

# YŪSUF AL-‘UYAIRĪ AND THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY SALAFI PRAXIS

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## *Abstract*

Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī was the first leader of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula. Besides being part of the al-Qaeda network he was also an important ideologue, whose ideas give a much more coherent view of Jihadism as it has developed during the past few years and as it has been adopted by a new generation. Al-‘Uyairī, who was killed in June 2003, aged 29, was a prolific writer who wrote on a variety of topics, ranging from the clash of civilization with the West to economic and political relations between the United States and the Middle East, to jihadist movements in Chechnya, the Philippines, Afghanistan, and finally, just before he died, Iraq. Interestingly, his goal is not only geared to mobilizing the Muslim *umma* as a whole for the *jihād* against the West and its local allies, the rulers (*ṭawāghīt*), the ‘establishment ‘*ulamā*’, and the Westernized intellectuals, who undermine the *umma* with the discourse of cooperation, mutual understanding, rationalism and tolerance. In his modernist project, he also tries to show that the *mujaḥid* has a superior knowledge and insight into reality and therefore deserves to be on the forefront of the permanent revolution to change reality in accordance with the will of God.

## **Introduction**

The number of studies on the ideological development of al-Qaeda and Jihadi Salafism has been relatively limited compared to the enormous amount of attention paid to their organisational capacity.<sup>1</sup> This is all the more puzzling, as there exists a huge Salafi library and a quite substantial Jihadi Salafi one.<sup>2</sup> Studies that do focus on ideology basically

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<sup>1</sup> The exceptions are Quantan Wiktorowicz, “The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad”, in: *Middle East Policy*, 8, no. 4 (2001), pp. 18-38; Bruce Lawrence (ed.), *Messages to the World. The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005); and Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy. Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also François Burgat and Muhammad Sbitli, “Les Salafis au Yémen...la modernisation malgré tout”, in: *Chroniques Yéménites*, 10, <http://cy.revues.org/document137.html.2002> (accessed 10 May 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Recently more attention has been paid to Jihadi Salafist intellectual background.

fall into four groups. The first argues that Islam is unable to cope with the modern world.<sup>3</sup> The second group states that radical Islamic thought should not be regarded as an Islamic phenomenon but as part of globalised modernity and should be analysed as part of modern political thought.<sup>4</sup> The third group argues that radical Islamic currents are not political at all. They lack a programme, are no longer connected to a certain cause, and do not mobilise Muslims on the basis of political goals.<sup>5</sup> Politics has been reduced to ethics. In the case of al-Qaeda, some argue that its ideology is part of a “debased, millenarian and nihilistic” strand of Islamic radicalism.<sup>6</sup> Others of this current hold the view that it has adopted much of its rhetoric from left-wing Third Worldism.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, the fourth group takes it more seriously and regards it as a social movement.<sup>8</sup> It emphasizes its rational character, taking advantage of the emerging opportunities, gaining access to power, its organizational capacity, and creating a new ideology however much it might lay claim to authenticity.<sup>9</sup>

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See, Thomas Hegghammer, “Global Jihadism after the Iraq War”, in: *Middle East Journal*, 60, 1 (Winter 2006), pp. 11-32. For an analysis of earlier forms of Salafism see Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, “Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia. The Story of Juhayman al-‘Utaybi Revisited”, in: *IJMES* 39,1 (2007), pp. 103-122. Much of the research on the intellectual background is of a strategic nature and is geared to finding the underlying strategic aims and methods. Jihadi Salafi thinkers propagate in their works. See for instance the translation of Abu Bakr Naji’s *Idāra al-tawāḥhush, Akhṭar marḥala satamarra bihi al-umma* by William McCants, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through which the Umma Will Pass* (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006): [http://www/ctc/usma.edu/Management\\_of\\_Savagery.pdf](http://www/ctc/usma.edu/Management_of_Savagery.pdf) (accessed June 18, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (London: Phoenix, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror. Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism. A Work of Comparative Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Umma* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004); and Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of Jihad. Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda. Casting a Shadow of Terror* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), p. 82.

<sup>7</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> See for an excellent compilation of this approach, Quantan Wiktorowicz (ed.), *Islamic Activism. A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> See Quantan Wiktorowicz, “Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory”, in: *Islamic Activism. A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quantan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 1-33.

Of these four currents, I believe the second and fourth current are the most fruitful approaches to analysing the broader Islamist movement of which al-Qaeda is a part.<sup>10</sup> This article intends to support their arguments in favour of looking at al-Qaeda as a modern political ideology by examining the writings of Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī. Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī is usually known as the leader of al-Qaeda on the Arabic Peninsula. He is less well known for his extensive political writings, although he is regarded as one of the foremost ideologues of Jihadi Salafism.<sup>11</sup> Most of his work concentrates on political, economic and cultural relations between the West and the Islamic world. This preoccupation with politics finds expression in the central role that the term “reality” (*wāqīʿ*) plays in his works. Transforming reality (*taghyīr al-wāqīʿ*) is the real goal of *jihād*. According to ʿUyairī, understanding reality as well as having a pure religious intention (*niyya*) is a precondition for devising an appropriate strategy to fight the enemy and establish God’s rule on earth. Fighting in the way of God (*fi sabīl Allāh*) is in fact an Islamic revolutionary praxis.<sup>12</sup> The main goal of this article is to trace ʿUyairī’s construction of this praxis and its form.

To this ideological analysis, one must supplement the value of the fourth approach, that of social movement theory. The combination is necessary because most attention in social movement theory has been paid to group dynamics and not so much to individual thinkers and strategists. ʿUyairī fits perfectly the figure of the activist-strategic thinker, who mobilizes a social movement defined by Sidney Tarrow as “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities

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<sup>10</sup> By Islamist I mean political Muslim movements that strive for political change. Not all Salafist currents can be labelled as Islamist. The non-political, quietist Salafist current of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī is not Islamist in this sense. There is also a difference in the adoption of ideas of non-Salafist Islamist movements such as the Egyptian *al-Jamāʿa al-Islāmiyya* and *Tanzīm al-Jihād*. Whereas the purist Salafists reject these currents, the political and Jihadist Salafi movement have been influenced by them.

<sup>11</sup> Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī is usually called a “Jihadi Strategist”. See William McCants and Jarret Brachman, *Militant Ideology Atlas, Executive Report* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center), [www.ctc.usma.edu/atlas/](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/atlas/), p. 9, accessed June 18, 2007; and Hegghammer “Global Jihadism”, p. 16. This designation, however, neglects ʿUyairī’s non-strategic works and his worldview in which his strategy must be located to give it meaning.

<sup>12</sup> See for a good review of the concept praxis, Alfred Schmidt, “Praxis”, in: *Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Marxschen Theorie*, Part 2, eds. H.G Backhaus et. al (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 264-308.

in sustained interaction with elite, opponents and authorities.”<sup>13</sup> It is with this intent that he frames his ideology to resonate with the grievances of the group he tries to activate, mostly the Saudi Arabian youth who are followers of the Ṣaḥwa movement as the main politically reformist Salafi movement in Saudi Arabia, but in general, Muslim youth everywhere in the world. Social movement theory has been applied to Saudi Arabia and the Islamist movement extensively,<sup>14</sup> but few attempts have been made to connect the Jihadi movement to the larger Ṣaḥwa reform movement that emerged in the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> From ‘Uyairī’s work it is obvious that he is constantly in dialogue with the broader Ṣaḥwa and other Islamist movements, whose followers he tries to win over to the Jihadist camp by criticising their leaders and presenting a more consistent alternative. In his attempt to establish his own credentials and gain hegemony over the larger reformist movement, he links the Jihadist discourse with other mainstream Islamist and Salafist tropes of discourse, appropriating them for the Salafist cause.<sup>16</sup>

Generally, three levels of ‘Uyairī’s framing can be discerned.<sup>17</sup> On the highest level of the grand narrative, analysed in Part I, a general explanation of the problem is framed. ‘Uyairī appropriates the concept

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<sup>13</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Gwen Okruhlik, “Networks of Dissent: Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia”, [http://www.ssrc.org/sept/11/essays/okruhlik\\_text\\_only.htm](http://www.ssrc.org/sept/11/essays/okruhlik_text_only.htm) (10 May 2007); Gwen Okruhlik, “Understanding Political Dissent in Saudi Arabia”, in: *Middle East Report Online*, October 24, 2001 <http://www.merip.org/mero102401.html> (10 May 2007); Toby Jones, “Violence and the Illusion of Reform in Saudi Arabia”, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero111303.html> (10 May 2007); Toby Jones, “Seeking a ‘Social Contract’ for Saudi Arabia”, in: *Middle East Report* 228, (Fall 2003), [http://www.merip.org/mer/mer228/228\\_jones.html](http://www.merip.org/mer/mer228/228_jones.html) (30 April 2007).

<sup>15</sup> For the exception, see especially the outstanding work of Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State. Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See also my article, “The ‘Cycle of Contention’ and the Limits of Terrorism in Saudi Arabia”, in: *Saudi Arabia in the Balance. Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, eds. Paul Aarts and Gerd Bauman (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), pp. 271-311. For an overview of the different currents and their interaction see *Saudi Background: Who are the Islamists?*, *ICG Middle East Report*, 31 (21 September 2004).

<sup>16</sup> See more on framing, David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization”, in: *International Social Movement Research*, 1 (1988), pp. 197-217; Quantan Wiktorowicz, “Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda’s Struggle for Sacred Authority”, in: *International Review of Social History*, 49, Supplement 12 (2004), pp. 159-177.

<sup>17</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, Chapter 7, “Framing Contention”, pp. 106-122.

of the clash of civilizations for the Jihadi Salafist cause. The battle on this abstract level is portrayed as a clash between two programmes or methods, the programme of truth (*manhaj al-ḥaqq*) and the programme of falsehood (*manhaj al-bāṭil*). On the second level, a solution is provided. Part II of this article includes this general theoretical solution that ‘Uyairī provides, and his contention that Salafi Jihadism is better equipped to tackle the enemy than the other currents because it has a superior understanding of reality and a deeper religious belief (‘*aqīda*’), leading to a better and more effective method or practice, a *manhaj*. On this level, ‘Uyairī not only formulates a theoretical solution to the problem, but also the tools to interact with reality and change it. He defines a revolutionary Salafi *manhaj*, akin to the Marxist concept of praxis, but also in some respects similar to Sayyid Quṭb’s concept of praxis.<sup>18</sup> Two practices are crucial for the Salafi Jihadi praxis: *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’*, loyalty to God and dissociation from the unbelievers, and *jihād*, the violent resistance of the enemy. In the last part of the article, Part III, I will deal with the implementation (*taḥqīq*) of the revolutionary praxis of *jihād*. On this

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<sup>18</sup> See especially the reading of Sayyid Quṭb by Leonard Binder, “The Religious Aesthetics of Sayyid Quṭb: A Non-Scriptural Fundamentalism”, in his *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 170-205. It is not clear whether Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī has been directly influenced by Quṭb. He does not mention him in the line of thinkers he enumerates as the thinkers who have developed the Jihadist *manhaj* in his *Risāla maftūḥa ilā shaykh Safar al-Ḥawālī* (Open letter to Shaykh Safar al-Ḥawālī). In my view every revolutionary or political movement has to deal with the interaction between theory and practice to devise a method of changing reality. This is the similarity with the Marxist and Leninist movements. The ideological similarities between ‘Uyairī and Quṭb are that both regard current regimes as *kufṛ*. The differences are that ‘Uyairī does not condemn all of society, and that his concept of praxis is much more detailed and strategic. In the Salafist tradition he musters a much more elaborate theological apparatus than Quṭb to justify the Islamic revolution against the West and local authoritarian regimes. It therefore is also more legalistic and less “emotional” and more rational than Quṭb’s promotion of *jihād*, as Binder argues. In his attempt to unleash the creative forces of *jihād* ‘Uyairī propounds a much more elaborate concept of *jihād* as a means to change society as a whole into a Jihadist force that is imbued with its activist spirit. In this sense his work is both more abstract and theoretical and more detailed and concrete, although he tries to mobilize the same forces, and refuses to provide a political programme and an end goal, except in vague terms as creating a Muslim society. Partly, ‘Uyairī’s more elaborate concept of praxis stems from the long experience the Jihadist movement has had and the evolution of the Jihadist ideology since Quṭb wrote *Signposts* in the 1960s. Its shift to include the West and concentrate on very specific issues of Western interference in the Middle East and elsewhere also reflects globalisation of Western culture and politics and the transnationalisation of the Jihadist movement.

more practical, strategic level ‘Uyairī focuses on the direct battle and shows how, in a dialectical process of interaction between theory and practice, a revolutionary praxis is formed, exercised and adapted during its implementation at the different international fronts where the clash between Islamic movement and its enemies takes place. The form of this revolutionary praxis depends on the manner in which “reality” and the threat of the enemy is framed.<sup>19</sup>

Two further remarks are in order. While I emphasize the political and revolutionary content of Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s works, this does not mean that he actually has a political programme. His program is formed in the ongoing dialectical process of implementing the revolutionary *jihād* and “transforming reality”, a clear case of praxis. It is also clear that at the same time he distrusts politics and rejects the normal means of reforming society and the state. The second remark relates to the relationship between the theology and politics in ‘Uyairī’s writings. In his informative article on Salafism, Quantan Wiktorowicz argues that there exist three Salafī currents, the purist, the political and Jihadist, which differ in their programme or method, their *manhaj*, but share the same ‘*aqīda*, the basic creed.<sup>20</sup> I will argue that ‘Uyairī’s writings do not support this view. Not only in its *manhaj* but also in its ‘*aqīda* the Jihadi Salafī differs from the political and purist groups. It is from the ‘*aqīda* that the programme and tools for changing reality (*manhaj*) derive. Praxis is ultimately determined in a dialectical process between theory (*tanẓīr*), implementation (*taṭbīq*) and interaction with “reality”.<sup>21</sup> It is however

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<sup>19</sup> There are parallels with Mao Zedong’s concept of praxis, which is also an adaptation of those of Lenin’s to the local circumstances. See “On Practice”, in: *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung*, ed. Stuart R. Schram (New York: Frederick A. Preager, 1969), pp. 190-194.

<sup>20</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafī Movement”, in: *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29 (2006), pp. 207-239. He states “Salafis are united by a common creed, which provides principles and a method for applying religious beliefs to contemporary issues and problems.” p. 7, and: “The splits are about contextual analysis, not belief”, p. 208.

<sup>21</sup> Part of the problem is that Wiktorowicz confines creed to the principles of *tawḥīd*: a) God is supreme and entirely unique, b) God is the sole creator and sovereign of the universe; c) God alone has the right to be worshipped and others cannot be associated with Him (*shirk*). Furthermore, Salafis hold fast to the purity of the Prophet Muḥammad’s model and the guidance of the companions (*salaf*), and only the Qur’ān and Sunna are sources of guidance. Innovation (*bid‘a*) and rationalism are rejected (see Quantan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafī Movement”, in: *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006) 3, pp. 208-213). Wiktorowicz argues that their differences derive from the different interpretation of

true that all three Salafi currents share *parts* of their ‘*aqīda*, and differ intensely over certain aspects. They are always engaged in persuading others of the truth of their ‘*aqīda*. This accounts for an interminable and vehement intra-Salafi debate.

## Note on the sources

This article is based on an analysis of the standard texts that are ascribed to Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī. All of these were found on the Internet, but it is never certain that they are his own works. The only indication that they are so is that the same collections of his texts have been found in different formats on different authoritative websites.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, some works are very different from others. In addition, it is not certain that some texts are complete or that they have not been edited afterwards, such as the series on Iraq. It is also unclear whether he is the only author, or that other authors have contributed to these works. He has certainly copied sections or adopted ideas from others and has transformed them—which is also a way to appropriate them. Although I have tried to indicate how he appropriates the themes and tropes of other currents, I have not attempted to certify their originality. In itself it is interesting that the collections are regarded as his work. I tried not to include his

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this creed. I believe that the differences are much more fundamental. While it is true that all Salafi currents agree on the above-mentioned principles, they also differ on other aspects of their creed and the weight they give to them. This is confirmed by the enormous importance they ascribe to their distinct ‘*aqīda*, which is often published as a separate document that demonstrates their principles. Due to the importance and nature of these documents they should be regarded as a manifesto of their religious and political programme. See for instance the manifesto of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, ‘*Aqīdat al-ṭā’ifa al-Manṣūra*, published by their electronic magazine, *Ṣawt al-Jihād*, or that of al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, *Hādhihi ‘aqīdatunā*, or that of Abū Muḥammad al-Maḥdī of the same title. *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, written by Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, has also been called his manifesto (cf. Natana Delong-Bas, *From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], p. 57). While the *Ṣawt al-Jihād* manifesto enumerates its basic principles, such as the political struggle against the idol/despot (*taḡhūt/ṭawāḡhūt*), unbelievers (*kāfir/kuffār*), international political system, democracy, in which *jihād* and *taḡfir* figure prominently, the manifesto of Abū Muḥammad al-Maḥdī is far more classical. It seems that Wiktorowicz’s model is too schematic and does not allow for individual differences or other influences, such as the concept of the clash of civilizations in ‘Uyairī’s work.

<sup>22</sup> These include [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws) of Abū Muḥammad al-Maḥdī and [www.oz000.tk](http://www.oz000.tk) (accessed May 2006).

military writings, nor the whole imagery of al-Qaeda, much of which probably Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī was responsible for when he was webmaster of *al-Nidā’*.

## I. The clash of civilizations

### *The life of a third generation Saudi mujāhid*

Reading the biographies of Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī one would think that his life has been wholly devoted to *jihād* and defending Islam.<sup>23</sup> Yūsuf bin Ṣāliḥ bin Fahd al-‘Uyairī, *nom de guerre* Abū Ṣāliḥ or Shaykh al-Baṭṭār, was born on 24 April 1974 in the Saudi city of Dammam.<sup>24</sup> He left school when he was 18, before he fully completed secondary school. He went to Afghanistan, where he arrived in 1991, during the last phase of the war against the Najibullah regime. He was trained in al-Fārūq camp, where he later became a trainer himself. At the time, this camp did not belong to al-Qaeda. He does, however, seem to have been acquainted with Bin Laden, who appointed him as his bodyguard for four months, and whom he accompanied to the Sudan in 1992. From there, we are told, he was sent to help organise the struggle in Somalia against the United States, led by Abū Ḥaṣṣ al-Miṣrī, Bin Laden’s military leader. Afterwards he returned to Saudi Arabia and worked as volunteer in Dammam to gather donations for the struggle in Bosnia and Kosovo. During this stay he met Salmān al-‘Awda twice. After the bomb attack on the compound of the American military at Khobar in 1996 he, was arrested and incarcerated in Dammam prison, where he was reportedly tortured.<sup>25</sup> He married the sister of the wife of Shaykh Sulaymān al-‘Ulwān, with whom he had three daughters.

<sup>23</sup> See for a biographical account of ‘Uyairī’s life and others associated with his organization, Thomas Hegghammer, “Terrorist recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia”, in: *Middle East Policy*, 13, 4 (Winter, 2006), pp. 39-60.

<sup>24</sup> There is basically one biography which was published in two issues of *Ṣawt al-Jihād*, No. 1, pp. 15-18 and No. 2, pp. 15-18, written by Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Sālim. It has subsequently been republished as *Man huwa al-shaykh al-Baṭṭār?* on the website [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws), which has been copied in an abridged version in *Muqtaṭaṭ min sīra Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī* (Selections from the life of Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī), and completely in *Siyār a’lām al-shuhadā’* (The lives of the outstanding martyrs) published by the radical website *al-Qā’idūn* in Hijra 1427. (Accessed March 2006).

<sup>25</sup> *Risālat al-shaykh Yūsuf li-ra’īs qism dā’irat al-raqāba ‘alā al-sujūn fī al-mantiqa al-sharqiyya*



After his release in 1998 Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī became involved in Chechnya and Daghestan, where he seems to have been in contact with the Saudi guerrilla leader Khaṭṭāb. ʿUyairī also played an important role as fundraiser, which was also the starting point of the growing estrangement with Salmān al-ʿAwda, who was released from prison in 1999. As he became more independent and asserted his own position, Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī started to publish his own works in support of the transnational Jihadi cause. His works on Chechnya dealt with prisoners of war,<sup>26</sup> ‘martyrdom operations’,<sup>27</sup> and hostage taking, for example the Moscow Theatre hostage taking in October 2002.<sup>28</sup> Some of these works were published by his newly founded research institute, The Institute for Islamic Research and Studies (*Markaz al-Buhūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya*), which acted as a forum for Jihadi ideas. In addition, he was actively posting his works, often issued as a series, on Saudi websites. Other causes he picked up at the time were those of the Taliban, which had taken over Afghanistan in 1996,<sup>29</sup> and whose state he held up as an example of anti-politics, as well as the MORO movement in the Philippines.<sup>30</sup> His growing estrangement from the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* was marked by their condemnation of 9/11, which he defended in his *The Truth about the New Crusade*.<sup>31</sup> In this period he probably also became Webmaster for al-Qaeda’s site *al-Nidāʾ*.

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‘*an awḍāʾ sijn al-Dammām* (The letter of Shaykh Yūsuf [al-ʿUyairī] to the director of the department of inspection of the prisons in the southern region on the conditions of the prison of Dammam) (No date).

<sup>26</sup> *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī jawāz qatl al-asārā* (Guidance for the perplexed on the permissibility of killing prisoners) (No date).

<sup>27</sup> *Hal intaḥarat Hawwāʾ am istashhadat? baḥṭh muṭawwal fī ḥukm al-ʿamalīyyāt al-ishtishhādiyya* (Has Eve committed suicide or has she martyred herself? Elaborate study on martyrdom operations) (No date).

<sup>28</sup> *ʿAmaliyyat “al-masrah fī Mūsūw,” mādhā rabiḥa minhā al-mujāhidūn wa mādhā khasarū?* (The “Moscow Theatre” operation: What did *mujāhidūn* benefit and what did they lose?) (No date).

<sup>29</sup> *al-Mizān li-ḥaraka Ṭalibān* (The Taliban movement in balance) according to the biographies he finished this book after “The truth of the new crusade” (see note 19).

<sup>30</sup> *Ma ḥakadhā al-ʿadl yā faḍila al-shaykh! Dīfāʾ an ʿan Jamāʿa Abī Sayyāf al-Filbīniyya* (This is not justice, oh honoured Shaykh. In defence of the Society of Abu Sayyaf of the Philippines) (No date). It is a open letter addressed to Salmān al-ʿAwda after he attacked the Abu Sayyaf group of un-Islamic activities by taking hostages.

<sup>31</sup> *Ḥaqīqat al-ḥarb al-ṣalibiyya al-jadīda* (The truth of the new crusade). Second issue published in Rajab, 1422 (September 2001).

To the general public Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī became known as the founder and the first leader of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>32</sup> It seems he was asked by Bin Laden to organize a cell in Saudi Arabia after he left the Sudan and returned to Saudi Arabia in 1992. But the project only really came off the ground after his release from Dammam prison in 1998, when Bin Laden gave him the assignment to recruit and train leaders for the organization. He recruited most of the leaders, like Khālīd Hājj and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Muqrin, from among his acquaintances in Afghanistan. Like the second echelon, they were on the List of 19 that the Saudi state published in May 2003.<sup>33</sup> Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī was killed on 31 May 2004 during a clash with the police 10 km northwest of the town of Turba near Hail, the capital of the northern province of Saudi Arabia.<sup>34</sup> Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī was 29 years old. He seems to have been opposed to the timing of the attacks in Saudi Arabia, which is confirmed in a pamphlet he wrote just before his death in which he accused the US of being behind the attack on his group.<sup>35</sup>

### *Zero-sum-game*

*Tawhīd* stands at the heart of Salafi ideology in general, but Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī adopts the clash of civilizations as the main over-arching concept for an activist and dramatic ideology. ‘Uyairī’s starting point is that the West is engaged in a total war on all fronts against Islam, economic, political, religious and cultural. But the struggle is especially directed on the level of identity. This struggle is a zero-sum-game, for Islam is equal to one’s identity and humanity. Losing one’s religion means losing one’s identity, morals (*akhlāq*), and principles (*mabādī*). One is literally dehumanised, for it leads to debauchery (*da‘ar*), and corruption (*fasād*)

<sup>32</sup> Fāris bin Ḥazzām, “Qissat ta’sīs al-Qā’ida fī al-Sa’ūdiyya”, Part I (The story of the founding of al-Qaida in Saudi Arabiyya), in: *al-Riyād*, 27 September 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Fāris bin Ḥazzām, “Qissat ta’sīs al-Qā’ida fī al-Sa’ūdiyya”, Part II, in: *al-Riyād*, 6 October 2005.

<sup>34</sup> See *al-Sharq al-Awsāt*, 4 June 2003 and 30 July 2003.

<sup>35</sup> *Risāla min Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī, aḥad al-maṭlūbīn al-tis’a ‘ashar ilā ‘umūm al-muslimīn* (Letter from Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī, one of the List of 19, to the Muslims, published in 2003).

“in all its forms”, with the result that Muslims are degraded to lead the life of “animals” (*bahīmī*), and in fact lose the right to exist.<sup>36</sup>

The war of civilizations is in itself not strange to the Islamist movement. What makes the Salafi Jihadi version different is its uncompromising character. It is an eternal war waged until the bitter end, founded on a conviction that Islam has almost been vanquished. Following the usual line, also upheld by Bin Laden, Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī propagates the main apocalyptic theme of the Jihadis that the Muslim community has been humiliated and has become “the most despised *umma*” (*adhalla umma*).<sup>37</sup> It is a battle between a Western program/method (*manhaj al-gharb*) of deception, deviation and the Muslim program of truth (*manhaj al-ḥaqq*).<sup>38</sup> In this apocalyptic vision “Muslims everywhere are threatened in their religion (*dīn*), soul (*nafs*), honour (*‘ird*), money (*māl*), rationality (*‘aql*) and offspring (*nasl*).”<sup>39</sup> If Muslims lose this war of principles (*mabādi’*) and creed (*‘aqīda*), ‘Uyairī argues, they will have forfeited their right to exist.<sup>40</sup>

Apart from being ubiquitous and eternal, this Western “crusade” against Islam and the Islamic world is also well planned. It aims to destroy the identity of Muslims, corrupt their morals, and terminate any religious feelings in order that Muslims lose faith in their creed (*‘aqīda*), the very basis of their resistance. This is a precondition for ruling over Muslims.<sup>41</sup> The most important means to defeat Islam is to corrupt it, by promoting free sex and stimulate the “corruption of women” (*ifsād al-mar’a*). Other means used are the imposition of “diversionary curricula” at school which are opposed to or ignore Islam, spreading drugs, and permitting the selling of alcohol.<sup>42</sup>

Although Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s accusations feed on the main Islamist diatribe against the West, they are also based on his extensive reading and knowledge of contemporary Western sources on the issue. He

<sup>36</sup> *al-‘Irāq wa-l-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya ba’d suqūṭ Baghdād* (Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula after the Fall of Baghdad, published in 2003), p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Risāla maftūḥa ila shaykh Safar al-Ḥawālī* (Open letter to Shaykh Safar al-Ḥawālī), p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> *al-‘Irāq wa-l-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya*, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> This is a common theme but is also a specific theme that he uses for instance to legitimate kidnapping in the Philippines by the Abu Sayyaf group, *Mā hākadhā al-‘aql*, p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> *Thawābit ‘alā darb al-jihād* (The principles of *jihād*) (No date), pp. 41f.

<sup>41</sup> *al-‘Irāq wa-l-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya*, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5ff.

shores up his argument by making references to prominent American intellectuals involved in the debate on Islam such as Bernard Lewis, Thomas Friedman, and Samuel Huntington, who he says claim to be “objective” and “neutral”, but in reality incite public opinion to support the American “crusade” against Muslims.<sup>43</sup>

Typical of radical Islamism and of Salafism is also his rejection of ‘well intended’ attempts of the West to spread democracy in the Muslim world. Regarded as part of the battle of civilizations, he distrusts democracy and secularism on account of the distinction these concepts make between church and state, and on grounds of their promotion of the sovereignty of the people. Besides associating partners with God (*shirk*), secularism leads to the “bestialization of all activities of life,” the rise of “odious capitalism, the liberation of women, the equality between man and woman, equality between religions, and non-discrimination on the basis of religion and belief”. Its fundamental flaw is that “it promotes total freedom: freedom of belief, freedom of expression, freedom of science, and freedom to change man from a servant of God into a low animal”.<sup>44</sup> This was also an important reason for the American invasion of Iraq:

This project [the invasion of Iraq] will ensure American hegemony by imposing American democracy, American politics, American education, and American culture and American morals and even American Islam on all countries except Israel. It is a comprehensive plan that will transform the region entirely, if it includes the heads of government [...]. This dangerous project will enslave the region and destroy the last remains of Islam from life in its entirety. It is a corrupt and corrupting plan (*mubādara al-fasād wa-l-ifsād*). It is a plan of unbelief (*kufṛ*) and of atheism (*zandaqa*).<sup>45</sup>

At the same time, according to ‘Uyairī, the West tries to undermine the will of the *umma* to resist this cultural and political invasion by injecting into it the idea that violence (*‘unf*) and *jihād* should be rejected. This is the main assignment of moderate ‘ulamā’, who, under influence of rationality (*ta‘aqqul*), spread the idea that violence and resistance endanger the *umma* because it is too weak to combat the enemy. They condemn the *mujāhidīn* as impatient (*ta‘ajjul*), irresponsible (*taḥawwur*) and

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

a threat to the internal Muslim front, leading to friction (*fitna*). ‘Uyairī believes that these ‘*ulamā*’ have been co-opted into the state and that they destroy the strength of creed (‘*aqīda*) in the name of coexistence (*ta‘āyush*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), and mutual understanding (*taqārub*) with the West. By claiming that Islam is a religion of peace and admonishing Muslims to limit their discourse to theoretical generalities (‘*umūmiyyāt nazariyya*) they instil impotence (*ghayr al-istiṭā’a*) in the struggle with the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) and even Shiites (called *rawāfiḍ* ‘rejectors’ by ‘Uyairī), Jews and Christians.<sup>46</sup>

### *Rejection of politics*

Despite his appropriation of the master narrative of the clash of civilizations and its cultural connotations, which runs through all his work, Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s writings are predominantly a critical analysis of the political situation in the Muslim world. He prides himself on knowing “reality” (*wāqī‘*). In these texts “interests” (*maṣāliḥ*) are as, or even more, important than creed and religion. Rather than just condemning the adversary on account of his religion, and framing the struggle as a clash of religions, he ‘demonstrates’ the corruption and falsehood of the adversary by referring to information he obtains from news stations such as FOX NEWS, the BBC, or English newspapers, as well as policy reports of renowned think tanks.<sup>47</sup> “Reality” as it were, and his political analysis confirms the threat of Western civilizations to the identity of Muslims.

Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s main concern is with foreign, especially American, interference in the Middle East, which he in modern terms calls “imperialism” (*istiṣmār*). For instance, in his analysis of the stationing of American troops in Saudi Arabia in 1991, he argues that it is their interests that forces them to remain in the region, not their inherent character as “crusaders”.<sup>48</sup> This is ‘proven’ by the subordination of international treaties and bodies to imperialist goals. ‘Uyairī concludes that neither alliances nor treaties are important; only power, and in

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16f.

<sup>47</sup> *Tawājud al-Amṛika fī al-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya: Haqīqa wa-ahdāf* (The presence of America in the Arabian Peninsula: Truth and Goals) (No date), pp. 16ff.; *al-‘Iraq wa-l-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya*, pp. 28f.

<sup>48</sup> *Tawājud al-Amṛika*, pp. 1-24. See also *al-‘Irāq wa-l-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya*, pp. 22f.

final analysis, military power counts. Therefore, ‘Uyairī considered all the rhetoric of justice and respect for human rights as worthless propaganda.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, his critique of democracy is not only based on democracy as a godless, secular system as such, which rejects *tawḥīd* in favour of the will of the people, transparency and accountability, nor as a way to dominate the region culturally by introducing new values. He also condemns it because it is used as a pretext to political and economic domination of the region, and a means to undermine the resistance to that domination. He questions the American support for democracy, because “if the people of the region could choose a political power freely they would choose Islamists, as they did in Algeria; and this is what the Americans reject”.<sup>50</sup>

Another reason why he rejects Western political projects is because he believes Israel dominates the US and dictates its foreign policy. He states that “one can even say that America is Greater Israel” or that “Israel is a lesser America”.<sup>51</sup> Referring to articles in *The Observer* and *Ma‘arif*, which analyse the Israeli influence on American policy, he believes that the real goal is to liberate Iraq for the Jews not for the Iraqis as the Americans claim.<sup>52</sup>

The final reason why politics has become tarnished is that local regimes closely collaborate with imperialism and are not based on the support of their own people. In fact, these local despotic regimes, called *tawāghīṭ* (idols, despots), as well as the official ‘*ulamā*’, called “establishment ‘*ulamā*’”, are deemed even more loathsome than the “crusading forces” because they claim to be Muslim and mislead the youth. These governments make alliances with “Zionist-Crusading forces” and support “the crusading campaign” (*al-ḥamla al-ṣalābiyya*), as is apparent in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, whose governments “will agree to implement American education and Westernize the *umma* in its totality and wipe out Islam”.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43f.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-53.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46f.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

This long history of political and economic dominance by the US, supported and implemented by the local states and ‘*ulamā*’, has instilled in ‘Uyairī a fundamental distrust of politics expressed in his rejection of all political institutions, very much like the Taliban in Afghanistan:

To end this situation it is necessary for the Arab states to stop deceiving their people. It is necessary to dissolve the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in fact the whole ministry and all that is related to foreign affairs. It suffices to appoint a representative who relays the debates on the issue to the American president and the Foreign Secretary. Neither these ministries nor the ministers have had any positive consequences for the region<sup>54</sup>

Under these conditions politics has become the root of the problem rather the means to change it. “Calls for tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), closer relations (*taqrīb*) and mutual understanding (*tafāhum*), with the killers (*qatala*) of the *umma*, the crusaders,” he condemns as hypocritical. “We are surprised that every time their killing increases the call for debate (*ḥiwārāt*), closer relations (*taqrīb*), mutual understanding (*tasāmuḥ*) and coexistence (*ta’āyush*) becomes louder.”<sup>55</sup> The only way to stop their power is to fight them and call for a *jihād*.<sup>56</sup> Political, rather than cultural dissonance, between Islam and America and the West, seems to be the root of the problem.

### *Rationalism and the rise and fall of the ‘intellectual’*

‘Uyairī’s framing of the enemy is not only directed against “imperialism”, the “corruption of the rulers” and “weakness of religious scholars”. It is also directed against the influence of Western thought and their promoters in the Islamic world, the moderate reformers, the Westernized intellectuals (*muḥtaqqafūn*), whom he regards as a Fifth Column. While they claim to “enlighten” (*tanwīr*) Islamic thought and pretend to lead Muslims to a renaissance, ‘Uyairī accuses them of supporting imperialism by undermining the true Islamic intellectual heritage. This clash is framed as a struggle between the program of truth (*manhaj al-ḥaqq*) and the program of falsehood (*manhaj al-bāṭil*) or Western program (*manhaj al-gharb*), called rationalism (*muʿtazalism*).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> *Tawājud al-Amrika*, p. 15

He points out the dangers of rationalism (*‘aqlāniyya*) and Westernization (*taghrībiyya*) of Muslim thought.<sup>57</sup> He states that during the past century westernised Muslims (*al-mutaghharbiyyūn*) called for a rational interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the Qur’ān and Sunna and subjected them to materialist principles in order to bring them closer to the Western model (*manhaj al-gharb*). They were based on Westernising ideas (*afkār taghrībiyya*), imported values (*qiyam wāfida*) and secular programs (*al-manhajīyya al-‘ilmāniyya*).<sup>58</sup> ‘Uyairī regards modernizers (*‘aṣrāniyyīn*) as especially dangerous because they practice innovation (*bid‘a*), import Western thought (*al-afkār al-wāfida*), while pretending to be Islamists and reforming Islam. ‘Uyairī states that modernism (*‘aṣriyya*), modernisation (*‘aṣrāniyya*), and westernisation (*taghrībiyya*) are by definition opposed to Islamic law (*shar‘a*). He accuses the intellectuals of being hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) and practicing dissimulation (*taqiyya*): “They form the bridgehead of western imperialism and culture that is opposed to the Islamic culture in its origin, legacy (*turāth*) and history and mislead (*taḍlīl*), corrupt (*tazyīf*) and cheat (*khid‘a*) the *umma*.”<sup>59</sup> The goal of imperialism is to “corrupt their deep rooted creed” (*tazyīf ‘aqīdatihim al-rāsikha*).<sup>60</sup>

‘Uyairī repeatedly appropriates the discourse of other currents, radicalises them, and turns them against their original thinker. He uses it against prominent thinkers of the Muslim Brotherhood and the more liberal-minded, or former leftists representatives of the Salafī movement.<sup>61</sup> His ire is especially directed at the thinkers who have called themselves al-Waṣaṭiyya, such as the Egyptian thinker Fahmī Huwaydī, who condemns Salafists as “idolators, who are worshippers of the text” (*wathāniyyūn hum ‘abadat al-nuṣūṣ*).<sup>62</sup> Others, such as Ḥasan al-Turābī, are vilified for developing a flexible doctrine, by calling for “the necessity of a new *fiqh* for a new reality”. What unites all these reformers, in the eyes of ‘Uyairī, is their call for “enlightened religious

<sup>57</sup> *Hasan Farḥān al-Mālikī wa ṣahira naqd uṣūl al-shar‘iyya* (Ḥasan Farḥān al-Mālikī and the phenomenon of the critique of the roots of legitimacy) (No date).

<sup>58</sup> *Hasan Farḥān al-Mālikī*, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> See for a broader analysis of the discourse of authenticity and Islam, Raymond W. Baker, *Islam without Fear. Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); *Hasan Farḥān al-Mālikī*, pp. 23-34.

<sup>62</sup> *Hasan Farḥān al-Mālikī*, p. 26.



thought" (*al-fikr al-dīnī al-mustanīr*) and the fact that, like the *mu'tazila*, "they give rationality absolute sovereignty". Their punishment for innovation, (*bid'a*), arrogance (*istikthār*), and bad intentions (*sū' niyyatihim*) is excommunication (*takfīr*)."<sup>63</sup>

This does not mean that Yūsuf al-'Uyairī is against *tajdīd* in itself. In fact, 'Uyairī affirms that Wahabbism was also a reform movement, but he rejects *tajdīd* as Muḥammad 'Abduh and other "rationalists" applied it on the basis of foreign principles and foreign-inspired programs (*manhaj*).<sup>64</sup> Reform cannot be based on replacement (*tabdīl*).<sup>65</sup> It can only be based on the pious forefathers, the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*. Classical terms as *ijtihād* therefore have more legitimacy than modern terms such as *tajdīd*, which are closely linked to secularism.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, other terms such as culture (*thaqāfa*), intellectual (*muthaqqaf*) and thinker (*mufakkir*) are part of the secular project to drive back and confine Islamic terms like religious scholar (*'ālim*, *muta'allim*) and individual reasoning (*ijtihād*) to a separate religious realm of *fiqh*. 'Uyairī believes that it is the Salafi Jihadi task to retrieve the original meaning of *tajdīd* in order to regain direction and create a renaissance (*nahḍa*) and progress (*taqaddum*), which can only be based on an Islamic identity (*huwīya*).<sup>67</sup>

### *Weakening and dilution of the Ṣaḥwa manhaj*

If the previous actors are regarded as enemies in the clash of civilizations, Yūsuf al-'Uyairī's relationship with the most important reform movement in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s, the Ṣaḥwa movement, is more ambivalent.<sup>68</sup> On the one hand, 'Uyairī praises the Ṣaḥwa movement

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39f.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> For a general overview of the movement in the 1990s, see Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: Palgrave, 1999); and Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition* (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000). For an analysis of the Ṣaḥwa movement since its leaders have been released from prison and have been co-opted by the state, see Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State*, pp. 59-101; Toby Craig Jones, "The Clerics, the Sahwa and the Saudi State", in: *Strategic Insights*, 4, 3 (March 2005): <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/mar/JonesMar05.asp> (accessed May 2007).

as “the most important reformist (*tajdīd*) movement in Arabic thought and society at the present moment”.<sup>69</sup> In an open letter he even lauds one of its leaders, Safar al-Ḥawālī, for “your guidance of the Ṣaḥwa youth” (*tawjīhuka li-shabāb al-ṣaḥwa*).<sup>70</sup> ‘Uyairī wrote in one of his letters to Salmān al-‘Awda, “dear *shaykh*, may God protect you, you know how much we love you, honour you and respect you...”.<sup>71</sup> As a sign of respect for Salmān al-‘Awda, the critique in his open letter is framed as an “advise” (*naṣiḥa*).<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, it is clear that the purpose of these writings is to castigate the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs*. Two issues stand out in this criticism. One is the accusation that the *shaykhs* have become part of the ‘establishment’ ‘*ulamā*’ when criticizing the *mujāhidūn* for leaving the *manhaj* on account of their extremism (*ghuluw*), violence (*‘unf*), and practise of excommunication (*takfīr*).<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, they have let the *mujāhidīn* down by refusing to instruct them during the *jihād* in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Chechnya.<sup>74</sup> He even accuses Salmān al-‘Awda of leaving them in the lurch, not just lacking in courage.<sup>75</sup>

Above all, Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī criticises the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* for the weakening of their *manhaj* during their stay in prison from 1994 to 1999. Safar al-Ḥawālī is especially castigated for directly attacking the *mujāhidīn* in his *Address to the Umma Concerning Recent Events*.<sup>76</sup> The manner in which ‘Uyairī attacks them is however especially interesting for the light it throws on his own revolutionary program of “changing reality”. He frames their deviation from the right path in terms of “orbiting around a star of a new *manhaj*” (*dārat fī falak manhaj jadīd*), leading to a new way of “interacting with reality” (*ta‘āmul ma’a al-wāqī‘*), which results in abandoning the hope of “changing reality” (*taghyīr al-wāqī‘*). He accuses

<sup>69</sup> *Hasan Farḥan al-Mālīki*, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> *Risāla maftūḥa*, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Mā ḥākadḥā al-‘adl*, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Munāṣaḥat Salmān al-‘Awda ba’d taghyīr manhajihī* (Advise to Salmān al-‘Awda after he changed his *manhaj*) was published as an open letter on 15 August 2000, eight months after the release of Salmān al-‘Awda from prison. Interestingly, the *naṣiḥa* was also used by the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* in their critique of the state in 1991.

<sup>73</sup> *Risāla maftūḥa*, p. 21f.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 21.

<sup>75</sup> *Mā ḥākadḥā al-‘adl*, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Safar al-Ḥawālī, *Bayān li-l-umma ‘an al-aḥdāth* (accessed on the website of Safar al-Ḥawālī, May 2006).

Salmān al-ʿAwda of giving in to the state and having “submitted to reality” (*ruḍūkh li-l-wāqʿi*), acquiescing merely in its “modification not its production” (*taḥwīruhu lā sināʿaṭihi*), with the result that their *manhaj* has become corrupted and weakened.<sup>77</sup>

As an example of separating theory (*tanẓīr*) from practice (*taṭbīq*) Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī directs his attack on the participation of the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* in an international campaign in 2003 to protest against the American invasion of Iraq. The campaign, which was based on Christian-Muslim dialogue, is according to Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī based on “slogans without meaning” and “images without content”.<sup>78</sup> Instead of devising concrete plans (*al-barāmij al-ʿamaliyya*) for change, the campaign concentrated on “raising the consciousness of the masses” (*tawʿiyat al-ʿamma*), which, he comments, is already quite aware of the situation they are in.<sup>79</sup> In another essential section where he demonstrates the linkage between revolutionary praxis (*manhaj*) with creed (*ʿaqīda*), he states that, once one organises political activities with the state, one’s independence is compromised and one’s *manhaj* is “diluted” (*tamyīʿ*), which in the end will threaten the very creed (*ʿaqīda*) it is based on. Working with the “client governments” means supporting imperialism. It will lead to coordination (*tansīq*) and cooperation (*taʿāwun*) with churches and such Islamic reformists such as Fahmī Huwaydī.<sup>80</sup> By betraying the transformative potential of the “*manhaj al-ṣaḥwiyyīn*” the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* have become mere “intellectuals” (*muthaqqafūn*), who talk without effect.<sup>81</sup>

If the critique of ʿUyairī of the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* gives an insight into their differences, his willingness to work with them, despite his critique, shows how he tries to include them in a more principled movement of resistance. He ascribes their lack of commitment to ignorance and not wilful rejection and therefore believes the role of the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* has not yet ended if they show themselves “more enthusiastic (*akthar hamāsan*), more perseverant (*akthar ṣumūdan*) and clearer in their *manhaj* (*akthar*

<sup>77</sup> *Munāṣaḥat Salmān al-ʿAwda*, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> *al-Ḥamla al-ʿālamīyya li-muqāwamat al-ʿudwān*: *Ẓayf, khidāʿ, wa-shaʿarat kādhība* (The global campaign for resisting aggression: Deception, treachery and false slogans, published probably in 2002 or 2003), p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

*wudūḥan fī l-manhaj*)". In his advice to them he believes they can still join the *manhaj* of truth if they keep their *manhaj* simple, undiluted, and reject coexistence (*tasāmuḥ*), tolerance (*tasāhul*), pliability (*līn*), and mitigation (*talyīn*).<sup>82</sup> Adding in true activist fashion: "we want to mobilise (*tafīl*) the Islamic people, whose wings are clipped, whose wealth is plundered, and who suffer under governments who refuse them everything, even the right of demonstration".<sup>83</sup> By rejecting reality (*rafḍ al-wāqīʿ*) instead of submitting to it, and adopting the revolutionary programme of the Jihadis, the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* can regain their credibility.

In the end, however, Yūsuf al-ʿUyairī is not convinced that they are able to change. Their attitude towards 9/11 and their support for the US constituted a watershed. "We warn them [that we will condemn them] for apostasy on the grounds that they are helping the crusaders by word or by *fatwās* in favour of the Arab states, condoning the participation in the fight against terrorism." For ʿUyairī, and the *ʿaqīda* of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, any form of cooperation (*muʿāwana*) and assistance (*musāʿada*) of the *kuffār* against Muslims either by mouth, deed, money in lesser or greater form, is unacceptable. Anyone who provides this assistance in any form in any degree is an apostate (*murtadd*).<sup>84</sup>

## II. A revolutionary *manhaj*

### *The 'victorious group' as vanguard*

The concept of the revolutionary praxis (*manhaj*) and the conceptualisation of its instruments of implementation on the second level derive from the general principles of the *ʿaqīda*, which, as we have seen, ʿUyairī claims to be purer and stronger than that of the Ṣaḥwa movement due to the uncompromising character of the revolutionary Jihadist movement. It is also buttressed by the general culturalist master narrative of the clash of civilizations and its corollary of political and economic imperialism. The second level of the revolutionary *manhaj* forms as it were the intermediate stage between the Salafī Jihadist *ʿaqīda* and

<sup>82</sup> *Munāṣaḥat Salmān al-ʿAwdā*, p. 6

<sup>83</sup> *Ḥamla*, p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ḥaqīqat al-ḥarb al-ṣalībiyya al-jadīda*, pp. 11f. See also *ʿAqīdat al-īḍaʿa al-manṣūra* issued by Ṣawt al-Jihād.

direct application of its principles in reality, providing the agency (the vanguard), as well as the instruments (*al-walā' wa-l-barā'* and *jihād*) for the actual implementation (*taṭbīq*) of the Jihadist revolution. Having stated in the previous section the main problem and how other agencies and practices have failed to solve it, this section will deal with the solution 'Uyairī provides and the revolutionary *manhaj* he presents as the only alternative to obtain revolutionary change.

He does this by first of all asserting the religious legitimacy of the *mujaḥidīn*. To counter the critique of the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* he emphatically states that “the *mujaḥidīn* do have a *manhaj*, a route (*tarīq*) and a concept (*fīkr*), which are in complete agreement with the *manhaj* of main stream Sunnism (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*) in their beliefs and *fiqh*”.<sup>85</sup> He is careful to point out they are not fanatics, or *khawārij*, as they are called by their enemies.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, he refers to their venerable intellectual tradition, represented by a long line of thinkers.<sup>87</sup> In fact, 'Uyairī argues that the *mujaḥidīn*, as people of the *jihād* (*ahl al-jihād*), have a superior knowledge over the knowledge of religious scholars (*ahl al-'ilm*).<sup>88</sup> At the heart of this argument is that one can only acquire a true understanding of the world and become part of the victorious group (*al-tā'ifa al-manṣūra*) if one is active in the resistance and especially participates in the *jihād*.<sup>89</sup>

Having the right religious knowledge, thus, is not enough. Other preconditions are crucial for joining the “victorious group” (*al-tā'ifa al-manṣūra*), who as leaders of the revolution, have the task to “enlighten”

<sup>85</sup> *Risāla maftūḥa*, pp. 18, 22.

<sup>86</sup> *Hamla*, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Risāla maftūḥa*, p. 18. Interestingly in the debate whether Salafism and Jihadi Salafism is indigenous or influenced by ‘foreigners,’ Yūsuf al-'Uyairī responds to Safar al-Ḥawālī and gives an account of the genealogy of the Jihadi Salafi foundation of the program (*ta'sīl al-manhaj*) that includes much more ‘foreigners than Saudis: ‘Abdallāh ‘Azzām, ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, Shaykh Tamīm al-'Adnānī, Shaykh Abū Ṭalāl al-Qāsimī, Aymān al-Zawāhirī, Shaykh Rifā'ī Aḥmad Ṭāhā, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Azīz, Shaykh Abū Yāsir al-Miṣri, Shaykh Abū Ḥafṣ al-Mūritānī, Shaykh Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Muhājir, Shaykh Abū Ibrāhīm al-Miṣri. Interestingly, Sayyid Quṭb is not included.

<sup>88</sup> I have derived the notion that Jihadis are superior from his work on Chechnya, but this is also clear in the open letters to Safar al-Ḥawālī and Salīm al-'Awda. The term *ahl al-jihād* is used in his work on Chechnya, *Istishhādīyya*, p. 5, and Iraq, *Silsilat al-ḥarb al-salibiyya 'alā al-'Irāq*, p. 43. The term *ahl al-'ilm* is also used throughout the rest of his work.

<sup>89</sup> This is also the central Marxist and especially Leninist and Maoist concept of praxis related to the idea of the vanguard.

the people and “assert its belief (*īmān*) and creed (*‘aqīda*) in this matter”.<sup>90</sup> For besides having knowledge, a true Muslim also must be purely himself (*tazkiya*), as well as engage in the highest form of activism, *jihād*. ‘Uyairī gives three reasons why the *mujāhidūn* are better suited to lead the *umma* than the *Ṣaḥwa shaykhs*. Firstly, they hold principles supreme, higher than friendship or politics.<sup>91</sup> Secondly, they are self-effacing and willing to sacrifice themselves for the higher goal. “They will sell their land, and leave their wives and children and money and they will trample on all forms of opulence (*tarāf*) and comfort (*rafāhiya*) [to achieve their goals]”.<sup>92</sup> Thirdly, the *mujāhidūn* are independent: they are “the only ones who say and do what they believe in”. In other words, in contrast to hypocrites, “the *mujāhid* is only afraid of God” and submits to *tawhūd*.<sup>93</sup>

These characteristics of the *mujāhid*—principled, uncompromising, self-effacing, independent—will lead to that other element in revolutionary praxis, the attainment of a superior knowledge of “reality” (*wāqī‘*). Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī states his case for the superiority of revolutionary epistemology in his treatise of martyrdom operations in Chechnya. In this tract he states that, “it is not possible to judge this operation and other ones like it, without knowledge of reality (*ma‘rifat al-wāqī‘*)”, or the science of reality (*‘ilm al-wāqī‘*). More than any other issue of *fiqh*, questions of *jihād* should be based on reality, he argues. But this knowledge is not based on a disinterested analysis of the situation in itself. Neutral knowledge in this phase of a deep crisis of the world is not possible and knowledge of reality has been transferred to those who have a higher understanding of reality than anyone else: “Those who want to judge specific instances of *jihād* should first of all ask the people of the *jihād* (*ahl al-jihād*) about the truth of their reality (*ḥaqīqat wāqī‘ihim*), and only then can they judge. The reality of the *jihād* is taken from the *mujāhidūn* not from the apostates.” Those who attain consciousness of the highest reality may determine what is true and false.<sup>94</sup>

This Leninist and Maoist logic of praxis, the eulogy of the revolutionary will and knowledge whose incontestable logic is based on the moral

<sup>90</sup> *Hamla*, p. 12

<sup>91</sup> *Mā hākadhā al-‘adl*, p. 1

<sup>92</sup> *Risāla maftūḥa*, p. 12

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Hal intaḥarat Hawwā’*, p. 5.

superiority of self-sacrifice as well as having a privileged access to truth during the struggle, lies at the core of Jihadi Salafism as Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī formulates it.<sup>95</sup> By stating that only revolutionary praxis is the source of religious as well as scientific truth, all neutral objective criteria for its evaluation have been swept aside. It has posited the activist *mujāhid* as holder of the absolute truth against the ineffective scholar or reformer, who is misled by a ‘false consciousness’, the arrogant intellectual deluded by rationalism, and the corrupt dictators (*ṭāghūt*) in the pay of imperialism. Moreover its claim to superior knowledge, surprising in a martyrdom culture which is so often regarded as irrational, is meant to disarm the moderate reformers who condemned violence as counterproductive and counsel moderation, accusing the *mujāhidīn* of jeopardising Islam on account of their fanaticism and irrationalism. Socially, Jihadism has the additional advantage of ending alienation. By being both an individual achievement in resisting all forms of temptation and overcoming personal trials, Jihadism leads to a personal achievement of salvation and redemption, while at the same time submitting the individual to the superior forces, the collectivity following the will of God, or embodied in laws of history—in the Marxist case—or the general good (*al-maṣlaḥa al-‘āmma*), *tawḥīd* or ‘*aqīda* in the Salafist case. In this sense, like Marxism, the Salafist causes constitute a form of sublimation, liberation, or even in a more mystical sense, self-abnegation, self-transcendence and redemption.<sup>96</sup>

*al-Walā’ wa-l-barā’ and the training of the revolutionary will*

One of the important means of joining the chosen group and pursuing the *manhaj al-ḥaqq* is to exercise the practice of *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’* (association with Muslims and dissociation from infidels). *Al-walā’ wa-l-barā’* is part of the Jihadi Salafist ‘*aqīda*. In Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s work this concept acquires an activist dimension and is regarded as a means of

<sup>95</sup> For a comparison with the Bolshevik Party and Lenin’s concept of the vanguard, which also has origins in sectarian Christian origins and community of faith, see Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes. Religion and Politics from European Dictators to Al Qaeda* (London: Harper Press, 2006), pp. 75–86.

<sup>96</sup> Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers. Allah’s New Martyrs*, trans. David Macey (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p. 44; and Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of Jihad*, for this aspect of Jihadi Salafism.

steeling the revolutionary will and exercising the revolutionary muscle. It is a mental operation which can be practised in ‘reality’ and precedes *jihād*. It is also a trial, a test, by God of the *mujāhid* as well as the non-*mujāhid* to strengthen their resolve to stay away from forces that corrupt, both Muslim as well as non-Muslim, proving the purity of their intention (*niyya*) and demonstrating their total submission to *tawhīd*, thereby becoming a tool in the hands of God. In political terms it is akin to a boycott. It is allied with the concept of *taḥfīr*, excommunication, and functions as a means of defining the boundaries between good and evil, although *taḥfīr* has a much more (inter)active dimension and is directed against Muslims. The ‘*aqīda*’ of the Jihadist leads to a broadening and radicalizing of these concepts, giving them a political meaning in contrast to the social meaning it has for official Salafism sanctioned by the state.<sup>97</sup>

In several examples, ‘Uyairī elaborates on the disciplining function of *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’* and its relation with the ‘*aqīda*’ and *manhaj*. For instance, he criticizes the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* for making a distinction between neo-conservatives in the United States, from whom they believe one should stay away, and liberals, who are acceptable as partners. ‘Uyairī states that the majority of the Americans have applauded the invasion of Iraq and “this means that the whole of the West is extremist”.<sup>98</sup> In hierarchy, he states, the rules of *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’* are part of the ‘*aqīda*’ and therefore have the authority of a “theoretical statement” (*taqrīr naẓarī*) and not that of a “practical project” (*mashrū‘ ‘amalī*). Therefore “as *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’* is part of the ‘*aqīda*’ it applies to all enemies and one must stay away from them, warn against them and announce one’s enmity against them, without distinction between right and left”.<sup>99</sup> Likewise, in another example ‘Uyairī believes it is forbidden to take part in elections. In his critique of Salmān al-‘Awda he states that if they compromise their *manhaj* in this regard, “they destroyed the principle of *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’*, diluted the ‘*aqīda*’ (*mayyā’ū al-‘aqīda*) and appeased the *ṭawāghīt* (*dahanū al-ṭawāghīt*)”.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> See al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State*, chapter 1, “Consenting Subjects: Official Wahhabi religio-political Discourse”, pp. 22-58.

<sup>98</sup> *Hamla*, p. 11.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Munāṣaḥat Salmān al-‘Awda*, p. 4.



In fact, one of the central aims of the West is to attack the concept of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'*, like *jihād*, and replace it with those concepts that emphasize cooperation, peace and mutual understanding. The principle of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* functions as a barrier to “diluting of the identity” (*tamyī' huwiya*) of the Muslim, [undermining his sense] of his belonging (*intimā'ihī*) and the fragmentation of his loyalty (*tashtīt walā'ihī*).<sup>101</sup>

### *Unleashing the Jihadi revolution*

If *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* is a disciplining force, *jihād* is the ultimate embodiment of the activist Islamic project, and therefore, on a higher level. It unites all the best qualities a Muslim must have to become a real Muslim. It is the ultimate test of faith (*īmān*), commitment (*iltizām*), and perseverance (*ṣabr*). It also is the ultimate source of knowledge (*ma'rifat al-'ilm*), experience, and the final means of measuring success in the application (*taṭbīq*) of the *manhaj* and strategic thinking.<sup>102</sup> As such it is both spiritual and physical,<sup>103</sup> intellectual and practical. *Jihād* is the ultimate proof that one has not been tempted by wealth, political power and corruption (*fasād*), bribery (*rashwa*), innovation (*bid'ā*) and ascribing associates to God (*shirk*), all of which stand in the way of total submission to God and the achievement of installing a true Muslim society. In particular it is political struggle against all those who take part in the war on Islam as collaborators, “crusaders” and “Zionists”, politicians, rulers (*tawāghīt*), scholars, hypocrites, *murj'īyyīn*, or simply those who will not support the final act of ablution and purification. It affects all levels of religious belief and practice, from the highest level of the spiritual (*rūhiyya*), the ideational (*fikriyya*), to the level of the method and strategy (*manhaj*) and practical implementation (*al-taṭbīqiyya al-'amaliyya*).<sup>104</sup> Finally, by participating in it the *mujāhid* wipes away the humiliation

<sup>101</sup> *Hasan Farhān al-Mālikī*, p. 51.

<sup>102</sup> 'Uyairī has written three works on *jihād*. The most important is *Thawābit 'alā darb al-jihād* (Principles of *Jihād*). His other works are *Iqā'āt 'alā ṭarīq al-jihād* (Illuminations on the road of *jihād*) and *Hukm al-jihād wa-amwā'ihī* (The Pronouncement/Judgment of Jihad and its forms).

<sup>103</sup> It is interesting that Yūsuf al-'Uyairī has also written a manual on physical exercises for *jihād*: *al-Riyāda al-badaniyya qabla al-jihād* (Physical exercises before participating in the *jihād*).

<sup>104</sup> *Thawābit*, pp. 3f.

(*madhilla*) and hypocrisy of the world, the corrupt international order based on man made laws which are in the interest of imperialism. In this crisis *jihād* has become an individual duty (*farḍ ‘ayn*) on every Muslim to defend the *umma*.<sup>105</sup> All these levels of participating in *jihād* are embodied and represented by the concept of ritual practice, a rite (*shā‘ira*), which is regarded as a form of worship (*ta‘abbud*).<sup>106</sup>

In general political terms, *jihād* is the ultimate creative modernist project of total destruction in order to build a new world of total submission to an ideal, a concept of absolute purity. In its violence it creates a *tabula rasa* for a new beginning.<sup>107</sup> For instance, in his work on Iraq ‘Uyairī states that in order to wipe the slate clean violence is imperative: “The redressing of this humiliation can only be done through *jihād*”, for it is impossible for the “tree of this religion to strike roots in our land until it is irrigated by the blood of its sons, like the first *mujāhidīn* irrigated it. We will not be able to achieve anything unless we exert ourselves in the same way they did.”<sup>108</sup>

That this principle is not directed at the distant enemy but at the rulers and society as a whole close by is clear from the manner in which *jihād* becomes the embodiment of *tawhīd*. Basically in ‘Uyairī’s terms submission to *tawhīd* means practising *jihād*. This is both an individual as well as a social exercise. In order to achieve the total submission of society to the practice of *jihād*, all Muslims must participate in it in one form or another, by “exercising *jihād* through money” (*jihād bi-l-māl*), “by the tongue” (*jihād bi-l-lisān*), physically participating in it “by

<sup>105</sup> *Thawābit*, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> See for a comparison with Communism and modern ‘constructivism’ and the urge to see the social as a product of the will, the rejection of traditions and the passion for the future, see François Furet, *Le passé d’une illusion: Essai sur l’idée communiste au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1995). Self-realisation through violence is also found in Sartre’s introduction to Franz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, where he states that “irrepressible violence...is man recreating himself”. It is through “mad fury” that the wretched of the earth can “become men”, see Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World Inc., 1970), p. 12.

<sup>108</sup> *Ba’d suqūt Baghdād. Mustaqbal al-‘Irāq wa-l-‘Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya*, p. 2. Furet argues that communism exerted tremendous attraction for claiming the truth of its praxis, because it simply was revolutionary, shortened the path to the future, trusted only action, and announced the new citizen liberated from egoism, as the only legitimate participant in the social contract. It was universal, and had history on its side. As in Salafism, virtue and supreme voluntarism replaced political representation. Furet, *Le passé d’une illusion*, p. 124.

the hand" (*jihād bi-l-yad*), or exerting it "by means of the heart" (*jihād bi-l-qalb*). Interestingly, 'Uyairī calls this last aspect of *jihād* "the very cornerstone of Islam," adding, "you cannot accept the God of Islam without it".<sup>109</sup> In fact, it coincides with the practice of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* and the creed (*aqīda*) as it aims at distancing oneself from the *kuffār*.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the social aspect of *jihād* as a total way of life and a culture is also clear from a whole chapter he devotes to the role parents have to play in the *jihād*. "For this, every father and mother must realise that they carry a heavy responsibility for the victory of this religion. And they must take part in the *jihād* with the sons, their money, their tongues for the victory of Islam and the dignity of the *umma*." He states that "obedience of the two parents is a *fard 'ayn*."<sup>111</sup> As a means of social disciplining, *jihād* has the aim both to combat fear in society as a whole as well as instil heroism in the *mujāhidīn*.<sup>112</sup>

The ultimate theoretical challenge in this modernist project is to unleash its creative powers. "Our goal of writing on the principles of *jihād* is to liberate (*tahrīr*) the *manhaj* of *jihād* from the chains (*quyūd*) and the shackles (*aqhlāl*) which have enveloped it in darkness (*zulman*) and lies (*jūran*)". His goal is to "correct" (*tashīh*) the concept of *jihād*.<sup>113</sup> In order to keep faith in victory he has drawn up six principles (*thawābit*).<sup>114</sup> The first principle is that *jihād* is eternal and that it will continue "until God has inherited the earth and all that is on it".<sup>115</sup> The argument that Muslims cannot fight the enemy because he is much stronger, an argument found among establishment '*ulamā'*, is dismissed as a sign of weakness.<sup>116</sup> The second principle is that *jihād* is not connected to a specific person, as this, as well, can lead to defeatism and undermine the belief in the eternal value of *jihād* and its universal application.<sup>117</sup> The third principle is that *jihād* is not limited by space. "*Jihād* is transnational

<sup>109</sup> *Idā'āt*, pp. 3ff.

<sup>110</sup> *Idā'āt*, p. 5

<sup>111</sup> *Idā'āt*, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> *Tasā'ulāt ḥawla al-ḥarb al-ṣalibiyya al-jadīda* (Questions about the new crusades) (no date), pp. 6f.

<sup>113</sup> *Thawābit*, p. 2

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> See also this argument in *Tasā'ulāt*, pp. 6f.

<sup>117</sup> *Thawābit*, pp. 12-20.

and is not restricted by boundaries and restrictions.” ‘Uyairī also does not recognise the distinction between defensive *jihād* and offensive *jihād*, or the *dār al-islām* and the *dār al-ḥarb*. This does not mean that *jihād* should be carried out everywhere at the same time. There are conditions for carrying out *jihād*: “*Jihād* is not limited territorially but [is based] on legal and practical preconditions.”<sup>118</sup> The fourth principle is that *jihād* is not dependent on the vagaries of the battlefield. “To connect the ritual of *jihād* to a certain battle [and possible defeat] is one of the reasons for a psychology of defeatism (*inhizāmiyya*) and one of the major reasons for the weakness of Muslims today.” It leads to a lack of faith (*īmān*) and perseverance (*ṣabr*).<sup>119</sup> The fifth principle is also related to the issue of mental steadfastness. In that sense the *jihād al-naḥs*, struggle against the self, has become the pillar of a successful struggle against the enemy. One must become a “slave of the *jihād*” (*abd al-jihād*) to succeed. It is in this regard that the intention (*niyya*) has to be pure in order for an action to succeed.<sup>120</sup> The sixth is that defeat is only related to a weakening of faith.<sup>121</sup>

‘Uyairī, who is widely associated with violence and martyrdom attacks of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, as the one the Muhaya complex on 12 May 2003 in Saudi Arabia, only mentions martyrdom operations as a subsection of the fifth principle as *jihād al-naḥs*. He does not propagate it as the main component of *jihād*. He justifies these actions when “the goal is sincere” (*ṣidq al-qaṣd*), the “resolution is firm” (*taṣmīm al-‘aẓm*) and the *mujaḥhid* has “the purity of intention of gaining martyrdom” (*ikhḷāṣ al-niyya fī ṭalab al-shahāda*).<sup>122</sup> But according to him, it is only one element that comes as a reward at the very end of the clash of civilizations. This total war is mostly waged in the field of ideas in the battle between way of truth (*manhaj al-ḥaqq*) and the way of the West (*manhaj al-gharb*) or falsehood (*bāṭil*). Ultimate defeat really means ideological defeat, in which Muslims lose their faith and identity and become animals.<sup>123</sup> *Jihād* is therefore more than just waging a physical struggle by a small

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22f.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26f.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-33.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-46.

<sup>122</sup> *Hal intiharat Hawwā’*, p. 24.

<sup>123</sup> *Thawābit*, pp. 42-45.

group, *at-ṭā'ifa al-manṣūra*. Basically it is both a mental exercise of the elite as well as a collective duty of the entirety of society to retain its discipline and identity.<sup>124</sup>

### III. Revolutionary practice

#### *The permanent revolution*

‘Uyairī offers radical *manhaj* as a response to the clash of civilization on the first level. On the second level he proposes the transforming instruments of *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’* and *jihād*. On the third level of praxis, the phase of implementation (*taṭbīq*) by means of “operations” (*‘amaliyyāt*), the dialectic with reality is most marked. On this lowest level, the ultimate proof of the efficacy of Jihadism is tested and analysed. This level is primarily one dominated by a strategic analysis, which draws up the means to analyse the outcome of the struggle of the zero-sum-game. In social movement theory, it is based on the opportunity structure: When is it feasible and when advisable to wage *jihād* and by what means and tools? What are the benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) and the disadvantages (*maḡāsid*) of certain “operations” (*‘amaliyyāt*) and how are they justified? The analysis of “reality” is crucial on this level. But of course, this is not a neutral analysis of cause and effect, for the ultimate criteria of analysis are informed by the *‘aqida* and the zero-sum-game of the clash of civilizations, and basically by the experience of the *mujāhid* as the one who is the ultimate arbitrator in determining the ‘truth’ by virtue of his purer intention and his superior insight into reality. However, on this level, more than on the other two higher ones, there is also room for debate, because it is also here that a tension exists in the dialectical process of the praxis between theory (*tanẓīr*) and implementation (*taṭbīq*),

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<sup>124</sup> It is instructive to make a comparison with another revolutionary Islamist, Sayyid Qutb. Although there are many similarities, ‘Uyairī’s works are much less concerned with a broad vision and theory and are much more concerned with revolutionary praxis and interaction with reality. See for instance, Yvonne Y. Haddad, “Sayyid Qutb. Ideologue of Islamic Revival”, in: *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 67-98. See especially the section on Qutb’s concept of *manhaj* (p. 90), which, in contrast to ‘Uyairī’s highly practical use of the term, is highly abstract and ritualistic and proceeds through four stages of forming a community (*jamā’a*), being prosecuted in a *jāhiliyya* society, migration, and the final victory and consolidation of power.

and the nature of reality. For although ‘Uyairī claims that *mujāhidīn* can reach a higher level of knowledge (*‘ilm*) and purity in faith (*niyya*), changing reality in the civilizational struggle is the ultimate proof of their effectiveness. The Salafi Jihadist cause is rooted on success on the ground. Praxis is localised, flexible, dependent on a host of elements, although the criteria of benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) and disadvantages (*maḥāsīd*) are determined by the crisis of Islam and measure of damage they inflict on the enemy and the benefits they provide for the *umma* according to the Jihadi Salafi criteria. ‘Uyairī has contributed to this debate and extended the revolutionary praxis by justifying martyrdom operations and hostage-taking. And although this had been done before, the force of his arguments is based on his command of the ‘facts’ and the manner in which he uses them to justify the revolutionary program. On this level ‘facts’ are mobilised to unleash the Jihadist revolution.

### *Martyrdom in Chechnya*

Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s first exercises in strategic thinking were probably applied in Chechnya, where he first came across martyrdom operations and defended them. It was also a step in his estrangement from the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs*. ‘Uyairī’s uses the example of Hawa (Eve) Basayev, who is “one of the small number of women whose glorious name history will remember,” to defend suicide missions.<sup>125</sup> In accordance with the principles of *maṣāliḥ wa-maḥāsīd* (benefits and disadvantages) Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī is careful to meticulously explain his justification for martyrdom operations. He states that it is impossible to reject all martyrdom operations in principle. At the same time, a universal acceptance is not possible. Either one must look at each case separately and take into account all the military, political and religious aspects to justify such an operation. Issues he mentions are the position of the enemy, the phase of the war (*waḍ‘ al-ḥarb*), personal position (*ḥāl al-shakhṣ*) of the future martyr, and the circumstances and effects of the operation itself (*mulābasāt al-‘amaliyya*).<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, he bases his ultimate jurisprudential argument on *qiyās*, analogy. The main problem is that the *salaf*, the forefathers, in their time

<sup>125</sup> *Hal intaḥarat Hawwā’*, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

did not know this phenomenon.<sup>127</sup> However, the principle of damaging the enemy and gaining paradise remains the same: “This difference has no effect on the nature of the judgement on the issue.”<sup>128</sup>

The main justification is therefore not religious in the sense that he finds justification in the Qur’ān and Sunna. Martyrdom only becomes fully legitimate on condition that it is connected with the practical level of inflicting damage on the enemy (*wujūd al-nikāya bi-l-‘adw*), terrorizing them (*irhābuhum*), and strengthening the souls of the Muslims.<sup>129</sup> In the end, the personal level of redemption must coincide with the general interest (*al-maṣlahah al-‘amma*) of the collective.<sup>130</sup> In that sense, in ‘Uyairī’s terms the individual purity of the intention also serves a public purpose. For only if his or her intentions are pure (*khālīṣa*) can the martyr mobilize public opinion (*‘alā ra’y al-jumhūr*).<sup>131</sup> This is considered to be the decisive mobilizing factor by example for “it must encourage the Muslims to fight the enemy”.<sup>132</sup> In sum, the strategic benefits of martyrdom operations must outweigh the disadvantages in all these fields in order for it to be permissible. According to ‘Uyairī this was the case in Chechnya because the material and psychological damage to the enemy is more than compensated by the death of a *mujāhid*, who is a *shahīd* anyway.<sup>133</sup>

### *Hostage-taking in the Philippines and Chechnya*

‘Uyairī’s treatise on the Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines highlights another aspect of revolutionary praxis.<sup>134</sup> The immediate motivation for his analysis of the Abu Sayyaf group was an article on [www.islamtoday](http://www.islamtoday.com) written by Salmān al-‘Awda in which he criticizes the Abu Sayyaf group for taking hostages, which, he claims, has tarnished the name of Islam and damaged the chances of the Moro Islamic Movement in its

<sup>127</sup> The difference between the period of the *salaf* and the contemporary period is not that now we are able to penetrate deeply in enemy lines individually or as group, but in the past the martyrs were killed by the hands of the enemy [by swords and spears] whereas today they are killed by their own hands [explosives].

<sup>128</sup> *Hal intaharat Hawwā’*, p. 20.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>134</sup> *Mā hākadha al-‘adl*.

negotiations with the government. ‘Uyairī systematically tries to break down the case of the reformists by demonstrating with ‘facts’ that the Islamic Front’s power is highly inflated and that it lacks infrastructure. His superior knowledge of “reality” shows that it hardly has any influence, which the Abu Sayyaf group could jeopardise.

Moreover, he ‘demonstrates’ that the actions of the Abu Sayyaf group are more than justified in legal terms. In the alarmist analysis of the plight of the Moro, ‘Uyairī compares their situation to that of the Palestinians, who are threatened by systematic colonization of Muslim lands by Christians in this instance. While Christians obtain support from the government, Muslims are forced to resettle and emigrate which destroys their livelihood, religion, honour and offspring. ‘Uyairī argues that in these extreme circumstances all means of resistance are allowed, and that the taking of hostages is one of the more moderate means of defending oneself. For this he uses the analogy of Muslims who are allowed to eat pork and drink wine in order to save their lives. Another argument is that Christians who invade Muslim land, which had been Muslim for five hundred years, have become part of the *dār al-ḥarb* and therefore can be taken hostage.<sup>135</sup>

While ‘Uyairī’s analysis of Abu Sayyaf is mostly juridical and based on his definition of reality, his treatise on the Moscow Theatre hostage taking is entirely argued in strategic military and political terms of taking advantage of opportunities.<sup>136</sup> Aside from the general remark that it is allowed to kill Russians because they are at war with the Muslim Chechnyans, his analysis lies on the practical level of costs and benefits. The benefits he mentions are the expansion of the war into enemy territory and lessening the pressure on the Chechnyan population; heightening the sense of insecurity within the Russian population, and increasing its opposition to the war; raising the cost of the war for the Russian state; and last but not least, fermenting divisions between the Russian politicians and military. ‘Uyairī even takes into account international public opinion that would be moved by the plight of the Chechnyan people and sympathise with them from a human rights

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>136</sup> ‘*Amaliyyat “masraḥ Muskuw”*’, *Mādhā rabiḥa al-mujāhidūn minhā wa mādhā khasirū?* (‘The “Moscow Theatre” operation. What benefit did the *mujāhidūn* reap and what losses did they incur? Probably published in 2002).



perspective. ‘Uyairī does not believe in human rights but does not desist from using it in the service of *jihād*.<sup>137</sup> As an important asset of the action, ‘Uyairī mentions that it was composed of all sections of the Chechnyan population.<sup>138</sup> In the rest of his article, in a dubious representation of facts, he enumerates the results of the action in weakening the Russian state and society.<sup>139</sup>

## 9/11

Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s conceptualisation of Jihadi praxis comes into its own with his view of 9/11 in his *The Truth about the New Crusades*,<sup>140</sup> and *Questions about the New Crusades*.<sup>141</sup> In the first book of more than a hundred pages, Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī addresses the jurisprudential issues involved in 9/11, whilst in the second he mostly counters the criticisms directed against the “operation” (*‘amaliyya*).

In both works he shows himself to be a spokesman of al-Qaeda, repeating many of the theological and strategic arguments presented elsewhere. For instance, on a juridical level, he rejects the idea that the US is protected by a “covenant” (*‘ahd*) with the Islamic world because it has “breached the contract” (*naqḍ al-‘ahd*) with the *umma* by its support of Israel,<sup>142</sup> in addition to committing acts of aggression against Muslims: “Today it bombs and boycotts Iraq, the Sudan and Afghanistan and is aggressive towards Muslims.”<sup>143</sup> The US is therefore squarely at war with the Muslims, and its territories regarded as the abode of war (*dār al-ḥarb*).<sup>144</sup> The argument, that among the victims of 9/11 were elderly, women and children, all protected categories in Islamic law, is also rejected because their protection is not absolute. Typical of al-Qaeda is the argument that they are no longer innocent people when they are part of a people involved in war (*ahl al-ḥarb*), and therefore no

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2f.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-12.

<sup>140</sup> *Ḥaqīqat al-ḥarb*.

<sup>141</sup> *Tasā’ulāt*.

<sup>142</sup> *Ḥaqīqa al-ḥarb*, pp. 4f.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

longer protected.<sup>145</sup> Even accidental killing of Muslims is allowed, for otherwise it would not be possible to wage *jihād* against the West.<sup>146</sup>

Although he frames these issues in theological arguments, the basic principle is strategic: according to him, the advantages (*maṣāliḥ*) far outweighed the disadvantages (*maḥāsīd*).<sup>147</sup> The counter-argument that 9/11 jeopardised the *jihād* in Palestine and provoked the destruction of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, as well as hampering the spread of Islam in the world, are swept aside.<sup>148</sup> Afghanistan would have fallen sooner or later, and sympathy for Muslims has been spurious. He is even willing to sacrifice the lives of the Muslims living in the US for the survival of the rest of the *umma*: “how can we let the interests of five hundred Muslims in the US prevail over those of 300 million Muslims who are being repressed [in the rest of the world] by the United States”. In this context of total war the bad image the Muslims have acquired is irrelevant: “This is the mentality of the fatalist and the feeble hearted” [ ] “How can the Muslim relinquish the *sharʿa* and the rules of his religion and the example of the Prophet? Our religion is the religion of the slaughtering (*dhabḥ*) of the *kuffār*, the religion of wiping them out if they do not submit.”<sup>149</sup> Accepting these arguments is in fact falling prey to the strategy of the West to undermine the Muslim resolve to fight the enemy.

ʿUyairī gives three reasons why 9/11 should be regarded as successful in the long term. The first is that the *mujāhidīn* took the initiative and caught the enemy off guard and forced it to hastily respond and attack while it was not yet prepared. Secondly, it unmasked the true face of the United States as an aggressive country, which in the long run will

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5ff. The most famous case is the case of *tatarus*, but ʿUyairī mentions another six instances in which ‘innocents’ can be killed in battle: in retribution, in the case of revenge when the unbelievers target children, elder and women; when they cannot be discerned from the attackers; when they help the attackers in deeds or words; when it is impossible to make a difference between them and the enemy with heavy weapons, as happened in Ṭāʾif; when they form a shield (*tatarus*) for the enemy with their women, children and the enemy, and could not be fought without killing the shield (*turs*); when they violate (*nakatha*) the treaty (*ʿahd*) and they are punished in retribution, exemplary punishment (*tankīl*), as happened with the Banī Qurayza.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7f.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8f. and *Tasāʾulāt*, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> *Ḥaqīqat al-ḥarb*, pp. 10f.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

contribute to the *jihād* against it. Thirdly, he expresses the hope that the US will be bogged down in Afghanistan in a long drawn out struggle that it cannot win.<sup>150</sup>

### *Iraq*

For the same strategic reasons Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī welcomed the invasion of Iraq.<sup>151</sup> For ‘Uyairī Iraq is the ultimate battleground where all the elements of the previous experience of the *mujāhidīn* in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and the Philippines come together. Although ‘Uyairī only lived during the first two months of the American invasion of Iraq, he followed events closely and kept a diary on the unfolding of the invasion on the site of the Institute for Islamic Research and Studies, analysing “reality” as he calls it. In this diary he is mostly concerned with the possibilities of US failure. In the first entries, he still believes the real battle still has to take place in the cities and especially Baghdad, which the Americans are approaching and where he hopes they meet their demise. He expects that their technological superiority will not be useful in the cities where their helicopters and bombs are ineffective and calculates that it might take eight months for the Americans to take the cities.<sup>152</sup> He advises, for instance, the Iraqi people to adopt the strategy of a guerrilla war, for it “is a revolutionary war (*al-ḥarb al-thawriyya*) in which civilians or at least a part of them are mobilized”.<sup>153</sup> Like in the Gaza Strip, where Palestinians hold down a superior Israeli force, he expresses the hope “that Iraq presents a tremendous opportunity for Muslims to turn Iraq into a hell for the crusaders and to inflict upon them a humiliating defeat, even if that may take some time”.<sup>154</sup> Vietnam is for ‘Uyairī the major example of a war that brought down the Americans. The other example is the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan.

This opportunity arises when the regime collapses in April and he has become convinced that Iraq has become a golden opportunity to

<sup>150</sup> *Tasā’ulāt*, p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> *Silsilat al-ḥarb al-ṣalibiyya ‘alā al-‘Irāq* (Series on the crusade war in Iraq) (March/April 2003).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-23.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

defeat the US: “our battle with the crusaders has not ended and will not end after the fall of Baghdad or Iraq as a whole. Our battle with the crusaders is a continuous battle and we as an Islamic *umma* will continue struggling to evict the crusaders from every place”. In fact, he continues, “fighting them by means of guerrilla [in Iraq] and bleeding them and destroying them is the best means to defend the *umma*”.<sup>155</sup> Foreshadowing the later influx of youth from surrounding countries, ‘Uyairī calls upon the youth to take part in this *jihād* that has become an obligation. Every means of resistance is allowed in this war, including martyrdom operations, poisoning of food and water. Most of the rest of the series is concerned with detailed guerrilla tactics.<sup>156</sup>

## Conclusion

For liberal Westerners Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī’s thought is not very pleasant. Jihadi Salafism is perhaps one of the most challenging ideologies of the moment as it stands completely opposed to everything liberalism stands for. In the words of ‘Uyairī, Jihadi Salafism is against debate, rejects tolerance, mutuality, equality of religions, equality of men and women, rationalist philosophy, and freedom of thought. In politics it is opposed to democracy, pluralism, representative government, international covenants and institutions and human rights. As politics is corrupt and corrupting, and all political institutions are rejected as suspicious, only violence remains as a form of resistance. These ideas are anchored in the ‘*aqīda*, evolved into instruments of waging the *jihād* in the *manhaj* of Jihadi Salafism and implemented in a dialectic between the *manhaj* and “reality”.

Having become the complete Other is however not a result of Islam. Nor is it an accident. Although ‘Uyairī has based himself on the principles of Wahhabism, his ideology is clearly framed to meet modern circumstances and challenges. It is a response to repression, war and destruction that the West has wrought on the Middle East and in which

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

local regimes participate. It is also a response to the manner in which the Ṣaḥwa *shaykhs* have been forced to compromise their program of reform. In itself ‘Uyairī’s work is thoroughly modernist. It is a total world view that tries to cover all aspects of modern life, devising a plan and framing an ideology for changing reality in all spheres of life. This is done in constant competition with other political, cultural and religious currents and leaders, especially the Ṣaḥwa movement, in an attempt to demonstrate their weakness on all levels of their ideology from their ‘*aqīda*, to their *manhaj* and implementation. In contrast to the opinion of some researchers, Jihadi Salafism is not Third Worldist, lacking intentionality, founded in an individualist mysticism. Rather, it is an attempt to find an answer and formulate a response on an ideological, cultural, strategic level to threats or perceived threats to the Muslim world. If these threats are framed as a clash of civilizations, it is buttressed and supported by an elaborate analysis of “reality” and how the West has ruthlessly manipulated that reality politically, economically and culturally to its advantage with the ultimate intention to destroy Islam and Muslim identity. ‘Uyairī’s originality lies in his ability to create a revolutionary praxis that enables Muslims to counter this threat in the most uncompromising manner by establishing a Jihadist culture and politics that mobilizes the population as whole under the leadership of a vanguard in a total war to the bitter end. The strength of this revolutionary praxis is that it is based on a fixed uncompromising ideology of confrontation which is also very practical, adaptable and flexible. Combining both unchanging principles of struggle laid down in the ‘*aqīda*, reformulated as general concepts and instruments of battle in *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’* and *jihād*, this revolutionary praxis is tested and adapted in a dialectical process with “reality”. This totally closed off worldview has tremendous appeal for youth in both the Middle East and the West who feel deeply humiliated by their marginalisation. It simultaneously contends to be an objective, rational analysis of reality which it explains it in a political, cultural as well as a religious language, and for which it provides instruments with which to change that reality. The world view promises youths the redemption of the Muslim world. Though the concept of praxis shows similarities in its broad action oriented approach to that of Sayyid Quṭb, its appeal is perhaps even stronger as it is more elaborate both in its theological definition of

*‘aqīda*, its more thorough conceptualisation of resistance and revolution by means of *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’*, martyrdom missions and *jihād*, and its much more detailed analysis of the current relations between the West and the Muslim world.