in Mogadishu since the middle of 2004, at a time when Harun was still in hiding from the authorities in a location he does not disclose. They were acting on the basis of their own judgments and initiatives. They seem to have been divided into two camps: the first included Yusuf al-Tanzani (Saleh al-Nabhan), `Abd al-Jabbar al-Kini (Abu Wafa'), `Isa al-Kini and later Harun.[140] They believed that their actions, though unguided by the senior leadership, should still be faithful to the disciplined spirit of al-Qa`ida. They wanted to maintain their independence in Somalia on the basis that they were the "Sheikh's men," i.e., their loyalty was to al-Qa`ida and they would only take orders from Bin Ladin. If they had the resources, members of this camp would have carried out al-Qa`ida's strategy in East Africa, which according to Harun had been defined by two primary goals: (1) mounting large scale operations against centers affiliated with the "global alliance of infidels led by America"; and (2) setting up large camps to train jihadis. According to Harun, they lacked "a large budget from the leadership,"[141] to carry out such goals, not to mention that they had not been in contact with the leadership for three years.[142]

In the other camp the only al-Qa`ida member was Talha al-Sudani. Talha had his own ambitious plan, which was to establish under his leadership an *imara*: an emirate that would attract global jihadis. As noted earlier, Talha was suspended from al-Qa`ida. Harun refrains from providing the reasons behind his suspension, but he briefly alludes to failed operations that Talha and his group had mounted in Djibouti and Ethiopia which led to the capture of many members of his cell by the authorities.[143]

Daily Mail, (15 May 2011), http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1387332/Osama-Bin-Laden-dead-London-sleeper-cell-told-carry-attacks-death.html (last accessed 11 January 2012).

[138] Some parts of this section were published as a separate article: Nelly Lahoud, "The Merger of al-Shabab and Qa`idat al-Jihad," *CTC Sentinel*, (vol. 5, issue 2, 16 February 2012).

[139] Vol. 2, 48.

[140] See vol. 2, 56, 60. There could have been possibly others because Harun mentions "and other brothers," but it's not clear whether these "brothers" are members of al-Qa`ida or not.

[141] Vol. 2, 20.

[142] It is not clear if the others also lost contact with the senior leadership in 2003.

[143] Vol. 2, 21. See also the same volume 45, where Talha tells Harun of some of these problems. It is possible that Harun's views of Talha are colored by the events that preceded the Mombasa attack. Harun relates that he was meant to be the leader of the operation, he was Bin Ladin's choice (see Vol. 1, 430, see also vol. 1, 445-6. Abu Hafs al-Misri seems to have been concerned about Harun's safety and needed some convincing (Vol. 1, 433. Abu Muhammad al-Misri was also concerned, see vol. 1, 443-5). Talha then

Prior to Harun's return to Somalia, Yusuf al-Tanzani and `Isa al-Kini had disagreed with Talha. They allied themselves with a Somali group led by one of Sheikh Hasan Tahir `Uways' men, Adam `Ayro (Aden Hashi Farah `Ayro), who had collaborated with al-Qa`ida against U.S. forces in 1994.[144] Mukhtar al-Sumali (Ahmed `Abdi) was the executive leader (*amir munaffidh*) of this group and had participated in the first Afghan jihad. Under the leadership of Mukhtar, the group that included members of al-Qa`ida targeted spies whom they believed were sent by the United States and Ethiopia.[145] Harun appears to have approved of their work. He claims that they avoided killing innocent bystanders and that their operations were approved in advance by a legal committee made up of Somali scholars.[146] Harun also gives the impression that members of al-Qa`ida in Mukhtar's group were preoccupied with placing their skills in the service of military training and in actively engaging in operational activities with Somali jihadis. On the political front, they were happy to take the backseat as far as local politics is concerned, believing that Somali leaders are better suited to handle the complex political landscape of Somalia. It is also possible that they chose to stay out of politics because the Somali society was resistant to extremists groups gaining hold in Somalia.[147]

At the beginning of 2006[148] `Abd al-Qadir Dujana bridged the differences between the two camps, after whichall three members of al-Qa`ida headed to Kaambooni where training camps were established thanks to the gifts of the "businessmen."[149] The three were in charge of the security of Kaambooni: Talha was in charge of the military portfolio (*al-mas'uliyya al-`askariyya*); `Isa al-Kini was in charge of leading the "army" and Yusuf al-Tanzani focused on "training the forces and elevating the standard of the

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was either in Yemen or Sudan, Bin Ladin hadn't heard from him for a year and told Harun that if he happened to see him Somalia, he should not let him interfere with his work (Vol. 1, 446). But after Harun reached East Africa, Talha made his way back to Afghanistan and met with the senior leadership of al-Qa`ida before he and `Isa al-Kini headed to East Africa. When they met Harun in Somalia, Talha told him that they lost their luggage in Dubai airport; in it was a personal letter to Harun from Abu Hafs in which he explains that Talha was to be the amir of the operation and Harun his deputy. Harun did not question Talha, responding "you have trained me in the Abu Shahid [training camp] and you have precedence over me in jihad; it would be my duty to cede my leadership to you even if Sheikh Abu Hafs did not send a letter to that effect" (Vol. 1, 474).

[144] According to Harun Adam `Ayro did not become the amir of al-Shabab, as is often reported; he asserts that Isma`il Arale who was the first amir of the group: see Vol. 2, 425.

[145] See the reporting in International Crisis Group, *Somalia's Islamists*, Africa Report No. 100 – 12 December 2005, 11.

[146] Vol. 2, 21-2.

[147] International Crisis Group, *Somalia's Islamists*, Africa Report No. 100 – 12 December 2005.

[148] This could have occurred in 2005: the chronology is inconsistent.

[149] Vol. 2, 25.

jihadis in the field of specialized training, for he possessed extensive experience in this domain, including explosive charges."[150] It was Hasan Turki who appointed the three al-Qa`ida members to these posts. There was another trainer, known as al-Mu`allim Qasim, a Somali who once lived with Abu Khabbab and who acquired an international reputation on account of his expertise in making explosives.[151] Abu Khabbab's name is often associated with explosive making—his training camp was renowned for its specialized focus on explosives—but Harun asserts that he was never a member of al-Qa`ida.[152] And yet, despite Qasim's supposedly international reputation, all of the explosives he prepared in offensives against Ethiopian forces when they invaded Somalia later that year failed to detonate.[153]

Several events coincided that led to the formation of al-Shabab in 2006. To begin with, the political landscape of Somalia was itself marred with divisions, with a weak and unpopular Transitional National Government (TFG) in power since its formation in 2004. Many Somalis, especially in Mogadishu, did not consider the TFG to be representative of the people of Somalia, believing that it favored the clans of the president Abdullahi Yusuf and his prime minister, Mohamed Ghedi.[154] The divisions were heightened by the creation of a U.S.-backed "Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism" (ARPCT), a coalition of clan militia leaders created to help to capture members of al-Qa`ida who were based in Somalia.[155] Lacking sufficient local support, the ARPCT was short-lived as it was defeated by Somali Islamist groups.[156] This was followed by the rise of Islamic Courts Union (ICU): a coalition of Islamic judicial bodies that sought to bring law and order to Somalia. On account of its rapid ability to govern Mogadishu and most of south-central Somalia, the ICU was gradually gaining the confidence of Somalis until divisions emerged within its ranks, which led to

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[150] Vol. 2, 25.

[151] Vol. 2, 25.

[152] See vol. 1, 382, 441. Harun claims that Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi used to attend Abu Khabbab's camp before he established his own camp in Herat. It was reported that he was killed in 2008 and was eulogized by al-Qa`ida, see "al-Qa`ida tan`i Abu al-Khabbab al-Misri Khabiruha al-Kimawi wa 3 min Rifaqihi," al-Sharq al-Awsat, 4 August 2008, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=481406&issueno=10842 (accessed 3 March 2012).

[153] Vol. 2, 200.

[154] Ken Menkhaus, *Somali a: A Country in Peril, a Policy Nightmare*, Enough Strategy Paper, (September 2008), 1.

[155] Ibid., 2. See also the article by Muhammad al-Amin Muhammad al-Hadi, "al-Waqi` al-Sumali al-Muta'azzim," *al-Jazeera* (Arabic), (7 June 2009), http://aljazeera.net/Portal/Templates/Postings/PocketPcDetailedPage.aspx?PrintPage=True&GUID=%7BBDC28AB0-7BDC-4C56-9AAB-82BC05FAABCE%7D (last accessed January 2, 2012).

[156] Menkhaus, *Somalia*, 2.

disunion within its militant wing and paved the way for the emergence of al-Shabab.[157] Harun's account provides a personal insight into the complex external and local factors that led to the rise of al-Shabab: factors over which the "original al-Qa`ida" exercised no control or influence.

It was not al-Qa`ida that was the catalyst for the emergence of al-Shabab. Rather, it was the existence of trained *muhajirun*—foreign fighters—who were eager to put their newly acquired skills into practice, but who were prevented by tribal disputes from being sent to Ogaden.[158] As noted earlier, were it not for the blessing of Hasan Turki and the gift of the "businessmen," foreign fighters would not have received military training in Kaambooni. Thus the *muhajirun* rejoiced at the news that Sheikh Hasan Turki received an *au secours* letter from a Somali businessman by the name Sheikh Abu Bakr `Adani from northern Mogadishu. In April that year in response to `Adani's call for help, approximately thirty of the *muhajirun* accompanied Turki, Talha, Yusuf al-Tanzani and `Isa al-Kini in traveling to Mogadishu.[159] When the ICU's troops were gaining ground over those of the clans, it appears that the Kaambooni group—which included members of al-Qa`ida along with Mukhtar and `Ayro's group—was at the forefront of the decisive battles that led to the ICU's consolidation of power.[160] But as Harun explained in his email to Bin Ladin, most members of the ICU did not know of the presence of al-Qa`ida members among the fighters.

The strong military performance of the Kaambooni group seems to have emboldened its leaders to form their own group, even though they sought to market it as a strategy of unifying ranks with Mogadishu militants. According to Harun, except for Talha who was suspended from al-Qa`ida and `Isa al-Kini, the remaining al-Qa`ida members, i.e., Harun, Yusuf al-Tanzani and `Abd al-Jabbar al-Kini, did not support the formation of al-Shabab. Instead, the latter sought to unite the militants of Kaambooni with those of Mogadishu under the leadership of the ICU.[161] Before becoming the first leader of al-Shabab, Isma`il Arale asked Harun to prepare a report for him concerning the Islamic movements in Somalia.[162] In his report Harun indicated that the Islamic movements "are not operating in complete secrecy yet they were not public enough, hence the

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[157] Menkhaus, *Somalia*, 2.

[158] Vol. 2, 27.

[159] Vol. 2, 28.

[160] Vol. 2, 31-2.

[161] Vol. 2, 56.

[162] *Arale would later be captured in Djibouti in mid-2007 and taken to Guantanamo; see also the following report on* Hanein, *http://hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=201273&langid=1 (last accessed 12 January 2012). Arale was later released in December 2009: see "Somalia- Amnesty International Report 2010,"* Amnesty International, *http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/Somali a/report-2010 (last accessed 12 January 2012).*

Somali people did not know with whom they were dealing;" that these groups were "claiming to be al-Qa`ida and I explained to him that this public competition to be close to al-Qa`ida does not serve the interest of the Somali people;" that the groups were competing to attract muhajirun but neglected to win the support of their people; finally Harun warned Arale that these different groups may well raise arms against each other in the future.[163] Except for the last point, Harun's advice to Arale conveys the same spirit that Bin Ladin's 2010 letter to Mukhtar Abu al-Zubayr, in which he politely denied al-Shabab public union with al-Qa`ida:[164] it is as if Harun wrote the first draft of Bin Ladin's letter.

Within a week of the formation of al-Shabab, Harun and al-Nabhan paid Arale a visit during which Harun made the views of the "Sheikh's men," i.e., al-Qa`ida leaders, explicit: "we [see ourselves] as guests in this state and there is an official body called the Islamic Courts [whose authority ought to be respected] and most of you [now in al-Shabab] are members of the Courts; why then resort to founding a new group?"[165] Harun proceeded to assure him that he would be happy to assist in any way he could if it served the interests of all, however, "as to taking orders from him or anyone else, this shall not happen because I am not part of the new group."[166] Referring to the Kaambooni group which included Talha and `Isa al-Kini, Harun further warned Arale that "I know things about the other side that you do not know…. I explained to him my concerns and assured him that [the Kaambooni group] believes in a mere tactical unity [with the Mogadishu militants] in order to gather enough forces to take over Kismayo; once this is done the [Kaambooni] group will start making decisions on its own and gradually separate from the rest":[167] this is a prediction that Arale soon experienced.[168]

Despite Harun's protestation, Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin was formed and comprised of militants from Mogadishu and Kaambooni, and of political leaders, some of whom were members of the ICU. Under the urging of Arale, Harun attended one of the early meetings the group held under the auspices of unity as an observer. Al-Nabhan chose to boycott the meeting because he was not enthusiastic about a group that, in his mind, was going to undermine the ICU.[169] On the agenda of the meeting was the distribution of various portfolios, several of which went to non-Somalis: Talha was

[163] Vol. 2, 59-60.
[164] SOCOM-2012-0000005.
[165] Vol. 2, 60.
[166] Vol. 2, 60.
[167] Vol. 2, 61.
[168] Vol. 2, 118. Arale confides in Harun that he had no authority over Kismayo.
[169] Among the people present were Mukhtar (Ahmed `Abdi), Adam `Ayro, Dajjana, Hasan Turki and Arale, Talha, `Isa al-Kini.

entrusted with the military portfolio (*al-haqiba al-`askariyya*) of al-Shabab; the leadership of the "army" went to `Isa al-Kini; the "political portfolio" to Ahmed Madobe of Ras Kambooni; and the treasury was assigned to Hasan Afghawi, considered to be a reputable banker from Mogadishu. Harun was surprised when it was announced that he would be entrusted with the security portfolio of the group, with Mahdi Krati (Jamal al-Ansari) as his deputy. He told Arale after the meeting that he refused to be considered a member (*`udw*), but agreed to be an assistant (*muta`awin*).[170] When Harun met with the Executive Committee of al-Shabab, which consisted of six men, four of whom were members of the ICU,[171] he told them that he would not help al-Shabab to undermine the ICU. Instead, he believed that the two were one and the same body, and that the men he was planning to train would form the backbone of the security apparatus of the ICU.[172]

Notwithstanding Harun's determination to avoid internal disagreements with the various factions, the Kaambooni group was not pleased with his plans. Given Harun's focus on military training, the European muhajirun became a subject of contention between him, on one hand, and Talha and Ahmed Madobe, on the other. Though the muhajirun had their own amir—an Ethiopian by the name of Shakir who holds British citizenship[173]—it seems that he was not permitted to contribute in any substantial way to the direction of their activities in Somalia. As noted earlier, Harun wanted to train the muhajirun and use them as sleeping cells around the world, whereas Talha and Madobe wanted to dedicate all the available manpower to fighting, even without the benefit of training.[174]

Harun and Yusuf al-Tanzani's training bases were in Mogadishu. Harun was pleased with the way they constructed intensive courses that spanned over a month, focusing on the art of spying, gathering intelligence, policing, strategic defense and how to form secret cells in wartime situations.[175] Their trainees consisted of many Somalis as well as European *muhajirun*.[176] But before the ICU had the opportunity to consolidate its

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[170] Vol. 2, 69.

[171] They were Mukhtar; Hasan Afghawi; al-Mu`allim; Ahmed Madobe; al-Mu`allim `Abdallah; and Ahmed Khalif (Harun implies that Khalif was from the foreign ministry): vol. 2, 69.

[172] Vol. 2, 69-70.

[173] Vol. 2, 71-2. Harun relates that he is of Ethiopian origin, converted to Islam in Britain, his mother used to work in the office of the prime minister of Ethiopia. He is connected to a group that sought to terrorize people in Britain following the 7/7 attacks when they planted fake explosive bombs on 22 July 2005. Some of them were arrested while others, Shakir among them, fled to Somalia: Vol. 2, 157.

[174] Vol. 2, 74, 95.

[175] Vol. 2, 83, 92. At least 300 men appear to have received rudimentary training in Eritrea. Harun was not impressed by the level of teaching and thought he could improve on this in Mogadishu: see vol. 2, 83.

[176] Vol. 2, 80.

control, Harun's training in Mogadishu was interrupted, when, as he predicted, the Kaambooni group now in control of Kismayo sought to separate from the Mogadishu group. Arale asked Harun to head to Kismayo and mediate with Talha. There, he observed that Talha and his group, "lacking sufficient awareness of political events and [the foresight] to centralize [defense]," were putting pressure on the Islamic Courts to provoke Ethiopia into war. He was disappointed that al-Shabab's enthusiasm for martyrdom blinded them from appreciating the enormous strength of the disciplined Ethiopian forces.[177] The war that Talha was impatient to fight cost him his life when—according to information relayed to Harun—he was killed in an ambush by U.S.-Kenyan-Ethiopian Special Operation Forces in the first week of 2007.[178] At any rate, Harun's wishes to unify the various groups were fulfilled, but only because invasion by Ethiopian forces denied the competing factions the luxury of internal disagreement.

Harun's manuscript includes detailed accounts of various battlefield fronts against Ethiopian forces and of the United States' role in that invasion, including the battlefield of Diinsoor, where Harun fought before heading back to Mogadishu to meet with his wife and children who had arrived in Somalia from Waziristan. Soon after he saw his family they all had to flee to the Kenyan border, along with others and their families, as Ethiopian forces were rapidly advancing on Mogadishu. Harun's group intended to reach the border with Kenya in the hope that their women and children would be given refuge there. Along the way they could hear and see spy planes searching for them, "but God blinded the [enemy]" and they were not successful in halting their escape.[179] When on 6 January 2007 they arrived on the borders of Kenya, near the village of Kiunga, they decided to send `Umar Mukhtar and Salmin al-Kini,[180] two Kenyan nationals who possessed their passports, to convince the Sheikhs of the village to give refuge to the women and children: They were refused.[181]

Since Harun and the other men's ammunition had been depleted and they could no longer provide protection to their families, they decided that they would send the women and children to the Kenyan village. Before parting in their separate ways, Harun told his wife that since she spoke fluent Swahili, she should pretend that she was a Kenyan-Somali who lived in Kismayo and was married to a Pakistani businessman who was recently killed in that city and she should ensure that the children speak only in Urdu. It is noteworthy that Harun warned his wife that in the event that she was

[177] Vol. 2, 124.
[178] Vol. 2, 224.
[179] Vol. 2, 241.
[180] Harun did not appear to know him well: he is a friend of Yusuf al-Tanzani and had been in a Kenyan prison for over two years in connection with the Mombasa bombing in 2002: vol. 2, 198.
[181] Vol. 2, 241-5.

captured by Kenyan authorities, she should tell them that she was his wife: "the moment the Europeans and Americans found out that the wife of Fadil Harun was in the custody of Kenyan authorities, they would want to interrogate her themselves…. I wanted her file to be transferred from the Africans to the Americans because the latter would treat her with respect."[182] Although Harun's family was indeed captured, they were not relocated to the United States but handed over to Ethiopian authorities.[183]

Harun and the other men made their way into the forest and by 27 January 2007 managed to secure seats for themselves on a tourist bus to Mombasa. On the way, Harun relates that they passed a village called Wito, where from the window of the bus he saw his photo and that of Saleh al-Nabhan posted at the entrance of a government security building.[184] When they reached Mombasa, each went in a separate direction with the plan to cross the border back into Somalia. To avoid risk to the others in the event that any of them were captured, they did not share with each other their planned destinations.[185]

Al-Shabab's Merger with "Qa`idat al-Jihad"

Although Harun succeeded in returning to Somalia, the remaining half of the manuscript does not detail his involvement with al-Shabab, if indeed he was involved with the group. Instead, he reports the news of the jihadis around the world, based mostly on media reports. In one of these sections he speaks of the various groups on the Somali scene, stressing that they are for the most part Somalis. He dismisses reports suggesting that there are more than 4,000 foreign fighters in Somalia and asserts that there couldn't be more than 40 in total, adding that even the *muhajirun* in southern Somalia who were under the political leadership of Hasan Turki and the military leadership of `Isa al-Kini "left this region, leaving it to the Somalis."[186] He expresses a cautious optimism at the re-emergence of Jama`at al-I`tisam bi-al-Kitab wa-al-Sunna, a group that espouses a neo-Salafi worldview and of which al-Qa`ida disapproved when it liaised with them in the 1990s.[187] His cause for optimism is due to having declared the formation of a militant group to fight against Ethiopian forces. His reporting of al-

[182] Vol. 2, 245.

[183] As reported in "al-`Afw al-Dawliyya Tutalib bi-al-Ifraj `an Muslimin Mu`taqalin fi Ethiopia," *Hady al-IslamI*, (26 May 2007), http://www.hadielislam.com/arabic/index.php?pg=articles%2Farticle&id=23879

[184] Vol. 2, 286.

[185] Vol. 2, 286.

[186] Vol. 2, 331, 359. http://reliefweb.int/node/222517

[187] Vol. 2, 359. Judging by the overall chronology of the news he is reading and reflecting on, the time of these reports is around the end of 2007; I suspect that he is referring to the interview by the leader of Jama`at al-I`tisam bi-al-Kitab wa-al-Sunna that was published by *al-Sumal al-Yawm*, (25 December 2007), http://Somali atodaynet.com/news/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=87&Itemid=35 (accessed 17 January 2012).

Shabab is brief, mainly noting that Abu Mansur—presumably `Umar Hammami—has emerged as the official spokesman of the group and that one faction of it is under the co-leadership of Adam `Ayro and Sheikh Mukhtar. He gives no indication that he is working with them: "I trained many of these men in the past, but there aren't many muhajirun in Somalia now."[188] If Harun collaborated with al-Shabab after January 2009, it is likely that he would have done so on his own terms. There is little doubt that they would not have been pleased with his uncooperative stance.

In September 2009 al-Shabab released a video which featured, among other things, an audio recording of Abu al-Zubayr, entitled "Labbaika Ya Usama" (At your Service Usama). In it, Abu al-Zubayr addressed Bin Ladin as "our Sheikh and leader (*amir*)," adding that "we await your guidance during this advanced stage of jihad."[189] The production of this video was misleading: the title "Labbaika Ya Usama" implies that al-Shabab is responding to an invitation issued by Bin Ladin; since the video featured Abu al-Zubayr's pledge following a statement by Bin Ladin in support of jihadis in Somalia,[190] it gave the impression that the union was a foregone conclusion. Yet Bin Ladin's statements never addressed al-Shabab by name; instead, his statements carefully used generic terms, displaying support of "jihadis in Somalia."

Since al-Shabab's courtship was repeatedly ignored in Bin Ladin's subsequent statements, when he was killed in May 2011 and jihadi websites announced that al-Zawahiri would succeed him in heading "Qa`idat al-Jihad," the group was quick to welcome the new appointee. `Ali Diri, the spokesman for the group, released another artfully misleading statement eulogizing Bin Ladin and welcoming the appointment of al-Zawahiri:

> We welcome the outstanding choice of [Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri], and we shall maintain our covenant with him (*sanakunu ma'ahu `ala al-`ahd*) as we did with his brethren before him. Our covenant is to defend our outposts/frontiers [*sadd thaghrana*] as Abu `Abdallah/Usama b. Ladin designated us when he described us as one of jihad's legions [*faylaq min fayaliq al-jihad*] and one of the outposts [anchoring the world of] Islam [*thaghr min thughur al-islam*]. We shall maintain our commitment to this covenant and protect our frontiers. [With this

[188] Vol. 3, 360.
[189] The video can be accessed on *Shabakat al-Ansar al-Mujahidin*, http://as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=10163 (accessed 12 February 2012).
[190] Usama B. Ladin, "al-Nizal al-Nizal ya Abtal al-Sumal," *Minbar al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=ewdscxvc (accessed 10 February 2012).

commitment], Islam and the *mujahidin* will not be weakened. We shall continue to confront the enemy as we have always done.[191]

The casual reader might be forgiven for assuming that Diri's statement suggests that al-Shabab was part of al-Qa`ida and that he was simply transferring the covenant that the group once had with Bin Ladin to al-Zawahiri. Yet, up until then, neither al-Zawahiri nor Bin Ladin had formally welcomed al-Shabab into the fold or even mentioned the group by name. Bin Ladin did use the expressions "*faylaq*" and "*thaghr*," but, as noted earlier, the contexts in which he used these expressions were in support of "jihadis in Somalia." The Abbottabad documents give some insight into Bin Ladin's hesitation to embrace the group publicly: Among other concerns, he feared that al-Shabab was not creating a viable economy for the Somalis and was too rigid in its administration of the *hudud*, deterrent penalties for certain crimes.[192]

If Bin Ladin rejected public union with al-Shabab, why was Diri still flirting with al-Zawahiri? Diri pledged al-Shabab's support to al-Zawahiri only after Fadil Harun was killed in June 2011. A skeptical reader of Harun's manuscript might address this with a radical scenario: Harun was killed within six weeks of Bin Ladin's death; the reported story surrounding his death is that instead of heading into an al-Shabab controlled area, he and his companion, Musa Husayn, accidentally drove into a checkpoint manned by forces from Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). It would be unusual for Harun to make such an amateurish error, and U.S. military forces which he had likely evaded for years would no doubt be surprised by this reported blunder.[193]

Soon after Harun was killed, *Somalia Report* published an article by two journalists whose names were withheld for security reasons, claiming that al-Shabab leader Abu al-Zubayr was behind his death. According to this report, Harun was given instructions to proceed to an al-Shabab controlled checkpoint to meet other jihadis, but Abu al-Zubayr had arranged earlier for it to be dismantled, causing Harun and Husayn to drive on, unknowingly falling into a TFG checkpoint. The report further indicates that

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[191] `Ali Diri, Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin, *Shabakat al-Jihad al-`Alami*, http://aljahad.com/vb/showthread.php?t=6715 (accessed 18 January 2012). Note that my translation of the Arabic is based on a translation, presumably from Somali, although the document does not specify.

[192] SOCOM-2012-0000010, 5. On al-Shabab's rigid application of the *hudud*, see Al-Qimmah Islamic Network, "Tatbiq Hadd al-Rajm wa-Hadd al-Harabah bi-Wilayat Shbili al-Wista al-Islamiya," http://al-qimmah.net/showthread.php?t=24727&langid=2 (last accessed 26 April 2010).

[193] In his manuscript Harun gives the impression that he quickly identified people who were working for U.S., Kenyan or Israeli intelligence, e.g., vol. 1, 543-48; one example that illustrates his operative skills is the way he managed to escape from Kenyan authorities just before the Mombasa bombing of Paradise Hotel in 2002. Harun was part of the cell that planned this bombing: see Vol. 1, 508-9.

Harun had received orders from al-Qa`ida to depose al-Shabab's leaders and replace them with foreign ones, which threatened Abu al-Zubayr's position.[194] It would be out of character for Harun to threaten to oust Somali leaders; his manuscript makes clear that he wanted Somalis to be in the forefront of the Somali scene. However, the fact that discussion exists concerning al-Shabab being responsible for Harun's death suggests that his differences with al-Shabab were known to many. These differences are echoed elsewhere: When in January 2012 the Global Islamic Media Front in collaboration with al-Kata'ib Media Foundation announced that al-Shabab welcomed questions posted online between February 4–14 to be addressed by `Ali Diri in an online interview, several of the posted questions raised Harun's relationship with al-Shabab. Some were specific, asking whether his differences with al-Shabab constituted the motivation for his death, while others asked for an explanation as to why al-Shabab did not eulogize Harun.[195]

The reader of Harun's manuscript would not be surprised to learn that al-Shabab might have engineered his seemingly accidental death. If Harun was operational and continued to make his dissatisfaction with al-Shabab public and persisted in displaying his concern over its members' political immaturity, it would not be surprising if they grew impatient with him. They may have tolerated his actions because they realized that eliminating him would undoubtedly upset Bin Ladin; however, when Bin Ladin was killed, they possessed at least two reasons to eliminate him. The first is obvious: it would be easier and more effective to murder him than to exile him. The second is somewhat speculative but potentially revealing: Harun was unquestionably committed to Bin Ladin, and although he acknowledges the close ties that developed between al-Zawahiri and Bin Ladin, he never warmed to al-Zawahiri or genuinely respected his opinions. His two-volume autobiography does not paint al-Zawahiri in a flattering light. Harun is also keen to stress that as far as the "original al-Qa`ida" is concerned, it is Sayf al-`Adl, not al-Zawahiri, who is second in command after Bin Ladin.[196] Even if Bin Ladin succeeded in bringing al-Zawahiri into the fold, Harun's tone invites the reader to muse on a lingering tension between the worldview of Bin Ladin and that of al-Zawahiri. What is more, Harun had plans to write a third volume.

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[194] *Somalia Report*, "al-Shabab Leader Arranged Fazul's Death," (16 June 2011), http://www.Somalireport.com/index.php/post/973/Al-Shabab_Leader_Arranged_Fazuls_Death (last accessed 11 February 2012)

[195] *Shabakat Shumukh al-Islam*, (4 January 2012), http://www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?p=1058845825 (last accessed 11 February 2012). Diri had not yet responded to questions at the time of going to press on 1 June 2012.

[196] Vol. 2, 500. The "original al-Qa`ida" (*al-Qa`ida al-umm*) is a description Harun uses to distinguish al-Qa`ida from other jihadi groups, including those who insert "al-Qa`ida" in their names.

It is possible that al-Shabab reasoned that eliminating Harun would be a welcome gift to al-Zawahiri, hoping that in return, al-Zawahiri would grant the group membership in al-Qa`ida. If this skeptical view is plausible, then al-Shabab's reasoning with respect to al-Zawahiri is not unfounded. Whereas Bin Ladin only granted al-Qa`ida in Iraq membership in al-Qa`ida and lived to regret it, al-Zawahiri was uncritical of his assessment of the groups he admitted to "Qa`idat al-Jihad," probably without the blessing of Bin Ladin or even against his wishes. For example, it was al-Zawahiri, not Bin Ladin, who announced in September 2006 that a large segment deriving from Egypt's Islamic Group and Algeria's Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) had officially joined "Qa`idat al-Jihad." He claimed that Bin Ladin "entrusted me" (*kallafani*) to make the announcement with respect to GSPC.[197] The skeptic might observe that if Bin Ladin wanted to welcome the group into al-Qa`ida, he could have done it himself when he released a statement two months earlier. The same logic would hold true with respect to al-Shabab: Bin Ladin chose not to bestow upon them membership of al-Qa`ida. Appearing on 9 February 2012 on a video to herald a *bushra* (glad tidings) to the *umma*, it was Al-Zawahiri who announced that al-Shabab had joined "Qa`idat al-Jihad," seeking to herald one of the many signs that the "jihadi movement is growing with God's help."[198]

Would al-Zawahiri welcome Harun's death? Possibly. At the very least, one could confidently assert that he would not welcome a third volume of Harun's autobiography.

Concluding Remarks

Some analysts perceive al-Qa`ida to be functioning like a Swiss watch: the more random attacks targeting non-combatants are mounted by jihadis around the world, the stronger is al-Qa`ida. Harun's account combined with the Abbottabad documents reveal that al-Qa`ida's leaders are not smiling at the spread of regional jihadi groups and they are far from impressed with jihadi ideologies and operational methods. Thus random operations mounted by jihadi groups against civilians, especially Muslims, should be interpreted not as a strength in the perception of al-Qa`ida, but a weakness. This is not to suggest that al-Qa`ida should be nominated for a peace award, but that it is interested in mounting qualitative attacks.

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[197] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Qadaya Sakhina" (2), *Minbar al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=efaperre (last accessed 12 February 2012). This was the second interview al-Sahab conducts with al-Zawahiri, coinciding with the 5th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

[198] "Bushra Sarra," *Shabakat Shumukh al-Islam*, http://www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=148330

Judging by al-Qa`ida's internal documents and Harun's account, it is clear that the founders of al-Qa`ida did not envisage their organization growing into a franchise, as some analysts suggest. The emphasis on having an organizational structure and a highly disciplined culture among its members suggests that al-Qa`ida's leaders did not wish to cede control of their brand to jihadis who did not share their worldview and could not be controlled. Among the specific goals the founders enumerated for al-Qa`ida was that of attaining the capacity to serve as a "wellspring for expertise in military training and [the art of] fighting," which is explained as "providing combat and military training cadres for the Islamic world."[199]

This vision was put into practice by investing in human capital that would one day be placed in the service of global militancy. The investment adopted at least two different forms. First, as noted in the previous chapter, when al-Qa`ida was acting in the open in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s it made its guesthouses (*madafat*) and its training camps available to Muslims from around the world, irrespective of their theological orientation, ethnic, regional or group affiliations. This, however, did not mean that these trainees automatically became members of al-Qa`ida.[200] But it did mean that al-Qa`ida was willing to provide military training on a pro bono basis and without having direct control over the goals towards which this training would eventually be directed. The Abbottabad documents suggest that at the very least Bin Ladin would have liked his investment to turn jihadis who were disciplined and mounted methodical and qualitative attacks.

Second, al-Qa`ida made its resources and expertise in "military training and the art of fighting" available to militant Islamic groups engaged in combat in different parts of the world. Consistent with the global vision it set for itself, soon after its inception al-Qa`ida began to contemplate unfolding events across the globe, e.g., Central and South Asia and the Horn of Africa, and proceeded to reach out to militant groups in various regions to provide them with military training. Thus, as early as 1991, al-Qa`ida provided military training to Tajik, Uzbek and Kashmiri groups in Afghanistan.[201] In early 1992 it sent an investigative team to Somalia that was led by Abu `Ubayda al-Banshiri and the "Chinese brother."[202] Harun himself was part of the first East Africa mission that was dispatched in February 1993; he was tasked with training Ogadens fighting against Ethiopia.[203] Before long, al-Qa`ida expanded its activities to Somalia, where an earlier attempt by Hamad then Sayf al-`Adl to exert pressure on the foreign

[199] AFGP-2002-000078, 1 of the Arabic document, although the document starts at 9.
[200] Vol. 1, 71.
[201] Vol. 1, 119.
[202] Vol. 1, 118.
[203] Vol. 1, 157-61. See also AFGP-2002-600104.

policy of Somali leaders had failed.[204] Al-Qa`ida settled for providing military training and to graduate six Somali trainers,[205] most of whom became skilled specialists in the military activities that ensued as the ICU was consolidating its power in early 2006.[206] Later, when Bin Ladin was based in Sudan, al-Qa`ida sent a group of military trainers to Chechnya, consisting of most of those who trained the Ogadens. It was led by Sayf al-Islam al-Misri.[207]

There is no evidence to suggest that in its collaborative efforts al-Qa`ida sought to bring other militant groups into its fold and under its direct leadership. It was only in 2003 that the branding al-Qa`ida took off when Saudi militants adopted the name "al-Qa`ida on the Arabian Peninsula" (QAP).[208] Harun explains that those with whom al-Qa`ida collaborated were not considered to be members of the "original al-Qa`ida"; that they were autonomous as far as their decisions and activities were concerned and did not take their orders from Bin Ladin. In practical terms, the collaboration meant that al-Qa`ida and another jihadi group could come to a mutual agreement to conduct a joint operation or another militant activity; only on these occasions would orders be issued. Otherwise, the same jihadi group maintained its own autonomy, including its ideology (*fikr*) and activities.[209] Quinton Temby's research on the relationship between Indonesia's Jema`a Islamiyya (JI) and al-Qa`ida reflects these dynamics. In the words of a JI member who personally liaised with al-Qa`ida:

> Like a business affiliate, we can ask them [i.e., al-Qa`ida] for an opinion but they have no authority over us. We are free. We have our own funds, our own

[204] Hamad, according to Harun, is an AQ political activist who had several positions in AQ: among them is the head of its political office in London. He is known by the name Khalid al-Fawwaz and his kunya is Ghazi: vol. 1, 143.

[205] Vol. 1, 175. On the difficulties al-Qa`ida encountered in Somali a, see Clint Watts, Jacob Shapiro, Vahid Brown, *Al-Qa`ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, Combating Terrorism Center, (2 July 2007).

[206] Vol. 2, 27.

[207] Vol. 1, 233. At 240 Harun explains that most of the members of the cell that headed to Chechnya were killed in 1996 inside Russian territories, but it continues to operate there. The al-Qa`ida cell liaised with, among others, Aslan Maskhadov, the separatist rebel leader who was killed in 2005; and the battlefield rebel commander Arbi Barayev. Harun had been in charge of preparing the papers of this al-Qa`ida cell in Chechnya.

[208] Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 37.

[209] Vol. 2, 426. Harun's explanation concerns the relationship that existed between Adam `Ayro and al-Qa`ida.

men. We are independent, like Australia and the US. But when it comes to an operation we can join together.[210]

If the dynamics between al-Qa`ida and other jihadi groups in the 1990s was one of selective collaboration rather than of franchising its brand or of unifying jihadi groups under its command, then the business of franchising al-Qa`ida is not organic to the group. Harun's manuscript suggests that in the post 9/11 era, particularly after March 2003—see Conclusion—and far from being in control of the jihadi landscape, al-Qa`ida's role has been either absent or based on ad hoc decisions. Al-Qa`ida in Iraq was certainly a branch of al-Qa`ida, with Bin Ladin himself bestowing the brand on al-Zarqawi. But this was the exception, not the norm. Harun's own experience with al-Shabab illustrates that jihadi groups claiming affiliation with al-Qa`ida are not organic to the group, but at most undisciplined imitators. Harun's claim that the role of al-Qa`ida is peripheral in the jihadi landscape could have been dismissed several months ago as that of a renegade. Now, however, it has a strong aura of credibility: Bin Ladin's own letters composed in 2010 show that his role, at least then, was that of a disappointed spectator when it came to operational jihadi work.

[210] Quinton Temby, "Informal Networks – Unraveling Al-Qaeda's Southeast Asia Alliances," IHS Defense, Security and Risk Consulting, March 2012. My gratitude to Quinton for sharing with me his research before publication.

CONCLUSION
Is There More to al-Qa`ida Than its Name?

Is al-Qa`ida's defeat "within reach"? More specifically, have al-Qa`ida's towering credentials—which it built from the rubble of the U.S. embassies in East Africa, the USS Cole and the Twin Towers—on the verge of collapse? This concluding chapter focuses on al-Qa`ida's strengths and failings as an organization. Drawing on Harun's manuscript, it is argued that al-Qa`ida was crippled not in 2011 but in 2003 when a number of its key tier-two leaders were arrested. Since then, the "original al-Qa`ida" led by Bin Ladin until his death in May 2011 is more of an idea (fikr) than an organization; but it is an idea that is mostly misunderstood by many of those who champion it.

"Operation Neptune Spear," which led to the killing of al-Qa`ida's leader Usama bin Ladin by U.S. Navy SEALs, was followed by a triumphalist mood in the U.S. security establishment.[1] Two months after the operation, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta asserted that the United States is "within reach of strategically defeating al-Qaida;" that "we have undermined their ability to conduct 9/11-type attacks." Referring to al-Qa`ida's leaders, he added that: "We have them on the run. Now is the moment, following what happened to bin Laden, to put maximum pressure on them, because I do believe if we continue this effort we can cripple al-Qaida as a threat."[2] A somewhat more cautious General David Petraeus remarked that al-Qa`ida's capabilities have been seriously depleted, even if the group has not been completely eliminated. He commented that while "there may be elements of al-Qaida out there for some time: the 'brand' so to speak," such elements, he continued, "will not be able to plan and execute strategic attacks."[3]

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[1] See Nicholas Schmidle, "Getting Bin Laden: What happened that night in Abbottabad," *The New Yorker*, (8 August 2011), http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/08/08/110808fa_fact_schmidle (accessed 15 October 2011).

[2] Cited in Jim Garamone, "Panetta Believes U.S. Close to Defeating al-Qaida," *American Forces Press Service*, (9 July 2011), available at: U.S. Department of Defense, http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=64600 (accessed 15 October 2011).

[3] Cited in Jim Garamone, "Al-Qaida Can Be Dismantled, Petraeus Says," *American Forces Press Service*, (9 July 2011), available at: U.S. Department of Defense, http://www.defense.gov//News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=64603 (accessed 15 October 2011). General Petraeus' comments were made when he was still serving as the NATO commander of the International Security Assistance Force.

In the minds of many, the year 2011 may register as the year that lamed al-Qa`ida. However, a reader of Harun's manuscript might justifiably wonder whether al-Qa`ida was still a viable organization in 2011 and a threat to global security. As discussed in previous chapters, Harun is bewildered by both the ideological worldview of jihadi groups claiming affiliation with al-Qa`ida and by their operational tactics. He is emphatic that jihadi groups acting in the name of al-Qa`ida are not organic to the "original al-Qa`ida" (*al-Qa`ida al-umm*) of which he is a member. Harun's reader is also led to believe that the "original al-Qa`ida" has had a limited, if any, role in the proliferation of jihadi groups around the world, including those that have inserted "al-Qa`ida" in their names. This is not to suggest that jihadi groups do not represent a threat to global security; indeed, if Harun's fears are valid, the world is a more dangerous place now that it is at the mercy of irresponsible jihadis, those whom he calls the "jihadis.com."[4] But these jihadis are not al-Qa`ida, nor should they be confused with it.

What then is al-Qa`ida today and is there more to it than its name? As far as Harun is concerned, al-Qa`ida has become an idea or a way of thinking (*fikr*). The problem with this *fikr*, as he sees it, is that it is misunderstood by many of those who champion it.[5] As to the actual organization, he is happy to agree with a certain "Richard" who was interviewed on Morning Joe on MSNBC on 1 August 2008, that "it is difficult to understand what is happening inside al-Qa`ida" and that "the situation is out of control."[6] If al-Qa`ida is no longer in control, when did this happen and why? The following section is a discussion of al-Qa`ida's decline as portrayed by Harun's writings.

The Laming of the "Original al-Qa`ida"

With the loss of a sanctuary in which to train militants and to operate freely in Afghanistan, it is difficult to envisage how the "original al-Qa`ida" that Harun describes—a description largely corroborated by the internal documents of the organization—is functional today in a coordinated and centralized fashion. Indeed, the Abbottabad documents reveal that what has been termed "al-Qa`ida Central"—said to be based in Pakistan's northwest frontier and supposedly providing directives to

[4] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 2, 151, 315.

[5] Ibid. As an example, note how difficult it was for Harun to educate young Somalis and foreign fighters that al-Qa`ida does not espouse a *takfiri* ideology: Vol. 2, 53.

[6] Ibid., Vol. 2, 460. The author has been unable to locate the interview he is referring to online.

regional jihadi groups[7]—is far removed from the internal reality of al-Qa`ida.[8] It appears that in 2010 Bin Ladin proposed to centralize jihadi media releases and the operational work of regional jihadi groups by requiring the leaders of regional jihadi groups to commit themselves to a memorandum of understanding devised by al-Qa`ida. It is unclear whether such a proposal was ever followed through. It must have come as a surprise to Bin Ladin that an "al-Qa`ida Central" existed, since his proposed centralization was inspired by what was reported in the press about his organization. The expression "al-Qa`ida Central," he wrote to `Atiyya, "is a technical term (*istilah*) used in the media to distinguish between al-Qa`ida in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Qa`ida in the rest of the regions (*aqalim*). I do not object to using it initially to clarify the objective [of the centralization endeavor]."[9]

If Bin Ladin was attempting to give his organization a new or at least a different lease on life in 2010, this suggests that prior to this date al-Qa`ida's fortunes had begun to decline. According to Harun, following the 9/11 attacks, Arab jihadis, including al-Qa`ida members, spread in several directions. The first group headed to Iran via Herat. It seems that an arrangement was made with the Iranian government that saw some of them put under house arrest, while others were imprisoned.[10] A second group which had been based in Tora Bora and led by Abu `Umar al-Maghribi, who served once as Bin Ladin's personal bodyguard, sought the help of a tribe in Tarkham, only to be betrayed and handed over to the Pakistan authorities. Harun is under the impression that al-Maghribi and his men were first sent to Bagram prison before they were moved to Guantanamo.[11] Another group, which included Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri, headed to Pakistan. Bin Ladin, Harun was told, left with "three brothers to an unknown location" to regroup, somewhat implying that Bin Ladin took part in the fighting.[12]

Yet, it is not this news that worried Harun. His manuscript suggests that the turning point for al-Qa`ida was in 2003 when key members of its tier-two leadership were arrested, including its "ambassador" in Pakistan, thereby losing the cover that al-Qa`ida

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[7] See for example Craig Whitlock, "The New al-Qaeda Central," *Washington Post*, (9 September 2007); Eric Schmitt, "Jet Plot Shows Growing Ability of Qaeda Affiliates," *New York Times*, (31 December 2009). Schmitt bases his article on interviews with U.S. counterterrorism officials.

[8] Nelly Lahoud, Stuart Caudill, Liam Collins, Gabe Koehler-Derrick, Don Rassler and Muhammad al-`Ubaydi, *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?*, CTC Report, 3 May 2012, 11-21.

[9] SOCOM-2012-0000019, 17. Linguistically, the Arabic expression Bin Ladin uses for AQC is inaccurate. He uses 'al-Qa'ida fi al-markaz': a more appropriate designation would be 'Tanzim al-Qa'ida al-Markazi' or 'Qiyadat al-Qa'ida al-Markaziyya'.

[10] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 497. For details about later years, see Lahoud et al., *Letters from Abbottabad*, 42-7.

[11] Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 497.

[12] Ibid.

might have once enjoyed through its connections with some members of the Pakistani establishment.

The reader should not expect that Harun would explicitly declare al-Qa`ida's virtual collapse. In his mind, even if al-Qa`ida was no longer active or dominant in the jihadi landscape, it nevertheless succeeded in spreading the idea of the need to unite Muslims around the world against the "infidel occupiers;" thus, every person who holds this *fikr* is of al-Qa`ida even if he did not meet Bin Ladin.[13] This may qualify as sentimental or even poetic on the part of Harun but these romantic sentiments are not in consonance with his sober, rational description of al-Qa`ida as an organization. In his analytical mode he is much more selective as to who can be considered to be a member of al-Qa`ida, asserting that not everyone who receives training in al-Qa`ida's camps automatically becomes a member of the group.[14]

It is possible to trace the decline of al-Qa`ida, particularly in those sections of his manuscripts in which his recording of events is immediate and emotionally expressive. For example, Harun speaks of successive "catastrophes" that caused him serious concerns, giving the reader the impression that these events marked a turning point for al-Qa`ida: on 1 March 2003, Harun heard of Khalid Sheikh Muhammad's (KSM) arrest and he "was very concerned by this operation because [I knew] that the FBI wanted to arrest us all in the same week."[15] He was sure that al-Qa`ida's network of security was compromised because KSM always took additional measures for security purposes, often changing more than ten phone lines each week to avoid being tracked by the authorities. Harun was later told that the Pakistani intelligence tracked KSM using technology that could identify his voice, which they matched with the voice prints of his recorded press conferences.[16] Being security cautious, Harun asserts that he purposely evaded the public eye: "I avoided that; I do not like releasing taped recordings or speaking at press conferences."[17] Mustafa al-Hawsawi—alias: Abu Zuheir al-Makki—was also arrested with KSM. He used to work at al-Sahab – al-Qa`ida media company and, more importantly, he used to travel to Dubai to bring back money "to the brothers in Afghanistan."[18]

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[13] Ibid., Vol. 2, 493.
[14] Ibid., Vol. 1, 71.
[15] Ibid., Vol. 1, 534.
[16] Ibid., Vol. 1, 534.
[17] Ibid., Vol. 1, 534.
[18] Ibid., Vol. 1, 535. Harun is under the impression that Hawsawi was deported to Jordan, but that is inaccurate, he is in Guantanamo. Regarding al-Hawsawi's role in financing the jihadis and his current situation, see "9/11 Defendants Charged at Guantánamo With Terrorism and Murder," *New York Times*,

Harun relates that when he heard of these arrests he immediately realized that "we would lose all communications [with the central leadership of al-Qa`ida] because KSM knew many of the brothers' residences."[19] The arrest caused an additional personal impact on Harun, since KSM knew "the house of my wife Umm Luqman."[20] Within two weeks al-Qa`ida suffered another crushing blow: "the second catastrophe befell [us] when the virtuous brother Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri was arrested."[21] The news of Abu Yasir's arrest shook Harun even more deeply than KSM's arrest. Despite maintaining a tone of bravado, and holding fast to his triumphant spirit, he declares that "we have not nor shall we come to an end except on the Hour of Resurrection (*illa bi-qiyam al-sa`a*)."[22] Harun nevertheless painfully admits that "we have lost [Key] tier-two [leaders] within a single week."[23] He further adds: "I was very worried about Abu Yasir's arrest; he, more so than our Brother KSM, knows the locations of al-Qa`ida's centers. He is our ambassador in Pakistan and knows the location of Sheikh Usama at that time."[24] It has to be mentioned that these figures are not the ones that Harun lists elsewhere to be part of al-Qa`ida's tier-two leaders. With the exception of a few whose whereabouts are unknown, many of those whom Harun considers to be tier-two leaders were arrested or killed a few years later. Clearly KSM's importance to al-Qa`ida is widely known, but Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri's importance is less known and it is worth relating Harun's information regarding him.

According to Harun, Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri was a highly valuable actor in al-Qa`ida. In 1987, when he was 16, he left Algeria and headed to Afghanistan and later married a Punjabi woman from Lahore. On account of having established critical contacts with the Pakistani authorities, and having become fluent in Urdu and acquiring Pakistani citizenship, he came to exercise a critical role in al-Qa`ida's committees, [25] and was eventually entrusted with overseeing al-Qa`ida's affairs in Pakistan.[26]

Al-Jaza'iri may well have served as the key intermediary between al-Qa`ida and members of the Pakistani intelligence community. An article in the Arabic press claims

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(31 May 2011), http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/us/01gitmo.html (accessed 15 October 2011); see also the documented case against him at: http://projects.nytimes.com/guantanamo/detainees/10011-mustafa-ahmed-al-hawsawi (accessed 15 October 2011).

[19] Harun, *al-Harb `ala al-Islam*, Vol. 1, 535.

[20] Ibid., Vol. 1, 535.

[21] Ibid., Vol. 1, 535.

[22] Ibid., Vol. 1, 535.

[23] Ibid., Vol. 1, 535. The arrest of Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri occurred on 15 March 2003, so Harun should have recorded it as "within two weeks."

[24] Ibid., Vol. 1, 535.

[25] Ibid., Vol. 1, 130.

[26] Ibid., Vol. 1, 448.

that the case of al-Jaza'iri was one of these "special files" over which the Pakistani government is keen to maintain control. The article reports that Pakistan kept al-Jaza'iri for three years before it handed him over, not to the United States, but to the Algerian government, to avoid exposing ISI-al-Qa`ida links to the CIA. The same report claims that in addition to serving as the "financial bridge" between various operatives of al-Qa`ida across different regions, al-Jaza'iri's connections with the Pakistani establishment were such that in the late 1990s he was surreptitiously flown to Islamabad, to find that General Hamid Gul of the ISI was waiting to meet with him. General Gul informed him that an imminent U.S. attack was about to target Bin Ladin in Afghanistan and that he must warn him.[27] The article is referring to Operation Infinite Reach, which took the form of U.S. military strikes in late August 1998 against Sudan and Afghanistan in retaliation for al-Qa`ida's 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa.

Harun was told that the Pakistani government turned against al-Qa`ida and other jihadis with a vengeance after the 9/11 attacks. But since a group of al-Qa`ida members made the choice to head to Pakistan, it is possible that they were counting on some help from elements of the Pakistani government. If that is the case and if Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri constituted the knot that once tied al-Qa`ida to elements in Pakistan's ISI, it is likely that they lost it in 2003 with his arrest. The collaboration between the ISI and the CIA to arrest him must have signaled a turning point in any relationship that might have existed between al-Qa`ida and the ISI.[28] This might explain why Harun was alarmed about al-Jaza'iri's arrest and wasted no time endeavoring to make contact with the central leadership. Up until then, Harun had been in relatively regular contact with the leadership in Pakistan, mainly through email communication with Sheikh Swedan, of Kenyan origin, who had helped in the planning of the East Africa embassy bombings and assumed charge of Harun's portfolio when he left Afghanistan. In email correspondence preceding KSM's arrest, Swedan had informed Harun that the "Sheikh," i.e., Bin Ladin, was pleased with the Mombasa bombings and that Harun's wife gave birth to a daughter she named Samiyya. At that time Swedan was also close to KSM. Thus, when Harun contacted him after the series of arrests, Swedan confirmed

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[27] Lutfi Flissi, "al-Wasit al-Tijari li-Bin Ladin fi Qabdat al-Aman al-Jaza'iri," (16 October 2007), http://www.echoroukonline.com/ara/national/17740.html?print (last accessed 25 January 2012); for background information about General Gul, see Declan Walsh, "Pakistan's Spymaster Hamid Gul: Angel of Jihad or Windbag Provocateur," *Guardian*, (31 May 2011), http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/hamid-gul-pakistan-spymaster-taliban (last accessed 28 January 2012).

[28] On the Pakistani authorities pursuing Abu Yasir al-Jaza'iri and other members of al-Qa`ida, see "Pakistan suspects ordered freed," *BBC*, (18 February 2003), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2772337.stm (last accessed 20 October 2011).

that KSM and al-Jaza'iri had indeed been arrested. Harun advised Swedan that "you are all in danger; it is critical that the houses [in Pakistan] and every other area that KSM and Abu Yasir knew of be vacated."[29] Swedan assured Harun that "we shall go underground (*sa-nadkhulu al-sirdab*) and communications may therefore be lost." It was in April 2003 when Harun lost all contact with the cell in Pakistan, and he assumed that they "entered Afghanistan to fight alongside their Afghan brothers after they consolidated their ranks once again."[30]

Going by Harun's description, the early part of 2003 marked the time when the "original al-Qa`ida" suffered a crippling blow from which it has not since recovered. As noted in the previous chapter, Harun does not believe that the "original al-Qa`ida" is involved in any of the attacks that have been carried out since 2002. In his mind, the attacks in "Bali, Casablanca, Beslan, London, Madrid and others in East Asia were planned [and carried out] by some jihadis who were in Afghanistan, but I categorically affirm that they are not permanent members of the original al-Qa`ida."[31] Harun is equally certain that al-Qa`ida is not responsible for the proliferation of jihadi groups around the world, save the problematic exception of al-Qa`ida in Iraq.[32]

The "original al-Qa`ida" suffered additional blows in subsequent years when other tier-two leaders that Harun lists in the manuscript were arrested or killed.[33] While Waziristan was often reported to be "the hub of al-Qa`ida operations" where its senior leaders guided the activities of jihadis across the globe,[34] Harun's manuscript suggests that this was far from reality. By the end of 2006, when Harun's wife Halima left Waziristan and joined her husband in Somalia, the situation of the "brothers" in Waziristan was dire. When he met Halima, Harun asked her "of the situation of the brothers in Waziristan;" she told him "that they were safe for the moment due to an agreement between the government and the tribes. But their financial situation was not at all stable. They [are struggling] for their livelihood, and rely on God's grace." She further remarked that "your financial situation here [in Somalia] is by far better than theirs."[35]

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[29] Ibid., Vol. 1, 535.
[30] Ibid., Vol. 1, 536.
[31] Ibid., Vol. 1, 524.
[32] See the previous chapter concerning why al-Qa`ida in Iraq is a problematic exception.
[33] See Chapter Three of this report.
[34] See for instance, Declan Walsh and Allegra Stratton, "Waziristan: the hub of al-Qaida operations," *Guardian*, (7 January 2008), http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/07/pakistan.allegrastratton1 (last accessed 31 December 2011). Since Usama b. Ladin was found living in Pakistan, now al-Qa`ida Central is reported to be "regrouping in Pakistan."
[35] Vol. 2, 174.

At the time he was writing, the key people whom Harun believed continued to matter in al-Qa`ida were "Sayf al-`Adl; Abu Muhammad [al-Misri]; Sheikh Sa'id [al-Misri];[36] and Abu Hafs al-Muritani; led by Sheikh Usama."[37] They mattered because Harun believed them to be still in charge of the Military, Security, Legal and Economic Committees of al-Qa`ida. However, Sa`id al-Misri (Mustafa Abu al-Yazid) was killed in May 2010,[38] Bin Ladin in May 2011, and the whereabouts of Sayf al-`Adl and Abu Muhammad al-Misri are unknown. As to Abu Hafs al-Muritani, he was detained by Iranian authorities in 2001 and released in April 2012. He now resides in Mauritania and has been detained by the authorities. Initially, his family claimed that he was with Mauritanian authorities by choice,[39] but it was since reported that he is on a hunger strike because he is being pressured to meet with foreign interrogators.[40]

If Harun is correct that the dire situation of al-Qa`ida "is not enough" to defeat it "because we have become an idea and we're no longer a group,"[41] then al-Qa`ida may justifiably be blamed for the attacks carried out in its name, but it should not be credited with having mounted them. Indeed, if because al-Qa`ida was crippled, various jihadi groups took advantage of this by using its name to benefit from the credentials the brand has to offer, it would be naïve of the counter-terrorism establishment to validate their claims. This would not simply amount to resuscitating a severely ailing group, but it would also risk misunderstanding the ideology and organizational structure of other rising jihadi groups with characteristics that are fundamentally different from those of al-Qa`ida.

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[36] He was announced as leader of al-Qa`ida in Afghanistan in 2007: see the following report about him by *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, (25 May 2007), Issue, 10405, http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=420726&issueno=10405 (last accessed 27 December 2011).

[37] Vol. 1, 535.

[38] Eric Schmitt, "American Strike Is Said to Kill a Top Qaeda Leader," *New York Times*, (31 May 2010), http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/asia/01qaeda.html (last accessed 24 January 2012).

[39] "Nass Bayan Usrat Mahfuz bin al-Walid," al-Akhbar, (11 April 2012), http://www.alakhbar.info/23686-0-BC-A50B-F0-F.html (accessed 16 April 2012).

[40] "Sheikh al-Qa`ida al-Muritani Mudrib `an al-Ta`am bi-Sabab al-Ajanib," al-`Arabiyya, 30 May 2012, http://www.alarabiya.net/mob/ar/217507.html (accessed 1 June 2012).

[41] Vol. 1, 534.