



**Working Paper**  
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## **The Evolution of Jihadi Profiles**

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A progressive evolution of the formation of both the operational cells and the Jihadi militants themselves, is observable. There are several factors which contribute to this evolution. For instance:

- The absence of a central geographical sanctuary, like Afghanistan was in the 1990's,
- The disorganization of Al Qa'ida.

In the U.S., this change is believed to be new. But “Homegrown terrorists”, that is “non-aligned jihadi”, self-trained and self-radicalized jihadists, without any connection to transnational jihadi networks, have existed in Europe since the mid 1990's.

It is nevertheless true that now, more than ever, there is a fragmentation of networks which leads to increasing problems of detection.

Assuming an optimistic position, one could affirm that the international anti-terrorist efforts have had a direct impact on the structuring and maintenance of the transnational networks themselves. But on the contrary, one could also claim that these networks, more or less doctrinally inter-dependent, have empirically known how to precipitate the proper conditions for their perpetuation.

### Adaptations of global Jihad: a Darwinian evolution

In the last five or six years, the transnational Jihadi networks have gone through a dynamic evolution:

- ❖ *Initially, the absence of a central geographical sanctuary*, as was the case with Afghanistan, when it was in the hands of the Taliban who offered opportunities in both, training and coordination, as well as the operational and localized doctrinal guidance (*Al Qa'ida*, in the strictest sense). However, the situation in this region is undoubtedly proving to be a problematic one, and in the long run, this country cannot provide the same

facilities it could once offer. In other words, for the first time in contemporary history, the existence of two leading "lands of Jihad"- Afghanistan and Iraq - provides an apparently broadened source of recruitment, and a larger geographical cauldron of fundamentalist terror. But it is worth mentioning that the absence of mountainous zones, and the disparities between various local guerrilla groups, makes Iraq a less obvious alternative land of Jihad as compared to Afghanistan in the 1980s.

- ❖ *By contrast, Chechnya, from now on, ranks third, and is a less attractive theater for the staging of the candidates' armed struggle.*
- ❖ *The disorganization of Al Qa'ida's main structure has transformed its leaders into doctrinal and political reference points rather than operational commanders. In addition, Abu Mussab Al-Zarqawi has become, in turn, a competing icon capable of mobilizing many young men from various areas, particularly Europe.*
- ❖ *The Algerian Salafist threat appears to have weakened in comparison to what it was in the 1990s, though it may remain for several years in Algeria and elsewhere (including Darfur)- but at a much lower and residual level.*
- ❖ *Lastly, there also exist some networks comprised of Moroccan citizens or citizens emigrating from Morocco who could represent an emerging threat to the Moroccan regime. The bombings in Casablanca on May 16, 2003, and in Madrid on March 11, 2004, were both carried out almost entirely by Moroccan men. More deeply, the Islamic themes of change as expounded by the Moroccan organization like al-'Adl wa al-Ihsan or the leading party PJD (Parti de la justice et du développement) provide a set of broad guidelines, a critical perspective of the West and a scathing condemnation of the Westernized elites of the country. *However, this situation is true of any Islamic State that is likely to have systemic domestic disorders, and whose diaspora is present in North America or Europe.**

#### The fragmentation of global Jihad

The Jihadi cells threatening Europe and North America currently display three stages of evolution. They are increasingly characterized by the following elements:

- ❖ *Diversification of recruitments:* Inevitably, profiles are no longer ethnically, sexually or geographically homogeneous. Women can be employed (the converted Belgian martyr who died in Iraq), and there is no reason not to expect teenagers, if not children, to play a part in the future, given its undeniable operational advantage. Multiethnic compositions are also likely, including converted Europeans, West-Indians and Africans, while only a few years ago, operational teams were more homogeneous i.e. primarily Arab, the perfect example being September 11, 2001. *When necessary, the cell is formed according to more diversified processes. This*

*modus operandi* is not new, and seems to be growing. For example, sports and martial arts centers have become fertile meeting and recruiting grounds, which means that targeting radical mosques is no longer sufficient. The British government recently published a report on the July 7, 2005 attacks on London, revealing that three out of the four members of the operational cell had been radicalized, not in a mosque, but in a sports center. At the same time, Mohammed Sidique Khan- the facilitator of the group- indoctrinated *protégés* at an Islamic bookshop where he worked, and in gyms for weight lifting.

- ❖ *Consistent sensitivity to the commands for action expressed by emblematic individuals of the global jihad:* From this point of view, any increase in the incidents of declarations by emblematic figures such as Bin Laden, Zawahiri, or *fatwas*- almost clearly associated with the GSPC (The Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, recently connected to al-Qa'ida), etc. might trigger disastrous and proportional consequences in terms of attacks. Other groups could raise alarm, like the Libyan Combat Islamic Group (GICL) and the Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG).
- ❖ *The theoretical Jihadi corpus has neither been deep nor elaborate:* Some of the recently arrested Jihadists in Europe– the Netherlands (Hofstad group<sup>1</sup>), Italy and France – do not possess Arabic language-skills, which leaves them insensitive to propaganda from direct sources and cultural Jihadi, and therefore, obliges them to seek out second-hand translations, particularly through the Internet, or to build their own doctrines– *a radical Islam "cut and pasted"*. *The worst case scenario has already been observed in Northern Europe, where an individual with no understanding of the propaganda from direct cultural Jihad sources, brainwashed himself within a span of few weeks to find a theoretical motivation to act, but lacked even the modest operational knowledge.*
- ❖ Salafist-Jihadi ideas are more commonly spread through the Internet- via forums, rather than traditional web sites- in many European languages. It is an overt proof *of the pragmatic adaptability of international Jihadi networks to the specificities of their radical militants and other pools of recruitment taking into account the number of "assimilated" members in the West.*
- ❖ *The Jihad movement's widening of its traditional base of recruitment presents another threat. It threatens to instil in some individuals a radical opposition and repulsive force against the West. This was evident in the recent case of a non-Muslim individual who belonged to a dismantled*

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<sup>1</sup> The Hofstad Network (in Dutch: *Hofstadnetwerk* or *Hofstadgroep*) a radical network of mostly young Dutch Muslims of mainly North African ancestry. On December 5, 2005, the Hofstad court case against 14 suspected members started. On March 10, 2006, the court convicted nine of the 14 suspects of being member of a criminal terrorist organisation.

*Jihadi cell (syndrome of the radical Comintern unifying oppositions to the West, including non-radical Muslim ones). It must be added that the process of radicalisation seems to be faster and unpredictable. A rather characteristic example of this is Nizar Nawar, the perpetrator of the explosion of a compressed gas tanker in front of the synagogue of El Ghriba, which left 21 dead, including 14 German tourists, on April 11, 2002. Nawar was radicalized within few months.*

Towards a necessary evolution of the anti-terrorist effort?

This evolution has concrete consequences with regards to the anti-terrorist effort. If it is proven that there is a dissemination of initiatives and recruitments, as well as a decentralization of the networks and an increase in spontaneity for decisions towards action, then the traditional anti-terrorism policies must experience strain. *Current anti-terrorism efforts are designed for the dismantling of international networks which are rather ethnically and nationally homogeneous, and for the arrest of individuals under continued surveillance. They probably must be disseminated in order to account for the evolution of Jihadi profiles and the process of radicalisation in Europe or North America.* This necessitates teaching law enforcement how to detect overt indicators and suspicious latent activities including:

- to be able to distinguish symptomatic cultural, religious, linguistic or factual elements in the activities of minor delinquency;
- to be able to, and also possess the desire to pass this information up to the appropriate authorities;
- to attempt to target specific research on uncommon sectors, *which particularly leads to specific HUMINT accompanied by a more trained general police force.*

*The opinions expressed here are strictly of the author only.*