



# As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad

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Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens

**Foreword by  
Lord Carlile of Berriew QC**

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## CONTACT DETAILS

For questions, queries and additional copies of this report, please contact:

ICSR  
King's College London  
138–142 Strand  
London WC2R 1HH  
United Kingdom  
**T.** +44 (0)20 7848 2065  
**F.** +44 (0)20 7848 2748  
**E.** [mail@icsr.info](mailto:mail@icsr.info)

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This report contains many quotes from audio lectures as well as online forums and emails. All of these have been reproduced in their original syntax, including all spelling and grammatical errors.

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# Foreword

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## **Lord Carlile of Berriew Q.C.**

In the UK, United States, and much of Europe, one of the key components of any counter-terrorism strategy includes provisions for preventing or countering radicalisation. The more we know about this complex and complicated process, the better we can inform the policy-making process. Research by organisations such as the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence provides an invaluable resource for practitioners and experts alike.

This report on the development of Anwar al-Awlaki's political thought, and his influence in the West, provides us with a substantial and important explanation of the process of radicalisation.

One of the key recommendations I made in my recent review of the UK's Prevent strategy was that it must focus on challenging the ideological underpinnings of Islamist-inspired terrorism and the individuals who promote extremist ideology among our youth. Of these ideologues, Awlaki is among the most prominent and influential operating in the English language. He has been linked to numerous plots to attack major Western cities, and continues to spread his message, primarily through the internet.

In a study that takes us from his beginnings as a preacher in a small mosque in San Diego, California to his present role as an ideologue for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens's report provides an insight into the role that Awlaki plays in the current 'homegrown' terrorist threat to the West, and how he came to hold his current ideological positions. As the first serious attempt to offer a scholarly and forensic analysis of Awlaki's messaging and discourse, it should become required reading for anyone working in this field. Without studies of this quality, we shall fail to understand the sources of one of the greatest dangers to our democratic system.



Alex Carlile

**Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation 2001–2011**  
**Independent Oversight of the Prevent Strategy 2011**

# START

NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE  
STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE OF THE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
BASED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Dear Colleagues,

As is made clear in President Obama's recent report, "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," al-Qaeda and its affiliates and adherents are currently the preeminent terrorist threat to the United States. We know that al-Qaeda and its supporters are actively seeking to recruit or inspire Americans to carry out attacks against the United States and over the past several years we have seen increased numbers of American citizens or residents inspired by al-Qaeda's ideology and involved in terrorism. Some have traveled overseas to train or fight, while others have been involved in supporting, financing, or plotting attacks in the homeland. In this context, there could hardly be a case of more pressing national concern than that of Anwar al-Awlaki. Over the last decade, during which he spent time in the United States and Britain, Awlaki has built up a formidable following in the West as a spiritual leader and spokesman for Western Muslim grievances.

In order to counter Awlaki's message of violence, we need to understand the path to radicalization followed by Awlaki and other jihadis who have been radicalized in the West. Our ability to counter the threat we face will be immeasurably strengthened if we can begin to grasp the aspects of al-Qaeda's ideology that is most appealing to those who have grown up in the West.

In this detailed report, Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens endeavors to help us better understand how, why and when Awlaki began his journey on the path to violent jihad. The report goes a long way toward answering crucial questions about what we now refer to as 'homegrown' terrorism, and through interviews, rigorous research and analysis it provides us with the first authoritative and in-depth look into Awlaki's ideology and its origins. The work builds upon a growing body of rigorous empirical analysis on radicalization processes, including notable contributions by a number of START researchers, that has helped to illuminate the diverse paths to and triggers of violent extremism.

As a Department of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Center of Excellence, based at the University of Maryland, START places great value in cutting-edge research into the global jihad movement. In addition, as an academic institute, we are also constantly seeking out impartial, informative and original research. We are therefore delighted to be part of the author's ongoing research on the topic of the spread of Salafi-jihadist ideology in the West, and look forward to continued collaboration with Mr. Meleagrou-Hitchens and the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.

Very Sincerely,



Dr. Gary LaFree  
*Director, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism  
and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland*

# Glossary of Terms

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**Al wala' wal bara':** Salafi doctrine of loyalty and disavowal

**Ameer:** Ruler

**Anbiya:** The Prophets

**Aqeedah:** Creed

**Auliya:** Friend

**Ayah (pl. Ayat):** Koranic verse

**Bida'a:** Religious innovation

**Da'wah:** Proselytism

**Deen:** Religion

**Dunya:** The temporal world

**Fard:** Duty

**Fard al-ayn:** Individual duty

**Fard khifayah:** Collective duty

**Fasiq (pl. Fasiqeen):** Person of no moral character and/or violator of Islamic law

**Fatwa (pl. Fatawa):** An authoritative ruling on a point of Islamic law from a recognised scholarly authority

**Fe Sabeelillah:** In the path of Allah

**Fiqh:** Jurisprudence

**Fir'awn:** The Pharaoh

**Hadith:** Collected sayings of the Prophet

**Hakimiyya:** Sovereignty

**Haqq:** Truth

**Hijrah:** Migration – refers specifically to Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina with his followers in 622 AD

**Hudood:** Islamic penal code

**Ibadah (pl. Ibadat):** An act of worship to Allah

**Ikhwan:** The Muslim Brotherhood

**Iman:** Faith

**Irhab:** Terror

**Jahiliyya** Ignorance – in the context of this report it refers to countries that do not fully implement Sharia law as required by Salafi-jihadis

**Jama'a:** (Islamic) Group

**Jihad:** Struggle – in the context of this report it refers specifically to armed struggle

**Kafir (pl. Kuffar):** Unbeliever

**Khilafa:** The Caliphate

**Kufr:** Unbelief

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**Madhab:** Islamic school of thought

**Manhaj:** Method

**Mujahid (pl. Mujahideen):** Holy warrior

**Munafiq (pl. Munafiqeen):** Religious hypocrite who outwardly practices Islam and conceals their unbelief

**Mushrik (pl. Mushrikeen):** Polytheist

**Nusrah:** The search for help – refers to Hizb ut-Tahrir’s method of seeking support to establish the Caliphate by co-opting powerful people or organisations, either through alliance or infiltration

**Quraish:** Pre-Islamic, Arabian tribe

**Rasool/Rusool/Rasulullah:** The Prophet Mohammed

**Sahaba:** The Companions of Mohammed

**Salafi:** Refers to the *Salaf al-Salihin*, the original group of Mohammed’s followers, along with the two generations that followed them, and is now a multifaceted global Islamic movement which seeks to re-implement their way of life

**Salah:** The practice of prayer in Islam

**Shaheed:** Martyr

**Shaksiyah:** (Islamic) Identity

**Shariah:** Road – in the context of this report it refers to Islamic law as implemented by Salafi-jihadis

**Shaytan:** Satan

**Surah:** Koranic chapter

**Taghoot (pl. Tawaghit):** False leader – in the context of this report it refers to a leader who does not run a government based on Shariah law

**Tarbiyah:** Education – in the context of this report it refers to the Muslim Brotherhood’s method of preparing the ground for the creation of an Islamic society governed by the Shariah

**Ulema:** Islamic legal scholars

**Ummah:** The global Islamic nation

**Wasatiyya:** The middle way – in the context of this report it refers to the Muslim Brotherhood’s strategy for the West

# Executive summary

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## Important Case Study

- Awlaki represents the most effective and refined version of his English speaking Salafi-jihadi predecessors, who has adapted more effectively to Western political and social culture. However, unlike his forebears, he was also long considered a leading moderate Muslim and critic of al-Qaeda, having cultivated this image in the years both before and immediately following 9/11. The ideological and intellectual journey that is evident within his public discourse makes him a useful and pertinent case study for the radicalisation of Western Muslims.
- Despite some reports to the contrary, Awlaki was well known as a popular preacher long before the recent media interest in him. According to some sources, by 2000 he was one of the most well known English speaking Islamic preachers in the United States.
- Although there is a clear shift towards violence in his later work, a close analysis of the corpus of Awlaki's sermons and articles shows a surprising level of consistency throughout. Little has changed from his earlier years in both his discourse and ideological worldview. Rather, the only significant change has been in the prescriptions for solving the perceived problems faced by the *ummah* (global Muslim community).

## Connections with the Muslim Brotherhood

- During his time in the US and UK, many of Awlaki's main backers and sponsors were closely tied to the international Muslim Brotherhood movement.
- While in America, much of Awlaki's work was more comparable with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood than it was with al-Qaeda's. His recommendations for Muslims living in the West were almost identical to those put forward by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the Brotherhood's spiritual leaders. However, even at this early stage, he displayed an admiration for Sayyid Qutb, one of the intellectual godfathers of Salafi-jihadism.

## Homegrown Jihadism

- The story of Anwar al-Awlaki, and in particular his intellectual progression to jihad, provides a unique and revealing insight into jihadism in the West. This movement is no longer confined to Muslim majority countries, and through arguments he and others have provided, its message now resonates with small sections of Western Muslims.
- The movement has achieved this level of resonance through a process which includes the appropriation of contemporary Western political discourse about human rights, injustice and foreign policy, interwoven with the history of Islam and the

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fostering a of global Islamic consciousness which demands violent action in order for it to survive and expand.

- Using a number of case studies of individuals influenced to act by Awlaki's work, this report shows precisely how Awlaki has made key Salafi-jihadi theological and ideological dictums relevant and accessible to Western Muslims through translation and his use of language.
- Throughout his career, Awlaki's main focus has been to convince Western Muslims that their governments are actively engaged in a multi-faceted war against Islam and Muslims. During his more Muslim Brotherhood-influenced phase, his suggested responses to this threat included political activism within Western Islamist lobby groups, and as he embraced Salafi-jihadism, this gradually became a call for violence.
- In his earlier stages, Awlaki's ability to juxtapose key moments from the early history of Islam onto the present situation of Western Muslims made him immensely popular and easily accessible. In his later, more al-Qaeda aligned work, one can see how he employs this skill as a highly effective mobilisation tool, using the examples of Mohammed's more violent phases to encourage modern day jihad.

## **Relevance to al-Qaeda Post-bin Laden**

- A significant feature of much of Awlaki's work is the lack of direct references to the al-Qaeda network or any of its leading members. This reflects his desire, and that of many other actors within the movement, for the global jihad to move away from a reliance on a particular group or individual, and instead to take the shape of a social movement that transcends personality, culture and organisational affiliation. This is particularly important in the post-bin Laden era, where al-Qaeda and other global jihadists are struggling to remain appealing and relevant.
- Despite his popularity, there is a large gap between Awlaki and senior al-Qaeda leaders like the late Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi, in terms of both the depth of his arguments and his personal experiences in the global jihad. Awlaki's presentation of global jihadist ideology is a simplified version of what these and other men have already formulated, and he has tailored it so as to appeal to as many people as possible within the new 'Facebook generation' of young, Western Muslims.
- The vast majority of Awlaki's output is spoken and he has written little, especially when compared to Zawahiri, whose lengthy treatises have provided al-Qaeda with its ideological backbone. In addition, Awlaki has no experience in the battlefield, which sets him apart from the majority of leading al-Qaeda members.

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## Policy Implications

- Awlaki's story, while not providing any definitive answers, suggests that there is no easy formula or grand strategy which will solve the problem of homegrown extremism and radicalisation. In particular, it warns against policies that are predicated on the distinction between violent and non-violent actors within the Islamist movement; these distinctions are unclear, and the boundaries that do exist are blurry and easily traversed.
- According to intelligence officials who were involved with the initial assessments of the ideologue for the United States government, Awlaki's main role in the global jihad is ideological rather than operational. Despite his direct involvement in a number of attempted terrorist attacks in the West, it is his ability to project Salafi-jihadi ideology and mobilise Western Muslims through his sermons that represents his greatest threat. Awlaki is therefore a key tactical asset to the global jihad's strategy for garnering Western recruits and expanding the movement.

# 1 Introduction

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In the past three years Anwar al-Awlaki has, according to senior security officials in Europe and America, become one of the most important actors in the Western Salafi-jihadi movement.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand how and why he has reached this position, it is important to first unpick his intellectual and ideological formation. Thus, this report will track the intellectual development of the American-Yemeni cleric, beginning from his time as the face of a moderate, Western Islam to his most recent incarnation as a senior member of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Following a loose chronology of his work, this report will map out Awlaki's progression to violent jihadism and determine how he has succeeded in framing jihadist discourse so that this ideology is effectively delivered to a Western, English speaking audience. In doing so, this study also intends to demonstrate that, although he did not begin with openly supporting al-Qaeda inspired violence, Awlaki's interpretation of political events through a specific ideological frame predisposed him to supporting violence. His **diagnostic** framing remained largely consistent throughout, with the only significant change found in his **prognosis** – moving as it did from calling for more Muslim Brotherhood-based solutions such as *tarbiyah*<sup>2</sup> and *daw'ah* (proselytising), to the Salafi-jihadi calls for unrelenting violence against all non-Muslims.

On this basis I posit a broader thesis which relates directly to ongoing debates about violent and non-violent extremism and government responses to them. Specifically the report argues that the core Islamist diagnosis of the world can, and sometimes will, lead individuals to support organisations such as al-Qaeda.

This report charts his formation, development and progression through a forensic analysis of his spoken and written output over this period. This will be split into two main sections: pre-al-Qaeda, during which he had an *Ikhwan* (Muslim Brotherhood) influence; and when he openly began to support al-Qaeda.

In the first instance, it will identify his diagnostic and prognostic frames during his more Muslim Brotherhood-oriented phase and show how, although his diagnosis of problems facing Muslims and the world has remained largely unchanged, his prognosis for addressing these changed substantially as he moved toward Salafi-jihadism. It will also identify the frames he uses during the latter stage to motivate Western Muslims to mobilise in favour of his cause. Further, through a reconstruction of the milieu in which he operated at various points, it stresses the importance of analysing this primary source material chronologically and also within its ideological, intellectual and historical context. This context includes both the complexities and tensions within Salafist and Islamist thought on the one hand, and

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Director General of MI5 Jonathan Evans' speech to the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals, 16 September 2010, available at <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/output/the-threat-to-national-security.html>; Former United States Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis Charles E. Allen's speech at GEOINT Conference, 28 October 2008, available at [http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/speeches/sp\\_1225377634961.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/speeches/sp_1225377634961.shtm)

<sup>2</sup> See Glossary

on the other it also places those ideas against the backdrop of other Western intellectual discursive trends, ideas and broader political development, as they relate to the position of Muslims in the West, Western security and foreign policy and the concept of the *ummah*.

Throughout this study, the way in which Awlaki's ideas have been received, taken up or embraced by his audience is explained with specific reference to those who have planned, attempted or carried out extremist or violent actions after following his work. This analysis will identify what aspects of his message have the most resonance among Western Muslims, and therefore provide some understanding about how to counter the ongoing problem of so-called 'homegrown' radicalisation.

Anwar al-Awlaki's role in the global jihad against the West is twofold: operational and ideological. Some experts, such as Thomas Hegghammer, have concentrated primarily on the former, pointing to a number of examples in which Awlaki has specifically directed a terrorist attack, such as the attempted bombing of Northwest Airlines flight 253 by Nigerian national Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the recent case of British Airways employee Rajib Karim – who Awlaki attempted to co-opt for a mission to bring down an airliner – demonstrates beyond any doubt that he remains committed to directly helping execute an act of terror.<sup>4</sup> Other scholars, including Gregory Johnsen, question much of the recent media and government interest in the global jihad's newest celebrity and argue that his operational role is greatly exaggerated, suggesting that other senior members of al-Qaeda and its affiliates are far more dangerous.<sup>5</sup> Both of these views have their merit, but this report will focus on the primary threat Awlaki poses: his ability, through his lectures and sermons, to mobilise Western Muslims to take action in the cause of global jihad by giving immediate relevance to its ideology.<sup>6</sup> Thus, this paper will concentrate on his ideological role in the Western jihad, although a study of Awlaki cannot wholly ignore his influence on the tactical shift taken by the movement.

Awlaki is the latest in a long line of English speaking Salafi ideologues, emerging from a milieu which included other like-minded individuals dating back to the late 80s and early 90s, who were based primarily in Britain and America. These include well known figures such as the American Salafis Ali al-Timimi, London-based Salafi-jihadi clerics Abu Hamza and the founder of al-Muhajiroun, Omar Bakri Mohammed. Together, they introduced Salafi, Islamist and in some cases Salafi-jihadi thought to an audience of Western Muslims who were seeking new and culturally transcendent expressions of their religion which could offer them solutions to contemporary issues.

I argue that Awlaki represents the most effective and refined version of his English speaking predecessors, and has adapted more effectively to Western political and social culture. However, unlike his forebears, he was also long considered a moderate and critic of al-Qaeda, having cultivated this image in the years both before and immediately following 9/11. The ideological and intellectual transformation that is

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<sup>3</sup> T. Hegghammer, 'The Case for Chasing Awlaki', *Foreign Policy*, 24 November 2010

<sup>4</sup> 'Terror plot BA man Rajib Karim gets 30 years', *BBC News*, 18 March 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12788224>

<sup>5</sup> G. Johnsen, 'A False Target in Yemen', *The New York Times*, 19 November 2010

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix for a comprehensive list of Western Muslims who have been influenced by Awlaki's message

evident within his public discourse makes him a useful and pertinent case study for the radicalisation process of Western Muslims. It should be noted at this point that there is a large gap between Awlaki and senior al-Qaeda leaders like the late Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi, in terms of both the depth of his arguments and his personal experiences in the global jihad. Awlaki's presentation of global jihadist ideology is a simplified version of what these and other men have already formulated, and he has tailored it so as to appeal to as many people as possible within the new 'Facebook generation' of young, Western Muslims. The vast majority of his output, for example, is spoken and he has written little, especially when compared to Zawahiri, whose lengthy treatises have provided al-Qaeda with its ideological backbone. Nonetheless, since the demise of bin Laden, there have been some suggestions that Awlaki is among those who may one day succeed him as the head of the network. This is unlikely for a number of reasons. Chief among these is his lack of profile in the Arab world; the majority of his followers are Western Muslims, and any leader of al-Qaeda would require a substantial base of Arab supporters.

Awlaki has also not seen combat, whereas al-Libi has experience as a military commander in Afghanistan, and both bin Laden and Zawahiri were involved in the jihad against the Soviets. To gain some credibility, he therefore makes the most out of his year and a half incarceration in Yemen, writing about it in his blog and giving a lengthy interview to a Western supporter in which he claimed he was being victimised by the Americans.<sup>7</sup> This is not, however, to diminish his importance, and there have been a number of developments which could suggest a bright future for the ambitious ideologue.

Christopher Boucek has written of claims that Awlaki is becoming better known in the Middle East, and security officials in Saudi Arabia are concerned that his 'profile is rising in the Arabic speaking world.'<sup>8</sup> In addition, intelligence gathered in preparation for the May 2011 raid on bin Laden's compound in Abbotobad included a message from a senior member of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), in which he suggested that Awlaki take his place as head of the network's Yemeni affiliate. Bin Laden's reply however, was lukewarm, according to a security official who paraphrased it as follows: 'I know you. I trust you. Let's keep things the way they are.'<sup>9</sup> The US House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security also revealed in a July 2011 report that Awlaki has become an important lynchpin in the budding relationship between AQAP and Somalia's al-Shabaab militia. As well as having pledged an ideological alliance with the preacher, the report claims that 'Shabaab is cementing operational links with Yemeni-American AQAP leader Anwar al-Aulaqi and his growing terror network.'<sup>10</sup>

The most effective delivery of Awlaki's message has thus far been through the internet – a medium which has been expertly harnessed by al-Qaeda and its sympathisers over the last decade to achieve maximum penetration of, and impact within, Western societies.

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<sup>7</sup> 'Moazzam Begg Interviews Imam Anwar al-Awlaki', *www.cageprisoners.com*, 31 December 2007, available at: <http://old.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=22926>

<sup>8</sup> C. Boucek, 'The New Face of al-Qaeda?', *Foreign Policy*, 18 May 2011

<sup>9</sup> S. Rotella, 'New Details in the bin Laden Docs: Portrait of a Fugitive Micro-Manager', *www.propublica.org*, 11 May 2011, available at: <http://www.propublica.org/article/bin-laden-documents-portrait-of-a-fugitive-micro-manager/single>

<sup>10</sup> 'Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American Community and the Threat to the Homeland', Majority Investigative Report of the US House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, 27 July 2011)

This has presented authorities with the unprecedented challenge of countering these messages, with the internet now widely acknowledged as the most effective dissemination tool for global jihadists.<sup>11</sup> As well as being found on password protected jihadist online forums, the vast majority of his work is also readily available on mainstream websites, including Youtube. This has concerned many Western government and in November 2010, the then UK Security and Counter-Terrorism Minister, Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones called on the US administration to take more direct steps to ensure that Youtube removes videos of Awlaki from its database.<sup>12</sup>

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**11** See for example comments made by Interpol Secretary General, Robert K. Noble, on 21 September 2010 in Paris, France. Available at <http://www.interpol.int/Public/ICPO/PressReleases/PR2010/PR072.asp>

**12** D. Gardham, G. Rayner and J. Bingham, "White House "must shut down hate videos on Youtube", *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 November 2010

## 2 Methodology and Key Concepts

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'I wish to explain to you in brief terms and I want you to note the point that Islam's call for the affirmation of faith in one God and offering devotion to Him alone was not an invitation to follow a creed in the same conventional sense as the call of other religious creeds. In reality, it was an invitation to join a movement of social revolution.'

– Abul A'ala Maududi

**T**he following chapter explains the methodology used in this report and the ongoing research on English Speaking Salafi-jihadi ideologues, of which this study of Awlaki is a part. Subsequent chapters focus more directly on Awlaki's development and the policy making implications of this.

### Social Movement Theory

A significant feature of much of Awlaki's work is the paucity of direct references to the al-Qaeda network or any of its leading members. This reflects his desire, and that of many other actors, for the global jihad to move away from a reliance on a particular group or individual, and instead to take the shape of a social movement that transcends personality, culture and organisational affiliation. Thus, this study will provide an insight into how and why Awlaki attempts to "sell" the Salafi-jihadi ideology to Western Muslims through an extensive analysis of his work, to which certain aspects of social movement theory, in particular frame analysis and boundary activation mechanisms, will be applied.

Despite it being identified by Sydney Tarrow as early as 1998 as 'the most powerful global movement of the early 1990s',<sup>13</sup> the application of social movement mechanisms to the Islamist movement remains an underdeveloped field.<sup>14</sup> As Kurzman noted in 2004, 'over the past generation, the fields of social movement theory and Islamic studies have followed parallel trajectories, with few glances across the chasm that has separated them.'<sup>15</sup> Over the last few years, this has gradually changed, and social movement theory has perhaps best been applied to Islamist movements in Quintan Wiktorowicz's *Radical Islam Rising* and his edited collection, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Significantly, in the latter work – which mainly covers non-Western Islamic activism – frame analysis, although referred to, is largely relegated in favour of other aspects of social movement theory, such as resource mobilisation, as an explanation for movement success and trajectory.<sup>16</sup> Frame analysis has yet to be applied to the output of Salafi-jihadi "radicalisers" in the West, when it could be

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<sup>13</sup> S.Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

<sup>14</sup> See for example: D. Snow, 'Ideology, Framing Processes and Islamic Movements', 2000, Paper presented at New York University, February 19-20

<sup>15</sup> C. Kurzman (2004), 'Social Movement Theory and Islamic Studies', in Q. Wiktorowicz (ed), *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Indiana University Press, 2004)

<sup>16</sup> G. Robinson, ' Hamas as a Social Movement', in Q. Wiktorowicz (ed), *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Indiana University Press, 2004)

the most appropriate means of analysis for further research on this subject.

## Framing and Frame Analysis

Awlaki is offering a simplified, easy to consume version of Salafi-jihadi ideology for Western Muslims, and as Robinson explains: 'To effectively popularise its ideology, a social movement must be able to provide clear summations of its ideology that resonate with its target audience...cultural framings represent the popular, bumper-sticker version of the broader ideology of the movement.'<sup>17</sup> This view captures the essence of the approach adopted in this study.

In order to best understand how Awlaki is able to make Salafi-jihadi ideology appealing to Western Muslims, it is first necessary to analyse his skill in bringing together seemingly unconnected conflicts and events around the world – from the NATO-ISAF presence in Afghanistan to the Mohammed cartoons controversy – and portraying them as part of a Western conspiracy to destroy Islam and Muslims. This is best demonstrated using frame analysis which, according to Benford and Snow, is 'a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements.'<sup>18</sup> It is also an important analytical tool when attempting to explain the processes, evolution and appeal of a social movement, in this case the global jihad.

In order for such a movement to have any real impact or success it must be able to offer relevance and meaning to its ideas and purpose to a given group of people. According to Goffman, frames are a 'schemata of interpretation' that assist people 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' events both within their immediate surroundings and on the world stage.<sup>19</sup> Benford and Snow also inform us that 'by rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective.'<sup>20</sup> Frames which are specifically formulated so as to elicit movement members, or potential recruits, to take part in collective action on behalf of a social movement are referred to as "collective action frames," and are the type which this study will focus on.

Often, a movement adopts a frame which is unspecific, broad, multifaceted and associated with a variety of separate, and often rival, movements; this is referred to as a "master frame".<sup>21</sup> In the case of the Islamist movement, the primary master frame is that which portrays Islam and the secular, primarily Western, world as fundamentally conflicting. For al-Qaeda and the global jihadist movement, since Islam was first introduced to the world, non-Muslims have waged a physical and ideological war on the religion and its followers, which is at present being carried out by a combination of secularists, Christian Crusaders and Jews. This grievance-based injustice frame is the most effective tool used by all Islamist movements to mobilise their adherents. As this report

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<sup>17</sup> 'Hamas as a Social Movement'

<sup>18</sup> R. D. Benford and D. A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26 (2000), pp. 611–639

<sup>19</sup> E. Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (Harvard University Press, 1974)

<sup>20</sup> D. A. Snow, E. B. Rochford, Jr., S. K. Worden and R. D. Benford, 'Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation', *American Sociological Review*, 51:4 (1986), pp. 464-481

<sup>21</sup> For more on master frames see: D. A. Snow, 'Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields', in D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004); D. A. Snow and R. D. Benford, 'Master Frames and Cycles of Protest', in A. D. Morris and C. McClurg Mueller (ed.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, (Yale University Press, 1992)

will demonstrate, almost all of Awlaki's interpretive frames fall under the rubric of this master frame, and he seeks to include within this frame events in the West that are familiar to – and perhaps have some impact upon – its Muslims, thus giving it immediate relevance to their lives.<sup>22</sup>

Master frames are made up of three collective action sub-frames that, when combined, offer an identification of the problem, as well as solutions and motivations for collective action. Benford and Snow identify these three 'core framing tasks' as: diagnostic framing (problem identification and attributions), prognostic framing, and motivational framing.<sup>23</sup>

In the first instance, frame articulators like Awlaki must offer a diagnosis of the problems which possible recruits are facing, or perceive they are facing, in their daily lives. The majority of diagnostic frames are termed as "injustice frames",<sup>24</sup> or frames which act as 'as a mode of interpretation – prefatory to collective noncompliance, protest, and/or rebellion – generated and adopted by those who come to define the actions of an authority as unjust.'<sup>25</sup> Similarly, McAdam explains that 'before collective action can get underway, people must collectively define their situation as unjust.'<sup>26</sup>

Once a diagnosis is formed, one can begin to offer possible solutions, or prognoses. As its name suggests, this type of framing 'involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan.'<sup>27</sup> Whereas Awlaki and al-Qaeda's diagnosis differs little from any other Islamist movement, it is in the prognostic phase where divergence is more common. This paper will demonstrate that in Awlaki's case, his diagnosis, based primarily on an ideological worldview, has remained essentially the same throughout his career as a preacher. His solutions to the problems of the *ummah* (global Muslim community), however, gradually changed from recommending more involvement in political Islamic activism within ostensibly non-violent Islamist movements, to his current position of calling for violence against non-Muslims around the world.

The final framing task, the motivational, entails convincing potential movement participants of the merits and efficacy of taking part in collective action. Gamson, for example, argues that one of the key elements of collective action framing is creating 'the consciousness that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through collective action.'<sup>28</sup> Awlaki must therefore convince his audience of the utility of participating in the global jihad, be that through carrying out a suicide bombing, or joining one of the militant Islamist insurgencies that are currently operating around the world. He must also convince them that violent jihad is the surest path to pleasing God, a common desire of any religious believer.

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the importance of finding local resonance for master frames see: T. Olesen and F. Khosrokhavar, *Islamism as Social Movement*, Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation (CIR), Department of Political Science Aarhus University, Denmark, May 2009

<sup>23</sup> 'Framing Processes and Social Movements'

<sup>24</sup> For more on injustice frames see: W.A. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); W.A. Gamson, B. Fireman and S. Rytina, *Encounters with Unjust Authority* (Dorsey, 1982)

<sup>25</sup> 'Framing Processes and Social Movements'

<sup>26</sup> D. McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (University of Chicago Press, 1978)

<sup>27</sup> 'Framing Processes and Social Movements'

<sup>28</sup> W. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1992)

## Frame Alignment

Social movement theory, according to Wiktorowicz, has now begun to address 'the ways in which meaning is produced, articulated and disseminated by movement actors through interactive processes.'<sup>29</sup> In order to understand how the Salafi-jihadi movement has begun to appeal to Western Muslims, its ability to create frames which draw upon 'indigenous cultural symbols, language and identities' of potential recruits must be analysed.<sup>30</sup>

Success for a social movement is achieved, in part, through the process of frame alignment, described by Benford and Snow as 'strategic efforts by social movement organizations to link their interests and interpretive frames with those of prospective constituents and actual or prospective resource providers'.<sup>31</sup> Wiktorowicz elaborates on this, stating that 'where a movement frame draws upon indigenous cultural symbols, language and identities, it is more likely to reverberate with constituents.'<sup>32</sup> A social movement, therefore, succeeds when the message of the frame articulator aligns with the views and experiences of potential movement participants, and achieves a level of resonance which can move people towards action.<sup>33</sup>

In order to mobilise people to take part in collective action on behalf of a social movement, events and ideas must be framed in such a way as to give it an immediate relevance to the target audience. It is here where Awlaki's work really begins; his main purpose is to align pre-existing frames developed by al-Qaeda's ideology and that of the larger Salafi-jihadi movement with the perspectives and experiences of a Western, English speaking audience. His fluency in the language and culture of this audience is unrivalled among his fellow Salafi-jihadi ideologues, making him well placed to achieve the required level of resonance.

As Wiktorowicz notes, however, frame resonance is not enough, and in order to achieve mobilisation, the person or group using the frame must themselves be deemed credible.<sup>34</sup> In Awlaki's case, despite no formal Islamic training, over the past fifteen years he has built up a reputation as a learned scholar through his many lectures on the Koran and Hadith. It is these religious and largely non-political works from his early days as a preacher that established him as one of the rising stars of Western Salafi Islam, and gave him a large base of loyal followers, for whom he had reinvigorated their religion.

If analysts and policy makers are able to understand how figures like Awlaki have been able to achieve such a level of resonance with a significant portion of Western Muslims, they may then be able to construct appropriate responses to the phenomenon of 'homegrown' terrorism and extremism.

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<sup>29</sup> Q. Wiktorowicz Introduction in Q. Wiktorowicz (ed), *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Indiana University Press, 2004)

<sup>30</sup> Q. Wiktorowicz Introduction

<sup>31</sup> 'Framing Processes and Social Movements'

<sup>32</sup> Q. Wiktorowicz Introduction

<sup>33</sup> R. Meijer, 'Taking the Islamist Movement Seriously: Social Movement Theory and the Islamist Movement', *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 50 (2005), pp. 279-291

<sup>34</sup> Q. Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*, (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005)

## Boundary Activation

One of the most crucial aspects of a recruiter's message is the creation and cultivation of a collective identity; a basis for any social movement. The Islamist movement is no exception, and for Awlaki – whose aim is to create an unyielding and resolute group of followers, loyal only to the Salafi-jihadi interpretation of Islam – defining one's Islamic *shaksiyah* (identity) and setting its parameters as opposed to non-Muslims and “deviant” Muslims is paramount. This process of defining the boundaries between the “true” Muslims and all of their supposed enemies is often referred to in social movement literature as “boundary activation”.<sup>35</sup>

A crucial aspect of almost any Islamist movement's mission is its desire to magnify and raise the significance of existing sectarian differences within any given society so that they can act as barriers between movement adherents and those who may dilute, question or resist their ideology.<sup>36</sup> In any form of Islamism, there are two very important boundaries which define the movement: that between Muslims and non-Muslims; and that between “rightly-guided” and “deviant” Muslims. As we shall see, much of Awlaki's messaging is aimed at demonstrating, activating and reinforcing both of these boundaries. In the case of the former, he refers often to the Salafi interpretation of *al wala' wal bara'* (loyalty to Muslims and Islam and disavowal of non-Muslims and their practices), and stresses it as an important part of the correct *aqeedah* (creed). Awlaki's approach to the boundaries between Muslims focuses heavily upon different interpretations of jihad, and the conditions which are required to carry it out.

### ***Al wala' wal bara'***

Within the Salafi movement, the concept of *al wala' wal bara'* is one which is applied in order to define and activate boundaries between what they see as “rightly-guided” Muslims on one side and “deviant” sects as well as non-Muslims on the other. Originally formulated by thirteenth century Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyya, its stated purpose is to preserve the purity of Islam as defined in the Koran and Hadith, and create a devoted and ideological group of followers. Joas Wagemakers identifies *al wala' wal bara'* as a means used by modern day Salafis, and jihadis in particular, to clearly convey the war on Islam frame because it ‘establishes such a clear dichotomy between “pure” Islam and everything else that it lends itself perfectly to the frequent attempts by Salafis to frame Islam as being under attack.’<sup>37</sup>

Wagemakers also describes this doctrine as one which is used to ‘set up boundaries between groups and create divisions’ which in the West ‘can be used as a bulwark against successful integration into society.’<sup>38</sup> An inherently extreme concept, it is nonetheless interpreted in a number of different ways among the various strains of Salafism. Many non-violent Salafis who avoid applying their *aqeedah* to modern day politics, and are often close to or supportive of the

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<sup>35</sup> C. Tilly, ‘Social Boundary Mechanisms’, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 34:2 (2004), pp. 211-236

<sup>36</sup> C. Tilly Foreword in Q. Wiktorowicz (ed), *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Indiana University Press, 2004)

<sup>37</sup> J. Wagemakers, ‘Framing the “threat to Islam”: *al wala' wal bara'* in Salafi discourse’, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30:4, September 2008

<sup>38</sup> J. Wagemakers, ‘The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *al wala' wal bara'* in the ideology of Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi’, in R. Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (Hurst, 2009)

Saudi establishment, use it as a mechanism to prevent Muslims from allowing the purity of their religion to be diluted or corrupted by other religions and cultures. They warn that Muslims must show their loyalty (*wala*) only to their fellow believers and avoid unnecessary contact with non-Muslims, rejecting their beliefs and practices, or any so-called “interfaith dialogue” with other religions. To support their claims, these Salafis most commonly refer to the following Koranic verses:

Sura 3:28:

Let not believers take disbelievers as allies rather than believers. And whoever [of you] does that has nothing with Allah, except when taking precaution against them in prudence. And Allah warns you of Himself, and to Allah is the [final] destination.

Sura 5:51:

O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.

Sura 60:1:

O you who have believed, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies, extending to them affection while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, having driven out the Prophet and yourselves [only] because you believe in Allah , your Lord. If you have come out for jihad in My cause and seeking means to My approval, [take them not as friends]. You confide to them affection, but I am most knowing of what you have concealed and what you have declared. And whoever does it among you has certainly strayed from the soundness of the way.

This concept is particularly popular with Western Salafis, whose audiences are often made up of Muslims who have very regular interactions with Western culture. Take, for example, the words of Abdur Raheem Green, a popular Salafi preacher among Western Muslims, and considered by many as part of the non-violent Salafi movement:

So the natural condition of the human being is to...worship Allah alone. But the environment changes that, and causes someone to actually be the opposite, to make *shirk* [idol worship] with Allah, to set up rivals to Allah, which is the greatest oppression, the greatest wrongdoing and the greatest tyranny... The prophet warned us, be careful who you take as your friend, because you will take your *deen* [religion] from your friend. This is one of the reasons why Allah has warned us in his book: ‘do not take the disbelievers as your *auliya* [allies], do not take the Jews and the Christians, or the *mushrikeen* [polytheists] as your *auliya*.’...Do not prefer them to the believers, do not prefer their company to the company of the believers.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> A.R. Green, ‘Surviving the West’, undated. It should also be noted here that although Green is considered a non-violent Salafi, he has also expressed support for jihad in certain circumstances, though not within Western countries.

On the other end of the Salafi spectrum, the jihadis apply the doctrine in an expressly political fashion, using it to attack rulers in Muslim majority countries who do not properly apply the Shariah (they are often referred to as the *tawaghit*). This interpretation was largely formulated and popularised by Jordanian Salafi-jihadi ideologue, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who presents these rulers as polytheists because they worship man-made laws over those of Allah. Any Muslim who sides with man-made law is, according to Maqdisi, an apostate who has pledged loyalty to the forces of unbelief, and true Muslims are obligated to fight jihad against these rulers in order to establish the law of Allah in their place.<sup>40</sup> His most important work, *Millat Ibrahim* (The Religion of Abraham), begins with a 'Declaration of Disavowal', which outlines what he believes should be the main targets of a pious Muslim's *bara'*, or disdain:

To the transgressing rulers (*tawaghit*) of every time and place... to the transgressing rulers; the governors and the leaders and the Caesars and the Kisrahs (Persian Emperors) and the Pharaohs and the Kings... to their servants and their misguiding scholars (Ulama)... to their supporters and their armies and their police and their intelligence agencies... and their guardians... to all of them collectively, we say: 'Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allah.' [Koran 60:4] Free from your retched laws, methodologies, constitutions and values... free from your repugnant governments, courts, distinguishing characteristics and media... 'We have rejected you, and there has become apparent between us and you, enmity and hatred forever, until you believe in Allah Alone.' [Koran 60:4]<sup>41</sup>

This Islamist interpretation of *tawaghit* (singular: *taghoot*) derives, in part, from Abul A'ala Maududi, founder of the South Asian Islamist political party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, whose definition of *taghoot* is among the most succinct. Speaking about the evils of non-Shariah leadership which usurps the rule of Allah to an audience in Lahore in 1939, he proclaimed:

The word *Taghut* is derived from *Tughatan* (the deluge) which bears the meaning 'to cross the limit'...when man transgresses all lawful bounds and exerts himself to assume the position of the Lord over human beings or to expropriate more goods than are rightfully his due, this is called 'fighting in the way of *Taghut*'.<sup>42</sup>

In Awlaki's lectures, his initial expression of *al wala' wal bara'* was closer to the non-violent Salafi position, and his main concern was the preservation of the Islamic *shaksiyah* of Muslims who live in the West. His interpretation does not reach its jihadi apex until later on, being as it was more congruent with Ibn Taymiyya's as a 'tool that keeps Muslims away from un-Islamic practices'<sup>43</sup> than it was with Maqdisi's, who made it into one of the pillars of Salafi-jihadi thought.

Even when Awlaki's work does begin to take on a more Salafi-jihadi tone, his focus on *al wala' wal bara'* differs from Maqdisi's.

<sup>40</sup> For more on Maqdisi's interpretation of *al wala' wal bara'* see J. Wagemakers, 'A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi', *British Journal of Middle-Eastern Studies*, 36:2 (2009), pp. 281-297

<sup>41</sup> A.M. al-Maqdisi, *Millat Ibrahim wa da'wat al-anbiya' wa-l-mursalim*, translation by At-Tibyan Publications, undated

<sup>42</sup> A. A'ala Maududi, 'Jihad in Islam', 1939 speech given in Lahore Town Hall. For transcript see A. A'ala Maududi, *Jihad in Islam* (Holy Koran Publishing House)

<sup>43</sup> 'The Transformation of a Radical Concept'

Whereas the latter concentrates on the application of this doctrine at the political level so that he can mobilise Muslims to fight the “near enemy”, Awlaki’s focus is the “far enemy”; he must convince Western Muslims to not only disavow the ways of their non-Muslim compatriots on an individual level, but also to fight and kill them in Western countries. This tenet is central to much of Awlaki’s later work and is an important part of his desire to transfer the core of Salafi-jihadi ideology to a Western audience.

However, *al wala’ wal bara’* often presents a problem for Salafis seeking frame resonance with a wide audience. Wagemakers points out that for Muslims in Muslim majority countries, though the idea of a war on Islam may be relatively pervasive, the details of *al wala’ wal bara’* certainly are not. Such provisions as forbidding any form of contact with non-Muslims and punishing rulers for rejecting the sovereignty (*hakimiyya*) of God by not implementing Islamic law, do not appeal to many people beyond the immediate Salafi community. Awlaki is thus faced with a similar, if not larger, dilemma to frame alignment among his Western audience; unlike many of their Arab (and to some extent South-Asian) counterparts, Western Muslims must live, work and interact with non-Muslims on a daily basis. It is therefore even more difficult to convince such a group that non-Muslims are in fact their mortal enemies, and also puts a greater imperative on Salafi-jihadis to convey to them that hatred and mistrust of non-Muslims is a religious requirement.

As this study will demonstrate, in order to achieve frame resonance, Awlaki uses contemporary political situations that he knows much of his audience can relate to, and frames them as examples of the modern and immediate relevance of this concept.

## The Fluidity of Salafi-Islamist Thought

Before delving into Awlaki’s corpus of work, it is worth briefly discussing the issue of categorising Awlaki’s ideological stance. This is no easy task, and categorising any violent or ostensibly non-violent Islamists has for many years proven an onerous venture for academics. Although it is not within the remit of this paper to exhaustively comb through the many distinctions between different Islamist groupings, it is necessary to briefly touch upon this ongoing discussion in order to find a place for Awlaki’s ideology, and also demonstrate the inherent fluidity of Islamist thought.

Theologically, it is quite clear that Awlaki’s *aqeedah* has always been Salafi,<sup>44</sup> and yet even here there is some debate about this categorisation. Imam Johari Abdul Malik, Awlaki’s replacement at the Dar al-Hijrah Mosque in Falls Church, Virginia where he was the imam in charge of outreach, defines Awlaki’s original theology as ‘Salafi-lite’. Coined, according to Imam Johari, in order to categorise those who have ‘the core underpinnings of a conservative ideology, but have lightened up on the strident rhetoric’, this term is applied to those who are seen by traditionalists as having modified aspects of their message in order to be more in line with the ideals of a

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<sup>44</sup> The term “Salafi” refers to a modern Islamic movement which seeks to revert Islam back to the time of the first three generations of Muslims, known as the *Salaf al-salihin* (pious predecessors). Thus, they shun any Islamic sources that follow the third generation, and reject any innovations in Islam after that as a sin. For Salafis, the only legitimate sources are the Koran, the sayings of the Prophet known as the Hadith, and the consensus of the *Salaf al-salihin*. For more on this see: R. Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (Hurst, 2009)

liberal, secular society. Sitting in Awlaki's old office, he recalled how traditional American Salafis, including Ali al-Timimi, regarded Awlaki's talk of interfaith dialogue and understanding as something of a 'sell-out' to the West.<sup>45</sup>

However, as Thomas Hegghammer notes, simply defining someone as a Salafi (or even Salafi-lite) is of little use when attempting to understand how, why and when individuals begin to call for violence in pursuit of the Islamist cause.<sup>46</sup> He thus argues for a more in-depth categorisation of this wide-ranging movement.

Wiktorowicz provides three categories for Salafis: purist, politico and jihadi.<sup>47</sup> The purists, usually associated with those that toe the Saudi government line, reject political involvement or political frames within their discourse, at least until Islam is "purified" of *bida'a* (innovation) and other evils. Politicos reject the purist approach as ineffective and believe instead that they are best placed to contextualise and frame Salafi *aqeedah* so that it offers solutions and responses to contemporary political issues. Often associated with reformist Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, politicians do not usually engage in, or call for, revolutionary violence in support of their cause, but do seek the removal of 'un-Islamic' regimes in the Middle East. The jihadi category differs from the other two primarily due to their support for various forms of violence in the name of Salafism, and specifically in their interpretation of *takfir* (excommunication). However, although Wiktorowicz's work on the subject is among the most reliable and informative to be found in English, it does little for those attempting to understand where Awlaki stands and does not explain the fluidity that exists among these different categories, and the ease with which Salafis can glide to-and-fro between them.<sup>48</sup>

In his work on categorising political Salafi movements, Hegghammer acknowledges that attempting to apply any sort of typology to political Salafist thought 'falls into the trap of excessive categorisation of an inherently fluid and dynamic phenomenon.'<sup>49</sup> Despite this, he also notes that some form of categorisation is a 'pre-requisite for scientific analysis', and provides a number of useful typologies. He explains that although Salafism is often the correct definition of any Islamist's theology, politically it is also a catch-all term that can be used to describe anyone from violent anti-Saudi regime ideologues like Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, to official regime *ulema* (Islamic scholars). Thus, Hegghammer argues that a more precise set of definitions, which distinguishes between the aims, methods and tactics of different political Salafis, is required.

Hegghammer therefore provides what he sees as five different Salafist rationales for collective action: 'state oriented', which seeks a social and political re-organisation of the state; 'nation-oriented', which calls for the re-establishment of Islamic rule in regions perceived as Islamic which are now dominated by non-Muslims; '*ummah*-oriented', which places a premium on the protection of the entire 'Islamic nation' from perceived external threats; 'morality oriented', which desires to rid society of perceived social misconduct

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<sup>45</sup> Author's interview, 24 June 2011, Falls Church, USA

<sup>46</sup> T. Hegghammer, 'Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries?', in R. Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (Hurst, 2009)

<sup>47</sup> Q. Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 29:3 (2006), pp. 207-239

<sup>48</sup> For more on this fluidity see: 'A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi'

<sup>49</sup> 'Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries?'

not in line with a conservative and literalist Islam; and ‘sectarian’, which works primarily against opposite sects within Islam. Each of these Islamist rationales are represented by both violent and ostensibly non-violent actors.

For the purposes of this report, the focus will be upon the Hegghammer’s ‘state-oriented’ and ‘*ummah*-oriented’ Islamists. According to him, the non-violent version of the former is perhaps best exemplified by the Muslim Brotherhood which works toward reforming society mainly through *da’wah* and education, with their violent counterparts taking the form of social revolutionaries such as the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA). The latter’s non-violent form is to be found in the pan-Islamism of the Muslim World League, and it is here where al-Qaeda appear as the violent ‘global jihadist’ version of this rationale. Hegghammer accepts that even among these categories, fluidity and mobility exists. The Muslim World League, for example, which is categorised by him as the exemplar of non-violent *ummah*-orientation, was set up by the Muslim Brotherhood’s Said Ramadan, in partnership with the Saudi Kingdom.

Through a chronological study of Awlaki’s ideology and how he chose to frame it depending on his audience and geographical location, I will argue that he is an embodiment of the fluidity and overlap that exists throughout different forms of political, Salafist thought, particularly as manifested in the West. His public sermons suggest that he moved rapidly and almost seamlessly from a ‘politico’ Salafi closer to the ‘state-oriented’ mould, to a ‘jihadi’ Salafi within Hegghammer’s ‘*ummah*-oriented’ category. Admittedly, this analysis is also problematic as before Awlaki began making clear al-Qaedaist statements, he showed a tendency towards it through his early reverence of Sayyid Qutb, a figure venerated by Salafi-jihadis.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, his ideological hybridism is one of the likely keys to Awlaki’s success. Particularly during his early phase, he may have appealed to a wide variety of Muslims precisely because he avoided making any clear statements about which sect or movement he represented. Imam Johari suggests that, during his time in the United States, Awlaki ‘did not pronounce himself as a Salafi because it would alienate and put off a large number of ordinary Muslims’.<sup>51</sup>

Even a cursory glance at Awlaki’s own description of his religious training provides a complex picture.<sup>52</sup> He claims to have studied with the Salafi-Wahhabi scholars of Mecca and Medina for a number of months, also attending the study circle of Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen, a “purist” and one of Saudi Wahhabism’s most highly respected figures. He also claims to have studied the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) of the Shafi’i school of Islam with a number of scholars, which suggests he was perhaps seeking to gain a wider appeal among Muslims, as it is the Hanbali school of *fiqh* which is most commonly associated with Salafism. Further widening his ideological scope, Awlaki also notes that he ‘benefited from the teachings of Shaykh Abdul Majid al-Zindani.’<sup>53</sup> Among other things, Zindani is the rector of the Iman University in Yemen and the head of the Shurah Committee of Islah,

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**50** The difficulty in gaining a concrete understanding of where Awlaki stood ideologically before he publicly embraced al-Qaeda’s jihad is further exacerbated by the details of his time in the United States before 11 September 2001, and in particular his associations with three of the al-Qaeda hijackers.

**51** Author’s interview, 24 June 2011, Falls Church, USA

**52** A. al-Awlaki, ‘The Islamic Education of Shaikh Anwar al Awlaki’, [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com), 12 August 2008

**53** ‘The Islamic Education of Shaikh Anwar al Awlaki’

the Yemeni wing of the Muslim Brotherhood which he founded in the 1970s.<sup>54</sup> Awlaki also wrote that in 2002 he was 'given permission from the administration of the University of Iman in Yemen to attend any class at any level.' Salman al-Awda is also listed by Awlaki as a person whom he 'spent a short time' with in Saudi Arabia. It is not clear when this was, but until he was imprisoned by the regime in 1994 Awda was one of the leaders of the *Sahwa* politico Salafi movement which was heavily critical of the Saudi Kingdom's purist and apolitical approach. Since Awda was released in 1999, he has recanted his former positions and is now, publicly at least, ideologically in line with the regime.

A look at the body of his work further illustrates that he has taken inspiration from a wide variety of different Islamic ideologues and theologians, from Sayyid Qutb and Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, to Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Shaykh Ibn al-Uthaymeen.

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## 3 Background

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### United States

During his time in the United States, where among other roles he was the imam of the Dar al-Hijrah Mosque in Falls Church, Virginia and the Muslim chaplain of George Washington University, his early work appears relatively innocuous.

His recorded lectures focused primarily on reinvigorating Islam for Western, English speaking Muslims; he retold stories from the Koran and Hadith in Americanised, idiomatic English, often drawing parallels between the time of the Prophet and his companions (the *Sahaba*) and the present. This ability – to juxtapose key moments from the early history of Islam onto the present situation of Muslims – made him immensely popular and easily accessible. In his later, more al-Qaeda aligned work, one can see how he employs this skill as a highly effective mobilisation tool, using the examples of Mohammed's more violent phases to encourage modern day violent jihad. However, in his early work there were no calls for violence and little politicisation of Islam, though it was through these works that he gained a considerable base of followers.

Awlaki began his preaching career in 1994 at Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins, Colorado where he would occasionally deliver Friday sermons at the Fort Collins Islamic Centre. In 1995, he moved to Denver and shortly after became a part-time imam at the Denver Islamic Society, based in the city's al-Noor mosque. According to reports and witnesses, even from this early stage he was able to relate and appeal to young American Muslims. 'He could talk to people directly – looking them in the eye. He had this magic', one member of the al-Noor mosque would later recount.<sup>55</sup>

A senior member of the Denver Islamic Society, who preferred to remain anonymous, has since told journalists that he clashed with Awlaki after discovering that the young imam was preaching jihad and encouraging members to join the Chechen jihad against Russia.<sup>56</sup> One young Saudi who studied at the nearby University of Denver told the elder that, based on Awlaki's encouragement, he was to travel and join the Chechen jihadi rebels. The young man is thought to have died in battle in 1999. 'He had a beautiful tongue', the elder told *The New York Times*, 'But I told him: Don't talk to my people about jihad.'<sup>57</sup> Awlaki left Denver within weeks of the confrontation.

In 1996 Awlaki moved to San Diego, California where he was the imam at the Arribat al-Islami mosque. According to both *The 9/11 Commission Report* and the *Report of the Joint Inquiry into the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001*, it was during this time that he first attracted interest from counter-terrorism authorities.

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<sup>55</sup> B. Finley, 'Muslim cleric targeted by U.S. made little impression during Colorado years', *Denver Post*, 11 April 2010

<sup>56</sup> See for example: S. Shane and S. Mekhennet, 'Imam's Path From Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad', *The New York Times*, 8 May 2010; 'Muslim cleric targeted by U.S. made little impression during Colorado years'

<sup>57</sup> 'Imam's Path From Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad'

The 9/11 Commission states that he was twice investigated by the FBI. The first, a short-lived inquiry in June 1999, looked into Awlaki's connections with Ziyad Khalil who at the time was thought to be a 'procurement agent' for Osama bin Laden, though it came to nothing. The second investigation, in 2000, sought to clarify his relationship with the 'blind sheikh' Omar Abdel Rahman, who was a leading plotter of the 1991 World Trade Center bombing. Again, the investigation led nowhere, and Awlaki fell off the radar.<sup>58</sup>

It was during this second investigation, which ended in March 2000, that it is thought Awlaki first came into contact with future 9/11 hijackers Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar. According to the Joint Inquiry:

The FBI closed its inquiry into the activities of the imam in March 2000, approximately two months after al-Hazmi and al-Midhar arrived in San Diego.

In the case closing memorandum, the agent asserted that the imam had been 'fully identified and does not meet the criterion for [further] investigation.' The investigation was closed despite the imam's contacts with other subjects of counterterrorism investigations and reports concerning the imam's connection to suspect organizations.<sup>59</sup>

The 9/11 Commission report says that early on, 'Hazmi and Mihdhar reportedly respected Aulaqi as a religious figure and developed a close relationship with him.' The Joint Inquiry also adds that he 'served as their spiritual advisor during their time in San Diego' and that he held a number of closed door meetings with both of the men.<sup>60</sup>

One of the 'suspect organisations' referred to by the Joint Inquiry was the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW), which tax records show Awlaki was vice president of in 1998 and 1999.<sup>61</sup> Later described by the FBI as a front for al-Qaeda, the CSSW was the American wing of a Yemeni organisation run by Sheikh Abdul Majid al-Zindani.<sup>62</sup> A few years later, in February 2004, Zindani was designated by the US Treasury Department as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and the CSSW as a front for al-Qaeda.<sup>63</sup>

In January 2001, Awlaki took up his post as imam at the Dar al-Hijrah mosque in Falls Church, Virginia, and Hazmi followed, now also joined by Hani Hanjour, another one of the 9/11 hijackers. Here, they linked up with Eyad al-Rabah, a Jordanian who helped them find an apartment. Rababah would later tell investigators that a chance meeting with Hazmi at the mosque led to him helping the young Saudis find somewhere to live, but the 9/11 Commission report is skeptical, saying that 'some investigators suspect that Aulaqi may have tasked Rababah to help Hazmi and Hanjour. We share

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<sup>58</sup> P.D. Zelikow, E. R. May and B. Jenkins, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (W.W. Norton and Company, 2004); *Report of the Joint Inquiry into the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001*, The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and the Select Senate Committee on Intelligence, December 2002

<sup>59</sup> Report of the *Joint Inquiry*

<sup>60</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report; Report of the Joint Inquiry*

<sup>61</sup> S. Schmidt, 'Imam From Va. Mosque Now Thought to Have Aided Al-Qaeda', *The Washington Post*, 27 February 2008

<sup>62</sup> T. Hays, 'FBI Eyes NYC "Charity" in Terror Probe', *The Associated Press*, 26 February 2004

<sup>63</sup> 'United States Designates bin Laden Loyalist', United States Treasury Press Release, 24 February 2004, available at <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js1190.aspx>; 'Imam From Va. Mosque Now Thought to Have Aided Al-Qaeda'

that suspicion, given the remarkable coincidence of Aulaqi's prior relationship with Alhazmi.'<sup>64</sup>

After 9/11, Awlaki's connections with three of the hijackers made him an obvious suspect, but despite a number of interviews and investigations, the FBI was unable to obtain enough evidence to charge him with any terrorist activity. As the pressure on him increased, he moved to London in March 2002 and apart from a brief return that same year to visit fellow Salafi preacher Ali al-Timimi (who was later himself convicted of inciting American Muslims to join the Taliban) in Northern Virginia, he was never to return to the United States.<sup>65</sup>

The reasons why Awlaki decided to leave remain unclear, although they were not unrelated to the increased scrutiny he was under following the revelations about his links to three of the 9/11 hijackers. Years later, Awlaki would claim that he left after deciding that the persecution of Muslims in the United States by the government had reached unbearable heights, which put him and his fellow Muslims in grave danger. Johari Abdul Malik, having become acquainted with Awlaki while at Dar al-Hijrah, tried to convince him to stay, but was unable to sway the preacher. At a meeting between the two, Imam Johari describes how Awlaki 'told me he wanted to leave because he was under a tremendous amount of pressure from the FBI, and that he wanted to teach in an overseas university or perhaps go into politics in Yemen', but that he also omitted one crucial detail: 'Awlaki knew that he had been arrested for the solicitation of prostitutes, and that any revelation of this by US authorities would have ruined him.'<sup>66</sup> He is referring to Awlaki's two arrests in San Diego in 1996 and 1997 and one in the Washington D.C. area. He pleaded guilty to the 1997 charge of soliciting a prostitute and was sentenced to three years' probation and a fine.<sup>67</sup> In retrospect, Johari speculates that 'while Awlaki was selling us this jive about politics and university lecturing, maybe there was another motivation: to get out of there before they publicly uncovered his dirt.'<sup>68</sup>

## United Kingdom

Previous reporting on Awlaki's movements during the late 1990s and early 2000s, including that undertaken by this author, has suggested that Awlaki first arrived in the United Kingdom in 2002, where he gained popularity as a preacher and stayed for two years. However, new interviews with former British-based associates of his now suggest otherwise. According to Abu Muntasir,<sup>69</sup> a founding member of what was then an *ikhwan* influenced Salafi organisation in the UK called JIMAS,<sup>70</sup> by the late 1990s and early 2000s Awlaki was already an established member of a milieu of English speaking Salafi ideologues based in America and the UK. While some in this group went on to become strident supporters of al-Qaeda's jihad, others,

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<sup>64</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*

<sup>65</sup> 'Imam From Va. Mosque Now Thought to Have Aided Al-Qaeda'

<sup>66</sup> Author's interview, 24 June 2011, Falls Church, USA

<sup>67</sup> For more see: 'Imam's Path From Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad'; C. Herridge, *The Next Wave: On the Hunt for America's Next Recruits* (Crown Forum, 2011)

<sup>68</sup> Author's interview, 24 June 2011, Falls Church, USA

<sup>69</sup> This is his *kunyah* (name of adult derived from their eldest son), his full name is Muhammad Manwar Ali.

<sup>70</sup> JIMAS is an acronym of Arabic words which translate to 'The Association to Revive the Way of the Messenger.' For more see S. Hamid, 'The Attraction of "Authentic" Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth', in R. Mejer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, (Hurst, 2009)

such as Abu Muntasir himself, reformed and moderated their outlook along more national and integrationalist lines.

During the 1990s, JIMAS hosted many members of this milieu to lead prayers and give lectures to British Muslims, and included among these was Anwar al-Awlaki. 'I was very impressed with him', recalls Abu Muntasir, 'he filled a gap for Western Muslims who were seeking expressions of their religion which differed from Islam of their parents' generation, to which they found it difficult to relate.' Even at this early pre-9/11 stage, Awlaki was 'one of the most popular speakers we [JIMAS] ever had. He had a gift for speaking that few could rival.'<sup>71</sup>

Abu Muntasir, a veteran of the Afghan jihad, remembers that Awlaki 'always supported jihad, we all did. Chechnya, Afghanistan, Bosnia, these were all places where there was no question about helping Muslims.'<sup>72</sup> In the pre-9/11 world, the idea of an al-Qaeda-style offensive jihad within Western countries was 'not even on the table', but, in hindsight, he is not surprised to see where Awlaki has ended up: 'His outlook, his ideological worldview, is essentially the same as it was then, but his answers to our problems have changed.'<sup>73</sup> He even recalls how Awlaki would speak about a number of sheikhs in Yemen who 'were waiting for the right time', and questions if Awlaki had even by this early stage made contact with a budding al-Qaeda movement.

In 2002, Awlaki moved to the UK where, along with JIMAS, his patrons were leading Muslim Brotherhood-aligned organisations such as the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS). Throughout June 2003, they toured him around the country to give lectures to Muslims on subjects ranging from the war on Islam and Muslims to the role of Muslims in the local community. On 18 June in London, he spoke at an event held in conjunction with the MAB and the Islamic societies of four of the city's main universities,<sup>74</sup> a further reflection of his popularity among young Western Muslims. At the University of Aston in Birmingham four days later, his entire talk was in praise of a number of leading Islamist ideologues, including Muslim Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna and 'Umm Jihad' (mother of jihad) Zaynab al-Ghazali, who were both described as 'saviours of the Islamic spirit.'<sup>75</sup>

His popularity in the West was now at its peak, and he drew in large crowds according to Abu Muntasir and another man who knew him during this time, Dr. Usama Hasan, formerly of the Tawheed Mosque in Leyton, North London: 'He was one of the icons of Western Salafism and would pack out every venue he spoke at, people were excited to see him'.<sup>76</sup> Like Abu Muntasir, Hasan is now reformed but was also heavily involved in the UK Islamist scene of the 1980s and 1990s and is a veteran of the jihad to remove the Soviets from Afghanistan. He also shares the view that Awlaki was, even at this early stage, on the path to Salafi-jihadism, claiming that 'looking back, there hasn't been much of a change'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Author's interview, 22 February 2011, Ipswich, England

<sup>72</sup> Author's interview, 22 February 2011, Ipswich, England

<sup>73</sup> Author's interview, 22 February 2011, Ipswich, England

<sup>74</sup> These were: the School of Oriental and African Studies; Imperial College; the London School of Economics; and King's College.

<sup>75</sup> MAB Advertisement literature for all of Awlaki's UK appearances in author's possession

<sup>76</sup> Author's interview, 9 May 2011, London, England

<sup>77</sup> Author's interview, 9 May 2011, London, England'

Dr. Hasan offers an interesting suggestion about why Awlaki later gravitated towards al-Qaeda, noting that, unlike himself, Awlaki never had the opportunity to fight jihad and, lacking this outlet, continued on a path which he and Abu Muntasir had rejected: 'I've got a feeling that he's always been yearning for it (to fight jihad), and our yearning was satiated in a way, but he never got that outlet. Add to that his strong links to Yemen, which has extensive connections to al-Qaeda, and the pull to jihad was too strong.'<sup>78</sup>

Awlaki's time in the UK signalled a new stage in the development of his public work; by this time he was unceasing both in his message about the clear and present threats faced by Muslims of the West, and in his criticism of apathetic Muslims yet to "wake up" to the realities of their deteriorating situation. As yet, although Awlaki sought to spark an Islamist political awakening within his audience, he was not openly calling for violent jihad against Western countries.

## Yemen

By early 2004, Awlaki had moved to Yemen, and reached the final stage in his development into a fully-fledged Salafi-jihadi. As well as attending classes at Zindani's Iman University, he also lectured young students and, according to some reports, it was during this time that he first came into contact with Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who had travelled there to learn Arabic.<sup>79</sup> In August 2006, he was arrested by Yemeni authorities and imprisoned, according to the US Treasury Department, on 'charges of kidnapping for ransom and being involved in an al-Qa'ida plot to kidnap a US official.'<sup>80</sup> His arrest caused a large outpouring of anger and concern among his Western followers. Dr. Hasan recalls that Awlaki's arrest was 'the talk of the town' among his fellow congregants at the Tawheed Mosque and the wider Muslim community.<sup>81</sup> Popular Western Islamic forums lit up with comments such as:

We pray for the imam, tyrants hate those who only fear Allah and speak the truth. Imaam Anwar al Awlaki imprisonment and that of Sh.[Sheikh] Ali Timimi should show us that America and its puppet regimes will not last long for the prayer of the righteous are accepted by Allah.<sup>82</sup>

Imaam Anwar Awlaki is deeply loved by so many people who listen to his lectures, May Allah free him soon and the other brothers suffering under the tawagheet [un-Islamic rulers] for nothing.<sup>83</sup>

I honestly can't believe this!! SubhanAllah [for the sake of God], I don't know how many of you have listened to Imam Anwar, but mahsha'Allah [praise God] his talks are amazing.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Author's interview, 9 May 2011, London, England

<sup>79</sup> D. Leppard and D. McDougall, 'MI5 knew of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's UK extremist links', *The Sunday Times*, 3 January 2010; D. McDougall, C. Newell, C. Lamb, J. Ungeod-Thomas, C. Gourlay, K. Dowling and D. Tobin 'Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab: one boy's journey to jihad', *The Sunday Times*, 3 January 2010

<sup>80</sup> 'Treasury Designates Anwar Al-Aulaqi, Key Leader of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula', United States Treasury Department Press Release, 16 July 2010, available at: <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg779.aspx>

<sup>81</sup> Author's interview, 9 May 2011, London, England

<sup>82</sup> Comment on 'Islamic Awakening' internet forum, 27 December 2006

<sup>83</sup> Comment on 'Islamic Awakening' internet forum, 4 November 2006

<sup>84</sup> Comment on 'Sunni Forum' internet forum, 8 November 2006

Cageprisoners, a UK-based lobbyist group which campaigns for the civil liberties of Muslims convicted and imprisoned on terrorism charges, launched a campaign to secure his release, stating in their promotional leaflets that:

Reports indicate that Imam Anwar Al Awlaki, a prominent Muslim scholar highly regarded in English speaking Islamic circles, has been detained incommunicado for the past two months in Yemen and may face torture or ill treatment in custody.<sup>85</sup>

The campaign called on supporters to write letters to the then United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, urging them to free the preacher.

He was released in December 2007, likely owing to his tribal connections with the influential Awalik tribe and his father's senior position in the Yemeni government. His first public appearance after this came in the form of an interview with the founder of Cageprisoners, Moazzam Begg. Contrary to the allegations made later by the US Treasury, he claimed to have been initially arrested due to his role as an arbitrator in a tribal dispute and was then held for longer at the behest of the United States, who had sent FBI interrogators to speak to him about his association with three of the 9/11 hijackers. Asked about what the future held for him, he replied rather ominously: 'I have a few opportunities open at the moment and I haven't chosen yet among them. I'm still sort of studying the situation at the time being.'<sup>86</sup>

By June the next year, Awlaki had launched his widely read blog, *www.anwar-alawlaki.com*, in which he began announcing his clear support for the global jihad and al-Qaeda. It was also during this period that he began to become a concern for American intelligence and security agencies, and October 2008 saw one of the first official public pronouncements on the threat. Speaking at a Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT) conference in Nashville, Tennessee, the then Undersecretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security, Charles E. Allen, referred to Awlaki as a prime example of al-Qaeda's 'reach into the homeland.'<sup>87</sup> He chose to publicly air his concerns because 'I was impressed by what I was reading about his activities in Yemen. It became evident from what I saw and from talking to state and local government, that there was this individual who was bending the minds of people here in America.'<sup>88</sup> He had also noticed a clear change in Awlaki's work, and was struck 'that he had changed from being a proselytiser among Western Muslims, to using his work to recruit for the global jihad.' Though unable to reveal any details, Allen goes on to mention that even in 2008, 'there was intelligence on him at the time that worried me.'<sup>89</sup>

In late 2009, Awlaki had, according to the United States Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, pledged allegiance to Nasir al-Wuhaishi, the head of AQAP, and began 'playing a key role in

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<sup>85</sup> 'Imam Anwar Al Awlaki: Urgent Appeal: Imam Anwar Al Awlaki - A Leader in Need', Cageprisoners campaign leaflet, 8 November 2006, no longer available online, copies in author's possession

<sup>86</sup> 'Moazzam Begg Interviews Imam Anwar al-Awlaki'

<sup>87</sup> Charles E. Allen speech at GEOINT Conference

<sup>88</sup> Author's interview, 8 June 2011, Washington D.C., USA

<sup>89</sup> Author's interview, 8 June 2011, Washington D.C., USA

setting the strategic direction' for the group.<sup>90</sup> Awlaki's subsequent links with Nidal Hasan, the Fort Hood attacker, and the apparent central role he played in planning and preparing Abdulmutallab's attempted bombing on Christmas Day 2009, led President Obama's administration to authorise his extrajudicial assassination in early 2010.<sup>91</sup>

Later that year, the United States Treasury designated Awlaki as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) for his role in 'acting for or on behalf of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) . . . and for providing financial, material or technological support for, or other services to or in support of, acts of terrorism[.]'<sup>92</sup> In a move which sought to publicly cement Awlaki's relationship with AQAP, Wuhaishi also released a statement through the group's official media wing, *al-Malahem*, in June 2010 supporting the preacher. Entitled 'In Defence of Anwar al-Awlaki', it criticised the US government's decision to target the cleric, and also guaranteed his safety:

As for the Sheikh and Islamic preacher, Anwar al-Awlaki, the likes of who we are proud to have in the Muslim *ummah*, he has not been deserted nor will he be, Allah willing, for he is amongst the Muslim masses who are spiteful of the oppressive tyranny of America. They will never surrender him. They know well that surrendering him to the infidels constitutes disbelief and hypocrisy, and that deserting him is humiliation and shame.<sup>93</sup>

From his tribal base in the province of Shabwa, South-Eastern Yemen, Awlaki continues to issue statements about the global jihad, urging Muslims to do all they can to inflict death and destruction upon the United States and its allies. Intelligence has also revealed that he remains in contact with followers in the West, and, where possible, attempts to persuade them to carry out terrorist attacks.

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<sup>90</sup> J. R. Clapper, 'Unclassified Declaration in Support of Formal Claim of State Secrets Privilege' in the case of Nasser al-Aulaqi, on his own behalf and as next friend acting on behalf of Anwar al-Aulaqi, Plaintiff vs Barack Obama, President of the United States; Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense; Leon E. Panetta, Director, Central Intelligence Agency. Case 1:10-cv-01469-JDB Document 15-2, Filed 25 September 2010

<sup>91</sup> S. Shane, 'U.S. Approves Targeted Killing of American Cleric', *The New York Times*, 6 April 2010

<sup>92</sup> 'Treasury Designates Anwar Al-Aulaqi, Key Leader of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula'

<sup>93</sup> Abu Bashir Nasir al-Wuhaishi, 'In Defence of Anwar al-Awlaki', *Al-Malahem Media*, June 2010

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## 4 Awlaki and the *Ikhwan* in the United States and United Kingdom

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**A**wlaki's main diagnostic frames for the problems facing Muslims at this stage were: the danger of Western culture diluting and damaging Islam and the Islamic *shaksiyah*; a war on Islam and Muslims waged by America and its allies; and infighting within the *ummah*. There is much in both his diagnosis and prognosis to suggest that he drew substantial inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood's version of Salafism, and in particular Yusuf al-Qaradawi's work on the spread of Islam in the West.<sup>94</sup>

By the early to mid-1990s, Awlaki had already begun to gain a following among American Muslims, although he only emerged as a public figure in the months following 9/11, where he was seen as a moderate and critic of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Speaking to *The New York Times* in October 2001 about the threat of al-Qaeda he said:

In the past we were oblivious. We didn't really care much because we never expected things to happen. Now I think things are different. What we might have tolerated in the past, we won't tolerate any more.

There were some statements that were inflammatory, and were considered just talk, but now we realize that talk can be taken seriously and acted upon in a violent radical way.<sup>95</sup>

From this early stage, Awlaki's use of terms such as 'violent radical' was evidence of his acute awareness of Western discourse about terrorism and radicalisation. His finger was on the pulse of not only Western Muslim thought, but the wider political discourse of the time.

In the same month he told *The Washington Times* that:

Muslims still see [bin Laden] as a person with extremely radical ideas. But he has been able to take advantage of the sentiment that is out there regarding U.S. foreign policy...We're totally against what the terrorists had done. We want to bring those who had done this to justice. But we're also against the killing of civilians in Afghanistan.<sup>96</sup>

Despite claiming to be against the violence of al-Qaeda, Awlaki also sought to draw a moral equivalence between the 9/11 attacks, and the American military response in Afghanistan. This is a common theme within Islamist discourse, and would also be familiar to any person following Western political and polemical discussions on the subject.

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<sup>94</sup> For more on this see J. Amis and A. Meleagrou-Hitchens, 'The Making of the Christmas Day Bomber', *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 10, Hudson Institute, 2010

<sup>95</sup> L. Goodstein, 'A Nation Challenged: The American Muslims; Influential American Muslims Temper Their Tone', *The New York Times*, 19 October 2001

<sup>96</sup> R. Z. Hallow and V. Honawar, 'Muslim students are wary of the war', *The Washington Times*, 11 October 2001

Filmed in October 2001 during a programme about him for the American television channel PBS, Awlaki is seen making the simplistic Muslim and non-Muslim dichotomy when he suggests that although al-Qaeda acted erroneously, it was a response to American aggression against Muslims around the world:

The fact that the US has administered the death and homicide of over 1 million civilians in Iraq [referring to US-backed UN sanctions on Iraq]; the fact that the US is supporting the deaths and killing of thousands of Palestinians does not justify the killing of one US civilian in New York City and Washington DC.

The US is the only reason for the survival of some governments in the Middle East, governments who have some of the worst track records of human rights in the world. And these are the allies of the United States in the Middle East – Muslim governments. But they are dictatorships, tyrannical, totalitarian regimes – and if it was not for the US backing them they would crumble one after another.<sup>97</sup>

At this early stage in his career, one can already see the diagnostic framing in his invocation of the war on Islam master frame, in which he presents a world which is defined by Islam and unbelief: the sanctions in Iraq did not simply lead to the suffering of Iraqis, but to the suffering of *Muslims*; the regimes in the Middle East are ‘Muslim’ governments (despite many of them being secular). This view is not one held only by violent extremists, but is a staple part of any category of Islamist thought. Furthermore, his comments about the United States propping up oppressive regimes in the Arab World are precisely in line with bin Laden’s reasons for planning 9/11: the necessity of destroying the United States, the so-called “far enemy”, and thus irreparably weakening the “near enemy” which is defined as Arab regimes that are not properly implementing Shariah law.<sup>98</sup>

Awlaki seems to agree with al-Qaeda’s analysis and diagnosis of the problems with the current world order, but he does not at this point publicly share their prognosis: a call for violence and the targeting of civilians and other American interests in order to alter the global balance of power. Rather he says that America must do more to ‘support freedom and human rights in the Muslim world’ if it is to ensure against future attacks.<sup>99</sup> It should be noted, however, that this is not a diagnosis or worldview held only by al-Qaeda, and seen along with his comments about violent radicalism and the invasion of Afghanistan, it appears that from an early stage Awlaki was adept at finding a wider resonance by drawing on mainstream political arguments and ideas familiar to many Westerners.

This desire to appeal to a wide audience may also explain why, during a 17 September 2001 interview with *www.islamonline.net*, he made very strong suggestions that the Israeli Mossad were involved with planning the attacks in Washington DC and New York. Asked about the true perpetrators he first responded saying:

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<sup>97</sup> Awlaki speech recorded by PBS *Newshour* in October 2001 at Dar al-Hijrah Mosque, Falls Church, Virginia

<sup>98</sup> For more on the development of this concept during the 1990s, see: F. Gerges., *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

<sup>99</sup> Awlaki speech recorded by PBS *Newshour*

As far as I am concerned, we, the American public have NOT been presented with any solid evidence of who did it.<sup>100</sup>

Later in the interview, he took this even further when asked if he thought Mossad were involved:

...there has been an uprising in Palestine that was becoming very popular while the popularity of the Israeli response was plummeting. Israel was going through a serious PR crisis. Israel has even hired U.S. public relations firms to try to clean up its reputation and Ariel Sharon's damaged image.

Also there were lawsuits filed against the war criminal Ariel Sharon in Belgium. That was a serious blow to Israel to have its highest official in such a position.

Now doesn't the timing of the attacks raise a question mark???

This type of discourse, although popular with many Islamists and Salafis, is certainly not their preserve. Taken on their own, Awlaki's arguments here could again be easily attributed to certain sections of the conspiratorial far-left or far-right.

## **Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character**

One of his first politically oriented public talks was given at the September 2001 convention of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in Chicago. Entitled 'Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character', the sermon addressed a number of conventionally Salafi themes, including the current weak state of the *ummah* brought about due to petty disagreements among Muslims and the importance of drawing on lessons from the time of the Prophet in order to unify and strengthen the Islamic nation. As we shall see, the war on Islam was very much on his conscience at this early stage.

Speaking just days before the 9/11 attacks, his delivery was yet to reach the polished and almost flawless standards of later years as he identified two types of Islamic tolerance: that towards other religious groups and that among Muslims. Addressing this problem through the war on Islam master frame, the former, according to him, is only applicable to people who are in 'a position of authority', and is of little importance in the present as this no longer applies to Muslims. In fact, the modern relevance of Muslim tolerance towards other religions was all but dismissed when he offered the following diagnosis: 'When [now] you look at Muslims driven out of their homes and their land invaded and then you tell them to be tolerant: it doesn't really make a lot of sense.'<sup>101</sup> Speaking nostalgically about the times 'when the Muslims were in a position of authority', he recounted how 'they had the best track record of tolerance in the world'.<sup>102</sup> Referring to Western historical works, including James Reston's *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*, he also noted that Saladin's demise came about because he was 'too tolerant' and merciful toward his enemies.

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<sup>100</sup> 'Live Dialogue with Anwar al-Awlaki', IslamOnline.net, 17 September, 2001. This page is no longer accessible, but a saved version remains in the author's possession.

<sup>101</sup> A. al-Awlaki, 'Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character', September 2001, ISNA Annual Conference, Chicago

<sup>102</sup> Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character

Far more important was the question of tolerance between and among Muslims, and his Salafi outlook and diagnostic and prognostic framing at this time appeared to be, at least in part, influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. The majority of the talk was devoted to his prognosis of strengthening and protecting the *ummah* through *fiqh al-ikhtilaf* (understanding of differences), or learning to deal with minor differences in opinion among Muslims, and maintaining unity. The most important aspect of this, according to Awlaki, is *fiqh al-awlawiyyat* (understanding of priorities), which places a premium on keeping various issues concerning the *ummah* in perspective and retaining the ability to prioritise various dilemmas.

His specific use of the term *fiqh al-awlawiyyat* strongly suggests that Awlaki was at this time heavily influenced by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. Although not coined by him, Qaradawi popularised this term in his 1990 treatise *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, devoting an entire section of it to this subject. In this, he explained that:

By *fiqh* of priorities, we mean putting everything in true perspective; no prominent issue should be postponed, and no minor issue should be given prominence; no big matter should be underestimated, and no small matter should be exaggerated.<sup>103</sup>

On his official website, [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net), Qaradawi described the *fiqh* of priorities to a young Muslim American student who is struggling to maintain unity within her campus Islamic society:

Muslims now are in need of understanding what Muslim scholars call as *fiqh al-awlawiyyat* or discernment of priorities, which requires Muslims to concern themselves with the fundamental issues and disregard trivialities.<sup>104</sup>

Qaradawi also explains that his use of the term *fiqh* in this instance is not defined in the Islamic jurisprudential sense where it is applied in order to interpret the particular terms and judgments of Shariah law. Rather, its meaning here derives from the Arabic root, which simply means “understanding”.

Global consciousness was always key to Awlaki’s thinking and it was on these terms that Awlaki criticised Muslims who attach importance to small and trivial disagreements while ignoring the major problems faced by the *ummah*:

We don’t have our priorities straight. We shouldn’t get into pitiful discussions and arguments about minor issues when the *ummah* is facing some serious problems.

Iraq is being choked to death....what are we doing for them? We should raise up the understanding of the *ummah* to a higher level, where we are dealing with issues that are facing us, the issues of the *ummah*. The Palestinian issue should be something that we are concerned about day and night. We should participate in and support this uprising and let them know the American Muslims are with you.

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<sup>103</sup> Y. al-Qaradawi, *Priorities of The Islamic Movement in The Coming Phase* (Awakening Publications, 2000)

<sup>104</sup> Fatwa available at: [http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?cid=1119503544064&pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask\\_Scholar%2FFatwaE%2FFatwaEAskTheScholar#ixzz0ohBZ9wJE](http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?cid=1119503544064&pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar%2FFatwaE%2FFatwaEAskTheScholar#ixzz0ohBZ9wJE)

These are priorities for us that we need to deal with...we need to get our priorities straight.<sup>105</sup>

His diagnosis and prognosis within the war on Islam frame was thus laid out. Muslims are involving themselves in 'pitiful' discussions about minor issues of *fiqh*, while their co-religionists are suffering terribly all around the globe. The solution is an adoption and development of an "ummah-oriented" mentality of the type laid out by Hegghammer, but Awlaki had not yet called for any sort of violent action in response.

Rather, his prognoses and explanations mirror Qaradawi's, even to the extent of using the same example from Islamic history to illustrate the problem. Referring to a story where a delegation of Iraqis from Kufa visit Mecca for the Hajj and ask Abdallah ibn Umar if their prayers will be spoiled were they to kill a mosquito, Awlaki noted his response: 'You kill the grandson of Hussein bin Ali, and now you are asking about killing mosquitoes?' Similarly, in *Priorities* Qaradawi wrote: 'It is a pity that we ask for instance about the blood of a gnat, and do not care about the shedding of al-Hussein's blood.'<sup>106</sup>

'The key to the solution', he said pointing to his heart, 'is here.'<sup>107</sup> As will be discussed in more depth below, in his later Salafi-jihadi phase, the solutions become far more radical, including commands to *hijrah* (fleeing to Muslim majority countries) and violent jihad.

Even at this early stage, Awlaki's *ummah*-oriented mindset and worldview is apparent, bemoaning as he does the plight of Muslims being 'driven from their homes' and the 'choking' of Iraq's Muslims (reference to the UN sanctions on the Saddam Hussein regime) on a purely confessional basis.<sup>108</sup> Seen on its own, this type of worldview is by no means a sign of support for extremist Islamist violence, but is one of the key ideological components necessary to move toward such views. His prognosis is closely tied to that offered to Western Muslims by the *Ikhwān*, and in particular to ideas formulated by Qaradawi. According to Lorenzo Vidino's description of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West:

[It is] a socially conservative force that, unlike other movements with which they are often mistakenly grouped, encourages the integration of western Muslim communities, offers a model in which Muslims can live their faith fully and maintain a strong Islamic identity while becoming actively engaged citizens.<sup>109</sup>

This approach, formulated in large part by Qaradawi's *Priorities* appears to be where Awlaki began. He worked with organisations that pursued this agenda and his lectures during his early phase as a preacher strongly suggest that this was a programme which he supported and recommended to his followers.

Awlaki's earlier views on the preservation of Islamic identity is perhaps the best example of his ideological affinity with the *Ikhwān*. One particular concern shared by all Salafis and Islamists, and in particular those working in the West, is the preservation and maintenance of the Islamic *shaksiyah* and the importance of resisting its dilution

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<sup>105</sup> 'Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character'

<sup>106</sup> *Priorities of The Islamic Movement in The Coming Phase*

<sup>107</sup> 'Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character'

<sup>108</sup> 'Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character'

<sup>109</sup> L. Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Columbia University Press, 2010); see also O. Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2009)

with supposedly Western concepts such as nationalism, culture and secularism.<sup>110</sup> The suggested prognosis to this concern differs depending on a Salafi's political outlook. Yusuf al-Qaradawi's *fiqh al-aqalliyat* (*fiqh* of Muslim minorities), which was developed in his overall treatise on Muslims in the West found in *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, expresses serious concerns that Muslims in the West are vulnerable to being 'swept by the whirlpool of the materialistic trend that prevails in the West.'<sup>111</sup> His solution – 'a conservatism without isolation, and an openness without melting'<sup>112</sup> – is described by Caiero and al-Saify as a solution which seeks to "integrate" Muslims in Europe while resisting "assimilation".<sup>113</sup> This differs from the solution that other, more isolationist Salafis offer, which is commonly a call to keep any interaction with non-Muslims to a minimum and isolate from the wider society so as to avoid any possible corruption. At its most extreme, Salafism can also call for Muslims to make *hijrah* to Islamic lands or even fight violent jihad in their Western host countries.

## The Life of the Prophet: The Makkan Period

Looking at some of Awlaki's earlier work, the apparent attempts to inject Western culture into Islam were viewed through the war on Islam master frame, and diagnosed in typical Salafi fashion. He was always deeply concerned about the preservation of Islamic identity and in his one of his most popular early lecture series, 'The Life of the Prophet: The Makkan Period', he tells his audience:

There is a global culture that is being forced down the throats of everyone on the face of the earth. This global culture is protected and promoted. Thomas Friedman, he is a famous writer in the US, he writes for *The New York Times*. He says the hidden hand of the market cannot survive without the hidden fist. McDonald's [fast food chain] will never flourish without McDonnell Douglas – the designer of F15s [fighter jets].

In other words, we are not really dealing with a global culture that is benign or compassionate. This is a culture that gives you no choice. Either accept McDonald's, otherwise McDonnell Douglas will send their F15s above your head. It is very intolerant culture, that cannot co exist with anything else. It uproots every other culture on the face of the earth. Just cuts the roots of it. And you have a quote here by [Russian historian and Soviet dissident] Alexander Solzhenitsyn... 'To destroy a people, you must sever their roots.'

[...]

So this is not a global culture that will co-exist with others, it will replace others. And the only ideology that is standing up to this global culture is Islam. But still, as Muslims and especially Muslims living in the West, we are suffering from a serious identity crisis. I mean you would find that even though the brother or the sister would be practicing Islam, but the identity itself, the Islamic identity

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**110** For more on this, see Oliver Roy's explanations about the "deculturation" of Islam pursued by the Salafi movement in O. Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (Columbia University Press, 2004)

**111** *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*

**112** *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*

**113** A. Caiero and M. al-Saify, 'Qaradawi in Europe, Europe in Qaradawi?', in J. Skovgaard-Peterson and B. Graaf (ed.), *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi* (Columbia University Press, 2009)

itself is lost. I mean [a] person would have more in common with the rock star or a soccer player than they would have with the companions of *Rasool* Allah [Mohammed]. You would find that our youth know more about pop stars than they know about the Sahaba [companions] of *Rasool*. In fact even sometimes more than the *Anbiya* [Prophets]. How many of our youth know the names of all of the *Anbiya* of Allah? How many of our youth know the names of the *Sahaba*? But ask the same person to name the soccer players on their favourite team or their best basketball players and they would go down the list. So there is a serious identity crisis that is going on among Muslims.<sup>114</sup>

Like most other Salafis, Awlaki clearly considered Western secular culture as a direct and metastatic threat to Islam and Muslims. However, his references to Western and non-Islamic sources – such as the work of Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn and American author Thomas Friedman – give us a glimpse of how he differs from any of his counterparts or predecessors. Such sources would be seen by most Salafis as illegitimate as they have no Islamic backing and are not linked to the primary religious texts.

Awlaki offers two possible prognoses for this perceived threat to Islam:

Number one: By having a strong study of Islamic history. Which is made up of the lives of Prophets of Allah. The life of Muhammad saw, the life of the Sahaba and then learning in general, the Muslim history after that. So that's number one. You develop an identity, by having an attachment with history. Because our history is our umbilical cord. This is our life line. We are an extension of an *ummah*. We are not separated; we are not severed from our roots. We are a part of a glorious *ummah* that we need to study about.

Number two: By being part of the world wide Muslim *ummah*. Our local identity should not override our Muslim identity. So my identification with Britain or America or Pakistan or Kuwait or any other country should not override my Islamic identity. See this nation-state concept is something that Islam came to abolish. We have our loyalty to Allah and to our religion. And we are part of a worldwide *ummah*. Therefore we need to study; we need to learn about our Muslim brothers all over the world. What happens in Palestine should concern every British Muslim. What happens in Kashmir should concern every American Muslim. What happens in every part of the Muslim world, should concern me as if it is happening within my own house.<sup>115</sup>

Again, there is a clear Qaradawi influence here, with Awlaki's prognostic framing and focus on the *ummah* mindset mirroring some of what is said in *Priorities* including:

They [Western Muslims] need to obtain the original Islamic references that explain Islam's creed, worships, morals and legislations in the languages of these minorities, so as to provide them with a proper source of knowledge. They particularly need the interpretation of the Holy Quran and a number of the approved and accepted Hadith collections.

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<sup>114</sup> A. al-Awlaki, 'The Life of the Prophet: The Makkan Period', al-Bashir Audio, undated

<sup>115</sup> 'The Life of the Prophet: The Makkan Period'

[...]

If the Muslims living in Muslim countries are suffering persecution, injustice and oppression at the hands of rulers who are supposed to be Muslims, why should we expect no complaints from those Muslims living in non-Muslim countries and ruled by non-Muslims, be they Christians, Communists or Heathens?<sup>116</sup>

As with Qaradawi, there is no call for complete isolation, *hijrah* or violent jihad, but rather an emphasis on an *Ikhwani* style of *tarbiyah*, fostering a sense of Islamic brotherhood, and promoting an outlook described by Hegghammer as 'ummah-oriented'. He does not yet reject the concept of an American or British Muslim, but rather believes that *ummah*-consciousness should take precedence over any nationalist sentiment. Further, Awlaki's specific reference to a Muslim's 'loyalty' to their religion is evidence of his initial interpretation of *al wala' wal bara'* as a tool which prevents Western culture's destruction of one's *deen*.

These solutions characterise much of Awlaki's earlier work, and they were to change only when he entered his Salafi-jihadi phase some years later. What is evident at even this early stage however, is a significant level of animosity to America and the West, which would remain, fester and grow over the years. To further complicate matters, he also includes a sympathetic reference to Sayyid Qutb, a source avoided by Qaradawi<sup>117</sup> and despised by many isolationist Salafis:

*Jahiliyya* is the ignorance of the Pre Islamic era. So *jahiliyya* is a time period but it is also conduct. Whenever you have a time that resembles the pre Islamic era, it is called *jahiliyya*. And you will find that Sayyid Qutb uses this word a lot in reference to the times that we are living in. He says that there is a lot of resemblance between it and the early *jahiliyya*. So *jahiliyya* comes from the root word *jahal*, which is ignorance. So it is the time of ignorance. The absence of the message. Even if the message is there and the people are not following it, it is a *jahiliyya*.

Sayyid Qutb's reinterpretation of *jahiliyya* – from a historical period before the introduction of Islam to an eternal concept which describes a society which has not accepted Islam or the Shariah – is a key element of the Salafi-jihadi creed, and Awlaki's apparent affinity with this Qutbist doctrine should also be seen as further warning of his future path to Salafi-jihadism.<sup>118</sup>

## It's a War on Islam

Despite his views on American culture, Awlaki was at this time considered by the government to be an important figure for American Islam in the post-9/11 world. On 5 February 2002, he was a guest speaker on 'Islam and Middle Eastern Politics and Culture' at a luncheon in the Pentagon organised by the Department of Defence. In an email sent to the lunch invitees, a Defence Department lawyer remarked how impressed she was with the preacher:

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<sup>116</sup> *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*

<sup>117</sup> Qaradawi represents a school of thought within the Muslim Brotherhood that has rejected much of Qutb's firebrand and violent ideas, preferring the method of integration within non-Muslim countries.

<sup>118</sup> For more on Qutb's conception of *jahiliyya* see for example: S. Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty: the political and ideological philosophy of Sayyid Qutb* (Taylor & Francis, 2007); J. Kalvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (Hurst, 2010)

I had the privilege of hearing one of Mr. Awlaki's presentations in November and was impressed both by the extent of his knowledge and by how he communicated that information and handled a hostile element in the audience. I particularly liked how he addressed how the average Middle Eastern person perceives the United States and his views on the international media.<sup>119</sup>

Within a month of his appearance at the Pentagon, he would give a Friday sermon which marked a watershed in his public pronouncements. On 20 March 2002, Operation Green Quest – a US Customs interagency investigative entity tasked with stopping terror financing – carried out raids on members of the SAAR network in Virginia. Named after its Saudi Arabian funder, Sulaiman Abdul Aziz al-Rajhi, SAAR was an umbrella organisation of over 100 Islamic charities, think-tanks and businesses, members of which were suspected of involvement in financing various Islamist terror networks.<sup>120</sup> Speaking shortly after the raids, Awlaki sought to instill in his audience a sense of isolation and siege, framing any police or government counter-terrorism efforts as part of the Western war on Islam and Muslims. These operations, he maintained, were part of an overall mission to 'put out the light of Allah':

This is not now a war on terrorism. We need to all be clear about this. This is a war against Muslims. It is a war against Muslims and Islam. Not only is this happening worldwide but it is happening right here, in America, that is claiming to be fighting this war for the sake of freedom, while it is infringing on the freedom of its own citizens, just because they are Muslims.

[...]

As Muslims, if we allow this to continue, if we do not stop it, it ain't gonna stop, it's not gonna stop. If you do not stand up in this struggle, and make your voices heard, and unite, and make it clear to the authorities that you're not going to allow your necks to be stepped over, and your rights to be infringed upon, if you do not do that, then only Allah knows where it's going to stop. Maybe the next day the Congress will pass a bill about Islam that it is illegal in America.<sup>121</sup>

In order to protect themselves, American Muslims must unite, setting all theological or ideological differences aside:

[The Operation Green Quest raid] was an attack on every one of us, this attack was on the Muslim community and all of us are harmed, we are all part of this, therefore we need to forget about our differences, put them aside, and stand united...if today this happened to these organisations, tomorrow you're going to be next.<sup>122</sup>

To add religious authenticity to this message, a regular and obvious part of almost all of his work, Awlaki quoted a Hadith in which Mohammed says: 'the Muslim is the brother of his fellow Muslim,

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**119** Internal Department of Defence email, dated 1 February 2002. This email was uncovered as part of the Fox News investigation and was made available to them via a Freedom of Information Act request

**120** For more on this see: D. Farah, *Blood from Stones: The Secret Financial Network of Terror* (Broadway Books, 2004)

**121** A. al-Awlaki, Friday sermon, unconfirmed location though likely to be the Dar al-Hijrah Mosque in Virginia, March 2002

**122** A. al-Awlaki, Friday sermon, March 2002

and if you fulfil the need of your Muslim brother, Allah will fulfil your need...' [Sahih Bukhari Hadith 3.622]. Somewhat more ominously in this context, he also recites: 'if you conceal the private sins of your Muslim brother, Allah will conceal yours on the day of judgement' [Sahih Bukhari Hadith 3.622]. He stopped short of calling for a violent reaction to this perceived attack, something he would only begin to explicitly call for in later years. Instead, his prognosis remained taking part in political activism and protesting against government policies that are persecuting Muslims 'on a religious basis':

You are all urged to stand together and be tuned to what the Islamic organisations are going to be calling for – the Islamic groups in the area with political orientation...are working on this case. It is time for you to step up and support these organisations.<sup>123</sup>

He advised that Muslims 'wise-up' and not take the government and media's comments about terrorism and Islam 'at face value'. The war on terror is being used as a cover to fulfil an age old mission to destroy Islam:

This war against terrorism, it is using a legitimate cause for some underground objectives and one of them is to eliminate Islamic work. And it's happening here, it's happening all over the world.<sup>124</sup>

Quoting Koran 61:8, 'they [the unbelievers] want to extinguish the light of Allah', he gave this verse a contemporary Western relevance for his audience by referring to the first Iraq war – which according to him was in fact an attempt to destroy a powerful international Kuwaiti business network – and the build up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Citing the case of Jamil al-Amin – a Muslim convert who had been convicted that year for the murder of a US Sheriff's deputy – he presented it through the war on Islam frame, and rejects the guilty verdict as illegitimate, made as it was by a non-Muslim jury taken from a society that contains an ingrained hatred of Islam and Muslims. Indeed, he chooses to believe his co-religionist was innocent, taking it as 'an article of faith'.<sup>125</sup> His method of coming to this conclusion has been highlighted by Salafi Minhaj, a British-based purist and apolitical Salafi organisation, as an example of his early political extremism. In a paper which criticises Awlaki's *manhaj* (methodology), they argue that his choice to take as an article of faith a current political issue is methodologically unacceptable and suggests that by this time he was already influenced by the Qutbist strand of the Muslim Brotherhood:

He takes a current issue and says publicly that 'he takes it as an article of faith?!' Did Allah command him to take such an issue as an article of faith like that? Awlaki therefore, on account of emotions and methodology, developed into a full blown takfiri-jihadi which in fact was the logical progression of a dedicated adherent of the Qutbi-Ikhwani method.<sup>126</sup>

The purist Salafi reasoning here is that, as there is no mention of a comparable case in the core Islamic texts, Awlaki is behaving in

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<sup>123</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday sermon, March 2002

<sup>124</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday sermon, March 2002

<sup>125</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday sermon, March 2002

<sup>126</sup> 'A Critique of the Methodology of Anwar al Awlaki and His Errors in the Fiqh of Jihaad', Salafi Minhaj, 2010, available at: [http://www.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj\\_Awlaki.pdf](http://www.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_Awlaki.pdf)

a dangerously presumptuous manner by applying God's will to a modern, political occurrence, a methodology which is commonly associated with political Salafis, or Islamists.

Making reference to the history of minorities in America, he reminded Muslims of the plight of black Americans until the Civil Rights Movement, and suggested that they are now facing similar problems:

Maybe the next day the Congress will pass a bill that Islam is illegal in America. Don't think that this is a strange thing to happen; anything is probable in the world of today, because there are no rights unless there's a struggle for those rights, and the history of America is that sense is very clear. African Americans in this country had to go through a struggle; their rights were not handed to them...that's how slavery ended, and the struggle has to continue...<sup>127</sup>

Eight years later, in mid 2010, Awlaki would offer a very similar diagnosis in a message to Western Muslims, adding to it, however, a plea to flee the West or carry out attacks within their home countries.

This sermon is one of the last he is known to have given in the United States as he left for the UK later that year, where he was welcomed by a number of Islamic political pressure groups and student societies. Here, his ongoing development of the war on Islam master frame continued, as did his desire to erect boundaries both between Muslims and non-Muslims and between Muslims.

## **Lessons from the Companions: Living as a Minority**

In August 2002, Awlaki gave a lecture at the annual JIMAS conference held at the University of Leicester which again mirrored many of the teachings found in Qaradawi's *Priorities*. In 'Lessons from the Companions: Living as a Minority', he discussed issues facing Muslims living in the West, and stressed the centrality of 'working collectively' in order to benefit and improve the *ummah*, telling his audience that 'we cannot march forward unless we are organised'.<sup>128</sup> A reading of *Priorities* – in which Qaradawi writes that *daw'ah* should be conducted through 'organised, collective work, undertaken by the people, to restore Islam to the leadership of society'<sup>129</sup> – reveals where Awlaki's inspiration was perhaps coming from during this time.

Awlaki's continued emphasis on organised *daw'ah* as the key to Islamic revival shows that, publicly at least, he was yet to embrace the Salafi-jihadi ideology of al-Qaeda, which calls for a shift in global balance of power through indiscriminate violence in the West and around the world. Indeed, Qaradawi's popular doctrine of *wasatiyya* (middle way) represents a direct challenge to this approach, instead favouring a peaceful (at least in the West) and long-term program of delegitimising secularism while simultaneously offering Islam as the only viable alternative. In Leicester, Awlaki made precisely this point when he used a metaphor which appeared to be an obvious rejection

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<sup>127</sup> A. al-Awlaki, March 2002 Sermon, Virginia, USA

<sup>128</sup> A. al-Awlaki, 'Lessons from the Companions: Living as a Minority', 2002 JIMAS Annual Conference, August 2002, University of Leicester, Leicester

<sup>129</sup> *Priorities of the Islamic Movements in the Coming Phase*

of al-Qaeda's global jihadism in favour of the smooth and plausible proselytising of the Muslim Brotherhood:

The wisdom comes in on how the package is delivered. Rather than using a hammer to knock on the door and then throwing the package into the face of the person who opens the door, the door should be knocked on politely and the package delivered in a polite manner.<sup>130</sup>

During the talk, he used the example of a friendly employee of the Federal Express delivery company who used to bring packages to his home in the United States, fondly recalling his politeness and good manner. Not many would have predicted the somewhat ironic scenario which was to unfold eight years later, when Awlaki was involved in a failed plot with AQAP to plant explosives in Federal Express packages sent from Yemen and detonate them during their transit to the US.<sup>131</sup>

## Stop Police Terror

The next year, he took part in a UK campaign called 'Stop Police Terror'. Founded on 10 December 2003 following the arrest of a British Muslim named Babar Ahmed, and backed by a number of British Islamist organisations, the stated aims of the campaign were to encourage Muslims to take action against 'anti-terrorist police terror' and to raise awareness about 'the deteriorating situation in the UK and the scale of arrests, raids and abuse meted out [against Muslims] by Anti-Terrorist Police.'<sup>132</sup> Ahmed reported that he had been severely mistreated by counter-terrorism officers, and in 2009 was awarded £60,000 in compensation by the British state.<sup>133</sup> At the time of writing, he is fighting a legal battle to prevent his extradition to the United States where he faces terrorism-related charges.<sup>134</sup>

For a group which was clearly framing counter-terrorism operations as part of the war on Islam, Awlaki was an obvious and useful partner. The campaign statement also came with a clear warning: 'Britain's Muslims, as a community, will refuse to cooperate with the law enforcement authorities **if** [their emphasis] this abuse continues.'<sup>135</sup> Awlaki's involvement appears to have amounted to a 40 minute lecture which was advertised by the group as having taken place at the East London Mosque. Given as his Friday sermon on 26 December 2003, his message bore many similarities to the March 2002 talk on the war on Islam, though it contained what appear to be calls for non-compliance with counter-terrorism authorities.

During the lecture, he attempted to portray the supposed war against Muslims in the West using a parable of four cows, three black and one white, which are surrounded by wolves. The cows remained safe as long as they stayed together, and successfully fended off prowling predators. This changed, however, when the black cows decided to abandon their white companion for fear that his colour revealed them

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<sup>130</sup> 'Lessons from the Companions: Living as a Minority'

<sup>131</sup> R. F. Worth, 'Yemen Emerges as Base for Qaeda Attacks on U.S.', *The New York Times*, 29 October 2010

<sup>132</sup> This was provided in the mission statement of the Stop Police Terror campaign, available on their website which is no longer operational. Author is in possession of archived versions

<sup>133</sup> 'Terror suspect wins £60,000 damages from Met Police over assault', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 March 2009

<sup>134</sup> 'The battle to banish Babar Ahmad', *BBC News*, 16 November 2005, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4441680.stm>

<sup>135</sup> Mission statement of the Stop Police Terror campaign

in the night. This disunity did not go amiss for the wolf, who promptly killed and ate the single white cow. This weakened the entire group, eventually leading to the death of all the cows, with the final cow lamenting before his demise: 'I was eaten the day the white cow was eaten.'<sup>136</sup>

Despite being a rather long-winded and drawn-out metaphor, the lessons for his Muslim audience are clear when Awlaki uses it as both a diagnostic and motivational frame for the war on Islam:

This story is a good representation of the situation of the Muslim *ummah* today. This is exactly what is happening. We are watching one Muslim nation fall one after another and we are watching, sitting back, doing nothing. When Palestine was taken we did nothing and then one nation after another is entering into problems, we have Kashmir, we have Chechnya, the Muslims in the Philippines and now we have Iraq and the *ummah* is doing nothing. The *ummah* is watching while Iraq is being devoured. It's not going to end there because this will spill over to other countries like Syria and only Allah knows who is next. So those nations were not taken today, they were taken a long time ago. When we allowed a Muslim nation to fall down we have allowed the same thing to happen to each and every one of us.<sup>137</sup>

Listing examples of where Muslims have stood idle while the *ummah* is attacked, he again fell short of calling for violence, but suggested that such evils will continue as long as Muslims remain inactive. In addition, he continued to offer the non-violent unity prognosis that we are now familiar with:

This shows us the consequences of having disunity...this *ummah* is like a body... if one part of the body feels pain, then the whole body would suffer

[...]

it doesn't matter whether they are split into different political states or they are in different groups or they belong to different madhab [Islamic schools of thought] as long as this person is a Muslim and a Muslim is a person whom has a sound belief in Allah, somebody who is not deviant, that's a Muslim.<sup>138</sup>

As with his 2001 talk in Chicago, he again exclaimed that:

You [Muslims] need to feel the pain and suffering when you see what is happening to your brothers in other parts of the Muslim world. You need to be concerned about what is happening in Palestine and Iraq. You need to be concerned about what's happening in Kashmir even though it's not your country.<sup>139</sup>

Although he was yet to specifically refer to the doctrine, Awlaki's prognostic framing now began to wed itself to the Manichean binarism of *al wala' wal bara'*, and there was a clear allusion to it when he offered the following:

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<sup>136</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003, East London Mosque, London

<sup>137</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

<sup>138</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

<sup>139</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

If you have love of the Muslims you will be with the Muslims on the day of judgement. If you have love for the *kuffar* [non-Muslims] you will be with the *kuffar* on the day of judgement, that's how it works. That's the justice of Allah; somebody who loved the Muslims will be with the Muslims and will follow them wherever they go.<sup>140</sup>

He then moved on to the third lesson of the parable which dovetails seamlessly from his previous one: 'the consequences of betrayal, the consequences of forsaking a Muslim'. Referring again as he did in 2002 to the same Bukhari Hadiths, he reminded Muslims that their Prophet says:

'A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim, he does not oppress him, he does not hand him over'.

You don't hand over a Muslim to the enemies of Allah.<sup>141</sup>

His choice to translate this Hadith differently than he did in March 2002, now using the term 'hand over', is significant given that the sermon is about British counter-terrorism police. Ensuring that the modern political relevance of this parable was not lost on some of his listeners, he left little to chance when aligning this frame, reminding them that that the three black cows,

Thought that they would be safe if they hand over this white cow, this white cow was outspoken, it was causing a lot of trouble, it was being accused of being a terrorist, so let it go, we don't want anything to do with him. Let him go to jail. But the thing is they don't realise that it will come to you next, you will be next in line.

[...]

If you are to protect yourselves you need to stop that, you need to stop such things from happening because as soon as you allow one Muslim to be taken, Allah does not help you anymore. You lose the assistance of Allah.<sup>142</sup>

It is important to remember that seen within the context of this sermon, which was part of a campaign against UK anti-terror operations, these words conveyed a clear message about co-operating with and helping the government, which he characterised as *Shaytan* (Satan):

[...] take it as a rule, *Shaytan* will never be satisfied, will never be happy until he is able to destroy the entire *ummah*. Nothing will satisfy *Shaytan*. If you try to please him, by all means it's not going to work. He has been our enemy since the time of Adam and he will carry on being our enemy until the day of judgment. Don't think that you will please him and keep him quiet by feeding him one of your brothers. No. His hunger is never satisfied. His thirst is never quenched.<sup>143</sup>

Looking to further align this war on Islam frame with his British audience he continued:

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<sup>140</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

<sup>141</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

<sup>142</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

<sup>143</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

Now dear brothers and sisters, we talked about this issue in general, however some specifics in your city, in your own neighbourhood. We are not talking now about things that are happening in Iraq or Palestine, or somewhere else, in your own city, and in this country, many Muslims have been arrested. You know, when you talk about Guantanamo Bay and all that stuff, there is a Guantanamo Bay in this country. There are 524 Muslims who are arrested under the new laws and only two of them have been charged. You have over 520 Muslims who are locked up in jail and are left to rot in there, and there is no crime, they have not committed anything, there are no charges brought against them. And they are left there for months on end to just rot in those prison cells.<sup>144</sup>

Thus, it is not only fellow Muslims in far-off lands who are being persecuted as part of the anti-Islam conspiracy, but the very same is happening on the doorsteps of Western Muslims, and they ignore it at their peril.

The East London Mosque was not the only place Awlaki delivered this lecture, having also given it in late 2003 at the Tawheed Mosque in Leyton. Dr. Usama Hasan, who chaired the talk there, recalls feeling quite uneasy about Awlaki's tone and message:

It was all very us and them, and I felt very uncomfortable about it... then he said we have to do something about it [police brutality]. He was very good at inspiring people, but then he would leave them with no practical suggestions about how to react or what to do.<sup>145</sup>

## The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab

During the same time as his 2003 'Stop Police Terror' lecture, he also orated a series called 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab', based on the Hadith about the follower of Mohammed, who became one of the rightly-guided Caliphs after the death of the Prophet.<sup>146</sup> Delivered at the East London Mosque, this is still considered by the mosque's management to be a moderate and mainstream piece of work, so much so that in a recent defence of their past hosting of him, they were happy to admit that this series was given on their official platform.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, in the nearly twenty hour long lecture (given over what it likely to have been several days), there are only small segments that betray an otherwise ostensibly measured tone. Yet, the final moral of the story is not left in any doubt when Awlaki, again taking a story from classical Islamic history and framing it so as to give it immediate relevance to his Western audience, used Umar's experiences to explain the war on Islam and Muslims in the West.

As he had begun to repeat by this point, Muslims were under immediate ideological, and even physical, threat from Western governments, in particular those of Britain and the United States. The leaders of the West were likened to the *fir'awn* (Egyptian

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<sup>144</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday Sermon, 26 December 2003

<sup>145</sup> Author's interview, 11 May 2011, London, England

<sup>146</sup> The exact date of when he first gave this lecture is unknown, and it is likely to have evolved over time. It is also available as a CD set

<sup>147</sup> 'East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre Statement on Anwar Awlaki', East London Mosque Press Release, 6 November 2010, available at: [http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/uploadedimage/pdf/2010\\_11\\_07\\_15\\_44\\_46\\_Awlaki%20Statement%206%20Nov10%20-%20Full%20Statement.pdf](http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/uploadedimage/pdf/2010_11_07_15_44_46_Awlaki%20Statement%206%20Nov10%20-%20Full%20Statement.pdf)

Pharaohs), who in the seventh century resisted Khattab and Islam's foray into North Africa.

Awlaki's use of *al wala' wal bara'* as part of his prognostic framing within the war on Islam master frame was also all too apparent when he discussed the deception of Abu Jahl, a Quraishi leader of pre-Islamic Mecca, against Ayaash ibn abi Rabi', a Muslim friend of Umar's:

Brothers and sisters, there is a very important lesson to learn here...Umar told Ayaash, don't believe them, they want to deceive you. The important lesson to learn here is never, ever trust the *kuffar*. Do not trust them.<sup>148</sup>

After a long and detailed exegesis of the life of Umar – during which he would have convinced many in the audience of his Islamic knowledge and credentials – he concluded that what happened in the time of the Prophet was now being replayed before their very own eyes in the West.

The period of Umar's life in which Awlaki was most interested here is during his *hijrah* to Medina, when Mohammed and Islam were still in what is referred to as the Meccan period.<sup>149</sup> The hostility shown to Muslims in West in modern times is, according to Awlaki, the equivalent to what they experienced in Mecca.

This distinction between the Meccan and Medinan period and which of these is most applicable to the present day is central for Salafis. Wiktorowicz explains that within the movement, a prognostic divide exists between those who see the present time as equivalent to either the Meccan or Medinan periods:

If, for example, a scholar believes that the current context is analogous to the Meccan period, a time when the Muslims comprised a small minority in a society still dominated by disbelievers, he will likely argue that the focus of Islamic activism should be peaceful propagation because this is what the Prophet Muhammad emphasized during the first half of his mission. However, if the scholar reasons that today is better compared to the Medinan period after the *hijrah* (migration) when the Prophet established the first Islamic state, implemented the *hudood* (Islamic penal code), and waged jihad of the sword, conclusions about Islamic activism will likely include more militant measures.<sup>150</sup>

Awlaki, now having established that the Meccan period is the most relevant for Western Muslims, seems to share the prognosis of peaceful propagation and resistance as explained by Wiktorowicz.

Here, he was faced with something of an obstacle to frame alignment; for Muslims who spend much of their lives working and living with non-Muslims, the story of Umar is perhaps outdated and their experiences with non-Muslims are such that it would be difficult to possess such seemingly unnecessary enmity for their friends and

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<sup>148</sup> A. al-Awlaki, 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab', East London Mosque, December 2003, London, United Kingdom

<sup>149</sup> The Meccan period was a time in the history of Islam when Mohammed and his followers were persecuted by the Quraish tribes and not allowed to openly practice their religion. The *hijrah* refers to Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina with his followers in order to escape persecution.

<sup>150</sup> 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement'

neighbours. He therefore sought to pre-empt what many within his Western Muslim audience may have thought about such a statement:

Now you might argue and say 'but my neighbour is such a nice person, my classmates are very nice, my co-workers, they're just fabulous people, they're so decent and honest...' <sup>151</sup>

Such thoughts, he explained, are utterly without foundation in Islam; this hatred and distrust should be held for the leaders of *kufir*, the ones who are, as he put it, 'calling the shots'. The leaders are 'plotting to kill this religion', and one should not 'make peace based on your friend who is not a decision maker.' The Koran says nothing, and cares little for 'the people who are just fillings and don't make any decisions.' 'Joe six-pack and Sally soccer-mom', as he described them, are not the ones upon whom a Muslim should make their judgement on *kufir*. Reverting briefly back to Islamic history, he reminded his audience of the story of the Bani Isra'il (Israelites) who committed a sin by fishing during the Sabbath, and who were reprimanded by those who were commanding the good and of those who 'stayed quiet'. Of these three 'camps', the Koran describes the fate of the first two, but gives no mention at all of the latter. <sup>152</sup>

This does not, however, make 'the followers' insignificant, and in order to illustrate this, Awlaki reached for a contemporary example that would have still been raw in the memories of many in the audience:

You know, these nice neighbours, wonderful co-workers and friends, all that it needed was for [former Yugoslav President] Milosevic to tell them the Muslims are evil people, all that was needed, and they pounced on the Muslims like wild beasts. This is in twentieth century Europe. <sup>153</sup>

The message is clear: modern Europe has already seen one atrocity against its Muslims and these unbelievers with whom Western Muslims must interact on a daily basis, and forge relationships with, are no more than a few stirring speeches away from sanctioning, and even participating in, yet another mass killing of European Muslims. He added to this an element of conspiracy, a common component of Islamist thought, by suggesting that the Western leaders, in tandem with the United Nations and Amnesty International, are sanctioning the 'use of homosexuals to rape them [Muslim prisoners]', and are subjecting them to the regular spectacle of their mothers and sisters being raped by interrogators. <sup>154</sup>

This 'is something that is happening today', and was in a similar vein to what happened to Muslims in Bosnia. Western Muslims must awaken from their media-induced torpor and realise that it is only a matter of time before similar measures are taken against them. The Jews and Christians, through CNN and other media, ('the mouthpiece of the Shaytan') aim to 'deceive' Muslims into a false sense of security; they have, he said while quoting Malcolm X, 'been bamboozled'. <sup>155</sup> Like his past references to Solzhenitsyn and Friedman, Malcolm X would not be an acceptable

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<sup>151</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

<sup>152</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

<sup>153</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

<sup>154</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

<sup>155</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

source for any other Salafis, even less so due to his connections with the Nation of Islam, which is considered a deviant sect as far as Salafis are concerned.

Near the end of this section of the talk, Awlaki took a moment to discuss concepts of human rights and freedom of speech:

By the way, this thing about 'It's [extermination of Muslims] not going to happen to us, this is a civilised world, democracy, human rights', Brothers and Sisters, when it comes to religious freedoms, Mecca maybe had more religious freedoms than the West today.<sup>156</sup>

This couching of his rhetoric in Western terms of 'human rights' and 'freedom of speech' shows that Awlaki sought to fight his battles on Western terrain, using terms and concepts that Western Muslims would be familiar with. He warned that Muslims should not be fooled by such terms into thinking they will be safe; the society in which they live is no different from pre-Islamic Mecca, which tolerated Christians and Jews, but persecuted Muslims. In order to drive the point home to his specifically British audience, he claimed that in terms of free speech, the system was 'equal or better to the Speaker's Corner of Hyde Park.' Similarly, because modern Western society shares these values with pre-Islamic Mecca, it has also reacted in the same way as the Quraish: 'when Islam came on the scene it was not tolerated, because that's the way of the *Shaytan*, he will tolerate everything except the truth.'<sup>157</sup>

Referring back to the general population of non-Muslims, the Joe six-packs and Sally soccer-moms, he offered the example of Koran 43:54 about the Pharaoh and his followers which reads: 'He thus fooled his people, and they obeyed him; they were wicked people.' Those who followed the Pharaoh, like their modern counterparts, were *fasiqeen* (people of no moral character and violators of Islamic law), and so devoted were they to *dunya* (the temporal world) that 'they were attached to their jobs, they were attached to the status quo, they were attached to their desires and that misled them, that's how their leaders tricked them.'<sup>158</sup> This brings him back to the massacres of Muslims in Bosnia, a very potent contemporary tool for Islamist radicalisation in the UK and a convenient way to give resonance to the war on Islam frame among his British audience:

So in Bosnia, that's what happened, they were very nice, I mean a brother was telling me, 'they used to date our women, they used to be very close to us, neighbour to neighbour, very close'. But then Milosevic tricked them, bringing up these false legends of history and these nationalistic songs and all that. It inspired the people and they turned against the Muslims. They were so gullible and naïve that all it took were a few nationalistic songs and a few events in history that were fabricated and not true and they just attacked the Muslims, that's how easy it was to deceive these masses who were otherwise before that very decent and honest and nice people. But the thing is that many of the people just follow what they are told.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

<sup>157</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

<sup>158</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

<sup>159</sup> 'The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab'

This stops short of advocating the killing of non-Muslims in the West, something he would call for publicly in the years to come. Yet, his ideological frames are clearly set, and his view of political events and individuals are seen only through classic Salafi-Islamist frames. The justification for the killing of these *fasiqeen* requires little more from what he has already provided – merely a slight shift in the prognostic framing – and indeed when he does condone such acts, his justification is based upon the same arguments he has made here.

These earlier sermons give a sense of Awlaki's ideological perception of the world at the time; one which is split simply between Muslims and non-Muslims, and in which the latter are engaged in a multi-faceted conspiracy to destroy Islam and Muslims under the pretence of preventing further terrorist attacks. However, his views at this point, though undoubtedly *ummah*-oriented, cannot yet be categorised as jihadi and were clearly influenced by, among others, Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. This is seen not only through his use of the Qaradawist *fiqh al-awlawiyyat*, but also in his 2002 call for Muslims to join the Islamic groups in America that had a 'political orientation'.<sup>160</sup> Though highly inflammatory, the 'Stop Police Terror' campaign in which he took part during his time in London called for political activism in response to supposed government hostility to Muslims. In addition, his main sponsor and supporter during his time in the UK, the Muslim Association of Britain, was set up in 1997 by *Ikhwani* activists as the UK wing of the global Muslim Brotherhood, and is described by Vidino as 'a quintessential New Western Brotherhood organization.'<sup>161</sup> His partnership with Brotherhood-aligned organisations in the United States and United Kingdom is also likely to have been one of expediency, whereby they sought to co-opt a charismatic young preacher in order to help them gain influence among Western Muslims, and in return, they opened up to him the benefits of their considerable organisational capacities, providing Awlaki with ready-made large audiences and venues.

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<sup>160</sup> A. al-Awlaki, Friday sermon, March 2002

<sup>161</sup> *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*

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## 5 Awlaki, Salafi-Jihadi Ideology and al-Qaeda

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The second part of this study will analyse Awlaki's work as it became more overtly in-line with Salafi-jihadi thought. Whereas much of his public work up until this period is heavily diagnostic, offering as it does Salafist interpretations of the current problems faced by the *ummah*, he does not offer much detail by way of solutions apart from variations upon preserving Islamic identity in the face of an onslaught from Western culture and a basic application of *al wala' wal bara'*. It is also at this stage, during which he seeks to encourage his audience to pursue violent jihad against the West, where Awlaki begins to formulate specifically motivational frames. This analysis will also reveal that, although Awlaki's prognoses have altered to take on a more Salafi-jihadi bent, there is little discernable change in his diagnostic framing and ideological worldview.

### The Book of Jihad

One of his earliest works focussing on jihad was a lecture series entitled 'The Story of Ibn al-Akwa', which was based upon *Mashari al-Ashwaq ila Masari al-Ushaaq*<sup>162</sup> (also known as Book of Jihad) written by a fourteenth century Islamic scholar and warrior, Ibn Nuhaas, who died in 1411 fighting the Moguls and Crusaders. Delivered during his time in London in 2003, it is one of the only translations of this key text on jihad. The work was supposedly hailed by Abdullah Azzam as 'the best book on Jihad', and was listed by Hasan al-Banna as essential reading on the 1940s *Ikhwan* members' syllabus.<sup>163</sup> Awlaki also found it a useful text through which to define and activate boundaries between "true" Muslims and those who claim that jihad does not refer only to violent, physical action, as well as to characterise such claims as representing a deviation from the Koran and Hadith.

The work is an important one because, according to Awlaki, the true meaning of jihad has been lost in the post-9/11 confusion and search for answers. He explained that, although it was an old text, it's messages were still very relevant for Muslims today:

[Jihad] is an integral part of *fiqh*...however, because of the circumstances today it has become a very obscure issue. This issue of jihad has accumulated many misinterpretations...it is not clear in the minds of...Muslims. That's why we want to go and study an old book rather than a new one, because with the *Salaf*, the old Muslims, most likely they would have it right, unlike *ul-khalaf* [later scholars], who among them you would find an accumulation of different influences.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> This is classical, *fusha* Arabic which was used by Islamic scholars for stylistic purposes. It roughly translates as 'The correct path for those who seek the battlefield'. The book is more commonly known as *Kitab al-Jihad* (Book of Jihad).

<sup>163</sup> This claim is made both in the text of the translation itself and is also found in Maktabah's 2006 edition of *Qutb's Milestones*, edited by A.B. al-Mehri, (Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2006)

<sup>164</sup> Audio CD collection: A. al-Awlaki, 'The Story of Ibn al-Akwa: Shaykh Noor al-Din Shahaada', (Dar Ibn al-Mubarak, 2003). A transcript of Awlaki's oral translation was also published by Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, Birmingham, England

Therefore, according to Awlaki, the book's many references to the untainted words of the Prophet and his followers makes it the best source for modern day Muslims who want to understand jihad in a time when Islam has been diluted and many have deviated from the correct path. Despite this, he appeared to immediately contradict this statement by claiming his lecture was purely academic, with no relevance for the present:

I want to state in the beginning and make it very clear that our study of this book is not an exhortation or an invitation to violence or a promotion of violence against an individual or society or a state...We are studying a book that is 600 years old...so that is the extent of what we are doing, it's a purely academic study of an old traditional book.<sup>165</sup>

Awlaki was yet to make clear and public statements in support of violent jihad in a contemporary Western context, and this disclaimer was likely made with the intention of avoiding the attention of British security authorities.

In the first instance, the definition of jihad appears to be the biggest victim of the gradual dilution of Islam since the time of Mohammed. He explained that in the original Arabic the linguistic meaning of jihad is "to strive", but since the introduction of Islam it has also taken on a more important, Shariah meaning. Referring to one of the key texts of the Hanafi school, *Hashiyah ibn Abidin*, Awlaki defined jihad in Islam as:

Striving to the limit in fighting in the sake of Allah directly or by money, or intellect, or by increasing the numbers [of Muslims] or other means.<sup>166</sup>

Using this as well as sources from the Koran, Awlaki sought to make it very clear that, in Islam, jihad refers primarily to physical fighting in the path of God, and any other act that directly assists this deed. Despite this apparently undisputable fact, he warned that:

Nowadays, it is very common to find among Muslims the understanding that jihad is primarily *jihad al-nafs* (internal struggle) and the secondary meaning is the fighting of the *kuffar* (non-believers).<sup>167</sup>

Indeed, much to the chagrin of many Salafi-jihadis, the Hadith which makes this statement is widely used and is particularly popular with Muslims in the West who work against Islamist and Salafi-jihadi influence. They are, however, greatly mistaken according to Awlaki, as not only is this a 'fabricated Hadith', but the vast majority of references to jihad in the Koran and Hadith make its meaning clear. He used to a number of Koranic verses to back this up, including:

- 9:41 – March forth whether you are light or heavy and strive hard with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah.
- 9:86 – And when a *Surah* [chapter of the Koran] is revealed, enjoining them to believe in Allah and to strive hard and fight along with His Messenger, the wealthy among them ask your leave to

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<sup>164</sup> A. al-Awlaki, 'The Story of Ibn al-Akwa: Shaykh Noor al-Din Shahaada', (Dar Ibn al-Mubarak, 2003)

<sup>166</sup> 'The Story of Ibn al-Akwa: Shaykh Noor al-Din Shahaada'

<sup>167</sup> 'The Story of Ibn al-Akwa: Shaykh Noor al-Din Shahaada'

exempt them (from jihad) and say, 'Leave us (behind), we would be with those who sit (at home).'

Adding a number of Hadith and other key texts of the five main schools of Sunni Islam to this list, he aimed to prove that the vast majority of Islamic references to jihad refer specifically and only to fighting.

Ibn Nuhaas' work, which provides a classical justification and explanation of jihad, supplied Awlaki with a useful platform from which to properly introduce jihad to his audience. Although he made efforts to give the book relevance in a modern context, he needed something more to give jihad an immediate importance to Western Muslims. This was provided to him in the form of *Constants on the Path of Jihad*, written after 9/11 by Sheikh Yusuf al-Uyayree, a now deceased Salafi-jihadi ideologue from Saudi Arabia.

## Constants on the Path of Jihad

Unlike Ibn Nuhaas, Uyayree was a modern Salafi-jihadi who cut his teeth fighting for the *mujahideen* against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Similarly, his book on jihad is a contemporary work, which explicitly places Nuhaas' ancient teachings in a modern context.<sup>168</sup>

Awlaki is thought to have first given his oral translation and exegesis of Yusuf al Uyayree's *Constants on the Path of Jihad* in 2005, heralding a full transition to Salafi-jihadism in his public work. The work, originally in Arabic, was formulated by Uyayree as an encouragement to violent jihad in Saudi Arabia and surrounding countries. Awlaki's desire to provide a sympathetic English version of this work, which had until this point only been available in Arabic, reflects the ideologue's growing desire to promote Salafi-jihadi thought among Western Muslims. In 2009, he would explain his motivations for this in another of his more popular works which will be discussed later, '44 Ways to Support Jihad':

Most of the *Jihad* literature is available only in Arabic and publishers are not willing to take the risk of translating it. The only ones who are spending the money and time translating *Jihad* literature are the Western intelligence services...and too bad, they would not be willing to share it with you.<sup>169</sup>

Taken up by Awlaki, he intended to provide his own summary and explanation of *Constants*, giving its ideas a Western context. Upon listening to the lectures, it becomes clear that this was not an attempt by Awlaki at a scholarly or academic analysis; rather it was a sympathetic retelling that wanted to convey and enliven Uyayree's ideas for a Western audience. It is among his most popular works, and has been cited as an inspiration for violence in a number of terrorist trials. In a 2008 trial of six men who planned to attack the Fort Dix military base in New Jersey, recordings of the plotters' conversations about Awlaki were discussed in the court. In his report, expert witness for the prosecution, Evan Kohlmann, recalled a conversation secretly recorded by American authorities between

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<sup>168</sup> A. al-Awlaki, 'Constants on the Path of Jihad', 2005

<sup>169</sup> A. al-Awlaki, '44 ways to support jihad', Victorious Media, 2009

plotters Shain and Dritan Duka, Gregori Ilichenko and Serdar Tatar in which they discussed the lecture:

Shain Duka commented, ‘...as I was saying Serd... about Anwar al Awlaki... You gotta hear this lecture... you gotta hear it... The title? The title is Constants of [UI].’ Dritan Duka echoed, ‘You gotta hear this lecture, this brother [UI] him locked up in Yemen, Anwar al Awlaki the Imam in Washington DC, they kicked him out of the US and now they locked him up in Yemen. He was talking about *jihad* [holy struggle] the truth, no holds barred, straight how it is!’ Later, during the same conversation, the group of men listen to an actual copy of Anwar al-Awlaki’s sermon on ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad.’ While the audio recording plays in the background, Shain Duka insists to them, ‘You gotta listen to this [UI]...He has a whole volume of this lecture.’ Dritan Duka added, ‘You can’t buy it nowhere... He’s in jail, they arrest him, he’s on house arrest... For stuff like this, in Yemen.’ Shain Duka concurred with Dritan’s assessment: ‘You can’t find it...In his own country they locked him up for speaking like this...That’s a good lecture, huh brother?... There’s no lies with this guy.’ One of the other men listening – Gregori Ilichenko – praised al-Awlaki and his interpretation of “Constants on the Path of Jihad”, responding, ‘Mad good son.’ Separately, in early 2007, the subject of “Constants on the Path of Jihad” came again several times during recorded conversations involving [plotter] Eljvir Duka. In February 2007, Duka repeatedly instructed an unidentified male to download a copy of Anwar al-Awlaki’s English language lecture...<sup>170</sup>

In the same month, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was provided with an assessment by its Extremism and Radicalization Branch<sup>171</sup> which warned that:

English language transcripts and recordings that are circulating on the Internet and in hard copy of... “Constants on the path of jihad” command U.S. Muslims to conduct violent attacks in the Homeland and against U.S. targets abroad...The sermon also attempts to inoculate readers against popular counter-violence messages.<sup>172</sup>

The audio and PDF transcript of this lecture can be found on numerous jihadist websites. However, until recently, it was also widely available on more mainstream Islamic sites. At the time that it came to the attention of US authorities in 2008, the lecture was available on one of the most popular of these, *www.ummah.com*, which according to the assessment received approximately 48,300 visitors per month from the U.S. alone.<sup>173</sup>

The transcript includes an introduction by an Awlaki follower using the nom de guerre, Mujahid Fe Sabeelillah (holy warrior in the path of Allah), and is worth a brief examination as it picks out key themes and frames in the lecture, and in particular those relevant to Westerners. *Constants*, the author claims, is ‘extremely relevant to our time’ due

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<sup>170</sup> E. F. Kohlmann, ‘Expert Report II: U.S. v. Mohamad Ibrahim Shnewer et al’, NEFA Foundation, September 2008

<sup>171</sup> Part of the Homeland Environment Threat Analysis Division, this branch is mainly responsible for tracking and analysing media and other propaganda efforts by al-Qaeda and its affiliates which is specifically directed at radicalising Western Muslims

<sup>172</sup> ‘Countering Radicalization: Popular Lecture Encourages Violence in the Homeland’, Internal assessment for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Unclassified/For Official Use Only, 15 September 2008

<sup>173</sup> ‘Countering Radicalization: Popular Lecture Encourages Violence in the Homeland’

to the growth in number of supposedly deviant Muslims who claim that 'it is not time for jihad'.<sup>174</sup> The work draws a clear boundary between Awlaki's (and Uyayree's) correct *manhaj* and that of other Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood:

In addition, for the many Muslims and Islamic movements who do recognize that establishing the *Khilafa* [Caliphate] is a duty, many of these Muslims and Islamic movements, unfortunately take up the attitude of understanding Deen from a very western perspective.<sup>175</sup>

Describing jihad as an inner struggle is therefore nothing more than another part of the war on Islam and 'a very twisted concept of jihad via western propagation'. As part of its ideological and physical war on the *haqq* (truth), the West co-opts dishonest Muslims to encourage deceptions about jihad and a Muslim's duty to it. The same goes for the Western media:

[...] today, the word 'terrorism' in the news, in most cases, implies jihad. This is done to scare our *muslimeen* [Muslims] away from fulfilling their duty of Allah.<sup>176</sup>

Using a Hadith from Abu Hurairah, the author frames the current role of Western Muslims as a simple choice between action and inaction in the face of an overwhelming attack on Islam:

Abu Hurairah narrated: The Messenger of Allah said: 'The trials and tribulations are on their way. Trials like pieces of a dark night. The safest from them would be a man living on the peaks of mountains, living off his flock of sheep, or a man mounting his horse living off his sword.'

What are we doing in the West in the first place? The safest of Muslims would be the one living like a hermit by worshipping Allah far away from the evil...society or the one who is living off of his sword fighting *fe sabeelillah* [in the path of God] and living the life of Jihad. There is nothing else in between.

Thus, those Muslims in the West who do not partake in violent jihad are those who Mohammed criticises for 'living on the peaks of mountains' while those who are rightly-guided live 'the life of jihad'. Western Muslims are duty bound either to travel to Muslim majority countries in order to undertake jihad and re-establish Islam, or strike back at the enemies of Islam in their own countries:

Some will argue, "I was born in the West; so where am I going?" Well if you are cognizant that the West is not your average land of the disbelievers and is actually fighting Islam in the media and battlefield front, then your obligation is to either fight them back with the sword or move to a Muslim country (if possible) and fight jihad.<sup>177</sup>

The author also attempts to pre-empt the arguments of non-Salafi-jihadi Muslims and find resonance with what Western Muslims may

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<sup>174</sup> Mujahid Fe Sabeelillah introduction to official transcript of A. al-Awlaki, 'Constants on the Path of Jihad', 2005

<sup>175</sup> Mujahid Fe Sabeelillah introduction

<sup>176</sup> Mujahid Fe Sabeelillah introduction

<sup>177</sup> Mujahid Fe Sabeelillah introduction

be thinking about taking part in jihad. This is then followed by a clear enjoinment to commit violent acts in the West based on the war on Islam frame. This war, in both its physical and ideological forms, does not allow Muslims to fight jihad or implement the Salafi-jihadi version of Shariah law – two supposedly absolute requirements for Muslims who wish to properly observe their religion. Therefore, any concept of freedom for Muslims in the West is an illusion:

Some will argue, “We are fleeing religious persecution; this Country has more freedom.” That is not an excuse to come to the land of the disbelievers. Firstly, the land of the disbelievers doesn’t let you practice your Islam completely. Do they allow you to do jihad? Do they allow you to implement the *hudoos* [punishments in Shariah law] of Allah? Do they allow you to condemn, in public, those who are fighting the *Mujahideen* and Islam? If not, then what kind of Islam are we following? Allah says, “Then is it only a part of the Book that you believe in and you reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? And on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous punishment! For Allah is not unmindful of what you do!”<sup>178</sup>

Moving on to the lecture itself, Awlaki began by discussing Uyayree’s Islamic credentials, describing his books as masterpieces. In particular, he lauded the Salafi-jihadi scholar’s skill in combining the teachings of Islam with the modern day:

[Uyayree displays] knowledge of the text and also knowledge of present day, and that is what is needed by the Mufti, by the scholar, it’s to be able to use the text and apply it to our present day.<sup>179</sup>

Indeed, this is also how Awlaki sees his own role in the Western context, and his work displays a desire to do in English what Uyayree did so skilfully in Arabic; not only justify the religious mandate for violent jihad against the “enemies of Islam”, but also successfully align various Salafi-jihadi frames so that they apply to a modern context.

Uyayree’s treatise identifies seven key constants in the Salafi-jihadi interpretation of jihad; themes that he believes have remained unchanged between the time of the Prophet and present day. The work is thus split along these lines into seven sections and the first three, which will be examined here, are concerned primarily with both frame construction and alignment: ‘Jihad will continue until the day of judgement’; ‘Jihad does not depend on an individual or individuals’; and ‘Jihad is not dependent on a particular land’.

The first section is among the most important as it concentrates primarily on developing the war on Islam master frame and the importance of jihad. Awlaki’s references to Western military interventions, counter-terrorism operations, and other acts of supposed aggression against Muslims remain, though now he adds an additional diagnostic frame to the war on Islam: the prevention of Islamic supremacy. Any person or country that does not accept

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<sup>178</sup> Mujahid Fe Sabeellillah introduction

<sup>179</sup> ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’

the law of God and apply the Shariah appropriately is now defined as part of the worldwide aggression against Islam and Muslims. From now on, this is one of the most common frames found in his work.

First, as a motivational frame, Awlaki needed to establish the importance of jihad as a pillar of Islam equal to fasting and the Hajj pilgrimage, and a requirement for anyone who seeks paradise. Based on the Salafi-jihadi interpretation of *ibadah* (forms of worship), jihad is as much of a *fard* (duty or obligation) for Muslims as *salah* (prayer) and fasting during Ramadan. Thus, quoting Koran 2:216, he argued:

Allah says, 'Fighting has been prescribed upon you and you dislike it, but it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you and you love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knows and you know not.' This *ayah* [verse] says that fighting is prescribed upon you, so it is a *fard*, it's an instruction from Allah.

[...]

They [jihad and fasting] are both in Surah al-Baqarah. Fighting is prescribed upon you and fasting is prescribed upon you; so how come we are treating them differently?<sup>180</sup>

### Case Study 1: Faisal Shahzad and the Obligation of Jihad

This motivational interpretation of jihad has clearly not been lost on those who have taken up arms after listening to Awlaki's sermons. In a 40 minute video address filmed while he was training with the Tekhrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) before his operation, the failed Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad – who claims inspiration from Awlaki among others<sup>181</sup> – made the very same point about jihad as a pillar of Islam equal to fasting and prayer:

One of the most prominent things in Islam...when I came to it, is jihad. People do prayer, they...give *zakat* [obligatory charitable donations], they do fasting, they go to Hajj, but they follow part of it [Islam], but they don't follow the other part of it, which is fighting in the cause of Allah.

[...]

I don't understand why people follow one of the commandments, but they don't follow the other commandment...they are equally important.<sup>182</sup>

To justify his argument, Shahzad uses the same Koranic references applied by Awlaki in the lecture, namely Sura al-Baqarah verses 216 and 183, which refer to the ordained obligations of jihad and fasting respectively.

<sup>180</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>181</sup> It has been reported that in his interviews with American interrogators after his arrest, Faisal Shahzad claimed inspiration from the works of Anwar al-Awlaki, and that he was in online contact with the preacher prior to the failed attack. See for example: D. McElroy, 'Times Square bomb suspect had links to terror preacher', *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 May 2010; R. Esposito, C. Vlasto and C. Cuomo, 'Shahzad Had Contact With Awlaki, Taliban Chief, and Mumbai Massacre Mastermind', *ABC News*, 6 May 2010, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/faisal-shahzad-contact-awlaki-taliban-mumbai-massacre-mastermind/story?id=10575061>

<sup>182</sup> Faisal Shahzad video address, undated, in author's possession.

If one were to accept this interpretation of Islamic obligations, and use it to frame various Western countries' responses to violent jihad, it is not difficult to see how this could be a convincing argument; by preventing and working against jihad, America and the West are actively preventing Muslims from carrying out their duties to both the defence and spread of their religion as ordained by Allah.

As demonstrated in his Ibn Nuhaas lecture two years previously, Awlaki's main concern at this stage was to raise the significance and importance of jihad and make the war on Islam a reality for his Western audience. This war, Awlaki claimed, is being waged on five fronts: religious, political, media, economic and cultural. He delved into each of these, providing modern, Western examples of each to achieve frame resonance:

**Religious:** Awlaki argued that the West's actions against jihad (and therefore Islam and Muslims as a whole) are themselves religiously motivated:

You can find that the Christians and the Jews are using religion to justify what they are doing...a lot of the interference that is happening in the Middle East today is done in the name of the second return of Christ...it is interesting to see at a very very high level in American politics, these are intentions that these politicians have in some of their actions. For example, [Palestinian Authority head] Abu Mazen: he said that he had a meeting with [President George W.] Bush and that Bush told him that God has instructed him to invade Afghanistan And the Jews are now trying to destroy the Maasjid al-Aqsa [al-Aqsa Mosque].<sup>183</sup>

**Political:** The US, NATO, the European Union and others are developing and discussing strategies to fight jihad, and therefore they are all 'united in fighting Islam':

Diplomacy around the world now is revolving around a central idea, and that's fighting Islamic terrorism.

[...]

On the political level...every single government in the world is in line to fight Islam.<sup>184</sup>

**Media:** The Western media is part of this conspiracy, and works tirelessly towards defaming and distorting the image of Islam and its Prophet:

We find that the media is doing an excellent job in deceiving the people, the masses, to what Islam really is.<sup>185</sup>

The various fronts in the war on Islam now clearly outlined, Awlaki's prognosis is unambiguous when he again quotes Koran 2:216: 'Allah says: fighting is proscribed upon you'. This fight must be taken up by Muslims with no hesitation, and embraced in the same way as the obligations of prayer, Hajj and fasting.

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<sup>183</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>184</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>185</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

Having identified the key external impediments to this pillar of Islam, Awlaki turned (as he did in his Ibn Nuhaas lecture) to the current obstacles to violent jihad coming from within the *ummah*. Prime among these is the concept of *tarbiyah*. Literally translated as “education”, it was originally formulated by Muslim Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna (and later adopted by his successor Hasan Ismai’il al-Hudaybi) as a way to prepare the ground for the creation of an Islamic society governed by the Shariah. The essence of the Brotherhood’s continuing strategy, *tarbiyah* holds that revolutionary political reform toward an Islamist model is only possible once the Muslim youth are properly and patiently prepared, through *da’wah* and Islamic education, to implement Islam as an all-encompassing identity and way of life.<sup>186</sup> Thus, conditions on violent jihad were set by the Brotherhood, conditions which Salafi-jihadis like Awlaki furiously reject.

A far cry from his above mentioned lecture on Mohammed’s time in Mecca, where he calls for the creation and protection of the Islamic identity through *daw’ah* and education, Awlaki now railed against *tarbiyah*:

A lot of people and a lot of jama’a (Islamic groups), say that before jihad *fe sabeelillah*, there must be *tarbiyah*...they say the following: ‘*tarbiyah* is a prerequisite of jihad. So without *tarbiyah* you cannot make jihad.’ They don’t say that it is something that is needed, they don’t say that it is something good to have, they say that you cannot fight jihad without *tarbiyah*.

[...]

Is there justification for delaying jihad *fe sabeelillah*? To answer this question, let me ask you another question: If somebody starts practicing Islam or somebody reverts to Islam; would you tell them that you would have to have *tarbiyah* before you start fasting?... Nobody would say that, it’s a joke. So what’s the difference? Why do we say that about jihad *fe sabeelillah*?...they are both in Sura al-Baqarah: ‘fighting is proscribed upon you and fasting is proscribed upon you’. So how come we are treating them differently?<sup>187</sup>

Invoking no less a figure than the Prophet himself, Awlaki asked ‘when somebody would embrace Islam, would *Rusool* tell them that “you have to go and study under the *Shuyookh* (Sheikhs), and then after that you can fight *fe sabeelillah*?”’ In one sentence, Awlaki thus lifted the pre-requisite jurisprudential impediments placed upon Muslims wanting to pursue violent jihad. The concept of *tarbiyah* before jihad is instead used by those Muslims who wish to ‘bail out’ of jihad, nothing more than the product of a flaw within the human psyche which brings about an aversion fighting, and one which must be overcome. Yet again quoting Koran 2:216, he claimed that this was a problem that Allah had foreseen: ‘Allah says: Fighting is proscribed upon you, and you dislike it.’

This all brought Awlaki to what he saw as one of the most important elements in the first section of Uyayree’s work, defining *al-Taifatul*

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<sup>186</sup> For more on this concept see for example: R.P. Mitchell, ‘The Society of the Muslim Brothers’ (Oxford University Press, 1969); U. Rosen, ‘The Muslim Brotherhood’s Concept of Education’, *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 7, Hudson, 2008

<sup>187</sup> ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’

*Mansura*. As well as activating boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims through his interpretation of *al wala' wal bara'*, Awlaki wished to do the same among Muslims – classifying who the “true” followers of the Prophet are, and who have supposedly deviated. This act of boundary definition and activation is also a motivational frame which purports to explain how Muslims can guarantee the pleasure of their Lord.

Translated as “those who have been ordained victorious by God”, *al-Taifatul Mansura* refers to the righteous Muslims who follow Islam as set out in the Koran and Hadith. In the Salafi-jihadi context, this group also takes on a specifically violent character. Clearly (and correctly) identifying organisational affiliation as a problem faced by Western Muslims, he recalled that:

In lectures, brothers and sisters will often ask the question... 'oh Sheikh, there are so many Islamic groups today, tell us which one to join.'...It seems to be a very confusing issue on the youth. They don't know which *jama'a* [group] to join.

[...]

The issue shouldn't be confusing at all, because this is the religion of Allah, and Allah has made it clear. If we look in the right place, we will find the answer. *Rasool* Allah [Mohammed] has told us in Hadith that there is a *taifah* [group or sect], there is a victorious group called *al-Taifatul Mansura*...He told us what the qualities of this victorious group are. If we look at these characteristics it will be as clear as the sun at noon, you will know which *jama'a* fits these qualities.<sup>188</sup>

Seeking to align the qualities set out by Mohammed with modern-day al-Qaeda groups, Awlaki first picked out a few of the required characteristics found in the Koran and Hadith, and applied to them modern examples:

**'They are humble towards the believers'** – taken in isolation, this requisite feature of *al-Taifatul Mansura* could be interpreted in numerous ways, and Awlaki offered the *ummah*-centric Islamist take:

This means they are concerned with the believers, they love the believers...they follow the news about what is happening to the believers around the world...they feel that a Muslim in the East is my brother...and if that Muslim in the East is killed, it is my responsibility to defend him.<sup>189</sup>

From such a simple and unspecific requirement from the primary Islamic texts, Awlaki has quickly and easily aligned it with the *ummah*-centric worldview of Islamism.

Seeking to set up a clear boundary between these “rightly guided” Muslims, and the “deviants”, he continued:

On the other hand, you find that there are some people who claim to be Muslim, but they have the opposite of this trait...You find that they are willing to give *fatawa* [religious edicts] to the government

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<sup>188</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>189</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

to detain Muslims, to interrogate Muslims...to allow Muslims to spy on Muslims. You find that they are willing to stand alongside the *kuffar* to fight against Muslims. So they represent the opposite though they claim to be Muslim.<sup>190</sup>

**‘They are stern towards the disbelievers’** – an obvious reference again to *al wala’ wal bara’*, but here with more emphasis upon those Muslims who ignore this instruction. He knowingly asked: ‘who are the ones who are harsh against *al-kuffaar*? Who are the ones who are willing to stand up against the oppression of the *kuffaar*? Who are the ones who are willing to terrorise the *kuffar*?’<sup>191</sup>

Referring to Koran 8:60 which, depending on the translation, reads: ‘Against them [the disbelievers] make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies’, Awlaki also pointed out that even the Arabic word for “terrorise” has Koranic roots. In Arabic, the word *irhab*, meaning “terror”, is used in this verse and Awlaki exploits this authority to his full advantage: ‘the word *irhab* in Arabic, which is the translation of terrorism, is actually a word in Koran.’<sup>192</sup>

Again defining the boundaries between *al-Taifatul Mansura* and other Muslims, Awlaki identified those Muslims who are ‘very critical of the Muslims, but at the same time they are very humble towards the *kuffar*.’<sup>193</sup> They do this, Awlaki claimed, for the purposes of *da’wah*, but by refusing to accept the Salafi-jihadi interpretation of *irhab*, they are also presenting a skewed version of their religion.

**‘They fight in the path of Allah’** – with more than a hint of sarcasm he told his followers to

Take your torchlight and look around the world [at] who are the people who are fighting *fe sabeelillah*, is that too difficult to do?.. It’s on the news, so how come this issue is so confusing? Who are the people who are fighting jihad *fe sabeelillah*?...So why should it be confusing to you brothers and sisters [to determine] who are the ones who are *al-Taifatul Mansura*, who are the ones who are the right *jama’a* to join. It shouldn’t be confusing at all.<sup>194</sup>

Awlaki avoided any specific mention of al-Qaeda or any other Salafi-jihadi groups, but this is nonetheless a clear call to join the global jihad.

He continued with this alignment of *al-Taifatul Mansura* with the modern world by quoting Koran 5:54: ‘they [*al-Taifatul Mansura*] do not fear the blame of the blamers’. This blame and attack upon the true *jama’a* that Allah himself has warned of is now being carried out by the Western media:

The *kuffar* are going to speak about them. The *kuffar* are going to write about them in their papers, they’re going to speak negatively about them on TV and radio. But do these brothers [of *al-Taifatul Mansura*] care?...They don’t care what CNN would say, or the BBC or ABC. They wouldn’t care what *The New York Times* would write

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<sup>190</sup> ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’

<sup>191</sup> ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’

<sup>192</sup> ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’

<sup>193</sup> ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’

<sup>194</sup> ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’

about them, or what *The Washington Post* would say about them... They don't care at all, as long as it pleases Allah...<sup>195</sup>

Offering a motivational frame to those willing to face attacks from multiple fronts for staying true to *al-Taifatul Mansura*, he reminded his audience that, despite their hardships, *al-Taifatul Mansura* are destined to prevail. Allah has ordained the victory of this group, and they should remain steadfast, seeking only the pleasure of Allah. Muslims have also been warned by their Prophet that they should expect much betrayal from the *munafiqeen* (Muslim religious hypocrites) within their own ranks, as well as from the Jews and Christians, and we are seeing evidence of that today. Yet, he reassured listeners, the prophecy will be realised and it is happening before their very eyes. 'In fact' he exclaimed, 'their [the *mujahideen*] numbers keep on multiplying', citing none other than Donald Rumsfeld's leaked 2003 internal memo about what the United States can do to reduce an expanding threat from global jihadism.<sup>196</sup> His answer for the then United States Secretary of Defense was simple:

Well, Mr. Rumsfeld, the reason [why you have not won] is because you are fighting *al-Taifatul Mansura*, which Allah promised that he will protect. No matter how many you kill and how many you arrest, they will carry on. You can never win this war, never, because you are fighting the *auliya* [chosen ones/saints] of Allah and Allah says: 'whoever fights my *auliya*, I will wage war against them.'<sup>197</sup>

Awlaki was aware that he was speaking to an audience of Muslims many of whom listened to him and read about Islam in a sincere attempt to discover how best to please of God, and he did not allow his opportunity to recruit them to al-Qaeda go to waste. Taking a moment away from translating Uyayree, he said:

I just wanted to mention one thing regarding what I said about the qualities of the righteous group which you should join: I think after mentioning these qualities, it's very clear who are the people who carry these qualities. And since they carry these qualities, they would also carry the other two qualities, which is, Allah loves them and they love Allah. Now, a lot of people would want to be loved by Allah, and a lot of Muslims want to develop a love of Allah, and they're looking for the magic pill that they could swallow, and suddenly they would love Allah....If you want Allah to love you and you want to love Allah, then this [joining *al-Taifatul Mansura*] is how to do it, this is how Allah will love you.<sup>198</sup>

Once he had firmly established the war on Islam frame, and the boundary parameters of the "pure" or "rightly-guided" Muslims, Awlaki turned his attention to whether or not jihad is dependent upon a single individual or organisation. In the global jihad's post bin Laden era, this is a very important subject, and one which Awlaki (and Uyayree before him) foresaw and tried to make ideological provisions for. The section is based on Koran 3:144:

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<sup>195</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>196</sup> Known as 'Rumsfeld's war on terror memo', this internal document was leaked to the press in October 2003 and is publicly available at: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm>

<sup>197</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>198</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

Muhammad is no more than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels as disbelievers? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah.

For Awlaki, this verse is all that is required for those who question the longevity of the jihad. The death of the religion's founder and most important figure, far from ending the defence and spread of Islam, strengthened the resolve of his followers to continue fighting. Referring to the aftermath of the Battle of *Uhud* (625 AD), during which there were widespread (but false) rumours about the death of Mohammed, Awlaki gave the examples provided by Uyayree of those who reacted in accordance to the words of Allah and continued to fight, seeking to emulate the example of their leader. This is the example that Muslims should continue to follow, safe in the knowledge that they fight not for any man, but for Allah, who is immortal. He further backs this up with reference to a Koranic verse that was revealed directly after *Uhud*, in which Allah addressed the response to rumours of his Prophet's death: 'So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers' [3:139]. It is worth noting here that throughout this lecture, Awlaki did not make any direct references to al-Qaeda or its then leader, Osama bin Laden. This perhaps reflects his desire to depict global jihadism as a social movement, and one which goes far beyond a reliance on specific organisations and mortal leaders.

The third section (and the last one to be analysed in this study) addresses where and when violent jihad is permissible. In 'Jihad is not dependent on a time or a place', Awlaki argues that jihad is a truly borderless concept:

Jihad is global. Jihad is not a local phenomenon. Jihad is not stopped by borders or barriers... Jihad does not recognise borders that were drawn by some colonial countries in the past, that are drawn by a ruler on a map and then Muslims are supposed to abide by them. Jihad doesn't recognise those superficial borders.<sup>199</sup>

Despite explaining the difference between defensive and offensive jihad, he insisted that even in its defensive form, jihad can be carried out on the home soil of any 'enemy of Islam' that is involved in a Muslim majority country. Using the war on Islam frame, he said:

People will say that to fight the Israelis you have to go to *Filistine* [Israel/Palestine] and fight them, but it is not allowed for you to target them anywhere else on the face of the earth. Now this is absolutely false, it doesn't stand on any Shariah foundation. Who said that if a particular people are in a state of war with you that this war needs to be limited to the piece of land that they occupied? If a particular nation or people are classified as *ahlul harb* [people of war] in the Shariah, then that applies to them on the whole earth.<sup>200</sup>

To round off this crucial point, he used his now familiar references to Islamic history, reminding listeners that:

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<sup>199</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>200</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

The Muslims started out in Mecca, and they left Mecca [due to the persecution of the Quraish], and they didn't say that since Mecca is the Holy Land then we have to fight in the Holy Land and we cannot fight except from that place, no, *Rusool sallallahu alayhe wassallam* [Mohammed, peace be upon him] left from Mecca and he established a base in Medina and started fighting jihad from Medina.

To all intents and purposes, this is a clear enjoiner to carry out attacks against Israel and its supporters wherever they may be, including the West.

Awlaki was aware, however, that this interpretation of jihad is widely rejected by Western Muslim organisations, and was again quick to define boundaries and address attempts to “customize” or “dilute” Islam. He pointed out that Mohammed could have stayed in Mecca and altered Islam in order to please and satisfy the enemies of the religion, but this would have been an affront to the revelations of Allah: ‘Mohammed did not customise Islam based on his location, no, he customised the location based on Islam’.<sup>201</sup> This is the example Western Muslims should follow, and they were being lead astray by many Islamic organisations:

This [the example of the Prophet] is contrary to the logic of many [Western] Muslims today. Many Muslims today, they say that, since we are living in the West, we have to customise an Islam that is suitable for the West. No, that's not how you should practice Islam – if you feel that Islam needs to be customised for a particular area, that means you need to make *hijrah* from it, and go and find a place where...you can live Islam in its entirety.<sup>202</sup>

Awlaki's diagnosis about Western culture and its attempts to dilute and alter Islam remained as it did during his 'Makkan Period' lecture many years previously, though his ideas about solutions have clearly shifted toward the Salafi-jihadi prognosis. Muslims now only have two options: make *hijrah* as Mohammed did during the Meccan period so as to escape persecution, or – taken with his earlier explanation about conducting jihad in any land where the enemy lies - fight jihad. Further, Awlaki continues to use the conceptualisation of jihad to define and activate boundaries between Muslims who practice it in its “true” sense and those who have apparently altered or misinterpreted it. The 2008 DHS assessment of the lecture recognised this as one of the main features of the work, noting that ‘to strengthen the impact of his message, al-Awlaki orders readers to ignore prominent counter-violence messages such as those from mainstream U.S. religious leaders, foreign government clerics, and reformed former violent extremist leaders.’<sup>203</sup>

As Wagemakers explains, for some Salafis who are concerned with a religious threat to Islam posed by the West, the only way to properly maintain *al wala' wal bara'* is for Muslims to make *hijrah* to what they deem to be Islamic countries.<sup>204</sup> Awlaki now clearly fears the concept of a “Western Islam”, and for him the best examples of the desire to alter the *deen* are projects in the West designed to change the true meaning of what he sees as a central form of worship: jihad.

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<sup>201</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>202</sup> 'Constants on the Path of Jihad'

<sup>203</sup> 'Countering Radicalization: Popular Lecture Encourages Violence in the Homeland'

<sup>204</sup> 'Framing the “threat to Islam”: *al wala' wal bara'* in Salafi discourse'

### Case Study 2: Rajib Karim, *Hijrah* and the *Munafiqeen*

Former British Airways employee Rajib Karim, to take yet another example of a convicted Islamist terrorist who was swayed by Awlaki's messaging, was quite clearly affected by the stark choices offered to Muslims in the West by the ideologue. After his conviction in March 2011 for plotting to plant a bomb on a British Airways flight, transcripts of his heavily encrypted email correspondence with Awlaki were leaked to the media. On 29 January 2010, he wrote to his sheikh regarding his concerns about not being able to properly practice Islam in the West, and his desire to make *hijrah*:

Dear shaykh...I always write to my brother saying how depressed I am living in Britain and how I hate myself for not making hijrah and also not being able to do anything here. Reading your message gave me hope and I really feel it is a blessing from Allah...from the moment I entered this country my niyah [intention] was to do something for the deen, it was not to make a living here and start enjoying life in this country. I got the BA [British Airways] job against all odds and really felt it was help from Allah....

As month after month and then slowly years went by without anything happening and also not being able to have any concrete plans to do anything here, my iman [faith] was getting affected. I started feeling like a real munafiq [hypocrite]. It has been three years that I have been living here away from the company of good brothers and spending a good part of my working day with the kuffar [infidels].<sup>205</sup>

## The Dust Will Never Settle Down

In May 2008, just months after his release from prison in Yemen, he gave an online sermon on 'PaTalk', a live chat forum popular with British based Salafis, many of whom are linked with the al-Muhajiroun/Islam4UK network.<sup>206</sup> Entitled 'The Dust Will Never Settle Down', it addressed the ongoing Mohammed cartoons controversy in Europe and the US, and in particular the cartoons drawn in Sweden. The depictions of Mohammed are framed as yet another aspect of the war on Islam, which also involves defaming and ridiculing Muslims.

The publicity for the sermon, which appeared on a number of popular Islamic forums, promised that Awlaki would give listeners the required information on 'what is the ruling of *sharia* on such incidents [insulting the Prophet] and how did the *Sahaba* deal with such people and what do our scholars say about them.'<sup>207</sup>

The talk focused on figures from Islamic history who had shown great devotion to the Prophet, and Awlaki held them up as examples for Western Muslims to follow. Referring to the original fiasco, triggered by the Danish cartoons, Awlaki proudly stated that 'the Muslim world

<sup>205</sup> The transcripts of the emails between Awlaki and the Karim brothers were released by the Metropolitan Police in February 2011, they are no longer available online, but are in author's possession.

<sup>206</sup> For more on this group see: C. Zara-Raymond, 'Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK: The group behind the ban', *Developments in Radicalisation and Political Violence*, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, May 2010

<sup>207</sup> This promotion of Awlaki's live online lecture appeared, among other places, on 'Sunni Forum', available at: <http://www.sunniforum.com/forum/showthread.php?34423-Live-lecture-by-Imam-Anwar-al-Awlaki-on-PaTalk>

was on fire', yet the reaction to the subsequent Swedish cartoons was unacceptably lethargic because 'our enemies have successfully desensitised us.'<sup>208</sup> Unlike the *Sahaba* before them, Western Muslims were not displaying sufficient love and devotion for Mohammed, and this had to change. The prognosis: 'let's go back [to the time of the Prophet and *Sahaba*] and see how things were then...that is the way we should follow, the way of the *Sahaba*.'<sup>209</sup> Retelling the story from the Sahih Bukhari Hadith about Ka'ab ibn al-Ashraf – a poet and Jewish tribal leader in pre-Islamic Mecca who wrote poems insulting the Prophet and lamenting the victory of the Muslims over the Quraish in the Battle of Badr – Awlaki informed listeners that Mohammed sanctioned his murder. Muhammad ibn Maslama, a follower and the man tasked with al-Ashraf's assassination, was praised for his zeal and devotion to Mohammed, but what of modern-day, Western Muslims?

How concerned are you? How concerned are we when it comes to the honour of *Rasool*, when it comes to the honour of Islam, when it comes to the book of Allah? How serious do we take it?... We want the spirit of the *Sahaba*.<sup>210</sup>

It is difficult to read this message as anything less than a call to kill those deemed to have ridiculed or insulted the Prophet, particularly when Awlaki followed this up by referring to Mohammed's passionate justification for violence taken from an account given in Ibn Taymiyya's book, *As-Saram Al-Maslool `Ala Shatim Ar-Rasul (The Drawn Sword and the One Who Curses the Messenger)*:

He [al-Ashraf] spoke against us. He spoke against me and he defamed me with his poetry. And then he made it clear to the Jews – if any one of you, you the *Yahood* [Jews], or the *Mushrikeen* [polytheists], if any one of you try to defame me through your words, this [the sword] will be the way we deal with you. There is nothing between us and you except the sword. There will be no dialogue, there will be no forgiveness, there will be no building of bridges, there will be no attempts of reconciliation, there will only be the sword between me and you.<sup>211</sup>

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**208** A. al-Awlaki, 'The Dust Will Never Settle Down', May 2008

**209** 'The Dust Will Never Settle Down'

**210** 'The Dust Will Never Settle Down'

**211** 'The Dust Will Never Settle Down'

### Case Study 3: Zachary Adam Chesser and the Honour of Mohammed

The Mohammed cartoons are an obvious and useful example to which Awlaki can apply the war on Islam frame for Western Muslims who would have been well aware of the controversy, and, as with his other major works, this lecture has helped mobilise. After the airing of an episode of American animated TV series, *South Park*, in which Mohammed and the controversy surrounding his depiction were given the usual satirical treatment by its producers, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, the death threats that followed owed much to Awlaki. Zachary Adam Chesser (also known as Abu Talhah al-Amriki), who was involved with the English Salafi-jihadi website [www.revolutionmuslim.com](http://www.revolutionmuslim.com), used the lecture to legitimise a posting on the group's site in which he claimed that:

We have to warn Matt and Trey that what they are doing is stupid and they will probably wind up like Theo Van Gogh [film director murdered after making a film criticising Islam] if they do air this show.

[...]

Join us in this campaign to let Matt Stone & Trey Parker know that...the dust will never settle down.<sup>212</sup>

Chesser included in this posting a video entitled 'South Park: The Dust Will Never Settle Down', in which pictures from the episode were accompanied by the audio of Awlaki's description of the demise of Ka'ab ibn al-Ashraf. Chesser would later be convicted in the United States for providing material support to terrorists, communicating threats and soliciting others to threaten violence.<sup>213</sup>

## Anwar al-Awlaki's Blog

By this time, Awlaki had moved to his tribal heartland in Yemen's Shabwa province, where he began trying to recruit for al-Qaeda and the global jihad. One of the vehicles he used to do this was a blog he launched in 2008: [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com). Although no official statistics are available about the level of traffic the blog received, it was very popular among the online Muslim community and was even referenced on occasion by influential Western Muslims. In Britain, Azad Ali, then a member of the British Government's Civil Service Islamic Society and one of the leading lights of the Islamic Forum of Europe,<sup>214</sup> referenced Awlaki's blog on his own website, describing him as 'one of my favourite speakers and scholars'.<sup>215</sup> He has since renounced his support for the preacher.

<sup>212</sup> This blog has since been removed from the internet. Copies are in the author's possession.

<sup>213</sup> C. Cratty, 'Man who threatened "South Park" creators gets 25 years in prison', CNN, 24 February 2011, available at: [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-24/justice/virginia.terror.sentence\\_1\\_online-threats-online-readers-maximum-sentence?\\_s=PM:CRIME](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-24/justice/virginia.terror.sentence_1_online-threats-online-readers-maximum-sentence?_s=PM:CRIME); 'Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee: An Extensive Online Footprint', Anti-Defamation League, 25 February 2011, available at: [http://www.adl.org/main\\_Terrorism/abu\\_talhah.htm](http://www.adl.org/main_Terrorism/abu_talhah.htm)

<sup>214</sup> The Islamic Forum of Europe is an influential subsidiary of the East London Mosque, one of the biggest Islamic centres in the country

<sup>215</sup> A. Ali, 'Iman, the new President and you!', [blog.islamicforumeurope.com](http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com), 5 November 2008, available at: <http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/2008/11/05/iman-the-new-president-and-you>

The blog posts regularly had hundreds of comments, mainly from Western Muslim readers, many of whom considered Awlaki to be their best source of Islamic information. According to Howard Clark, a former senior intelligence analyst for the DHS, who was monitoring Awlaki's blog for the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the daily traffic statistics for it were very high, with the majority of users coming from Britain and America:

By this time, al-Qaeda had begun to put huge stock into the internet as a perfect conduit for their messaging and propaganda. By August 2008, Awlaki was all over Youtube and the rest of the internet, and his website was skyrocketing in readership. The statistics were extremely concerning, particularly the number of visitors from the United States and Britain.<sup>216</sup>

Among the regular contributors to the blog comments section was one 'Zacharia', now confirmed to be Zachary Adam Chesser. He later attempted to travel to Somalia and join the al-Shabaab militia, one of the al-Qaeda aligned organisations that receive special attention in the blog.

The blog was filled with messages tailored specifically to appeal to English speaking, Western Muslims, and represented a final and unambiguous announcement of Awlaki's full public conversion to Salafi-jihadism. Made up of a series of short and simple blogs which applied aspects of this ideology to his now fully developed war on Islam master frame, it also indicated a new stage in his development, reflecting a desire to cast as wide a net as possible in his attempts to recruit for the global jihad.

By far the most important and revealing of these blogs is one he posted on 29 August 2008 entitled 'A Question About the Method of Establishing *Khilafa* [the Caliphate]', written in response to a reader's query about which Islamist group is applying the correct methodology in order to establish a new Caliphate. In Awlaki's answer, he provided a concise overview of his diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames for the war on Islam master frame, as well as his current definition of the boundaries between "rightly-guided" and "deviant" Muslims. He first outlined the four main methods currently being pursued by various groups: *tarbiyah*, participation in the democratic process, *nusrah*<sup>217</sup> and jihad in the path of Allah. His main aim was to discount the first three, and present violent jihad as the only correct prognosis.

The first two are most commonly associated with parts of the *Ikhwan* movement, while the third is the method pursued by Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT).<sup>218</sup> As we have already seen, Awlaki rejects *tarbiyah* as nothing more than a method which encourages 'negating the duty of jihad', concentrating as it does on postponing jihad while preparing the ground for a possible future jihad. HT's *nusrah* was similarly dismissed as an unnecessary delaying tactic. On democratic participation, he insisted that 'we should not subject Islam to the whims of the people', instead 'our [rightly-guided Muslims] position is that we will implement the rule of Allah on earth by the tip of the sword whether the masses

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<sup>216</sup> Author's interview, December 2010, London, England

<sup>217</sup> Meaning "the search for help", in this context it refers to seeking support to establish the Caliphate by co-opting powerful people or organisations, either through alliance or infiltration.

<sup>218</sup> Hizb ut-Tahrir is a revolutionary Islamist political party that works toward the re-establishment of the Caliphate. For more see: S. Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*, first edition (Grey Seal, 1996)

like it or not.<sup>219</sup> Jihad is thus the only legitimate method, and is a *fard al-ayn* [required individual duty] during a time when ‘the Muslim world is under occupation.’<sup>220</sup>

He concluded with two contemporary examples, offering a motivation frame for this course of action: the Afghan Taliban and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in Somalia. Both of these should demonstrate beyond any doubt that the most successful Islamic movements are those that ‘reached to power not through elections or debates but through war.’<sup>221</sup> The eventual demise of the Taliban and fall of the ICU were not a failure of method, but rather a failure on the part of the *ummah*, which did not offer sufficient support. He offered a very similar motivational frame in a December 2008 post, ‘Salutations to al-Shabaab of Somalia’, written during a period of relative success for the al-Qaeda linked Somali militant organisation, in which he depicted them as exemplars of the success and effectiveness of violent jihad when trying to establish the rule of Allah:

Al-Shabab not only have succeeded in expanding the areas that fall under their rule but they have succeeded in implementing the sharia and giving us a living example of how we as Muslims should proceed to change our situation. The ballot has failed us but the bullet has not.<sup>222</sup>

In ‘Voting for the American President’, a two part blog on voting in the 2008 US Presidential election, Awlaki further reinforced *al wala’ wal bara’* for a Western audience, applying the doctrine to the democratic process:

[Democracy is] a Western system that was founded and developed in the West and today the West, not the Muslims, have full authority and right to tell the world what democracy is and how it should be practiced and implemented. We have our own system of government and likewise it is the Muslims who are going to define it and will not allow non Muslims to meddle with our religion and teach us what is right from wrong.<sup>223</sup>

By taking part in elections, Muslims risk the ‘breaking down of the psychological barrier that should exist between Muslims and non-Muslims, the erosion of the *aqeedah* of wala and bara (loyalty to Allah and disavowal of the enemies of Allah).’<sup>224</sup> This, in turn, opens Western Muslims up to ‘the risk of losing one’s religion’.<sup>225</sup> In Part Two of the post, written in response to a large tranche of questions from readers, he again characterised Western leaders as modern day Pharaohs, much in the same way he did in his ‘Life of Umar’ talk during his pre-al-Qaeda days. Now, however, the general populations ‘are playing the role that the Quraish, Aad and Thamud’ (three tribes which persecuted Muslims in pre-Islamic Arabia).<sup>226</sup> Not only did this now match exactly the Salafi-jihadi narrative, but it also implicitly authorised targeting both leaders and civilians.

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**219** A. al-Awlaki, ‘A Question About the Method of Establishing Khilafa’, [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com), 29 August 2008

**220** ‘A Question About the Method of Establishing Khilafa’

**221** ‘A Question About the Method of Establishing Khilafa’

**222** A. al-Awlaki, ‘Salutations to al-Shabaab of Somalia’, [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com), 21 December 2008

**223** A. al-Awlaki, ‘Voting for the American President: Part 1’, [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com), 31 October 2008

**224** ‘Voting for the American President: Part 1’

**225** ‘Voting for the American President: Part 1’

**226** A. al-Awlaki, ‘Part 2: Voting for the American President’, [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com), 3 November 2008

The final major concern that is evident throughout the blog surrounds Muslims who have capitulated to Western efforts to dilute and damage their religion. This was not new, and was one of the main themes in much of his above cited work, though he now offers a novel, and more explicit, example. During the same period, in a May 2008 lecture given via phone link to a South African Islamic conference, he would coin the phrase “RAND Islam”, which referred to two reports by the American RAND corporation entitled ‘Building Moderate Muslim Networks’ and ‘Civil Democratic Islam’ in which the authors, Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Bernard respectively, offer a number of basic criteria for what they consider to be moderate Islam as well as recommendations for how to empower it.<sup>227</sup> These efforts, according to Awlaki, are yet another facet of the war on Islam, which amount to nothing more than attempts by the Crusader West to alter the true meaning of the religion and prevent it from spreading or gaining power. He builds on this diagnostic frame in many of his blogs, the most prominent being ‘Tawfique Chowdhury’s Alliance With the West’, a February 2009 post about a well known Islamic scholar in America who had written days earlier that Muslim scholars should ally with Western governments and, through *da’wah*, help them battle terrorism and extremism.<sup>228</sup> Awlaki used this as evidence of ‘the active involvement of the US in defining what Islam means today’ which, among other things, has led to ‘a gradual decline in the standard of *walaa’ and baraa’*’.<sup>229</sup>

In offering his services to the *kufir* American government, Chowdhury has gone against one of the pillars of the true *aqeedah*. Indeed, as far as Awlaki was concerned, the issue of Muslims targeting civilians in America is not even one of *aqeedah*, but of *fiqh* (interpretation of existing Islamic law). He thus wrote that an act of al-Qaeda linked or inspired terrorism does not constitute apostasy, and the perpetrators remain within the fold of Islam. Therefore, siding with non-Muslims against al-Qaeda and its supporters, he argued, goes against the teachings of *al wala’ wal bara’*. Giving his most extreme interpretation of this doctrine yet, he wrote: ‘if a Muslim kills each and every civilian disbeliever on the face of the earth he is still a Muslim and we cannot side with the disbelievers against him.’<sup>230</sup>

## 44 Ways to Support Jihad

In his August 2008 blog about establishing the Caliphate, Awlaki also lays out his vision of jihad as a supposedly Clausewitzian “total war”, writing that:

Jihad here is not just picking up a gun and fighting. Jihad is broader than that. What is meant by Jihad in this context is a total effort by the *ummah* to fight and defeat its enemy. Rasulullah [Mohammed] says: Fight the disbelievers with yourself, your wealth and your tongues. It is what Clausewitz would refer to as ‘total war’ but with the Islamic rules of engagement. It is a battle in the battlefield and a battle for the hearts and minds of the people.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> A. al-Awlaki, ‘Battle for the Hearts and Minds’, May 2008

<sup>228</sup> T. Chowdhury, ‘Muslim Scholars – West’s Natural Allies in Fighting Scourge of Terrorism’, [www.Muslimmatters.org](http://muslimmatters.org), 9 February 2009, available at: <http://muslimmatters.org/2009/02/09/muslim-scholars%E2%80%94west%E2%80%99s-natural-allies-in-fighting-scourge-of-terrorism>

<sup>229</sup> A. al-Awlaki, ‘Tawfique Chowdhury’s Alliance With the West’, [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com), 12 February 2009

<sup>230</sup> ‘The Dust Will Never Settle Down’

<sup>231</sup> ‘A Question About the Method of Establishing Khilafa’

It should be noted here that, despite sounding rather convincing, Awlaki misreads (or intentionally misrepresents) Clausewitzian theory, which has no concept of total war. Rather this derives, depending on the sources, from the Napoleonic Wars and World War I, and was later developed in the 1930s.<sup>232</sup> In *On War*, Clausewitz writes about the theory of “absolute war”, an entirely different philosophical concept of a war which is unaffected by common constraints such as politics and geographical location.<sup>233</sup>

The various ways of pursuing this total war were laid out by Awlaki some months later in ‘44 Ways to Support Jihad’, an essay which appears to be an updated version of a 2003 Arabic tract found on numerous al-Qaeda affiliated forums called ‘39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad’, by Mohammed bin Ahmed as-Salim.<sup>234</sup>

As has already been discussed, there was now a clear shift in how Awlaki diagnosed the war on Islam; in his earlier days, he would point to examples of the occupation of Muslim lands, although by this stage the prevention of the global application of Islamic law was also placed within the diagnostic framing of this threat. Thus, he wrote in the introduction that jihad was not only an obligation when ‘Muslim lands are occupied by the *kuffar*’, but also ‘when the rule of Allah is absent from this world.’<sup>235</sup>

In essence, this document is a collection of all of the prognoses Awlaki can offer to Muslims who wish to fight for the survival and expansion of the *ummah*. Written originally in English, it is aimed primarily at his Western followers, but not exclusively so. For Westerners, as well as partaking in violent jihad, he placed much emphasis on the so-called “financial jihad” which provides the movement with the fiscal resources required for its survival: ‘Probably the most important contribution the Muslims of the West could do for Jihad is making Jihad with their wealth.’<sup>236</sup>

Awlaki’s interpretation of *al wala’ wal bara’*, having now reached its Maqdisist stage, was further developed, and now described as ‘a central element of our military creed.’<sup>237</sup> He bemoaned that the doctrine has not yet ‘had its fair share of attention’, and it is the responsibility of the believers to continue propagating and developing it within their communities. Without a proper understanding of the level of hatred one must have for the *kuffar*, ‘Allah will not grant us victory.’<sup>238</sup>

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**232** For more, see for example: D. A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (HMH, 2007); A. Marwick, *Total War and Historical Change: Europe 1914-1955* (Open University Press, 2001)

**233** C. von Clausewitz, M.E. Howard (trans.) and P. Paret (trans.), *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1989)

**234** This is likely to be a pseudonym

**235** ‘44 Ways to Support Jihad’

**236** ‘44 Ways to Support Jihad’

**237** ‘44 Ways to Support Jihad’

**238** ‘44 Ways to Support Jihad’

#### Case Study 4: Roshonara Choudhry and Borderless Loyalty

On 14 May 2010, British born Roshonara Choudhry attempted the murder of the Member of Parliament for East Ham, Stephen Timms, in what she believed was a legitimate act of revenge after he had voted in support for the invasion of Iraq years earlier.<sup>239</sup> In her interview with the London Metropolitan Police hours after she stabbed the MP in his office, the former King's College student referred to Awlaki's lectures as the inspiration for her actions.<sup>240</sup>

Not only had his work clarified to her the religious 'obligation to defend the people of Iraq and to fight on their side', but it had also conveyed the importance of a borderless loyalty to her fellow Muslims. Asked by her police interviewers about why she decided to leave her studies and pursue jihad, she replied: 'I thought that I should have loyalty to my Muslim brothers and sisters in Palestine.'<sup>241</sup>

After Choudhry was convicted, the fourth issue of *Inspire* - an online English-language magazine produced by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula which carries regular articles by Awlaki - praised her as a 'follower of the borderless loyalty'.<sup>242</sup> Fusing the *ummah*-centric, global consciousness with the most extreme interpretation of *al wala' wal bara'*, the article warned:

Through her actions, she proved to the world the power of a borderless loyalty: Islam. The ummah, and specifically its mujahidin, are waiting to see more people of her caliber.

[...]

We say to the *kuffar*: the borderless loyalty is a religious sentiment of the people in your midst. As long as the Muslims remain in your focus, you will remain in ours. No matter the security precautions you may take, you cannot kill a borderless idea.<sup>243</sup>

The Western media, a long-time target of Awlaki's ire, is an enemy which it is imperative to resist. As he had stated previously in *Constants*, Western media outlets are directly involved in the ideological aspect of the war on Islam. Muslims must therefore take it upon themselves to raise awareness of this among their co-religionists and 'encourage them to be careful and critical of the Western media.'<sup>244</sup> Part of this fight should also include providing Muslims with alternative, and Islamically sound, media sources that not only counter the Western media's messaging, but also provide information about 'the *mujahideen* and their scholars.'<sup>245</sup> This is most effectively done, he suggested, through the creation of websites that publish Salafi-jihadi texts and lectures.

<sup>239</sup> 'Woman jailed for life for attack on MP Stephen Timms', *BBC News*, 3 November 2010, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-11682732>

<sup>240</sup> The transcript of Choudhry's police interview was made available to the media. See for example 'Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts', *Guardian*, 3 November 2010

<sup>241</sup> Transcript of Choudhry's police interview

<sup>242</sup> 'Roshonara and Taimour: Followers of the Borderless Loyalty', *Inspire*, Issue 4, Winter 2010

<sup>243</sup> 'Roshonara and Taimour: Followers of the Borderless Loyalty'

<sup>244</sup> '44 Ways to Support Jihad'

<sup>245</sup> '44 Ways to Support Jihad'

The key to this text is that it offers Western Muslims who desire to be a part of the global jihadist movement the various options that are available to them, many of which do not necessarily require being in any physical danger or even leaving the comfort of one's bedroom. In 'You too can be Awlaki!', Jarret Brachman and Alix Levine explain how Awlaki wants to give as many Muslims as possible the opportunity to feel they are contributing to the global jihad by lowering 'the expectations of what it means to be a member of al-Qaeda.'<sup>246</sup> They also suggest that, through encouraging more online participation, he is attempting create a larger pool from which to recruit fighters by narrowing 'the distance between non-violent propagandist and violent al-Qaeda activist.'<sup>247</sup>

## Post 2009 Output

Since late 2009, Awlaki's output in English has amounted to short and concise digests of his previous work. Like his now defunct blog, he is attempting to offer the most simple of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames, whilst generating the greatest possible resonance for a Western audience.

In March 2010, while attempting to take advantage of the aftermath of the failed Christmas Day bombing, Awlaki released two short audio lectures. In the first, entitled 'A Call To Jihad', he reminded his fellow Muslims that he too lived in the West and had worked tirelessly and through non-violent means to resist attempts to 'extinguish the light of Allah.' This approach, however, yielded no results, and he has been forced into taking more extreme measures:

To the Muslims in America I have this to say: How can your conscience allow you to live in peaceful co-existence with the nation that is responsible for the tyranny and crimes committed against your own brothers and sisters? How can you have your loyalty to a government that is leading the war against Islam and Muslims?<sup>248</sup>

Here we see references both to the *hijrah* which he called upon Western Muslims to perform in *Constants*, and the all important question of loyalty and disavowal. By remaining in the United States without carrying out an act of jihad, Muslims are *de facto* pledging their loyalty to an American government which is leading the *kuffar* in the war on Islam while also implementing man-made law.

Despite his clear prognostic shift since 2003, there is much to compare in his diagnosis in this lecture to the talk he gave all those years ago in Virginia where he warned of the coming domestic threat to Muslims and spoke about America's record of persecuting its minorities:

Muslims of the West, take heed and learn from the lessons of history: There are ominous clouds gathering in your horizon. Yesterday, America was a land of slavery, segregation, lynching, and [the] Ku Klux Klan, and tomorrow it will be a land of religious

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<sup>246</sup> J. Brachman and A. Levine, 'You Too Can Be Awlaki!', *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 35:1, 2011

<sup>247</sup> 'You Too Can Be Awlaki!'

<sup>248</sup> A. al-Awlaki, 'A Call To Jihad', March 2010

discrimination and concentration camps ... the war between Muslims and the West is escalating.<sup>249</sup>

Days later, another audio lecture entitled 'Western Jihad is Here to Stay' appeared on jihadist internet forums. Though only a few minutes long, it is geared towards motivation and covers many of Awlaki's key points about jihad in the West, while also using vernacular about the movement that would be instantly recognisable to anyone who reads a Western newspaper. Using the now very familiar term to describe the phenomena of Western Muslims participating in jihad, he says: 'jihad is not being imported but is being homegrown'.<sup>250</sup> After again framing Western efforts against global terrorism, and the media's 'smear against the *mujahideen*', as examples of the war on Islam, he reassured his followers that all the signs are pointing to their eventual victory, and included a sentence that he must have known would delight headline writers throughout the English speaking world:

In such an inhospitable environment, jihad is flourishing...The jihad movement has not only survived but is expanding. Isn't it ironic that the two capitals of the war against Islam, Washington D.C. and London have also become the centres of Western jihad? Jihad is becoming as American as apple pie and as British as afternoon tea.<sup>251</sup>

The final sentence here carries an unmistakably triumphalist tone; by ensuring that jihad has become a culturally transcendent and global movement, he and others like him are finally achieving what they set out to do. He refers, as he did previously in *Constants*, to the 2003 Rumsfeld memo as an example of how the *mujahideen* have repeatedly stymied the best efforts of the world's only superpower to stop them. The Americans must instead realise that there is a group of Muslims whose victory has been divinely ordained, a clear reference to *al-Taifatul Mansura*. There is no stopping this group, and no amount of 'RAND Muslims...would be able to block the light of the truth from reaching the hearts of those courageous brothers and sisters.'<sup>252</sup> The Americans have spent billions of dollars to ensure their security and yet 'they couldn't prevent Umar Farouk [Abdulmutallab]', while the case of "Jihad Jane",<sup>253</sup> a 'blond, blue eyed, small framed, middle-aged female', demonstrates the movement's adaptability and widespread appeal.<sup>254</sup> Jihad Jane (also known as Colleen LaRose) was arrested a few months earlier for plotting to kill Lars Vilks, the Swedish cartoonist famous for his depiction of Mohammed. This supposed plot to defame the Prophet, and the duty of all Muslims to kill those involved, had been dealt with in detail in 'The Dust Will Never Settle Down', and he was evidently pleased to see his fellow Muslims take action. Referring to both LaRose and the case of Mohammed Geele, who had attempted the murder of Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard on New Year's Day 2010,<sup>255</sup> he proclaimed that: 'the West will come to realise that when

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**249** 'A Call To Jihad'

**250** 'A Call To Jihad'

**251** A. al-Awlaki, 'Western Jihad is Here to Stay', March 2010

**252** 'Western Jihad is Here to Stay'

**253** "Jihad Jane" was one of the online monikers of Colleen LaRose, an American woman who was arrested in late 2009 and later pleaded guilty to conspiracy to give material support to terrorists and planning the murder of Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks. For more on this see: E. Pilkington, "'Jihad Jane' pleads guilty to murder attempt on Swedish cartoonist", *Guardian*, 2 February 2011

**254** 'Western Jihad is Here to Stay'

**255** For more on this see: 'Cartoon trial: Kurt Westergaard's attacker convicted', *BBC News*, 3 February 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12353863>

the honour of the Messenger of Allah is at stake, the dust will never settle down.'<sup>256</sup>

Awlaki's views about the role of Western civilians in the war on Islam had also shifted by this point though, as with many of his other positions, the change is primarily prognostic. In his early 2000 lecture about Umar bin Khattab, although he did not openly support attacking civilians, he was heavily critical of the 'Joe six-packs' and 'Sally soccer-moms' for not acting to stop their leaders from persecuting Muslims, and also suggested that they were likely to take part in any future aggression against Western Muslims. At present, this criticism remains essentially unchanged, but instead of calling as he had in the past for Western Muslims to distance themselves from the rest of their society, Awlaki now justifies their targeting and killing of Western civilians. Speaking to AQAP's *al-Malahem* media in late May 2010, he stated that any American citizen who votes is a legitimate target:

As for the American public then, collectively, it is participating [in the war on Islam], for it is the one who chose this administration, and it is the one who funds the war. In these recent elections and the ones before that, there were other choices for the American public, to chose candidates who do not want war, but in spite of that, they did not get except very few of the votes.<sup>257</sup>

Having for some time held, as many Salafis and Islamists do, that non-Muslims were by definition an enduring threat to Islam and Muslims, Awlaki eventually adopted the most extreme Islamist interpretation of how to respond to this.

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<sup>256</sup> 'Western Jihad is Here to Stay'

<sup>257</sup> Anwar al-Awlaki interview with *al-Malahem* media, 23 May 2010, video in author's possession

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## 6 Conclusion

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The story of Anwar al-Awlaki, and in particular his intellectual progression to jihad, provides a unique and revealing insight into jihadism in the West. This movement is no longer confined to Muslim majority countries and through arguments he and others have provided, its message now resonates with small sections of Western Muslims. It has achieved this level of resonance through a process which includes the appropriation of contemporary Western political discourse about human rights, injustice and foreign policy, interwoven with the history of Islam and the fostering of a global, *ummah*-consciousness which demands violent action in order for it to survive and expand.

Through cleverly designed diagnostic, prognostic and motivational collective action frames, Awlaki has convinced a significant number of Western Muslims that jihad is not a foreign concept practiced in far-away lands by highly trained operatives. Rather, it is a duty which can be carried out anywhere, and at any time, with little to no religious permission required beyond a few sermons found online. Similarly, the mission to destroy the *ummah* is no longer confined to far-away lands, but is evident in their own countries. Across the Western world, the ancient conspiracy to destroy Islam and Muslims is expanding and Western Muslims must take their cue from the most violent periods of Islamic history and resist this attack.

Unlike the work of most rival Salafi and other Muslim groups which eschew violence and stand against al-Qaeda, Awlaki's work is provided in easily digestible audio and video form. For a generation which seeks easy answers to complex questions, his frames offer the perfect way for al-Qaeda to appeal to those who may otherwise have been beyond their ideological reach.

Awlaki's approach to the boundaries between Muslims focuses heavily upon different interpretations of jihad, and the conditions which are required to carry it out. When he began to publicly discuss jihad after 9/11, for example, he frequently railed against Muslims who stressed the spiritual and non-violent interpretations of jihad. His delineation of the boundaries which define a "true" Muslim is in direct response to one of the biggest dilemmas facing Muslims in the West today: what is the "correct" Islam, and which of the many Islamic groups are practicing it?

The significance of these questions cannot be overstated; young Western Muslims, often unable to relate to their parent's culturally-infused Islam, who nonetheless have a desire to please their God and find a more compatible expression of their religion, are prime targets for recruiters like Awlaki. He preys on what Wiktorowicz refers to as the 'religious seeker', offering them an Islam that appears to address modern, and often political, issues which concern them and are apparent in their day-to-day lives.<sup>258</sup> Awlaki's description of the "true" Islam is simplistic, and yet convincing to the seeker: follow the way of Mohammed and his followers. For those who have not studied Islam and its many interpretations, Awlaki's apparent knowledge of

the religion places him in a position of authority, and his word is taken at face value. This is how he originally gained such a large following, before alienating many with his Salafi-jihadi rhetoric.

The case of Roshonara Choudhry appears to be a very good example of a Western Muslim religious seeker who fell under the spell of Awlaki and other Salafi-jihadi ideologues. In response to her police interrogators' question about her motivations for carrying out the attempted murder of Stephen Timms MP, simply said: 'when I began to learn more about Islam.'<sup>259</sup> Her online research quickly led to the work of Awlaki, who within months had convinced her that it was her religious duty as a Muslim to show her loyalty to the *ummah* by killing its enemies.

In order to see how this enemy is defined, one need only look at the diagnostic frames. Stephen Timms is an enemy because he gave his support to the Iraq invasion, yet Kurt Westergaard is placed in the same category, and is just as deserving of death because of his depiction of Mohammed. The drawing of a cartoon is no different, and is apparently an equally malevolent facet of the war on Islam.

Social movement theory has provided us useful tools with which to formulate an understanding of both how and why Awlaki is able to mobilise young Western Muslims. He has successfully framed core ideological concepts of the movement, in particular the war on Islam, jihad and *al wala' wal bara'*, so that they achieve the highest level of resonance among his Western followers. Thus, he reminds them what happened to the Bosnian Muslims who trusted their non-Muslim compatriots, or how Western cartoonists have been supposedly encouraged by Western governments to defame and attack the Prophet. Jihad, as the examples of Nidal Hasan and others have demonstrated, is the only course of action which al-Qaeda's Islam demands upon its followers in order to protect it from this onslaught.

His prognostic frames which call for violence rely almost entirely upon the Koran and Hadith, and according to Awlaki, violent jihad is currently a defensive measure, no matter where it is carried out. Thus, Abdulmutallab's actions on Christmas Day 2009, for example, though carried out on American soil, were an act of defence and revenge. For many Salafi-jihadis, however, violence is not only justifiable in a defensive context. As Awlaki's translation of *Constants on the Path of Jihad* as well as a number of his blog posts demonstrate, Muslims are also duty bound to spread Islam 'by the tip of the sword' once they are established enough to do so.

The hazy and permeable boundaries that exist between different forms of Salafism and Islamism, lines amongst which Awlaki seamlessly criss-crossed as it suited him in his earlier days, should demonstrate that grand counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism strategies based on the reliance upon apparently non-violent members of the different strands of this movement cannot work. His final embrace of the most extreme expressions of Islamism was, as this study demonstrates, a painless one which required only a minute adjustment to a set of beliefs deemed progressive and moderate enough by those who invited him to speak at the Pentagon.

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259 'Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts', *Guardian*, 3 November 2010

Between 2002 – when he was feted by American and British Islamists as well as government officials as the face of Western Islam – and 2010, the only discernable changes in his message were his prognoses for problems facing Islam and Muslims in the West. Patient and long-term Islamic activism, such as that carried out by his *Ikhwani* sponsors at the MAB, was discarded in favour of the instant gratification of violence. What brought about this prognostic modification is a question which may never be fully answered, but much of the evidence suggests that he simply took Islamist teachings to conclusions that had already been made available by the movement as a whole. The *ummah*-oriented global consciousness, combined with a justification of violence in defence of the ‘Islamic nation’ are features of any strand of political Salafism, with the only differences being when and where this violence is justifiable.

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# APPENDIX

## Awlaki-Influenced Individuals<sup>260</sup>

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### Direct Contact with Awlaki

#### *United States*

- **Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab** – Referred to by Awlaki as his student,<sup>261</sup> and according to a statement made by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, Awlaki was directly involved in preparing him for his attempted bombing on Christmas Day 2009 of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 over Detroit.<sup>262</sup>

Indicted on 15 December 2010 on six counts: attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction; attempted murder within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States; willful attempt to destroy and wreck an aircraft within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States; willfully placing a destructive device in, upon, and in proximity to an aircraft within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the US, which was likely to endanger the safety of such aircraft; and possession of a firearm/destructive in furtherance of a crime of violence.<sup>263</sup>

- **Zachary Adam Chesser** – Watched and disseminated Awlaki videos online and exchanged several emails with the preacher. He later told the FBI that Awlaki inspired him and others to pursue jihad.<sup>264</sup>

Convicted on 24 February 2011 and sentenced to 25 years in prison and three years of supervised release for communicating threats against the writers of the *South Park* television show, soliciting violent jihadists to desensitise law enforcement, and attempting to provide material support to al-Shabaab, a designated foreign terrorist organisation based in Somalia. He provided 'material support to a foreign terrorist organisation and used the Internet to incite violence' and advocated 'the murder of US citizens for engaging in free speech about his religion'.<sup>265</sup>

- **Nidal Malik Hasan** – Was in direct email contact with Awlaki before his attack on Fort Hood in November 2009.<sup>266</sup> Awlaki also

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<sup>260</sup> As of July 2011. Please note that this list does not contain all of the individuals who have been connected with Awlaki, as many of them are yet to be convicted of the terrorism-related charges they face. I am grateful to Alix Levine for sharing her research on this.

<sup>261</sup> Awlaki interview with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *al-Malahem* Media, 23 May 2010

<sup>262</sup> J. R. Clapper, 'Unclassified Declaration in Support of Formal Claim of State Secrets Privilege' in the case of Nasser al-Aulaqi, on his own behalf and as next friend acting on behalf of Anwar al-Aulaqi, Plaintiff vs Barack Obama, President of the United States; Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense; Leon E. Panetta, Director, Central Intelligence Agency. Case 1:10-cv-01469-JDB Document 15-2, Filed 25 September 2010

<sup>263</sup> First Superseding Indictment in the case of the United States vs. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, 15 December 2010, filed by the US District Court Eastern District of Michigan, Southern Division, Case no. 2: 10-CR-20005

<sup>264</sup> Affidavit in the case of The United States of America vs. Zachary Adam Chesser, filed 2 July 2010 in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Case Number: 1:10-cr-003954-LO

<sup>265</sup> 'Virginia Man Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison for Providing Material Support and Encouraging Violent Jihadists to Kill U.S. Citizens', United States Department of Justice Press Release, 24 January 2011, available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/washingtondc/press-releases/2011/wfo022411a.htm>

<sup>266</sup> S. Shane and J. Dao, 'Investigators Study Tangle of Clues on Fort Hood Suspect', *The New York Times*, 14 November 2009

referred to Hasan as his student, and praised his actions.<sup>267</sup> Hasan was charged on 12 November and 2 December 2009 with thirteen counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted murder under the Uniform code of Military Justice.<sup>268</sup>

- **Samir Khan** – In direct contact with Awlaki, it is alleged that together they publish al-Qaeda's online English-language magazine, *Inspire*.<sup>269</sup>

Khan is yet to be charged, though a grand jury began to investigate him in August 2010 due to his links with AQAP and Awlaki. The charges being considered are: material support to a terrorist organisation and conspiracy to commit murder overseas.<sup>270</sup>

## United Kingdom

- **Mohammed Hamid** – Attended Awlaki's sermons in London, though the extent of the preacher's influence is unclear.<sup>271</sup>

Hamid was sentenced on 7 March 2008 to seven and a half years in prison, but told that he will not be released until he is reformed. He was found guilty of on three counts of soliciting to murder and three counts of providing terrorism training.<sup>272</sup> He provided military training and inspiration to the July 21 bombers, though he was not involved with the plot itself. He was found guilty of organising terrorist training camps and encouraging others to murder non-believers.<sup>273</sup>

**Rajib Karim** – Was in email contact with Awlaki, and asked the preacher for advice about fighting jihad overseas. Awlaki instead requested that Karim use his position as a staff member at British Airways to plant a bomb on a plane, or pass on crucial details about new airport security measures.<sup>274</sup>

Sentenced to thirty years in prison on 18 March 2011 after being convicted of: possessing/collecting a record of information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism; fund raising for the purposes of terrorism; and engaging in the preparation of terrorism (seven counts, pleaded guilty to three, found guilty of other four).<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Awlaki interview with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *al-Malahem* Media, 23 May 2010

<sup>268</sup> 'Army adds charges against rampage suspect', *Associated Press*, 2 December 2010, available at: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34243082/ns/us\\_news-tragedy\\_at\\_fort\\_hood/t/army-adds-charges-against-rampage-suspect](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34243082/ns/us_news-tragedy_at_fort_hood/t/army-adds-charges-against-rampage-suspect)

<sup>269</sup> In the magazine's second issue, released in October 2010, it is claimed that Samir Khan produces the publication. Awlaki has contributed extensively to almost every issue.

<sup>270</sup> D. Temple-Raston, 'Grand Jury Focuses on N.C. Man Tied To Jihad Magazine', *National Public Radio*, 18 August 2010, available at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129263809>

<sup>271</sup> D. Gardham and C. Coughlin, 'Anwar al-Awlaki: MI5 warns of the Al-Qaeda preacher targeting Britain', *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 June, 2010

<sup>272</sup> 'Top extremist recruiter is jailed', *BBC News*, 7 March 2008, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7282137.stm>

<sup>273</sup> O. Bowcott, 'Preacher guilty of organising terror camps', *Guardian*, 26 February 2008

<sup>274</sup> 'Terror plot BA man Rajib Karim gets 30 years', *BBC news*, 18 March 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12788224>

<sup>275</sup> 'Terror plot BA man Rajib Karim gets 30 years'. Further case details are available at: <http://www.thelaw-pages.com/court-cases/Rajib-Karim-6523-1.law>

## Yemen

- **Hisham Assem** – Was sentenced to death in Yemen on 17 January 2011 for the murder of French contractor Jacques Spagnolo. Assem has vowed to appeal the sentence. The influence of Awlaki was mentioned in the trial and he was also sentenced in absentia to ten years in prison for his role in the aiding the kidnapping.<sup>276</sup>

## Failed or No Direct Contact

### United States

- **Farooque Ahmed** – Federal authorities recovered CDs containing lectures and speeches given by Awlaki at Ahmed's home. He was caught in an FBI sting operation, during which his lawyer claims he was 'seduced' by Awlaki's lectures.<sup>277</sup>

Ahmed was convicted in the United States on 11 April 2011. He pleaded guilty to three terrorism charges: attempting to provide material support to a designated terrorist organisation; collecting information to assist in planning a terrorist attack on a transit facility; and attempting to provide material support to terrorists.<sup>278</sup>

In a plea agreement, the defense and government jointly recommended a prison sentence of 23 years in prison. Following the acceptance of the guilty plea, the judge immediately sentenced Ahmed to the agreed-upon term of imprisonment and imposed a fifty-year term of supervised release.<sup>279</sup>

- **Mohamed Mahmood Alessa and Carlos Eduardo Almonte** – Watched Awlaki's videos and listened to sermons, including 'Constants on the Path of Jihad' and the May 2010 video warning of future attacks against Americans.<sup>280</sup>

Both pleaded guilty on 3 March 2011 in New Jersey to one count of conspiring to murder persons outside the United States on behalf of designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation al-Shabaab. Under the terms of their plea agreements, the defendants agreed not to request a sentence of less than fifteen years in prison, while the government agreed not to request a sentence of more than thirty years.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> 'Yemen convicts Frenchman's killer and Anwar al-Awlaki', *BBC News*, 17 January 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12205825>

<sup>277</sup> C. Cratty and J. Barnett, 'Guilty plea entered in thwarted Metro station bomb plot', *CNN*, 11 April 2011, available at: [http://edition.cnn.com/2011/CRIME/04/11/virginia.bomb.plot/index.html?eref=rss\\_topstories&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+rss%2F+cnn\\_topstories+%28RSS%3A+Top+Stories%29&utm\\_content=Google+Reader](http://edition.cnn.com/2011/CRIME/04/11/virginia.bomb.plot/index.html?eref=rss_topstories&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+rss%2F+cnn_topstories+%28RSS%3A+Top+Stories%29&utm_content=Google+Reader)

<sup>278</sup> Indictment in the case of the United States of America vs. Farooque Ahmed, 26 October, 2010 filed in Eastern District Court of Virginia, Case Number: 1:10 CR 413

<sup>279</sup> 'Virginia Man Sentenced to 23 Years in Prison for Plotting Attacks on D.C.-Area Metro Stations with People He Believed to Be Al-Qaeda Members', US department of Justice Press Release, 11 April 2011, available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/washingtondc/press-releases/2011/virginia-man-sentenced-to-23-years-in-prison-for-plotting-attacks-on-d.c.-area-metro-stations-with-people-he-believed-to-be-al-qaeda-members>

<sup>280</sup> Criminal complaint in the case of The United States of America vs. Mohamed Mahmood Alessa and Carlos Eduardo Almonte (a/k/a "Omar"), 4 June 2010, filed in the United States District Court of New Jersey, Magistrate Number: 10-8109

<sup>281</sup> 'Two New Jersey Men Plead Guilty to Conspiring to Kill Overseas for Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Al-Shabaab', US Attorney District of New Jersey Press Release, 3 March, 2011, available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/newark/press-releases/2011/nk030311.htm>

- **Betim Kaziu** – Was inspired, in part, by Awlaki's sermons.<sup>282</sup> Kaziu was convicted in July 2011 of a number of terrorism offences, including conspiracy to provide material support to a terrorist organisation and conspiracy to commit murder after travelling to Egypt in 2009 and attempting to buy automatic weapons to be used against American troops serving abroad. He also attempted to join al-Shabaab in Somalia, though chose instead to travel to Kosovo, where he was arrested.<sup>283</sup> Kaziu's accomplice, Sulejah Hadzovic, later became the star witness for the prosecution's case against him.
- **Colleen LaRose (also known as "Jihad Jane") and Jamie Paulin-Ramirez** – LaRose reposted a number of Awlaki's blog posts on other extremist message boards. Her associate and co-defendant, Paulin-Ramirez, was a fan of Awlaki on Facebook.

After being arrested on suspicion of planning the murder of Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks, who had depicted Mohammed in a drawing, Colleen LaRose pleaded guilty on 28 January 2011 to four counts: conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists; conspiracy to kill in a foreign country; making a false statement to a government official relating to an international terrorism offence; and attempted identity theft to facilitate an act of international terrorism. At the time of writing, she has yet to be sentenced, but she could face life imprisonment.<sup>284</sup>

Jamie Paulin-Ramirez pleaded guilty on 8 March 2011 to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists. Ramirez faces a potential maximum penalty of fifteen years in prison and a \$250,000 fine at sentencing.<sup>285</sup>

- **Abdulhakem Mujahid Muhammad (also known as Carlos Bledsoe)** – Bledsoe claims he was in direct contact with al-Qaeda in Yemen after having travelled there in 2007.<sup>286</sup> There is no evidence of direct contact with the preacher, though in a letter to a journalist written from his prison cell, Bledsoe refers to Awlaki as his 'Sheikh'.<sup>287</sup>

On 25 July 2011, he was sentenced to life without parole after pleading guilty to the fatal shooting of US Army recruiter Pvt. William A. Long in Little Rock, Arkansas in 2009, and to the attempted murder of Long's fellow recruiter, Pvt. Quinton Ezeagwula.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> L. Ferran and J. Cloherty, 'Homegrown Terrorist Convicted, Inspired by Al Qaeda's Anwar al-Awlaki', *ABC News*, 8 July 2011, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/homegrown-terrorist-inspired-al-qaeda-convicted/story?id=14031362>; M. Khan, 'Born in New Mexico, he is now one of the most hunted men in the world. How much longer can Anwar Al Awlaki survive?', *al-Arabiya News*, 7 July 2011, available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/07/07/156478.html>

<sup>283</sup> 'Brooklyn Resident Indicted for Conspiracy to Commit Murder Overseas and Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to Terrorists', The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York Press Release, 24 September 2009, available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2009/nyfo092409a.htm>

<sup>284</sup> Government's change of plea memorandum in the case of the United States of America vs. Coleen Rose (a/k/a Fatima LaRose, Jihad Jane), 28 January, 2011, filed at the US District Court Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Case Number: 10-123-01.

<sup>285</sup> 'Colorado Woman Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to Terrorists', United States Department of Justice Press Release, 8 March, 2011.

<sup>286</sup> J. Dao, 'Man Claims Terror Ties in Little Rock Shooting', *The New York Times*, 21 January 2010

<sup>287</sup> Letter written on 1 September 2010 to Kristina Goetz of *The Commercial Appeal*, a daily newspaper based in Memphis, Tennessee. The letters are available at: <http://www.commercialappeal.com/jihad>

<sup>288</sup> 'Man pleads guilty to recruitment center killing, gets life', *CNN*, 26 July 2011, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/CRIME/07/25/arkansas.recruiter.shooting>

- **Paul Rockwood Jr.** – Admitted in federal court that he devoted himself to Awlaki’s teachings, including ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’ and ‘44 Ways to Support Jihad’.<sup>289</sup>

Rockwood was convicted on 24 August 2010 for making false statements to the FBI in a domestic terrorism investigation. The Court documents highlight his adherence to the ideology of Anwar al-Awlaki as an inspiration for his terrorist acts. He had also written a list of planned targets in the US.<sup>290</sup>

- **Faisal Shahzad** – Told investigators he was influenced by Awlaki’s work.<sup>291</sup>

Sentenced to life in prison for attempted murder on 5 October 2010 after trying to set off a truck bomb in Times Square, New York.<sup>292</sup>

Pleaded guilty to ten counts: attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction; conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction; possession and use of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence; attempting an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries in violation of the terrorism sections of the criminal code; conspiracy to commit an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries; attempted use of a destructive device in relation to a crime of violence; transporting an explosive with the intent to kill, injure, and intimidate individuals and to damage and destroy nearby buildings; conspiracy to transport an explosive; attempted destruction of property by fire and explosives; and attempted destruction of property by fire and explosives.<sup>293</sup>

- **Fort Dix Plotters** – In possession of Awlaki’s ‘Constants on the Path of Jihad’ sermon and were reportedly recorded by an undercover informant enthusiastically discussing its importance.<sup>294</sup>

The plotters were in the early stages of a plan to attack a US Army base in Fort Dix, New Jersey with automatic weapons and grenades.<sup>295</sup>

- **Dritan Duka** – Sentenced to life plus 360 months on 28 April 2009 on five counts: conspiracy to murder members of the US military; possession of machine guns; possession and attempted possession of machine guns in furtherance of a crime of violence; and two counts of possession of firearms by an illegal alien.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Sentencing memorandum in the case of the United States vs. Paul Gene Rockwood, Jr. (a/k/a Bilal), 16 August 2010, filed in the US District Court of Alaska, Case Number: 3:10-cr-00061-RRB

<sup>290</sup> Sentencing memorandum in the case of the United States vs. Paul Gene Rockwood, Jr.

<sup>291</sup> D. McElroy, ‘Times Square bomb suspect had links to terror preacher’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 May 2010; ‘Shahzad Had Contact With Awlaki, Taliban Chief, and Mumbai Massacre Mastermind’, *ABC News*, 6 May 2010, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/faisal-shahzad-contact-awlaki-taliban-mumbai-massacre-mastermind/story?id=10575061>

<sup>292</sup> ‘Faisal Shahzad sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to Life in Prison for Attempted Car Bombing in Times Square’, United States Attorney, Southern District of New York Press Release, 5 October 2010, available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2010/nyfo100510.htm>

<sup>293</sup> ‘Faisal Shahzad sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to Life in Prison for Attempted Car Bombing in Times Square’

<sup>294</sup> E. F. Kohlmann, ‘Expert Report II: U.S. v. Mohamad Ibrahim Shnewer et al’, NEFA Foundation, September 2008

<sup>295</sup> D. Russakoff and D. Eggen, ‘Six Charged in Plot To Attack Fort Dix’, *The Washington Post*, 9 May 2007

<sup>296</sup> Judgment in the case of the United States vs. Dritan Duka (a/k/a Tony Duka), 28 April, 2009, filed by the United States District Court of New Jersey, Case Number: 07-CR-00459 (02)

- **Shain Duka** – Sentenced on 28 April 2009 to life plus 360 months on five counts: conspiracy to murder members of the US military; possession of machine guns; possession and attempted possession of machine guns in furtherance of a crime of violence; and two counts of possession of firearms by an illegal alien.<sup>297</sup>
- **Eljvir Duka** – Sentenced on 28 April 2009 to life on two counts: conspiracy to murder members of the US military, and possession of firearms by illegal aliens. The jury acquitted on one count of possession and attempted possession of machine guns in furtherance of a crime of violence.<sup>298</sup>
- **Serdar Tartar** – Sentenced on 29 April 2009 to 396 months in prison on one count of conspiracy to murder members of the US military.<sup>299</sup>
- **Mohamed Ibrahim Schnewer** – Sentenced on 29 April 2009 to life in prison plus an additional 380 months with no possibility of parole (federal system) on two counts: conspiracy to murder members of the members of the US military, and the attempted possession of firearms in furtherance of a crime of violence (AK-47 semi-automatic assault weapons to be used in the attack).<sup>300</sup>

## United Kingdom

- **Roshonara Choudhry** – Told police interrogators that she was inspired to act by Awlaki's lectures.<sup>301</sup>

On 14 May 2010, Choudhry entered the office of her local Member of Parliament, Stephen Timms, and stabbed him in revenge for his support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.<sup>302</sup>

Choudhry was jailed for life in London on 3 November 2010, with a minimum of fifteen years to serve in prison for attempted murder.<sup>303</sup>

- **Aabid Hussain Khan** – Awlaki's sermons were among the materials seized by British authorities upon Khan's arrest.<sup>304</sup>

After found to be in possession of large amounts of al-Qaeda and other terrorism related documents, Khan was convicted and sentenced to twelve years in prison on 19 August 2008.<sup>305</sup>

<sup>297</sup> Judgment in the case of the United States vs. Shain Duka (a/k/a Shaheen), 28 April, 2009, filed by the United States District Court of New Jersey, Case Number: 07-CR-00459 (04)

<sup>298</sup> Judgment in the case of the United States vs. Eljvir Duka (a/k/a Sulayman), 28 April, 2009, filed by the United States District Court of New Jersey, Case Number: 07-CR-00459 (03)

<sup>299</sup> Judgment in the case of the United States vs. Serdar Tatar, 29 April, 2009, filed by the United States District Court of New Jersey, Case Number: 07-CR-00459 (05)

<sup>300</sup> Judgment in the case of the United States of America vs. Mohamed Ibrahim Shnewer, 29 April, filed in the United States District Court of New Jersey, Case Number: 07-CR-00459(01)

<sup>301</sup> V. Dodd, 'Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts', *Guardian*, 3 November 2010

<sup>302</sup> 'MP Stephen Timms stabbed "in revenge for Iraq war"', *BBC News*, 1 November 2010, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-11667620>

<sup>303</sup> V. Dodd and A. Topping, 'Roshonara Choudhry jailed for life over MP attack', *Guardian*, 3 November 2010. Further case details available at: <http://www.thelawpages.com/court-cases/Roshonara-Choudhry-5755-1.law>

<sup>304</sup> C. Coughlin and P. Sherwell, 'American drones deployed to target Yemeni terrorist', *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 2010

<sup>305</sup> D. Gardham, 'Terrorist mentor Aabid Hussain Khan jailed for 12 years', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 2008. Further case details are available at: <http://www.thelawpages.com/court-cases/Aabid-H-Khan-1487-1.law>

## Canada

- **The Toronto 18** – Several of the convicted terrorists in the group watched and listened to Awlaki's sermons in a makeshift training camp in Canada.<sup>306</sup> In 2006, they planned to carry out a series of attacks on various targets in Toronto, Canada.

Four were convicted, seven pleaded guilty, and seven were cleared of charges.

- **Shareef Abdelhaleem** – Sentenced on 4 March 2011 in Toronto to life imprisonment for plotting to bomb financial, intelligence and military targets in Toronto, and for his participation in a 'terrorist group.'<sup>307</sup>
- **Fahim Ahmad** – Sentenced to sixteen years (with 7 years 3 months remaining at time of sentencing due to pre-trial arrest being deducted and counting double) on 25 October 2010 on three counts: participating in or contributing to the activities of a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing the ability of the terrorist group to facilitate or carry out a terrorist activity; importing firearms into Canada for the benefit of a terrorist group; and knowingly instructing six individuals to carry out an activity for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with a terrorist group.<sup>308</sup>
- **Zakaria Amara** – Sentenced on 18 January 2010 to life in prison after pleading guilty to: knowingly participating in or contributing to the activity of a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing the ability of the terrorist group to facilitate or carry out terrorist activity and intent to cause an explosion of an explosive substance that was likely to cause serious bodily harm or death to persons or was likely to cause serious damage to property.<sup>309</sup>
- **Asad Ansari** – On 23 June 2010, a jury found him guilty of knowingly participating in a terrorist group. He was sentenced on 4 October 2010 to six years and five months, but went free due to the double value of his more than three year long pre-trial incarceration.<sup>310</sup>
- **Ali Mohammed Dirie** – On 24 October 2005, Ali Dirie pleaded guilty and was sentenced to two years in addition to 73 days pre-sentence custody for possessing a prohibited firearm with readily available ammunition, importing a firearm, importing a prohibited device and possessing a prohibited device or ammunition knowing it was unauthorised. None of the initial offences included terrorist activity or organisations as essential elements. On 23 September 2009 he pleaded guilty to obtaining weapons, arranging false travel documents and attempting to recruit extremists for a domestic terrorist

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<sup>306</sup> L. Roberts, 'Anwar al-Awlaki: terror plots linked to Yemen-based cleric', *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 December 2010; M. Shephard, 'The powerful online voice of jihad', *The Star* (Toronto), 18 October 2009

<sup>307</sup> 'Sentence in R. v. Abdelhaleem', Public Prosecution of Canada Press Release, 4 March 2011, available at: [http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2011/04\\_03\\_11.html](http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2011/04_03_11.html)

<sup>308</sup> Sentencing in the case between Her Majesty the Queen and Fahim Ahmad, 25 October, 2010, filed by the Ontario Superior Court Justice, Case Number: CRIMJ (F)2025/07

<sup>309</sup> Judgment in the case between Her Majesty the Queen and Zakaria Aman, 17 December 2010, filed by the Ontario Court of Appeal, Case Number: 2010 ONCA 858

<sup>310</sup> M. O'Toole, 'Toronto 18's Asad Ansari sentenced to 6 years and 5 months....goes free', *The National Post*, 4 October 2010

group. He was sentenced on 2 October 2010 to two years in addition to thirty months pre-sentence custody for which he was credited with five years.<sup>311</sup>

- **Jahmaal James** – Pleaded guilty in February 2010 to knowingly participating in a terrorist group and was sentenced to seven years and seven months in jail. He was allowed to go free however, due to the three years and nine months he had already spent in custody.<sup>312</sup>
- **Amin Mohamed Durrani** – Pleaded guilty to knowingly participating in a terrorist group and sentenced on 20 January 2010 to seven and a half years in jail.<sup>313</sup>
- **Steven Vikash Chand** – Was found guilty on 23 June 2010 of knowingly participating in a terrorist group. He was also found guilty of counseling to commit fraud over \$5,000 for the benefit of the group. Sentenced on 26 November 2010 to seven months and ten days in addition to credit for time served for a total of ten years in prison.<sup>314</sup>
- **Saad Khalid** – Pleaded guilty in June 2009 to intent to cause an explosion for the benefit of a terrorist group. Sentenced on 3 September 2009 to fourteen years in prison, but credited with seven years for the three years and two months he served in pre-trial arrest.<sup>315</sup> The crown has since appealed and on 17 December 2010, the sentence was increased from fourteen to twenty years, with availability of parole after half the time is served.<sup>316</sup>
- **Saad Gaya** – Sentenced on 18 January 2010 to twelve years in prison on two counts: knowingly participating in a terrorist group and intent to cause an explosion for the benefit of a terrorist group.<sup>317</sup> The crown appealed and on 17 December 2010 his sentence was increased from twelve to eighteen years.<sup>318</sup>
- **Nishantan Yogakrishnan** – Convicted on 25 September 2008 of participating in and contributing to a terrorist organisation.<sup>319</sup> A minor at the time of the 2006 plot, he was sentenced on 22 May 2009 to two and a half years in prison, but was released immediately due to the time already spent in prison.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Sentencing in the case between Her Majesty's the Queen and Ali Mohamed Dirie, 2 October, 2009, filed by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Case Number: 2055/07.

<sup>312</sup> 'R. v. James', Public Prosecution of Canada Press Release, 26 February 2010, available at: [http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2010/26\\_02\\_10.html](http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2010/26_02_10.html)

<sup>313</sup> 'Durrani pleads guilty to terrorism offence', Public Prosecution Service of Canada Press Release, 20 January 2010, available at: [http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2010/20\\_01\\_10.html](http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2010/20_01_10.html)

<sup>314</sup> 'Sentence in R. v. Chand', Public Prosecution Service of Canada Press Release, 26 November 2010, available at: [http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2010/26\\_11\\_10.html](http://www.ppsc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/comm/2010/26_11_10.html)

<sup>315</sup> Ruling on Gardiner Hearing in the case between Her Majesty the Queen and Saad Khalid, 20 August 2009, filed by Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Case Number: 2025/07 2010 ONCA 861

<sup>316</sup> Appeal Decision in the case between in the case between Her Majesty the Queen and Saad Khalid, 17 December 2010. Filed by Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Case Number: 2025/07 2010 ONCA 861

<sup>317</sup> Judgment in the case between Her Majesty the Queen and Saad Gaya, 20 May 2008, filed by Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Case Number: DR(F) 2541/08

<sup>318</sup> Appeal Decision in the case between Her Majesty the Queen and Saad Gaya, 17 December 2010, filed by Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Case Number: 2010 ONSC 434

<sup>319</sup> 'Timeline Toronto 18: Key events in the case', *CBC News*, 4 March 2011, available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2008/06/02/f-toronto-timeline.html>

<sup>320</sup> 'Timeline Toronto 18: Key events in the case'





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens** is a PhD candidate at King's College, London and a Research Fellow at ICSR. His main area of study is the growth and success of English speaking Salafi-jihadi ideologues in the West.

Prior to joining ICSR, Alexander worked as a fellow at Policy Exchange and the Centre for Social Cohesion, where he focused on radicalisation, 'homegrown' Islamist extremism and the far-right.

He has contributed to various online and printed publications including, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *Foreign Policy*, *CTC Sentinel*, *Lebanon's Daily Star*, *Standpoint* and *NOWLebanon*. His work has also been cited in the *Weekly Standard*, *Observer*, *Daily Express*, and by the BBC.

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