

# Radical Islamic Ideologies

To understand Islamist terrorism, we must understand the underlying belief systems used to justify armed struggle & motivate members to violent action.



**Islamism** – political ideologies asserting that Islam is not only a religion, but also a political system whose teachings pervade all aspects of society. Muslims must go back to the pure form of early Islam, by replacing secular rule with *Sharia* (Islamic law). Ultimate goal is political unity of all Muslims, then worldwide conversion.

When, where, and why did Islamism arise in the modern era?

What are Islamists' principles & demands? Their social organization?

Which organizations promote Islamism and which resist its spread?

How do some Islamists justify the violent jihad that others call terror?

What similarities and differences do you see between the Islamist and Christian Identity movements?

# The Muslim Brotherhood

Egyptian teacher **Hassan al-Banna** founded Muslim Brotherhood in 1928.



The Brotherhood's Theme (credo):

“Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.”



Al-Banna used **social networks** – in the mosques, neighborhoods, and Islamic welfare associations – and **cell structure** to grow the Brotherhood membership.

It supported ouster of pro-Western monarchies in Egypt & other Arab countries. Today this religious-political movement claims 3 million members in 70 nations.

**Watch “Brotherhood of Terror” about violent early history of the Brotherhood.**

Muslim Brotherhood now officially opposes violence (it condemned 9/11), but its opponents dispute the sincerity of its evolution. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's regime obstructs MB efforts to win elections. He outlawed the party and police frequently make summary arrests, provoking bloody street riots.

**In 2005, independent MB candidates won 20% of Egyptian parliamentary seats, the largest opposition bloc.**

# Philosophical Foundations

**Sayyid Qutb** was the Brotherhood's leading theorist of 1950-60s. On a 1949 student trip to U.S., he developed negative impressions of American culture.

Egyptian Pres. Nasser hanged Qutb in 1966 for plotting his assassination.



Qutb laid the philosophical foundation for radical Islamists. In *Shade of the Qur'an* and *Milestones of the Roads*, Qutb interpreted the Qur'an as demanding extension of *Sharia* (religious law) to all aspects of life. He called for "Jihad for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *Jahili* system," i.e., all Muslim governments in the world today.

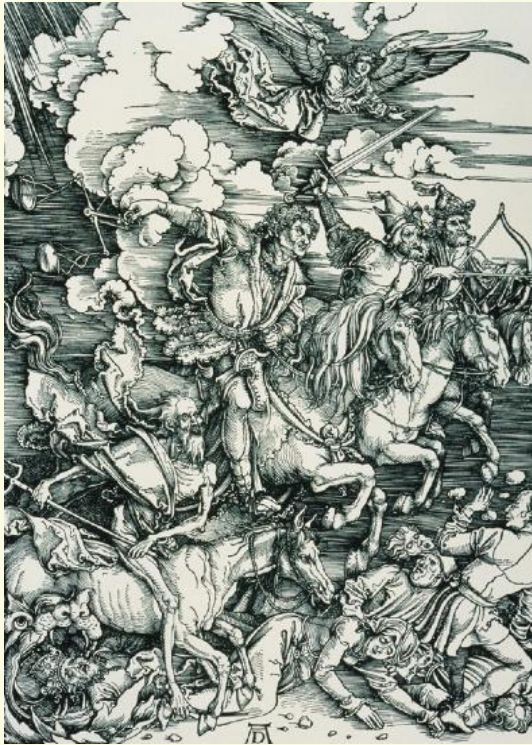
Drawing from puritanical Salafi & Wahabbi doctrines, Qutbism's principles are:

- ✓ Muslims must return to pure Islam as practiced in the Prophet's time
- ✓ That path lies through strict, literal interpretation of the Qur'an & Hadith
- ✓ Muslims should individually interpret original sources, not rely on scholars
- ✓ Using history and contexts to interpret the Qur'an is a corruption
- ✓ Armed struggle (*jihad*) is justifiable as a means to eliminate un-Islamic governments and establish a global system of Islamic State rule

# Comparing Ideologies

Some observers argue that many extremist ideologies have common themes and principles. For example, both Nazism and Stalinism advocated armed revolutionary struggles to eliminate enemies and create a Utopian society.

Small groups compare Christian Identity & Islamist ideologies, ask about similarities and differences. Do both ideologies hold that:



*Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*  
(1497) by Albrecht Dürer

its adherents have an exclusive monopoly on the true faith?

the believer community is spiritually and morally superior to all nonbelievers?

violence is justified against nonbelievers?

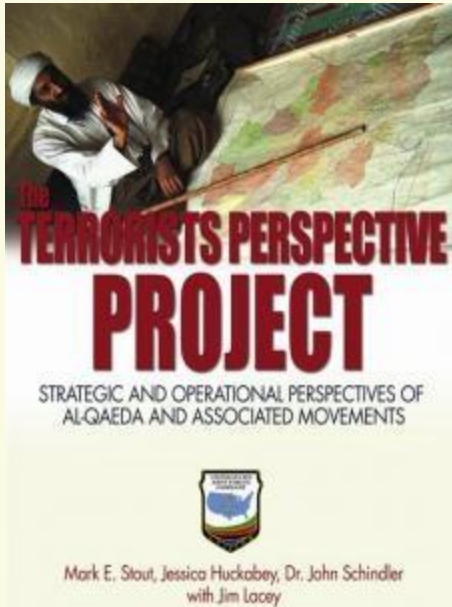
national governments are illegitimate?

correct earthly behavior will be rewarded in the Afterlife and/or on Judgment Day?

forces of good & evil face an approaching Apocalyptic showdown?

# Terrorist Perspectives Project

US Naval Institute used 100,000's of Al-Qaida captured docs & Internet open-source materials to investigate Islamist ideology.



Article by Matthew Stout (2009) summarized a book-length report by the USNI staff. It examined “intellectually vigorous” group of Salafi jihaddist thinkers and found they also use non-Islamic ideas about guerilla warfare and revolutionary struggles.

Islamist strategy echoes Clausewitz’s assertion that “war is merely politics by other means” & Mao Zedong’s metaphor of the guerilla as “a fish who swims in the sea of the people” (p. 880).

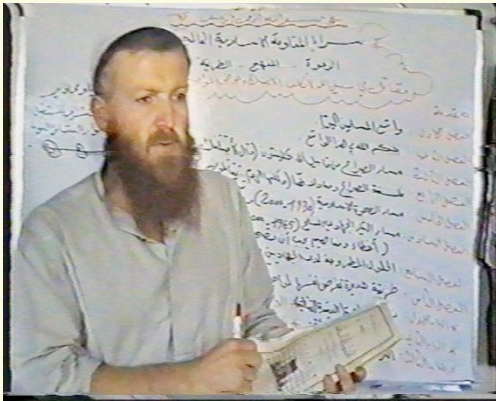
Was OBL implementing a Clausewitzian strategy in calling for (1) the military expulsion of U.S. and “colonial powers” (UK, France, Australian) from the Islamic world; (2) overthrow of corrupt national governments?

Is Al-Qaida harming its cause by attacks on Muslim civilians, in effect drying up the “sea of people” in which it must swim to survive and win?



# Al Qaida's Master Plan

Some Islamists pursue a “near enemy first” strategy of trying to take over Arab states. In Algeria, the Islamic Salvation Front won 1<sup>st</sup> round of elections but army cancelled elections & banned religious parties. In ensuing civil war (1992-2002), the military and radicals killed over 160,000, many in horrific civilian massacres.



The “far enemy” – the secular West – became the Islamists’ target in the Afghan & Persian Gulf Wars.

Jihad theorist Abu Musab al-Suri, who broke with OBL after 9/11 over the Taliban loss, called for the “largest number of human and material casualties possible for America and its allies” (Wright 2006:50).

**Al Qaida members described this master plan for global victory (Hussein 2005):**

1. **The Awakening:** The 9/11 attacks & 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq
2. **Opening Eyes:** Network recruiting of young members to Iraq until 2006
3. **Arising & Standing Up:** Attacks on Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Israel until 2010
4. **Declaration of the Caliphate:** Islamic State & a New World Order by 2016
5. **Total Confrontation:** Global fight of believers vs. nonbelievers 2017-19
6. **Definitive Victory:** Creation of the Islamist utopia by 2020

Wright, Lawrence. 2006. “The Master Plan.” *New Yorker* September 11:48-59.

Hussein, Fouad. 2005. *Al-Zarqawi: The Second Generation of Al Qaeda*.