

Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged Al Qaida Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings

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This article analyzes an Al Qaida strategy document about Iraq that received considerable attention after the Madrid bombings because of its references to the Spanish elections. The current article discusses the origin, content, and significance of the document and argues that it represents a hitherto unidentified genre in radical Islamist literature, namely “jihadi strategic studies.” The text, which is secular in style, analytical in its approach, and pragmatic in its conclusions, displays a level of political awareness that breaks with most preconceptions about religious fundamentalist thought. Moreover, it dispels the myth of a unified and coherent “Al Qaida ideology.”

On 10 December 2003 the well-known Islamist message board *Global Islamic Media* posted a document called *Jihadi Iraq—Hopes and Risks*.¹ The document, addressed to militant Islamists worldwide, contained a detailed analysis of the weaknesses of the Western coalition in Iraq, recommended “painful strikes” against the Spanish forces, and advised the Islamist resistance to “make utmost use of the upcoming Spanish elections in March next year.”² On 11 March 2004, 3 days before the general elections in Spain, 10 bombs detonated almost simultaneously on trains in or near the Atocha station in Madrid, killing 192 people and injuring more than 1,600. Two days later, the Spanish authorities received a videotaped statement in which a masked man, claiming to be Al Qaida’s military commander in Europe, said the bombings were a punishment for Spain’s involvement in the Iraq War.³ The subsequent investigation indicated that members of an Al Qaida-affiliated group known as the *Groupe Islamique Combattante du Maroc* (GICM) were responsible for the biggest ever terrorist attack on European soil after World War II in terms of the total number of casualties.⁴

There has naturally been much speculation about the possible relationship between the 42-page strategy document and the events in Madrid.⁵ In the weeks following the terrorist attacks, parts of the media even speculated that the document had been a terrorist “blueprint” or a “missed clue” to the Madrid attacks, suggesting that if more attention

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had been paid to the document, Spanish authorities would have been able to prevent the attacks.⁶ It must be stated at the outset that this was not really the case, because the document deals with strategy and not with tactics. It does not contain any references to specific attacks, nor choice of targets, on Spanish soil. However, it should be noticed that another document entitled “A Message to the Spanish People” had appeared on the same website at about the same time as *Jihadi Iraq* and had been signed by the same group. This document, only 4 pages long, did contain hints about attacks on Spanish interests *outside* of Iraq, but it did not make any specific reference to the Spanish elections.⁷ In hindsight it is possible to argue that these two documents together should have been seen as a general warning of attacks against Spanish interests in Iraq and outside of Iraq during the election period.

Regardless of the nature of the connection between the strategy document and the Madrid operation, the central fact remains that they both represent a relatively new phenomenon in contemporary radical Islamism, namely the *exploitation of the Western political calendar for the purpose of jihad*. The Madrid attacks were unique in their timing, not to mention their political effect. The question then arises: Are these the early symptoms of a more pragmatic and politically more sophisticated trend among the followers of Al Qaida?

In pro-Al Qaida literature it is very rare to find specific references to the benefits of attacking during an election period, although it is not entirely unprecedented.⁸ Looking at recent terrorist attacks, however, indications may be found of an increased awareness of the importance of timing. The Madrid bombings may represent a continuation and refinement of the tactics of timing, demonstrated for the first time on 20 November 2003, when twin suicide attacks against the British Consulate and the local headquarters of the Britain-based HSBC bank in Istanbul coincided precisely with a Bush–Blair summit in London, preventing the two leaders from claiming progress in the war on terror.⁹ The possibility of a new political manipulation strategy on the part of Al Qaida received further support as an audiotaped statement by Osama bin Laden aired by the al-Arabiyya TV-channel on 14 April 2004, presented “our neighbours north of the Mediterranean” with a “reconciliation initiative.”¹⁰ It represented a departure from past practices because Al Qaida usually has shunned diplomacy and negotiations and adhered strictly to the famous dictum of one of its founding fathers, Abdallah Azzam: “Jihad and the Rifle Alone: No negotiations, no conferences, no dialogues.”¹¹

The indications of a more *politically* sophisticated Al Qaida raises the question of whether there is any evidence of a corpus of research literature, produced by and shared among Al Qaida followers, in which avenues for enhancing the political effect and utility of terrorist operations are explored. If so, is there any possibility that this literature has informed Al Qaida’s recent operations?

In order to shed light on these questions this article takes a closer look at *Jihadi Iraq*, examining its origin, content, and wider significance. It will be argued that this is an example of a neglected genre in the study of Al Qaida, namely “jihadi strategic studies.” *Jihadi Iraq* is essentially a secular-rational academic research paper shaped to accommodate the needs of the jihadist movement.¹² It outlines methodology, gathers evidence, and produces an analysis to identify priority goals, that is, it examines why some types of operations and targeting may have a more desirable political outcome than others. The very existence of a *jihadi strategic studies genre* seems to refute the common belief that Al Qaida’s terrorism serves ritual purposes or the desire of revenge only. In contrast to the religious-propagandist style commonly associated with radical Islamist discourse, the genre of jihadi strategic studies contains very little theological

exegesis or exhortative propaganda. Similarly, *Jihadi Iraq* outlines a highly pragmatic worldview and presents an essentially secular argument, which not only downplays formal religious references but also seems to represent a departure from the previous understanding of radical salafi-jihadist discourse.

Background

Date and Origin of the Document

The document dates from the autumn of 2003. In a footnote in the introduction of the document the author states: “A draft of this research was written in the month of *Aylul* (September), but circumstances did not permit its release until now.”¹³ Another indication is the fact that the most recent article quoted in the text is dated 10 October 2003.¹⁴ It is not clear exactly where or when the document was first released, but it appeared on *Global Islamic Media* (GIM) on 10 December 2003.¹⁵ GIM is an information hub for various kinds of jihadist propaganda on the Internet, and has become one of the most important websites for keeping track of new Al Qaida statements and other radical Islamist texts and videos. The Saudi press consider GIM to be “closely linked with Al Qaida.”¹⁶ The GIM message presenting *Jihadi Iraq* contained an important clue as to the provenance of the text, because the Internet link to the document was listed alongside links to other well-known publications. It was clear from the posting that *Jihadi Iraq* was available for downloading from the same server as the Saudi jihadist magazine *Sawt al-Jihad*.¹⁷ The document also circulated on a number of other radical Islamist websites and discussion groups, where it was commented on and recommended to participants. At the time of writing (April 2004) it was still available on the pro Al Qaida website www.waheh.org. Altogether, this establishes the authenticity of the document and places it firmly within a radical Islamist context.

Authorship

It is not clear who wrote the document, because no author is ever mentioned by name in the text. It is quite possible that several people have been involved in the writing and editing process, because the style and quality of writing varies considerably throughout the document.¹⁸ The author sometimes refers to himself in plural and sometimes in singular. Multiple authorship is not unusual in Islamist propaganda circles.¹⁹ However, there seems to have been one main author or chief editor at work in the document, so this article refers to “the author” for the sake of simplicity.²⁰

Instead of being signed by an individual, the text is attributed to the *Media Committee for the Victory of the Iraqi People* (MCVIP).²¹ This entity is not well known, and as far as we know the name has only appeared in two other Islamist texts thus far. One of them was the 4-page *Message to the Spanish People* posted on GIM on 8 December 2003, which called for the withdrawal of the Spanish forces from Iraq and threatened to attack Spanish interests outside of Iraq.²² The other text signed by this committee was the 3-page *Warning to the Mujahidin in Iraq About the Spy Muhammad Qul Aghasi* (*Abu al-Qa'qa'*) published in late January 2004, which accused the Syrian-Kurdish jihadist leader Abu al-Qa'qa' of being a spy for the Syrian government and of having passed on information leading to the arrests of hundreds of mujahidin.²³ The *Jihadi Iraq* and *Warning to the Mujahidin* were both signed by MCVIP's “Mujahidin Services Centre” (*markaz khidamat al-mujahidin*), echoing the Peshawar-based “Services Bureau” (*maktab al-khidamat*),

the organization from which Al Qaida grew in the late 1980s. The message to the Spanish people was signed by MCVIP's "Department of Foreign Propaganda" (*qism al-i'lam al-khariji*).

It is difficult to determine the MCVIP's nature, location and nationality. The three texts issued in MCVIP's name provide conflicting indications. The *Message to the Spanish People* and the *Warning to the Mujahidin* are both apparently signed in Baghdad, indicating that it might be an Iraq-based group or organization. Similarly, in the *Jihadi Iraq* document, the author writes as though he belongs to the jihadist movement inside Iraq. He states, for example, that: "these are the specific aims for US [who are] inside the jihadist movement in Iraq . . ." or "we need to take good care of what we currently possess of weaponry and ammunition."²⁴ Still, in other sections, the author writes as though he himself is no longer an active jihadist.²⁵ The *Warning to the Mujahidin* seems to have been written by someone with a good knowledge of the Syrian Islamist movement, whereas *Jihadi Iraq* displays an intimate knowledge of (and interest in) Spain and Spanish politics.²⁶ The *Jihadi Iraq* document also points to a Saudi Arabian connection in several respects. First, the Web and e-mail addresses printed at the end of the document can be traced back to servers in Saudi Arabia.²⁷ Secondly, the introduction contains a dedication and display of allegiance to the Saudi Islamist Yusuf al-Ayiri, who was a key Al Qaida representative in Saudi Arabia.²⁸ The dedication is written in a way that suggests the author may have known al-Ayiri personally: "To the martyred mujahid Shaykh Yusuf al-Ayiri. . . . To you, my dear brother and my virtuous shaykh, I dedicate this short work."²⁹ All in all it is difficult to pin the MCVIP to a specific country or nationality—if anything the conflicting evidence is indicative of the transnational character of radical Islamism today.

Ideological Alignment

With regards to ideological content, the *Jihadi Iraq* and the other MCVIP documents place themselves firmly within the broader pro-Al Qaida salafi-jihadist school. The document refers to its audience as salafi-jihadists, and considers the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York great Islamic achievements. In the broader jihadist movement, these are indicators of an ideological association with Al Qaida. The MCVIP may also have had organizational links to Al Qaida. In the aforementioned *Warning to the Mujahidin*, written by MCVIP's "Mujahidin Services Centre," the readers are urged to pay special attention to a recent communiqué issued by "Al Qaida Organisation for the Mujahidin in Iraq."³⁰

However, the most important indication of the ideological association with Al Qaida is the admiration expressed for Shaykh Yusuf al-Ayiri and his writings. It quickly emerges that the author in fact considers *Jihadi Iraq* as a continuation of al-Ayiri's scholarship on strategic issues in Iraq and the Gulf region.³¹ The author highlights al-Ayiri's book *The Future of Iraq and the Arab Peninsula After the Fall of Baghdad*, which he describes as essential and compulsory reading.³² This book was written and published following a request from "the brothers" at "Center for Islamic Research and Studies" (*Markaz al-Buhuth wa'l-Dirasat al-Islamiyyah*, MBDI), long considered Al Qaida's main mouthpiece and website.³³ The informed Islamist reader will also have remembered the book written by al-Ayiri just before the war, namely the *Series on the Crusader War against Iraq*.³⁴ Hence *Jihadi Iraq* is presented as part of a sequence of radical Islamist analyses of the American "crusade" against Iraq. Whereas al-Ayiri's books dealt with the situation just before and just after the war, *Jihadi Iraq* analyses the state of affairs

under the occupation. The aspiration to this legacy is also reflected in the layout of *Jihadi Iraq*, which resembles that of al-Ayiri's studies.

The *Jihadi Iraq* seems to differ slightly from Shaykh Yusuf al-Ayiri in one important respect, namely its dealing with the Shiites. In al-Ayiri's writings there are harsh attacks on the Shiites and Iran, including the Shiite community in Iraq.³⁵ This position has been echoed by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi as well as several Iraqi salafi-jihadist groups.³⁶ *Jihadi Iraq* does not launch vitriolic attacks on the Iraqi Shiites and Iran, although there are muted warnings about the growing strengths of the Shiites, their substantial financial support from Iran, and the dangers of a war with the Iraqi Shiites.³⁷ The *Jihadi Iraq*'s more conciliatory tone reflects its purpose. As the paper is devoted to exploring "practical steps for the blessed jihad," the author obviously sees no need to delve into the usual reiteration of ideology, but proceeds directly to explaining how to find a *modus vivendi* with lesser enemies such as the Shiites, in order not to jeopardize the overall goal of expelling the Crusaders.

Intended Purpose

Yusuf al-Ayiri's books are characterized by a pragmatic, analytical, and almost secular style of writing. Particularly in his later analyses, al-Ayiri often ignores the theological aspects of the topic he is dealing with, leaving that to others.³⁸ He has no compunctions about using Western sources in illustrating his points. In constructing his argument, he separates clearly between military, political, social, and economic perspectives. He seems to have put particular emphasis on the need to understand the economic dimension of the war with the Crusaders.³⁹ The author of *Jihadi Iraq* makes the same priorities—he says he has skipped the religious discourse to save time: "Due to time constraints, we have confined ourselves to a few points, to present the question, without theological explanation [*sharh*]." ⁴⁰

It is important to note that although it contains a number of specific policy recommendations, *Jihadi Iraq* is not primarily a "plan of action" or a blueprint for Islamist groups to follow. Rather, the author humbly presents *Jihadi Iraq* as one of several intellectual contributions to the Islamists' cause, and he only intends to provide general advice: "We . . . wish that this little book may be an incentive for US, and for others who are zealous [to serve] the Islamic nation, to write and give advice."⁴¹ Moreover, the text was primarily intended to be a contribution to the Islamist resistance within Iraq. As the author clearly states, "This booklet is a contribution to guiding the Islamic jihadist work in Iraq."⁴² The text contains no calls for attacks outside Iraq. The strict focus on the Iraqi arena is particularly interesting when contrasted with the aforementioned *Message to the Spanish People*, in which the same MCVIP threatens to internationalize their campaign:

If the scene of the seven spies was not enough to activate your feelings and initiate you to save your sons, you push US towards increasing our resistance. The battalions of the Iraqi resistance and its supporters outside of Iraq are able to increase the dosage and will eclipse your memory of the rotten spies.⁴³

This is highly important, not only because it represents a considerable escalation of the rhetoric in a short space of time, but because it shows an awareness and a conscience of the difference between the national and the international levels of the

conflict.⁴⁴ Therefore, there can be no doubt that the author of *Jihadi Iraq* deliberately focuses on the Iraqi arena. If the overall perspective is international, it is only in order to identify the weaknesses of the occupying powers present within Iraq.

Intended Audience

Although the agenda is focused on Iraq, the audience is undoubtedly global. The document addresses an audience of jihadist militants, and particularly those with international combat experience:

To you who carried weapon to combat the Red Cancer and (to you) for whom the mountains of the Afghans can testify true combat and deep persistence. . . . To you who have known the land of jihad in Chechnya, Bosnia and Iraq . . . as a *mujahid* in your mind, heart and spirit.⁴⁵

This indicates that the text is not intended for internal organizational use only, but rather seeks to provide general strategic advice to a wider international jihadist audience. The author presumes that the readers already have a minimum of Islamist conviction and that they share his underlying ideological vision. He does not urge the reader to take up arms, and he skips the usual rehashing of theological justifications for jihad. Like al-Ayiri, the author sees no reason to spend time preaching to the choir about the need to fight the crusaders. He cuts straight to the crucial issue, namely how should the *mujahidin* proceed in *practical terms* in order to oust the occupation forces from Iraq. Thus he remains faithful to the subtitle of the document: “(A review of) the practical steps for the blessed jihad.” This would also explain why *Jihadi Iraq* was signed by MCVIP’s “Center for Services to the Mujahidin” and not its “Department for Foreign Propaganda” (as was the case in the *Letter to the Spanish People*).

A Jihadist Strategic Studies Genre

It’s already been alluded to how the *Jihadi Iraqi* document differs from what is commonly associated with radical Islamist texts. It is distinguished first of all by its *secularism*—that is to say by a relative lack of exhortative ideological discourse and by a relative scarcity of references to the Quran, the Sunna, or other kinds of theological literature. Second, it stands out by its *academic approach*—the arguments are rationally constructed and organized, and the author makes extensive use of sources from Western media and academia.

The analysis is informed by a “know your enemy” approach, based on sober assessments of your own and the enemy’s strength and weaknesses, so typical of the strategic studies genre. The author justifies this approach by arguing for the need to learn “the characteristics and qualities of the enemy.”⁴⁶ He also adheres to the typical strategic studies genre by proceeding from general geopolitics to the specific matter in question, proposing analytical tools for his analysis, presenting findings, and drawing concrete applicable lessons from these results. Along the way the author sees no need to offer theological or ideological justifications for his heavy reliance on infidel sources in his analysis. Nevertheless, the overall tone, especially evident in the introductory passages leaves no doubt that the fundamental point of departure is the radical Islamist jihadist worldview of Al Qaida, but the propagandist imperative is tempered by the need for a scientific approach with a view to serve the jihad and enhance its effectiveness. In essence, *Jihadi Iraq* is a strategic study jihadi-style.

What is important to recognize, however, is that *Jihadi Iraq* is not a rare and isolated example of Islamist strategic studies. Rather, it is only one example of an important body of jihadist literature, which has passed surprisingly unnoticed in academia.⁴⁷ Consider for example the bimonthly electronic journal *Majallat al-Ansar* (lit. “Journal of the Prophet’s Followers”) published in at least 29 issues between January 2002 and March 2003, and widely considered an Al Qaida mouthpiece by the Arab press.⁴⁸ *Majallat al-Ansar* ran a regular section on “strategic studies” (*dirasat istratijiyya*) in which Western sources are extensively quoted, the style is secular, and Quranic and theological references are nearly absent. The author of these studies was usually Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qirshi (an alias). He dealt with issues such as information warfare, fourth generation or asymmetric warfare, the Clausewitzian center of gravity versus Al Qaida’s decentralized leadership, the U.S. intelligence agencies, U.S. warfare doctrines, U.S. fears of weapons of mass destruction, the impact of the September 11 attacks, as well as lessons learned of specific operations and events such as the Moscow theatre hostage-taking and the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq. Following the Washington sniper attacks in October 2003, for example, the journal wrote extensively on the use of sniper operations in jihad.⁴⁹ The journal also offered a psychological profile of U.S. President George W. Bush, all in the interest of “learning to know the secret weaknesses of the enemy.”⁵⁰ Thus, a jihadist strategic study genre is already well established, and as the *Jihadi Iraq* booklet demonstrated all too well, Western security agencies would be ill advised to ignore this literature.

Major Themes, Research, and Methodology

Central Argument

The point of departure for *Jihadi Iraq* is that the outcome of the battle over Iraq is decisive for the future of the jihadist movement. A victory in Iraq will provide the jihadists with “an advanced base” (*qa’ida mutaqaddima*) close to the Land of the Two Holy Places [i.e., Saudi Arabia] and the al-Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem]” whereas a U.S. military victory “will hurt the Islamic renaissance in the entire region, at the heart of the Islamic world.”⁵¹

The *Jihadi Iraq* points to the difficulties and obstacles facing the Jihadist movement, and readily admits that America cannot be coerced to leave Iraq by military-political means alone. The Islamist resistance can nevertheless succeed if it makes the occupation of Iraq as costly as possible—in economic terms—for the United States. The document therefore offers a number of specific “policy recommendations” in order to increase the economic impact of the jihadist campaign in Iraq. The most important of these recommendations consists of strategies for splitting the U.S. alliance in Iraq. By limiting the number of American allies present in Iraq, America will be unable to share the rising cost of occupation with a broad coalition of countries. If the *mujahidin* can force U.S. allies to withdraw from Iraq then America will be left to cover the expenses on her own, which she cannot sustain for very long. The author argues that if one or two of the key European allies leave the coalition, this will cause many others to follow suit, essentially creating a domino effect that will unravel U.S. Iraqi strategy and break its will to fight in Iraq.

The Jihadist Movement and the International System

The author begins his research project with deriving a number of general postulates or “rules” about international politics and the role of the jihadist movement. This early

section is the only part of the analysis where Quranic verses and other sources of Muslim theology are invoked, and they are used to give religious legitimacy to the document's central argument of the need to distinguish between, and deal differently, with the various U.S. allies in order to be able to divide the U.S. Coalition in Iraq. The arguments for why this is a realistic and wise policy, however, are all secular, and draw on arguments from Western political science theory of power politics, especially the realism school: Relations between states are governed by the struggle for power and interests. The chief characteristic of contemporary international politics is "deceit, lies, trickery, falsification or denial of the truth. . . . No treaties, no pacts are being honoured. Interests are above all."⁵² This especially goes for the great powers, for which there is nobody to hold them accountable. He describes the international system as a "spider web"; even if it is intricately interwoven, it is largely an illusionary web: "only a breeze will break the fibres in the tissue."⁵³ The U.S. power in the world relies on a mixture of reality and illusion. True, there are objective assets supporting U.S. hegemony, but its power also depends on a great deal of illusion:

a large part of its power results from the conviction of others of their inability to confront [the US]. It is possible with relatively modest means . . . to destroy an important and essential part of America's power. The amazing effect of the September strikes is a case in point as it destroyed the American legend of power and invincibility, in addition to the large economic losses it inflicted.⁵⁴

The illusionary character of U.S. power and the assumed weakness of the international system offer possibilities for the jihadist movements to divide the Western alliance in Iraq. Although the author cautions about relying too much on the fact that "the differences between the unbelievers . . . may from time to time lead to a coincidence of interests between some of them and the Muslims," he emphasises that "not all unbelievers are God's enemies" and "there are various degrees of unbelief," some more serious and dangerous than others.⁵⁵ Having established a theological justification for dealing differently with different kinds of unbelievers, the author arrives at his central point, namely the political benefits of "breaking the existing alliances against us."⁵⁶ He concludes the section by emphasizing the legitimacy of "mak[ing] use of the contradiction of forces of unbelief, as long as this does not lead to deviation from our principles."⁵⁷ It may be added that the audiotape from Osama bin Laden on 14 April 2004 strongly suggests that this argument has also been endorsed by the Al Qaida leadership.

The Current Situation in Iraq

In reviewing the situation in Iraq following the U.S.-led occupation, the author no longer relies on theological literature, but the analysis is by and large secular and academic in nature. He surveys a number of actors on the Iraqi scene, ranging from the US-led occupation, and the Iraqi state institutions, to the Shiite and Sunni Muslim Parties. The initial survey is the introduction to a long, detailed, and relatively objective analysis of the current U.S. policy in Iraq and the conditions for its success, followed by detailed policy proposals for the Iraqi resistance and the jihadist movements in Iraq.

In this section the author does not resort to the simplistic rhetoric of blaming the Crusaders and Zionists for everything, which is characteristic of the majority of Islamist literature designed for external propaganda purposes. For example, the collapse of the

Iraqi state institutions and the security vacuum in Iraq are described as a tremendous obstacle to *any* future ruler of Iraq, not only the United States, but also to the jihadist movement and Islamist organizations in a “liberated [from the U.S. occupation] Iraq.” The author does not dwell extensively on the hidden motives and aims behind the U.S. occupation of Iraq, but proceeds directly to an analysis of the U.S. military and political plan for Iraq and the most important preconditions for its success. These are:

- Reducing the economic costs of occupation.
- Entry of international forces.
- Building an Iraqi army.
- Exporting oil.
- Building an Iraqi state and providing security.
- Limiting the military operations in scope and quality.

All these preconditions are interlinked and interdependent, but according to the author the two first points are the most important ones, and they are therefore most extensively analyzed.

Identifying the Weaknesses of U.S. Strategy in Iraq

The author uses his analysis of preconditions for a U.S. success as an entry point to an identification of the weakest link in U.S. strategy, which in turn is used to highlight the most effective focus for the jihadist activities in Iraq. The many obstacles and difficulties facing the *mujahidin* in Iraq by no means are ignored, however.

The major objective is to break the U.S. will to stay on in Iraq, and it is openly admitted that the insurgents cannot expect a military victory. Thus, a war of attrition on multiple fronts must be launched. In this context, the parallel to the Vietnam War is referred to more than once, for example by citing U.S. politicians who have warned about this scenario.⁵⁸ From the onset, however, the Iraqi occupation is interpreted as a return to the old direct rule imperialism. This offers new opportunities for the jihadist movement, because the U.S. administration has not taken into account the impact of the last centuries’ imperialism on the third world, especially not the “new consciousness” and “pride in their principles” among Muslims.⁵⁹ Instead, the U.S. policies are characterized by “rush and desire for quick results” and “an inability to wait,” indicating “a weakness in will and shortsightedness,” according to the author.⁶⁰ Many Western strategists have pointed out that the U.S. emphasis on timetables and exit strategies for its military engagements may create a strategic vulnerability. It is clear from the *Jihadi Iraq* that this has not eluded the author.

The main point of weakness identified by the author is the rising economic cost of the U.S. occupation. These expenditures will be hard to cover because the U.S. administration already has a record-high budget deficit and the U.S. economy is currently experiencing a “severe economic crisis.”⁶¹ In contrast to the first Gulf war when U.S. allies paid billions of dollars in support of the U.S. military campaign, the author notes that many traditional U.S. allies, such as Japan and Germany, have distanced themselves from the United States and have offered no direct financial aid. The author also notes the growing criticism of the U.S. administration’s Iraq policies, especially the statements by former presidential candidate Howard Dean that “a large part of the American people reject paying the rising costs of the war in Iraq.”⁶²

The author goes on at length to demonstrate the huge costs of the U.S.-led occupation

and the growing U.S. budget deficit, citing figures and statistics from a wide variety of Western (predominantly U.S. government) sources. Among the numerous figures cited by the author are estimates from Democratic members of the Congress Financial Committee from mid-2003, indicating that the occupation and rebuilding of Iraq will cost American taxpayers no less than 179 billion dollars at the very best, and in the worst case more than 400 billion dollars.⁶³ He also refers to figures about the overall economic costs of the U.S. war on terror, ranging from homeland security expenditures to the war in Afghanistan. The author emphasizes in particular that the early U.S. cost estimates were far too optimistic:

These expected cost estimates were based on . . . the perception was that there would be a wide acceptance of the occupation and an absence of an influential resistance. The beginning of the jihad against the Americans changed this situation considerably, however, and the expected figures for the occupation bill began to rise at an amazing speed.⁶⁴

Thus, it is the insurgency campaign in Iraq that made the U.S. military engagement in Iraq and its rebuilding efforts far more expensive in economic terms than was expected.⁶⁵ The author believes that the Iraqi resistance will be able to raise the costs of the U.S. occupation even further, if it follows the plan outlined by the author (discussed later).⁶⁶

According to the author, the entry of forces from other countries is of utmost importance for the success of the American project in Iraq, as it lowers the financial costs of the occupation, reduces the losses in terms of human lives, and gives a legal and moral cover to the occupation.⁶⁷ The author cites a U.S. Congress report published on 3 September 2003, arguing that the United States would not be able to remain in Iraq unless it reduces its force level by at least 50 percent in order to meet other challenges and avoid fatiguing its personnel in Iraq. However, the report allegedly states that given the level of violence in Iraq, even the current number of 150,000 may be insufficient.

According to sources cited by the author, the United States will need between 30,000 to 50,000 international forces in Iraq, in addition to the U.K. forces already present. There is admittedly already a sizeable international force in Iraq, the most important contributions coming from Italy, Spain, Latin American countries, Ukraine, and Poland, but these are far from sufficient to reach the desired number. Nevertheless, the author warns his fellow jihadists that

since these international forces have not been exposed to huge (human) losses accompanied with a large media outcry, other countries will be encouraged to participate under the stream of American cajolery and pressure. In addition, it may lead to an augmentation of forces by countries participating currently in Iraq. [This passage is underlined in the original]⁶⁸

These warnings about the small losses suffered by the international forces in Iraq did not go unheeded. It is noteworthy that the posting of the *Jihadi Iraq* on Global Islamic Media in December coincided roughly with a spate of attacks on foreign forces in Iraq, such as the attacks on the Italian *Carabinieri* in al-Nasiriyya and the assassination of Spanish intelligence officers in November 2003, and a fatal ambush of British and Canadian officers in January 2004. (The *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna* group, probably a splinter group of the Al Qaida-associated Ansar al-Islam group, assumed responsibility for the two latter attacks.⁶⁹)

The author devotes little attention to the Iraqi army, which he assumes will be “sectarian” in character, dominated by the Shiites, and “filled with American collaborators.”⁷⁰ It will be weak in morale and will not number more than 30,000 to 50,000, but it will have some impact in reducing the losses and economic costs of the occupation. (Anecdotally, the author uses the feminine plural (*hunna*) when referring to the new Iraqi military forces, probably as a way of dismissing them as unmanly and weak.⁷¹)

Revenues from the export of Iraqi oil are described as “the primary U.S. hope for securing financial sources for what is called the rebuilding.”⁷² Although the author notes the many difficulties associated with the rebuilding of the Iraqi oil industry and the use of oil revenues for rebuilding purposes due to the former regime’s enormous debts, he is obviously concerned that oil revenues will ease the economic pressure on the United States.

Policy Recommendations for the Islamist Resistance in Iraq

Before offering specific policy guidance to the resistance, the author reviews the status of the Islamist and jihadist movements in Iraq. He notes the quick re-establishment of the Islamic Party, a moderate nonviolent party associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, with branches in nearly all Sunni Arab regions of Iraq. Contrary to statements by several jihadist groups, who reject the Islamic Party as “the Devil’s Brotherhood,”⁷³ the author argues that conflicts between the Islamic Party and the mujahidin should be avoided. Instead, the jihadist activities should be used as a powerful negotiating card by the Islamic Party in order to make the Americans more amenable to the Party’s demands.⁷⁴ In adopting this conciliatory position to non-jihadists, he is more in tune with the Al Qaida leadership, and especially Osama bin Laden’s ecumenical approach of attempting to make local Islamist movements work together against the external enemy, in order to avoid destructive internal quarrels. The author similarly deplores the fragmented character of the resistance movement in Iraq, which prevents it from benefiting fully from the practical successes on the ground. Still, he is impressed by the very “strength of the insurgent attacks in Iraq,” which has “amazed” even the most optimistic observer.⁷⁵ The author sees the potential for “enormous and good results whose scope may even exceed the Vietnam war, if the *mujahidin* are proficient in the art of life and death in their blessed jihad.”⁷⁶

The *Jihadi Iraq* document offers several policy recommendations for the jihadist movement in Iraq. The resistance must form clear, specific, and accurate objectives that would create a unity of aims and compensate to some degree for the relative lack of organizational unity under the current circumstances. This consideration is highly important, as it probably has wider applications beyond the Iraqi scene and reflects jihadist strategic thinking of how to enhance unity and coordination in the absence of a centralized organizational leadership and without an effective command and control apparatus. Thus, online publications like *Jihadi Iraq*, where objectives, goals, and priorities are outlined, may be a way of strengthening the unity of the mujahidin in the post-Afghanistan era of decentralized jihad.

The *Jihadi Iraq* document offers several key criteria for shaping political demands: The religious legitimacy of these demands have to be established, they have to reflect “the living reality in Iraq,” and to a certain degree they should take into account the international situation in order to benefit from what the author calls “international contradictions and international pressure.”⁷⁷ The decisive criterion, however, is their effect on the jihadist operations: The political demands should enable the jihadist movement “to maintain their position in the field and their capability to disrupt the U.S. plans.”⁷⁸

Apart from several demands related to ensuring the Islamic character of the insurgency and the future Iraq, the most important *political* demands include:

- The immediate, total, and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign armies from all Iraqi territories.
- Rejection of any form of U.S. trusteeship over Iraq, including even advisers in the Iraqi ministries. (Due to the collapse of the Iraqi state, however, one might accept some form of foreign aid.) Similarly, the Provisional Council should be rejected both in its form and content because it is appointed by the United States.
- Reject any (jihadist) operation directed against the daily life of the Iraqi people and its future, including public services, schools, private property, and so on with the exception of the oil sector.

The author also lists a number of final demands, obviously related to the post-occupation situation. Like other Iraqi salafi-jihadist groups, the author stresses the need to look beyond the occupation phase, and to the role of a free and Islamic Iraq in the future global jihad: “implant the true Islamic creed in the sons of Iraq . . . reinvigorate the nation in its (Muslim) faith, civilization, and purity, and prepare to build a generation to liberate the Islamic nation.”⁷⁹ The latter demand highlights a commonly shared notion in the salafi-jihadist movement in Iraq that the country when liberated should serve as a launching pad for jihadist operations elsewhere and be a springboard to liberate other Muslim countries suffering from the dual yoke of Zionist-Crusader occupation and the Tyranny of the Muslim Hypocrites.⁸⁰ It also echoes the oft-repeated belief among the jihadists that sooner or later the Al Qaida training camps will be re-established, either in Afghanistan or elsewhere. As for the practical military goals of the mujahidin in Iraq at the current stage, the author lists a number of points:

- Make the jihadist operations more effective.
- Retain the spirit of initiative.
- Strike against the oil installations.
- Establish (Sunni Muslim) jihadist fighting cells in the Shiite-dominated south.

The author shows a keen awareness of the need to balance the daily operative activities with the long-term concerns about sustainability:

We need to take good care of what we currently possess of weaponry and ammunition and diversify the storage places, and avoid storing large quantities in one place. Similarly, we need to augment the purchase of weapons and ammunition from the local markets in a manner which fits the capability of the mujahidin to store them, use them and purchase them. . . .⁸¹

Similarly, *Jihadi Iraq* notes the need for diversifying targets and modus operandi by using a variety of tactics such as ambushes, raids, explosions, close combat operations, and so on.⁸² With regard to targeting oil installations, the author emphasizes the strategic importance of denying the U.S. occupation the benefit of increasing oil revenues. The author concedes elsewhere in the document that the resistance has been unsuccessful in disrupting the flow of oil from the Iraqi oilfields.⁸³ Nevertheless, he claims that sabotage operations are easy to carry out in the North, where frequent targeting of the oil pipelines would be sufficient. In the South, on the other hand, the author thinks routine

attacks on pipelines will be more difficult. Thus, attacks on oil installations, production facilities, terminals, or refineries will become necessary.⁸⁴ For this reason, the formation of jihadist cells in the South is seen as critical (“this point is very important”).⁸⁵ The author also argues that jihadist cells in the South “represents a necessary jihadist nucleus for defending the Sunni Muslim population in case—God forbid—a confrontation with the Shiites erupts in the South.”⁸⁶

The author also gives a number of other military recommendations of a general nature. He particularly emphasizes the need for strict security procedures and counter-intelligence to prevent infiltration and security breaches. He is very frank concerning the limited resources of the resistance: “first we have to recognise the differences in resources, experiences, and capabilities on every level in the field of security.”⁸⁷ However, these risks may be reduced through stricter recruitment procedures and by avoiding the use of telephones when transmitting sensitive information.

Another important theme in the author’s analysis of the future jihadist strategy in Iraq is the use of media and propaganda. He emphasises this as an essential point of weakness for the United States, which must be exploited by the resistance: “In many cases, the camera has more importance than the weapon and in many cases it surpasses the weapon in terms of its effect and power.”⁸⁸ By demonstrating the “repression” under the U.S. occupation, the resistance will remove U.S. pretexts for staying in Iraq, especially for the internal Iraqi audience. The author also encourages greater practical (media) use of the jihad, commensurate with the “dazzling successes” of the Iraqi resistance, assuming that this is essential for deterring other countries from sending their soldiers to Iraq.⁸⁹ The author also emphasizes the need to disavow the former regime, arguing that this will send an important political signal to “the Western peoples,” who still believe that “the resistance operations are carried out by remnants of the former regime’s army and by criminals.”⁹⁰

Finally, the author mentions the need for “gathering theological rulings or fatwas supporting the jihad in Iraq.”⁹¹ It should be noted that this has become increasingly difficult as many of the most influential clerics—many of them Saudis—who previously provided religious legitimacy for militant Islamism, have now been co-opted, imprisoned, or otherwise barred from issuing fatwas. Those left to issue religious rulings are less influential and younger “activist-clerics” who do not command the same religious authority.⁹² The author of *Jihadi Iraq* is keenly aware of the dangers of religious marginalization. He cautions against the use of harsh and extremist methods in propagating the Islamic message (*da’wa*) in order to counter “with our own practical behaviour” the accusations against Muslims of extremism and hatred.⁹³ He calls for greater emphasis on unity among all Muslims in Iraq, including even the Shiites.

At the very least, the resistance has to put the Shiites aside [regard them as neutral] in the struggle against the occupation, and if possible attempt to draw them into the fighting with the Americans.⁹⁴

At this point, the *Jihadi Iraq* seems to depart from the ideological posture of leading salafi-jihadists such as Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi whose recent communiqués are extremely hateful of the Iraqi Shiites and who is also a prime suspect in the series of deadly bomb attacks on the Shiite holy day of Ashura in Baghdad and Karbala.⁹⁵ Several of the Iraqi salafi-jihadist groups, such *The Army of the Sunna’s Supporters* (“Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna”) and *The Salafiyya Fighting Group in Iraqi* (“al-Jama‘a al-Salafiyya al-Mujahida fi’l-Iraq”) have also expressed deep hostility to the Iraqi Shiite majority.⁹⁶ The

fact that the *Jihadi Iraq* does not express such outright hostility seems to reflect internal differences in and between the jihadist movements in Iraq on the question of the Shiites.

Spain as the Weakest Link in the U.S. Coalition in Iraq

Jihadi Iraq devotes considerable space (pp. 25–40) to a detailed analysis of three of the most prominent U.S. allies in Iraq, namely Britain, Spain, and Poland. These subchapters are written specifically with a view to identifying weaknesses to be exploited by the jihadist movement. The point of departure is that “neither Poland nor Spain has real significant interests in Iraq . . . even Britain does not have the kind of priority interests in Iraq which makes it endure large sacrifices. . . .”⁹⁷ The author then starts his search for the weakest link in the Coalition or “the domino piece most likely to fall first.”⁹⁸

With this analytical reference in mind, the author provides a detailed survey of the domestic political map in each country, arguing that each country will react differently to violent attacks against its forces because of domestic political factors.

Poland is unlikely to withdraw from the coalition because there is political consensus on foreign policy, and the country has a very high tolerance for human casualties:

Despite its obvious weakness and poverty, Poland might be among the countries most prepared to stay on in Iraq, especially if it is only exposed to human losses, for which it puts no great values, unless other Western countries withdraw. In this case, it is possible that the nationalist spirit will return and the Polish president will face some difficulties, but the possibility of a (Polish) withdrawal from Iraq remains remote.⁹⁹

Britain is easier to force out of Iraq, because the popular opposition to the war and the occupation is so high. However, the author estimates that Britain will only withdraw from Iraq in one of two cases: “if Britain suffers huge human casualties in Iraq or if forces of other countries, such as Spain and Italy are withdrawn.”¹⁰⁰ The author also makes the somewhat curious argument that Britain will follow suit because it will not accept to be left in Iraq while other countries such as Italy, Poland, and Spain withdraw before them. This is because Britain considers these countries “less civilised and less concerned with human life and human rights.”¹⁰¹

Spain on the other hand is very vulnerable to attacks on its forces, primarily because public opposition to the war is almost total, and the government is virtually on its own on this issue. The author therefore identifies Spain as the weakest link in the coalition. This article now takes a closer look at the Spanish case study, which is of greatest interest in view of the Madrid attacks on 11 March 2004.

The author devotes 6 out of 42 pages to a review of the domestic political situation in Spain. In the process he displays a solid knowledge of and interest in Spanish society. It must also be noted that of the three case studies, the chapter on Spain is by far the best in terms of analytical clarity. The most interesting passage of the whole text is the author’s concluding remarks regarding Spain:

Aznar’s position does not express the Spanish popular stance at all. If the disparity between the government and the people were at the same percentage rate in Britain, then the government would fall. But this has not happened thus far, for a number of reasons, including:

- That the Spanish people, despite the passing of more than quarter of a century of democracy, have not reached the level of e.g. Britain in terms of holding its rulers accountable. So far they (the people) have accepted the reality of lying politicians and do not see a reason for holding them accountable. This is the opposite of what the British do, who try to hold Blair accountable for his lies in making a case for Britain's entry in the war on Iraq.
- That most of the rightist electorate are fanatical supporters of their party. Lately in the local parliamentary elections the Popular Party bloc voted for their party and remained loyal to it, despite the fact that the vast majority of Spaniards opposed the war.
- The power of the group Opus Dei in the Popular Party.
- The lack of direct influence of the Iraq events on life in Spain.
- The weakness of the leftist opposition and its failure to manage the political struggle in a wise manner."¹⁰²

This section is directly followed by a conclusion, containing policy recommendations for the Jihadist movement, the undoubtedly most intriguing part of the *Jihadi Iraq* document. As with the concluding section on Poland and Britain this section is both underlined and written in bold types, making it very easy for the reader to zoom in on the essentials:

Therefore we say that in order to force the Spanish government to withdraw from Iraq the resistance should deal painful blows to its [i.e., the Spanish] forces. This should be accompanied by an information campaign clarifying the truth of the matter inside Iraq. It is necessary to make utmost use of the upcoming general election in Spain in March next year.

We think that the Spanish government could not tolerate more than two, maximum three blows, after which it will be forced to withdraw as a result of popular pressure. If its troops still remain in Iraq after these blows, then the victory of the Socialist Party is almost guaranteed, and the withdrawal of the Spanish forces will be on its electoral programme.

Lastly, we are convinced that a withdrawal of the Spanish or Italian forces from Iraq will put huge pressure on the British presence [in Iraq], a pressure that Toni Blair might not be able to withstand.

In this way, the domino tiles would fall quickly, but the basic problem of making the first tile fall still remains.¹⁰³

Conclusion: The Significance of *Jihadi Iraq*

The significance of the *Jihadi Iraq* document is twofold. First of all there is the possibility that the document is somehow linked to the Madrid events. Second, *Jihadi Iraq* serves as an illustrative example of a hitherto unidentified genre in radical islamist literature, namely "jihadi strategic studies."

Relationship with the Madrid Events

Based on the earlier discussion, a hypothesis may be suggested that the perpetrators of the attacks knew this document in some way or other, or at the very least, that the document highlighted themes from an already ongoing discussion in Al Qaida circles on future strategies with which the Madrid perpetrators were familiar. There are three reasons for this.

First, the document points to Spain as the politically most convenient target of the coalition countries present in Iraq, and it specifically mentions run-up to the Spanish elections as the most appropriate time to strike.

Second, the recommendation to strike Spanish *forces* does not exclude attacks on other types of Spanish targets in other parts of the world. The perpetrators may have adopted the overall strategy outlined in the document while altering the tactics somewhat and taking the campaign onto Spanish territory. After all, the author makes a point of the fact that the occupation of Iraq has so far not affected life in Spain (“. . . *lack of direct influence of the Iraq events on life in Spain*”), and that this is one of the main causes why the Spanish government can continue to pursue a pro-U.S. Iraqi policy at odds with the vast majority of the Spanish electorate.¹⁰⁴ The underlying message is obvious: this must change. Moreover, the fact that the document is addressed to global jihadists, not Iraqi insurgents, and that it was posted on the “Global Islamic Media (GIM)” website, indicates that its scope went way beyond the Iraqi battlefield. Finally, only days before GIM posted the *Jihadi Iraq*, the previously mentioned document *A Message to the Spanish People* was posted on the same website by the very same group, containing explicit hints about impending attacks on Spanish interests outside Iraq.

Third, shortly after the Madrid bombings, Spanish police were provided with a videotape on which a man claiming to be Al Qaida’s military commander in Europe assumed responsibility for the attacks. On the video he appears under the alias Abu Dujana al-Afghani, echoing a reference to the historical Abu Dujana on page two of the document, which goes as follows:

Indeed they [the Crusaders and their Arab Allies] do not and will not be turned away [from aggression against Islam] except by the youth who have sold their souls to God the Almighty, and who have put on the headband of death, the headband of Abu Dujana.¹⁰⁵

Abu Dujana was one of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad and known as a brave fighter. His trademark was a red headband known as the “headband of death” (*‘asbat al-mawt*), which he wound around his helmet before going into battle. For this reason “Abu Dujana” has been used as an alias (or *kunya*) by several mujahidin in various parts of the world. In this case, there is a slight possibility that the person on the videotape has chosen the alias Abu Dujana after reading this document. Another possibility that cannot be excluded is that the author himself had some knowledge of Al Qaida cells in Europe, including the *nom de guerre* of their commander, and he wished to salute them by mentioning Abu Dujana. Such a message would not necessarily have an operational purpose, but could simply be a way of increasing the feeling of intimacy and unity among invited readers.

One must always be careful to link anonymous ideological texts with specific events on the ground, especially when the texts contain few operational details. One by one, the aforementioned points of convergence are not sufficient to link the document to the attacks.

However, when the indications are considered as a whole and coupled with details from the investigation (such as the videotape), it leads to the possibility that this text served as ideological inspiration and policy guidance for the terrorist attacks in Madrid.

Jihadi Strategic Studies

The detailed political and military strategy presented in *Jihadi Iraq* coupled with what might seem like the fulfilment of its prophecies in Madrid on 11 March 2004 has demonstrated the value of studying the militant islamist literature on the Internet. This analysis of *Jihadi Iraq* and the existence of other “jihadi strategic studies” suggest that online jihadist discourse should not be dismissed as religious ranting and cheap propaganda. There is a wide spectrum of online jihadist literature, including pure theological works, recruitment literature, statements from jihadi leaders, political analyses, tactical handbooks, and instruction manuals. A genre in this growing online literature is the kind of strategic analysis found in *Jihadi Iraq*, which draws on Western sources, identifies and analyzes weaknesses of *both* parties, considers the political, economic, and cultural factors in the military conflict, and recommends realistic strategies.

Last but not least, the form and content of *Jihadi Iraq* suggest that the label “Al Qaida ideology” should not be treated as a homogeneous entity. It no doubt covers a number of intellectual substreams *with various priorities and various degrees of pragmatism*. One of these subcurrents lies closer to a secular and “Western” political rationale than is commonly accepted. This semi-secular discourse reinforces the impression that for many islamic militants, nationalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-American sentiments play a greater role than “pure religious fanaticism.” This substream seems to have gained some importance in recent years, as suggested by evidence from recent investigations into European-based islamist networks.¹⁰⁶ The final question remains: Will the rising strategic awareness among Al Qaida sympathizers increase the power and impact of Islamist terrorist campaigns, or will it simply make it easier for Western analysts to predict its behavior? What *is* clear however, is that this ideological trend will probably serve to widen Al Qaida’s appeal among alienated young Muslims in the West.

Notes

1. The full Arabic title is ‘*Iraq al-Jihad—Amal wa Akhtar: Tahlil al-Waqi’ wa Istishraf li-l-Mustaqbal wa Khatawat ‘Amaliyyah ‘ala Tariq al-Jihad al-Mubarak* [Jihadi Iraq—Hopes and Risks: Analysis of the Reality, Overview of the Future and Practical Steps on the Way of the Blessed Jihad]. At first sight, *Iraq al-Jihad* seems like a rather unusual Arabic construction, but in fact it is a play on words with a double meaning, coming from the fact that the word ‘*iraq*’ can also mean “taking root.” The grammatically correct translation should therefore be “The Jihad Taking Root,” but semantically there is no doubt that the author is alluding to the country Iraq, and we have therefore chosen the title “Jihadi Iraq.” The Arabic original is available at (www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00038/_Jihadi_Iraq_Hopes__38063a.pdf). The first to provide an analysis of the text was Reuven Paz in “Qa’idat al-Jihad, Iraq, and Madrid: The First Tile in the Domino Effect,” *PRISM Special Dispatch*, 1/2, 13 March 2004. The authors of the current article published a preliminary analysis in “FFI Explains Al Qaida Document” available at (www.mil.no/felles/ffi/start/article.jhtml?articleID=71589)

2. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 33.

3. “Spain Says Tape Claims Al Qaeda Behind Attacks,” *Reuters*, 13 March 2004; and Jean-Pierre Tuquoi, “Un Franco-Marocain suspecté dans les attentats de Casablanca et Madrid,” *Le Monde*, 24 March 2004.

4. The downing of a TWA flight over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1989 caused more fatalities, but much fewer injured than the Madrid bombings.

5. See for example “Documents show al-Qaeda’s link to Madrid Blasts: Norwegian Researchers,” *Agence France Presse*, 13 March 2004; “Norwegian researchers find possible Al Qaida link in Madrid attack,” *CBS News.com*, 13 March 2004; “Possible Al Qaida Link Found in Attack,” *Washington Post* 13 March 2004; “A Strike At Europe’s Heart,” *Time Magazine*, 11 March 2004; “Norweger entdeckten Internet-Dokument,” *Der Spiegel Online—Panorama*, 13 March 2004; and “Terror in Madrid: Norwegische Experten finden Hinweise auf al-Kaida,” *Financial Times Deutschland*, 13 March 2004; “Madrid ‘blueprint’: a dodgy document,” *Spiked* 30 March 2004, available at (www.spiked-online.com/Articles/0000000CA4A9.htm); and “Document in the possession of European security agencies in 2003 recommended striking at Spain ahead of the elections” (in Arabic), *Kull al-‘Arab* 2 April 2004, available at (www.kul-alarab.com/K0851/Display.asp?FN=RMenu06_03&dir=rtl).

6. “Här avslöyas Al Qaidas plan” [Al Qaida’s Plans Uncovered], *Aftonbladet*, 13 March 2004; and “Madrid ‘blueprint’: a dodgy document,” *Spiked*, 30 March 2004. The latter article criticizes the early CNN coverage of the document.

7. For a commentary and translation of this document, see Reuven Paz, “A Message to the Spanish People: The Neglected Threat by Qa’idat al-Jihad,” *PRISM Special Dispatch*, 2/2, 18 March 2004.

8. For example, the Saudi cleric and jihadist ideologue Abu Umar Muhammad bin Abdallah al-Sayf, who served as an Islamic Court of Cassation judge in Chechnya, and whose publications were posted on the Al Qaida website *Markaz al-Buhuth wa’l-Dirasat al-Islamiyya*, has written about the need for attacks to coincide with the Russian presidential elections.

9. Sebastian Rotella, “Attacks appear timed to send message,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 November 2003; and “Blair and Bush condemn Istanbul bombings,” *The Guardian*, 20 November 2004.

10. “Full text: ‘Bin Laden tape’,” *BBC News* 15 April 2004. See also Dana Priest and Walter Pincus, “New Target and Tone: Message Shows Al Qaeda’s Adaptability,” *Washington Post*, 16 April 2004.

11. Abdallah Azzam, *Join The Caravan*, p. 9.

12. Secular in the sense that it uses predominantly non-religious sources and deduces its findings and conclusions based on a rational “pro and con” discussion.

13. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 2. All the quotations are the authors’ translation from the Arabic original, unless otherwise stated.

14. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 20.

15. The Global Islamic Media posting was still available in late March 2004 at (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/globalislamicmedia/message/241>)

16. “Abu Qa’qa’ accused of spying, treason and selling out ‘the mujahidin’ after enlisting them in Iraq,” (in Arabic), *al-Riyadh*, 1 February 2004, available at (www.alriyadh-np.com/Contents/01-02-2004/Mainpage/POLITICS_20171.php).

17. The original link (now broken) to *Jihadi Iraq* was (<http://aa.1asphost.com/iraq/book.doc>) whereas the link to *Sawt al-Jihad* (issue 6) was (<http://aa.1asphost.com/voicesout/s6.doc>).

18. For instance, a number of names are spelt inconsistently in the document, notably “Aznar,” “Gonzalez,” and “George W Bush.” Furthermore, the case study of Spain is of a much higher quality than those of Great Britain and Poland in terms of analytical clarity and knowledge of details.

19. For example, Yusuf al-Ayiri’s biographer states that “He participated in writing *Silsilat al-Harb al-Salibiyyah* . . . , and his contribution was the most important, representing almost 80% of the total,” see Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Salim “Yusuf al-‘Ayiri: Shumukh fi Zaman al-Hawan” [Yusuf al-Ayiri: Standing tall in an age of lowliness], *Sawt al-Jihad*, 2, October 2003.

20. This is clear from a number of statements such as “I wrote a draft of this paper . . .” (*Jihadi Iraq*, p. 2) or “I wish that I were with you to share in your meals, your jihad and your sacrifice for this great religion” (*Jihadi Iraq*, p. 40).

21. *al-Hay'ah al-I'lamiyyah li-Nasrat al-Sha'b al-'Iraqi* (Markaz Khidamat al-Mujahidin).

22. See Reuven Paz, "A message to the Spanish People: the Neglected Threat by Qa'idat al-Jihad," *PRISM Special Dispatch*, 2/2, 18 March 2004.

23. *Tahdhir ila al-Mujahidin al-Murabitin fi'l-'Iraq bi-Khusus al-Jasus Mahmud Qul al-Aghasi* (Abu al-Qa'qa'), signed 28 January 2004, posted 29 January on various jihadi websites, including *Global Islamic Media*, and *Muntada al-Ansar*, available at (www.al-ansar.biz/vb/showthread.php?threadid=4981).

24. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 21.

25. For example, when addressing "you my brother the mujahid" in the final section, he laments that he is not able to participate "in your meals, your jihad, and your sacrifices," *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 40.

26. The text contains specific details about the recent history of Syrian jihadi groups. To corroborate the accusations against Abu al-Qa'qa', it quotes two well-known jihadi-salafists of Syrian origin, Abu Basir al-Tartusi and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.

27. There are at least two versions of the document on the web; one gives the web address (<http://aa.lasphost.com/iraq/book.doc>) and the other e-mail address lc891593@atheer.net.sa.

28. Yusuf bin Salih al-Ayiri (aka Abu Qutaybah al-Makki, aka Abu Muhammad, aka Abu Maryam, aka Salah al-Din) was a key Al Qaida representative in Saudi Arabia who was killed by Saudi police on 31 May 2003. Born in Mecca in the late 1960s, he travelled to Afghanistan in the 1980s where he was an instructor in the al-Faruq training camp before becoming one of Osama bin Laden's bodyguards. He followed bin Laden to Sudan and allegedly fought in Somalia before returning to Saudi Arabia in late 1993 or early 1994. From then on, al-Ayiri did not roam the world like many Al Qaida affiliates, but stayed in Saudi Arabia where he collected funds, recruited and trained young people, and acted as a liaison officer between international mujahidin and jihadi salafi scholars in Saudi Arabia. Later in his career al-Ayiri established himself as a prominent ideologist and propagandist, notably in his position as webmaster of the *al-Nida'* website. At least 20 different books and articles by al-Ayiri are circulating today on Islamist websites. Al-Ayiri is venerated in jihadi circles in Saudi Arabia and his writings are regularly quoted in *Sawt al-Jihad* and *Mu'askar al-Battar*, two key online jihadist magazines. A seven-page biography of him was published in October 2003 over the first two issues of *Sawt al-Jihad*, see Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Salim, "Yusuf al-'Ayiri: Shumukh fi Zaman al-Hawan" [Yusuf al-Ayiri: Standing tall in an age of lowliness], *Sawt al-Jihad*, 2, October 2003. A commemorative website dedicated to al-Ayiri also exists—at the time of writing, it was available at (www.yosf.net).

29. Yusuf al-Ayiri did not travel very much outside of Saudi Arabia. If the author knew al-Ayiri well, he is either Saudi himself or alternatively he has met al-Ayiri in Saudi Arabia or in the Gulf. It must be noted that the expressions "my brother" and "my shaykh" could also be ways of expressing strong admiration, without *necessarily* implying a personal relationship.

30. "We remind you here of the communiqué that was recently issued by the Al Qaida Organisation for the Mujahidin in Iraq, containing a stern warning about the collaborators and spies who attempted to penetrate the Mujahidin's ranks in Afghanistan and who are now in Iraq." Cited in *Warning to the Mujahidin*, p. 7.

31. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 3.

32. Yusuf al-Ayiri, *Mustaqbal al-'Iraq wa-l-Jazirah al-'Arabiyya Ba'd Suqut Baghdad* [The Future of Iraq and the Arab Peninsula After the Fall of Baghdad], published May 2003. Available at (www.almaqdes.com). It was al-Ayiri's last book.

33. See introduction in Yusuf al-Ayiri, *Mustaqbal al-'Iraq* . . . , p. 2.

34. Yusuf al-Ayiri, *Silsilat al-Harb al-Salibiyyah 'ala al-'Iraq*, published on al-Nida' website in late 2002. According to al-Ayiri's biographer, the book was a collective work, but al-Ayiri wrote 80% of it. See al-Salim, p. 14.

35. See for example Yusuf al-Ayiri, *Mustaqbal al-'Iraq* . . . , pp. 17ff.

36. Al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian whose real name is Ahmad Fadil Nazzal al-Khalaylah, is a well-known leader of an alleged Al Qaida network with cells in Iraq and throughout the Middle East and Europe. His exact relationship to Al Qaida is somewhat disputed.

37. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 9.

38. For example, in the introduction to *Silsilat al-Harb al-Salibiyyah 'ala al-'Iraq*, al-Ayiri writes: “. . . The question on all Muslims’ minds is the following: How can we break this crusader campaign in Iraq and assist the Iraqi people? The answer to this question in terms of religious Law has already been given by scholars (*ulama*) in the past and present, . . . so we do not need to address it from a legal perspective again. However, in this series we will concentrate on the military and political aspects (of this issue) and on the Muslims’ practical options in military terms. . . .”

39. For example, al-Ayiri’s 29-page booklet *Amrika wa-l-Su’ud ila al-Hawiyyah* [*America and the Advance Toward the Abyss*] is devoted entirely to an analysis of the American economy and of the costs of American military adventures.

40. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 3, p. 24.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

43. Translation from Reuven Paz, “A message to the Spanish People: the Neglected Threat by Qa’idat al-Jihad,” *PRISM Special Dispatch*, 2, 2, 18 March 2004.

44. *Jihadi Iraq* was written in mid- and late 2003, but was posted on GIM only in December 2003, whereas *Message to the Spanish People* was probably written in December 2003 and appeared on GIM a few days before *Jihadi Iraq*.

45. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 1

46. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

47. The IntelCenter reports by Ben Venzke and Aimee Ibrahim have commented on a number of these studies; see (www.intelcenter.com/reports-charts.html).

48. For example, the well-informed *al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper in London considered *Majallat al-Ansar* an Al Qaida moutpiece. The editors themselves for obvious security purposes denied direct linkages to Al Qaida. In addition to strategic studies, the journal also published religious articles, political analyses, a section on educational policies, jihadist news from around the world, and so on.

49. Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qirshi, “Snipers: An Undervalued Weapon,” (in Arabic) *Majallat al-Ansar*, No. 19 (22 October 2002), pp. 9–14.

50. Cited in Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qirshi, “USA’s Nightmare” (in Arabic), *Majallat al-Ansar* No. 3 (13 November 2002), p. 15.

51. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 2.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 7

55. *Ibid.*, p. 4

56. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

61. *Ibid.*, p.12.

62. Citing Financial Times, *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 17.

63. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 18.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

69. See Communiqués by the Military Committee of the Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna, dated 2 December 2003 and 13 January 2004, both posted on (www.ansar-sonnah.8m.com/).

70. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 19.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

73. See for example Communiqués by the Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna-group in Iraq and the booklet “Communiqué to the Muslim Nation on the Devil’s Brothers,” in Arabic, both posted on (www.ansar-sonnah.8m.com/) and “Communiqué issued by the Juridical Committee of the Salafi Fighting Group in Iraq,” in Arabic, undated, on file with authors.

74. *Jihadi Iraq*, pp. 9–10.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

80. Brynjar Lia, “The Rise of Salafi-Jihadist Groups in Iraq,” Paper presented at the University of Oslo, 20 November 2003.

81. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 23.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

84. The maritime terrorist attacks on a key oil terminal in Basra in late April 2004 suggest that these goals have been adopted by jihadist groups in the field.

85. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 23.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

92. See Thomas Hegghammer, *Betraktninger om Al Qaidas ideologiske utvikling* [Reflections on Al Qaida’s Ideological Development] (Kjeller: FFI-NOTAT, 2004).

93. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 24.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

95. al-Zarqawi’s latest Communiqué in March 2004 is extremely harsh on the Iraqi Shiites, see “Letter to the Islamic Nation from Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi,” (in Arabic), *Global Islamic Media* 6 April 2004 (<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/globalislamicmedia/message/395>) (the link is now broken). Similarly, in an alleged al-Zarqawi document, uncovered by U.S. forces in Iraq in February 2004, the Iraqi Shiites are described as “the insurmountable obstacle, the lurking snake, the crafty and malicious scorpion, the spying enemy, and the penetrating venom. . . . These are a people who added to their infidelity and augmented their atheism with political cunning and a feverish effort to seize upon the crisis of governance and the balance of power in the state, whose features they are trying to draw and whose new lines they are trying to establish through their political banners and organizations in cooperation with their hidden allies the Americans.” Cited in (http://www.iraqcoalition.org/transcripts/20040212_zarqawi_full.html).

96. For an analysis on the latter group’s ideology, see Brynjar Lia, “The Rise of Salafi-Jihadist Groups in Iraq,” Paper presented at the University of Oslo, 20 November 2003.

97. *Jihadi Iraq*, p. 25.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 40. [The passage is underlined and in bold types in the Arabic original.]

100. *Ibid.*, p. 28. [The passage is underlined and in bold types in the Arabic original.]

101. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 33. [The passage is underlined and in bold types in the Arabic original.]

104. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

106. For a recent study of Al Qaida networks in Europe, see Petter Nesser, “Jihad in Europe—A survey of the motivations for Sunni-Islamist terrorism in Europe post-millennium,” *FFI Research Report* No. 2004/0011, available at (www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00039/Jihad_in_Europe_39602a.pdf).