YÛSUF AL-UYAIRÎ AND THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY SALAFI PRAXIS

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Abstract

Yûsuf al-’Uyairî 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-’Uyairî, 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 jihãd against the West and its local allies, the rulers (âlîghî), the ‘establishment’ (‘ulamá’), 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 mujãhid 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.¹ This is all the more puzzling, as there exists a huge Salafi library and a quite substantial Jihadi Salafi one.² Studies that do focus on ideology basically

² 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. 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. 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. 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. Others of this current hold the view that it has adopted much of its rhetoric from left-wing Third Worldism. In contrast, the fourth group takes it more seriously and regards it as a social movement. 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.


7 Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p. 50.
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.10 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-‘Uyairī. Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī is usually known as the leader of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula. He is less well known for his extensive political writings, although he is regarded as one of the foremost ideologues of Jihadi Salafism.11 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” (‘al-wāḥid) plays in his works. Transforming reality (tāghīr al-wāḥid) is the real goal of jihād. According to ‘Uyairī, understanding reality as well as having a pure religious intention (niyyah) 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 sabil Allāh) is in fact an Islamic revolutionary praxis.12 The main goal of this article is to trace ‘Uyairī’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. ‘Uyairī 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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10 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-Jam‘a al-Islāmiyya and Tanẓīm al-Jihād. Whereas the purist Salafists reject these currents, the political and Jihadi Salafi movement have been influenced by them.

11 Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī 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.westa.edu/atlas/, p. 9, accessed June 18, 2007; and Hegghammer “Global Jihadism”, p. 16. This designation, however, neglects ‘Uyairī’s non-strategic works and his worldview in which his strategy must be located to give it meaning.

in sustained interaction with elite, opponents and authorities.”

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 Šahwa 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, 14 but few attempts have been made to connect the Jihadist movement to the larger Šahwa reform movement that emerged in the 1990s. 15 From Ūyairī’s work it is obvious that he is constantly in dialogue with the broader Šahwa 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. 16

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

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-haqiq) and the programme of falsehood (manhaj al-badil). On the second level, a solution is provided. Part II of this article includes this general theoretical solution that 'Uyair 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 (aqida), leading to a better and more effective method or practice, a manhaj. On this level, 'Uyair 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 Qutb's concept of praxis. Two practices are crucial for the Salafi Jihadi praxis: al-wal wa-l-bar, loyalty to God and dissociation from the unbelievers, and jihad, the violent resistance of the enemy. In the last part of the article, Part III, I will deal with the implementation (tatbiq) of the revolutionary praxis of jihad. On this

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18 See especially the reading of Sayyid Qutb by Leonard Binder, “The Religious Aesthetics of Sayyid Qutb: 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 Yusuf al-'Uyair has been directly influenced by Qutb. He does not mention him in the line of thinkers he enumerates as the thinkers who have developed the Jihadist manhaj in his Risala mafta il shaykh Safar al-Hawaili (Open letter to Shaykh Safar al-Hawaili). 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 'Uyair and Qutb are that both regard current regimes as kufur. The differences are that 'Uyair 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 Qutb 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 Qutb’s promotion of jihad, as Binder argues. In his attempt to unleash the creative forces of jihad 'Uyair propounds a much more elaborate concept of jihad 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, 'Uyair’s more elaborate concept of praxis stems from the long experience the Jihadist movement has had and the evolution of the Jihadist ideology since Qutb 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 'Uyairi 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.19

Two further remarks are in order. While I emphasize the political and revolutionary content of Yūsuf al-'Uyairi’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 'Uyairi’s writings. In his informative article on Salafism, Quentan Wiktorowicz argues that there exist three Salafi currents, the purist, the political and Jihadist, which differ in their programme or method, their manhaj, but share the same 'aqidah, the basic creed.20 I will argue that 'Uyairi’s writings do not support this view. Not only in its manhaj but also in its 'aqidah the Jihadi Salafi differs from the political and purist groups. It is from the 'aqidah that the programme and tools for changing reality (manhaj) derive. Praxis is ultimately determined in a dialectical process between theory (tanzīr), implementation (taṣbihq) and interaction with “reality”.21 It is however

19 There are parallels with Mau 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 Mau Tse-Tung, ed. Stuart R. Schram (New York: Frederick A. Preager, 1969), pp. 190-194.


21 Part of the problem is that Wiktorowicz confines creed to the principles of taštīk: 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 Muhammad’s model and the guidance of the companions (salāf), and only the Qur’ān and Sunna are sources of guidance. Innovation (bida‘) and rationalism are rejected (see Quentan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi 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. 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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military writings, nor the whole imagery of al-Qaeda, much of which probably Yusuf al-'Uyairi was responsible for when he was webmaster of 'al-Nida‘.

I. The clash of civilizations

The life of a third generation Saudi mujahid

Reading the biographies of Yusuf al-'Uyairi one would think that his life has been wholly devoted to jihād and defending Islam.23 Yusuf bin Šāliḥ bin Fahd al-'Uyairi, nom de guerre Abū Šāliḥ or Shaykh al-Batţār, was born on 24 April 1974 in the Saudi city of Dammam.24 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-Fārûq 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 Ḥafṣ 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.25 He married the sister of the wife of Shaykh Sulaymān al-'Ulwān, with whom he had three daughters.


24 There is basically one biography which was published in two issues of Saws al-Jihād, No. 1, pp. 15-18 and No. 2, pp. 15-18, written by Muḥammad bin Ahmad al-Sālim. It has subsequently been republished as Man huwa al-shaykh al-Batṭār? on the website www.tawhed.ws, which has been copied in an abridged version in Muqtaṣaf min sira Yusuf al-'Uyairi (Selections form the life of Yusuf al-'Uyairi), and completely in Saws al-lām al-shuhadā‘ (The lives of the outstanding martyrs) published by the radical website al-Qādīns in Hijra 1427. (Accessed March 2006).

After his release in 1998 Yusuf al-Uyairi became involved in Chechnya and Daghestan, where he seems to have been in contact with the Saudi guerrilla leader Khatib. Uyairi also played an important role as fundraiser, which was also the starting point of the growing estrangement with Salman al-Awda, who was released from prison in 1999. As he became more independent and asserted his own position, Yusuf al-Uyairi started to publish his own works in support of the transnational Jihadi cause. His works on Chechnya dealt with prisoners of war, martyrdom operations, and hostage taking, for example the Moscow Theatre hostage taking in October 2002. Some of these works were published by his newly founded research institute, The Institute for Islamic Research and Studies (Markaz al-Buhath wa-l-Dirasat al-Islamiyya), 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, and whose state he held up as an example of anti-politics, as well as the MORO movement in the Philippines. His growing estrangement from the Shayha shaykh was marked by their condemnation of 9/11, which he defended in his The Truth about the New Crusade. In this period he probably also became Webmaster for al-Qaeda’s site al-Nida’.

References:

26 Hidyat al-ayr fi jasayn qatl al-asir (Guidance for the perplexed on the permissibility of killing prisoners) (No date).
27 Hal istahtabat? ba’th muwathwal fi hukm al-amsal-yiyati al-ishtishahadiyn (Has Eve committed suicide or has she martyred herself? Elaborate study on martyrdom operations) (No date).
29 al-Mizan li-harakat Taliban (The Taliban movement in balance) according to the biographies he finished this book after “The truth of the new crusade” (see note 19).
30 Ma hakadhah al’ud yk fudila al-shaykh! Dift’an ‘an Jam’ ari Abu Sayyaf al-Filismiya (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 Salman al-Awda after he attacked the Abu Sayyaf group of un-Islamic activities by taking hostages.
To the general public Yūsuf al-'Uyairī became known as the founder and the first leader of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula.\(^\text{32}\) 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 Khalīd Ḥāj and 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Muqrīn, 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.\(^\text{33}\) 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.\(^\text{34}\) 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.\(^\text{35}\)

Zero-sum-game

Tawḥīd 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 (mabādi’). One is literally dehumanised, for it leads to debauchery (dā‘ar), and corruption (fāṣūd).


\(^{34}\) See al-Sharq al-Awsāṭ, 4 June 2003 and 30 July 2003.

\(^{35}\) Risāla min Yūsuf al-'Uyairī, abad al-mattāḥīn al-ta'ā 'ushar iili 'umām 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” (bahīṁ), and in fact lose the right to exist.36

The war of civilizations is in itself not strange to the Islamist movement.
What makes the Salafi Jihādi 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, Yusuf 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).37
It is a battle between a Western program/method (manhaj al-gharb) of
deception, deviation and the Muslim program of truth (manhaj al-aqq).38
In this apocalyptic vision “Muslims everywhere are threatened in their
religion (dīn), soul (nafs), honour (‘ird), money (māl), rationality (‘aql)
and offspring (nasl).”39 If Muslims lose this war of principles (mabādi‘)
and creed (‘aqidah), Uyairi argues, they will have forfeited their right to
exist.40

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 (‘aqidah),
the very basis of their resistance. This is a precondition for ruling over
Muslims.41 The most important means to defeat Islam is to corrupt it,
by promoting free sex and stimulate the “corruption of women” (ifsād al-
máru‘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.42

Although Yusuf al-‘Uyairi’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

36 al-‘Irāq wa-l-Jazīrah al-Arabiyyah ba’d Thuqqīr Baghdad (Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula after
the Fall of Baghdad, published in 2003), p. 5.
37 Risāla maftūha ila shaykh Safar al-Hawālī (Open letter to Shaykh Safar al-Hawai‘), p. 10.
38 al-‘Irāq wa-l-Jazīrah al-Arabiyyah, p. 16.
39 This is a common theme but also a specific theme that he uses for instance to legitimate
kidnapping in the Philippines by the Abu Sayyaf group, Mīh ḥālaḏhī al-‘aḏalī, p. 16.
40 Thawabit ‘alā dahr al-jihād (The principles of jihād) (No date), pp. 41f.
41 al-‘Irāq wa-l-Jazīrah al-Arabiyyah, p. 5.
42 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.43

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”.44 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 (mubāhara al-fasād wa-l-ifsād). It is a plan of unbelief (kufi) and of atheism (zandaqa).45

At the same time, according to ‘Uyairi, 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 mujāhidin as impatient (ta‘ajul), irresponsible (ta‘awwur) and

43 Ibid., p. 9.
44 Ibid., p. 13.
a threat to the internal Muslim front, leading to friction (fitna). ‘Uyairī believes that these ‘ulamāʾ have been co-opted into the state and that they destroy the strength of creed (aqīda) in the name of coexistence (al-‘āyush), tolerance (tasāmah), 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 (umāmiyyāt nazariyya) they instil impotence (ghayr al-istiṣlah) in the struggle with the hypocrites (munāfiqun) and even Shiites (called rawāfiḍ ‘rejectors’ by ‘Uyairī), Jews and Christians.46

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” (waqī'). In these texts “interests” (maṣālīh) 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.47 “Reality” as it were, and his political analysis confirm 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” (isti‘mār). 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”.48 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

46 Ibid., pp. 16f.
final analysis, military power counts. Therefore, 'Uyairī considered all the rhetoric of justice and respect for human rights as worthless propaganda.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 43f.}

Similarly, his critique of democracy is not only based on democracy as a godless, secular system as such, which rejects taḥṣīl 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.”\footnote{Ibid., pp. 50-53.}

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”.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 46f.} Referring to articles in The Observer and Miʿarif, 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.\footnote{Ibid., p. 8.}

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 taʿāwūḥī (idols, despots), as well as the official ‘ulamāʾ, called “establishment ‘ulamāʾ”, 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-bandā al-salīḥyya), 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”.\footnote{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.54

Under these conditions politics has become the root of the problem rather than the means to change it. “Calls for tolerance (tasāmuh), 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 (hisārīrīt), closer relations (taqrīb), mutual understanding (tasāmuh) and coexistence (ta‘āyush) becomes louder.”55 The only way to stop their power is to fight them and call for a jihād.56 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 (muthaqafān), whom he regards as a Fifth Column. While they claim to “enlighten” (tawcīr) 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-haqq) and the program of falsehood (manhaj al-bāti‘l) or Western program (manhaj al-gharb), called rationalism (mu‘tazalism).

54 Ibid., p. 45.
55 Ibid., p. 11.
56 Tawṣījud al-Amerīka, p. 15
He points out the dangers of rationalism (‘aqlīnîyya) and Westernization (taghrībīyya) of Muslim thought. He states that during the past century westernised Muslims (al-mutagharīnān) 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 taghrībīyya), imported values (qiyyam wa‘fīda) and secular programs (al-manhajīyya al-‘ilmīn). Uyair regards modernizers (‘ārīnīyya) as especially dangerous because they practice innovation (bid‘a), import Western thought (al-afkār al-wa‘fīdā), while pretending to be Islamists and reforming Islam. Uyair states that modernism (‘ārīyya), modernisation (‘ārīnīyya), and westernisation (taghrībīyya) are by definition opposed to Islamic law (sharī‘a). He accuses the intellectuals of being hypocrites (munāfiqīn) and practicing dissimulation (taqīyya): ‘They form the bridgehead of western imperialism and culture that is opposed to the Islamic culture in its origin, legacy (turā’t) and history and mislead (tadīl), corrupt (tazyīf) and cheat (khid‘a) the umma.’ The goal of imperialism is to ‘corrupt their deep rooted creed’ (tazyīf ‘aqidatīthā al-rūṣīkha).

Uyair 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 Salafi movement. His ire is especially directed at the thinkers who have called themselves al-Wasaṭiyya, such as the Egyptian thinker Fahmūd Huwaydī, who condemns Salafists as “idolators, who are worshippers of the text” (waθanīnīyyūn hum ‘alabat al-nuṣīṣ). Others, such as Hasan al-Ṭurābī, 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 Uyair, is their call for “enlightened religious

57 Hasan Farḥān al-Mālikī, wa zabīra nasr ‘alī al-sharī‘yya (Hasan Farḥān al-Mālikī and the phenomenon of the critique of the roots of legitimacy) (No date).
58 Hasan Farhan al-Mālikī, p. 5.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., p. 9.
thought” (al-fikr al-din al-mustanir) and the fact that, like the mutazila, “they give rationality absolute sovereignty”. Their punishment for innovation, (bid'a), arrogance (istikhr), and bad intentions (si' niyyatihim) is excommunication (takfir).”

This does not mean that Yusuf al-'Uyairi is against tajdid in itself. In fact, 'Uyairi affirms that Wahabbism was also a reform movement, but he rejects tajdid as Muhammad 'Abdulh and other “rationalists” applied it on the basis of foreign principles and foreign-inspired programs (manhaj). Reform cannot be based on replacement (tabdil). It can only be based on the pious forefathers, the salaf al-salih. Classical terms as ijihad therefore have more legitimacy than modern terms such as tajdid, which are closely linked to secularism. Similarly, other terms such as culture (thaqafa), intellectual (muthaqaf), and thinker (mufakkir) are part of the secular project to drive back and confine Islamic terms like religious scholar (al-im, muta'allim) and individual reasoning (ijihad) to a separate religious realm of fiqh. 'Uyairi believes that it is the Salafi Jihadi task to retrieve the original meaning of tajdid in order to regain direction and create a renaissance (nahda) and progress (taqaddum), which can only be based on an Islamic identity (huwya).

Weakening and dilution of the Sahwa manhaj

If the previous actors are regarded as enemies in the clash of civilizations, Yusuf al-'Uyairi’s relationship with the most important reform movement in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s, the Sahwa movement, is more ambivalent. On the one hand, 'Uyairi praises the Sahwa movement 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 Sahwa 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.ecc.aps.navy.mil/si/2005/mar/JonesMar05.asp (accessed May 2007).
as “the most important reformist (tajdid) movement in Arabic thought and society at the present moment”. In an open letter he even lauds one of its leaders, Safar al-Hawálî, for “your guidance of the Shāhwa youth” (tawjihukā li-shabāb al-shāhwa). "Uyairi 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...”. As a sign of respect for Salmān al-‘Awda, the critique in his open letter is framed as an “advise” (nasīḥa).

On the other hand, it is clear that the purpose of these writings is to castigate the Shāhwa 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 mujāhidin for leaving the manhaj on account of their extremism (ghulāw), violence (‘unf), and practice of excommunication (takfīn). Furthermore, they have let the mujāhidin down by refusing to instruct them during the jihād in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Chechnya. He even accuses Salmān al-‘Awda of leaving them in the lurch, not just lacking in courage.

Above all, Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī criticises the Shāhwa shaykhs for the weakening of their manhaj during their stay in prison from 1994 to 1999. Safar al-Hawálî is especially castigated for directly attacking the mujāhidīn in his Address to the Umma Concerning Recent Events. The manner in which ‘Uyairi 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” (darat fi falak manhaj jugahid), leading to a new way of “interacting with reality” (ta’amul ma’a al-waqūf), which results in abandoning the hope of “changing reality” (taghyīr al-waqūf). He accuses

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61 Hāvan Farhan al-Mālikī, p. 12.
62 Risāla majfūhana, p. 2.
63 Mī hākamāh al-‘udd, p. 1.
64 Mūnī‘ al-Hawa’il al-Muṣaffa (Advis 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 nasīḥa was also used by the Shāhwa shaykhs in their critique of the state in 1991.
65 Risāla majfūhana, p. 21f.
66 Ibid., pp. 13, 21.
67 Mī hākamāh al-‘udd, p. 3.
Salmān al-‘Awda of giving in to the state and having “submitted to reality” (ruḍākh li-l-ʿaqqāt), acquiescing merely in its “modification not its production” (ṣahwūruhu lā sinḏ afhil), with the result that their manhaj has become corrupted and weakened.77

As an example of separating theory (ṭanẓīr) from practice (ṭabīq) Yūsuf al-‘Uyairi directs his attack on the participation of the ʿAlwa 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-‘Uyairi based on “slogans without meaning” and “images without content”.78 Instead of devising concrete plans (al-barāmij al-ʿamalsyya) for change, the campaign concentrated on “raising the consciousness of the masses” (taʿlīyat al-ʿāmm), which, he comments, is already quite aware of the situation they are in.79 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” (tamyīḏ), 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 (ṭansq) and cooperation (taʿawun) with churches and such Islamic reformists such as Fahmī Huwaydī.80 By betraying the transformative potential of the “manhaj al-ṣaḥāwiyyāt” the ʿAlwa shaykhs have become mere “intellectuals” (muḥaqqaqūn), who talk without effect.81

If the critique of ʿUyairi of the ʿAlwa 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 ʿAlwa shaykhs has not yet ended if they show themselves “more enthusiastic (akṭhar ḥamāsan), more perseverant (akṭhar ʿumūdan) and clearer in their manhaj (akṭhar

77 Munāṣṣebat Salmān al-ʿAwda, p. 4.
79 Ibid., p. 8.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., p. 4.
wudu‘ān 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 (taṣāmūh), tolerance (taṣāhhu), pliability (līm), and mitigation (tālīm).82 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”.83 By rejecting reality (raf al-wadā‘) instead of submitting to it, and adopting the revolutionary programme of the Jihadis, the Ẓalwa 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 ʿaqidah of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, any form of cooperation (mu‘āwana) and assistance (musā‘ada) 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 (muṣradd).84

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 ‘aqidah, which, as we have seen, ʿUyairī claims to be purer and stronger than that of the Ẓalwa 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 Salafi Jihadist ʿaqidah and

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81 Munāṣabat Salmān al-ʿAqāda, p. 6
82 Hamla, p. 8.
83 Ḥaqqat al-ḥarb al-salṭānīyya al-jadīda, pp. 11f. See also ʿAqidah al-tā‘īya al-manṣūra issued by Sūrat al-Jihād.
direct application of its principles in reality, providing the agency (the vanguard), as well as the instruments (al-walâ‘ wa-l-barâ‘ and jihâd) for the actual implementation (ta‘lîf) 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 'Uyairî 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 mujâhidin. To counter the critique of the Şâbâwâ Shaykhs he emphatically states that “the mujâhidin do have a manhaj, a route (ta‘lîf) and a concept (fikr), which are in complete agreement with the manhaj of mainstream Sunnîsm (ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamâ‘î) in their beliefs and fiqh.” He is careful to point out they are not fanatics, or khawârij, as they are called by their enemies. Moreover, he refers to their venerable intellectual tradition, represented by a long line of thinkers. In fact, ‘Uyairî argues that the mujâhidin, as people of the jihâd (ahl al-jihâd), have a superior knowledge over the knowledge of religious scholars (ahl al ‘ilm), 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-tâ‘ifa al-manṣūra) if one is active in the resistance and especially participates in the jihâd.

Having the right religious knowledge, thus, is not enough. Other preconditions are crucial for joining the “victorious group” (al-tâ‘ifa al-manṣūra), who as leaders of the revolution, have the task to “enlighten”...
the people and “assert its belief (imān) and creed (‘aqīda) in this matter”.

For besides having knowledge, a true Muslim also must be purely himself (tazkiya), as well as engage in the highest form of activism, jihād. ‘Uyairi gives three reasons why the mujāhidūn are better suited to lead the umma than the Sahwa shaykhs. Firstly, they hold principles supreme, higher than friendship or politics.91 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 (tāraf) and comfort (rafāḥiya) [to achieve their goals]”.

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 tawḥīd.93

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” (wāqi‘). Yusuf al-‘Uyairi 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-wāqi‘), or the science of reality (ilm al-wāqi‘)”. 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 (haṣīqat wāqi‘‘ītim), 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.94

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

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90 Hamla, p. 12
91 Mit hakmadhā al-‘adl, p. 1
92 Risāla maqta‘i, p. 12
93 Ibid.
94 Hul intaharat Huwāri‘, 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 Yusuf al-'Uyairi formulates it. 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 mujahid 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 (jihâdî) 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 mujahidÎn 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-maslah al-lÎmîna), tawhîd or 'aqîda 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.

al-Walá’ wa-l-barâ’ and the training of the revolutionary will

One of the important means of joining the chosen group and pursuing the manhaj al-haqq is to exercise the practice of al-walá’ wa-l-barâ’ (association with Muslims and dissociation from infidels). Al-walá’ wa-l-barâ’ is part of the Jihadi Salafist ‘aqîda. In Yusuf al-'Uyairi's work this concept acquires an activist dimension and is regarded as a means of

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95 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. 73-86.
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 tawḥīd, 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 takfīr, excommunication, and functions as a means of defining the boundaries between good and evil, although takfīr 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.97

In several examples, ‘Uyair elaborates on the disciplining function of al-walā’ wa-l-barā’ and its relation with the ‘aqīda and manhaj. For instance, he criticizes the Şaḥwa 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. ‘Uyair states that the majority of the Americans have applauded the invasion of Iraq and “this means that the whole of the West is extremist”.98 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 nazarī) and not that of a “practical project” (mashrūr ‘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”99. Likewise, in another example ‘Uyair 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 (mayya’ū al-‘aqīda) and appeased the tawāūghi (dahanū al-tawāūghi)”.100

98 Ḥumla, p. 11.
99 Ibid.
100 Manūṣ啊 ath 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” (*tamyīl huwiya*) of the Muslim, [undermining his sense] of his belonging (*intimā‘iḥa*) and the fragmentation of his loyalty (*tashīṭ walā‘iḥa*).101

Unleashing the *Jihādi* 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 (*imān*), commitment (*iḥlīzām*), and perseverance (*ṣabr*). It also is the ultimate source of knowledge (*ma‘rīfat al-‘ilm*), experience, and the final means of measuring success in the application (*ṭaḥāb*), bribe (*rasnaw*), innovation (*bīda‘a*) and ascribing associates to God (*shīrkh*), 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 (*taqāṣīf*), scholars, hypocrites, *muqīqīyīn*, 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 (*rāwi‘ya*), the ideational (*fikriyya*), to the level of the method and strategy (*manhaj*) and practical implementation (*al-ṭaḥāqīyya al-Amatiyya*).104 Finally, by participating in it the *muḥājīd* wipes away the humiliation


102 *‘Uyārī* has written three works on *jihād*. The most important is *Thawābih‘ al-šāh dar al-jihād* (Principles of *Jihād*). His other works are *Idā‘āt ‘alā tarīq al-jihād* (Illuminations on the road of *jihād*) and *Hukm al-jihād wa-anwā‘iḥi* (The Pronouncement/Judgment of *Jihād* and its forms).

103 It is interesting that *Yūsuf al-‘Uyārī* has also written a manual on physical exercises for *jihād*: *al-Bayādha al-budāanīyya qabla al-jihād* (Physical exercises before participating in the *jihād*).

104 *Thawābih*, 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 (fard ‘ayn) on every Muslim to defend the umma. All these levels of participating in jihād are embodied and represented by the concept of ritual practice, a rite (ṣhā’ira), which is regarded as a form of worship (‘aṣabud).106

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.107 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 mujāhidin irrigated it. We will not be able to achieve anything unless we exert ourselves in the same way they did.”108 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 tawḥīd. Basically in ‘Uyairī’s terms submission to tawḥīd 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-mūl), “by the tongue” (jihād bi-l-lisān), physically participating in it “by

105 Thawāḥith, p. 2.
106 Ibid.
107 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 XXe 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.
108 Bay’da suqīt 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”. In fact, it coincides with the practice of al-wala’ wa-l-barada and the creed (aqīda) as it aims at distancing oneself from the kuffār. 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.” 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 mujāhidin.

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 (taḥrīr) the manhaj of jihād from the chains (quyād) and the shackles (aghlāt) which have enveloped it in darkness (zulman) and lies (jārān).” His goal is to “correct” (tasāḥīḥ) the concept of jihād. In order to keep faith in victory he has drawn up six principles (thawābit). 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”. The argument that Muslims cannot fight the enemy because he is much stronger, an argument found among establishment ulama, is dismissed as a sign of weakness. 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. The third principle is that jihād is not limited by space. “Jihād is transnational

109 Ibid., pp. 3ff.
110 Ibid., p. 5
111 Ibid., p. 15.
112 Tasā‘ulāt hasāda al-barb al-yalibiyya al-jadida (Questions about the new crusades) (no date), pp. 6f.
113 Thawābit, p. 2
114 Ibid., p. 18.
115 Ibid., p. 5.
116 See also this argument in Tasā‘ulāt, pp. 6f.
117 Thawābit, pp. 12-20.
and is not restricted by boundaries and restrictions.” Uyair also does not recognise the distinction between defensive jihād and offensive jihād, or the dār al-islām and the dār al-harb. 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.” 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 (inhīzāmiyya) and one of the major reasons for the weakness of Muslims today.” It leads to a lack of faith (‘imān) and perseverance (‘abād). The fifth principle is also related to the issue of mental steadfastness. In that sense the jihād al-nafs, 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. The sixth is that defeat is only related to a weakening of faith.

Uyair, 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-nafs. He does not propagate it as the main component of jihād. He justifies these actions when “the goal is sincere” (ṣidq al-qāṣd), the “resolution is firm” (tasām al-‘azm) and the mujāhid has “the purity of intention of gaining martyrdom” (ikhlās al-niyya fi ṭalab al-shahāda). 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-‘aqq) 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.
group, at-ʃā’ifa al-mansūra. 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.124

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-awālī wa-l-barā‘ and jihād. On the third level of praxis, the phase of implementation (taḥāqīq) by means of “operations” (‘amālyyāt), 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 (maṣfāda) and the disadvantages (maṣfāsid) of certain “operations” (‘amālyyāt) 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 ‘aqīda 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 (taḥfūq) and implementation (taḥāqīq).

124 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 Reawakening 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 (camālī), being prosecuted in a jihālīyya 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 (masāliḥ) and disadvantages (mafāsid) 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 Ṣahwa shaykhīs. ‘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. In accordance with the principles of masāliḥ wa-mafāsid (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 (waqĪf al-ḥarb), personal position (ḥāl al-shakhī) of the future martyr, and the circumstances and effects of the operation itself (mulāḥasāt al-tanālīya). Interestingly, he bases his ultimate jurisprudential argument on qiyās, analogy. The main problem is that the salaf, the forefathers, in their time

125 Hal intahant Hawwā`, p. 2.
126 Ibid., p. 5.
did not know this phenomenon. 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.”

The main justification is therefore not religious in the sense that he finds justification in the Qur’ân and Sunna. Martyrdom only becomes fully legitimate on condition that it is connected with the practical level of inflicting damage on the enemy (ṣu‘yād al-nikāya bi-lʿadāw), terrorizing them (irḥābahum), and strengthening the souls of the Muslims. In the end, the personal level of redemption must coincide with the general interest (al-maṣūla al-wāma) of the collective. In that sense, in ʿUyairī’s terms the individual purity of the intention also serves a public purpose. For only if his or her intentions are pure (khālisat) can the martyr mobilize public opinion (ʿalā raʾy al-jumhūr). This is considered to be the decisive mobilizing factor by example for “it must encourage the Muslims to fight the enemy.” 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 ʿUyairī 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.

Hostage-taking in the Philippines and Chechnya

ʿUyairī’s treatise on the Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines highlights another aspect of revolutionary praxis. The immediate motivation for his analysis of the Abu Sayyaf group was an article on www.islamtoday 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

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127 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].
128 Hal inta Hawwā, p. 20.
129 Ibid., p. 28.
130 Ibid., p. 30.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid., p. 45.
133 Ibid., p. 7.
134 Makhadha al-ʿadl.
negotiations with the government. 'Uyairi 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, ‘Uyairi 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. ‘Uyairi 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.135

While ‘Uyairi’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.136 Aside from the general remark that it is allowed to kill Russians because they are at war with the Muslim Chechynans, 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 Chechynan 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. ‘Uyairi even takes into account international public opinion that would be moved by the plight of the Chechynan people and sympathise with them from a human rights perspective.

135 Ibid, p. 18.
perspective. 'Uyairi does not believe in human rights but does not desist from using it in the service of jihād.\textsuperscript{137} As an important asset of the action, 'Uyairi mentions that it was composed of all sections of the Chechnyan population.\textsuperscript{138} 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.\textsuperscript{139}

9/11

Yūsuf al-'Uyairi’s conceptualisation of Jihadi praxis comes into its own with his view of 9/11 in his \textit{The Truth about the New Crusades},\textsuperscript{140} and \textit{Questions about the New Crusades}.\textsuperscript{141} In the first book of more than a hundred pages, Yūsuf al-'Uyairi addresses the jurisprudential issues involved in 9/11, whilst in the second he mostly counters the criticisms directed against the “operation” (\textit{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” (\textit{ahd}) with the Islamic world because it has “breached the contract” (\textit{naqḍ al-'ahd}) with the umma by its support of Israel,\textsuperscript{142} in addition to committing acts of aggression against Muslims: “Today it bombs and boycotts Iraq, the Sudan and Afghanistan and is aggressive towards Muslims,”\textsuperscript{143} ‘The US is therefore squarely at war with the Muslims, and its territories regarded as the abode of war (\textit{dār al-harb}).’\textsuperscript{144} 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 (\textit{ahl al-harb}), and therefore no

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., pp. 2f.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., pp. 6-12.
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Harūqat al-ḥarb}.
\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Taqā’ulat}.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Harūqat al-ḥarb}, pp. 4f.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
longer protected.\textsuperscript{145} Even accidental killing of Muslims is allowed, for otherwise it would not be possible to wage \textit{jihād} against the West.\textsuperscript{146}

Although he frames these issues in theological arguments, the basic principle is strategic: according to him, the advantages (\textit{maṣāḥiḥ}) far outweighed the disadvantages (\textit{maṣāḥiḥ}).\textsuperscript{147} The counter-argument that 9/11 jeopardised the \textit{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.\textsuperscript{148} 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 \textit{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 \textit{shari‘a} and the rules of his religion and the example of the Prophet? Our religion is the religion of the slaughtering (\textit{dhabh}) of the \textit{kuffār}, the religion of wiping them out if they do not submit.”\textsuperscript{149} Accepting these arguments is in fact falling prey to the strategy of the West to undermine the Muslim resolve to fight the enemy.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., pp. 5ff. The most famous case is the case of \textit{tatarrus}, but 'Uyairī 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 Tā‘if; when they form a shield (\textit{tatarrus}) for the enemy with their women, children and the enemy, and could not be fought without killing the shield (\textit{turs}); when they violate (\textit{nakathā}) the treaty (\textit{‘ahd}) and they are punished in retribution, exemplary punishment (\textit{tankil}), as happened with the Bani Qurayza.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., pp. 7f.

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., pp. 8ff. and \textit{Ta‘ā’ulāt}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Hujjāt al-harb}, pp. 10ff.

\textsuperscript{149} 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.\textsuperscript{150}

\textit{Iraq}

For the same strategic reasons Yūsūf al-ʿUyairī welcomed the invasion of Iraq.\textsuperscript{151} For ʿUyairī 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 ʿUyairī 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.\textsuperscript{152} 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”.\textsuperscript{153} 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”.\textsuperscript{154} Vietnam is for ʿUyairī 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

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\textsuperscript{150} Tasāʾulāt, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{151} Silsilat al-ḥarb al-salāḥiyya al-ʿIrāq (Series on the crusade war in Iraq) (March/April 2003).
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., pp. 18-23.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p. 30.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., p. 32.
\end{flushleft}
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”.155

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.156

Conclusion

For liberal Westerners Yusuf 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

155 Ibid., p. 43.
156 Ibid., p. 44.
local regimes participate. It is also a response to the manner in which the Sahwa Shaykhs have been forced to compromise their program of reform. In itself 'Uyairi’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 Sahwa 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. ‘Uyairi’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 Qutb, its appeal is perhaps even stronger as it is more elaborate both in its theological definition of
‘iqīla, 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.