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Examining Bin Ladin's Statements:
A Quantitative Content Analysis from 1996 to 2011

By

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Abstract:

Given the armed struggle between the American government and Al-Qa'ida, some are skeptical President Obama can repair US-Muslim relations. The death of transnational terrorist leader Usama Bin Ladin does not necessarily assure the “death” of his violent ideology. Therefore, better US-Muslim relations will, in part, continue to require understanding how Usama bin Ladin influenced Muslim public opinion to support his cause. Misunderstanding, or misrepresenting, bin Ladin's pitch as religious, not political, is counterproductive to U.S. counterterrorism goals. We quantitatively analyzed 49 of bin Ladin's statements and found he cited policy-based grievances for his militancy twice as often as religious-based ones.

* Revised 10/13/11.

Given the context of armed struggle between the American government and Al-Qa'ida and its allies, some analysts have greeted the Obama administration's ability to repair relations with Muslim communities around the world with skepticism.¹ Others are arguing that the recent death of Al-Qa'ida leader, Usama Bin Ladin, combined with the ongoing revolutions in the Middle East, "represents the beginning of the end of a dark era in U.S.-Muslim relations."²

Bin Ladin's death does not necessarily assure the "death" of his violent ideology. It may still be used to motivate some Muslims to fight against the United States. Furthermore, Al-Qa'ida still has significant operational capability, making it an enduring threat.³ Therefore, in the foreseeable future, better relations with Muslim-majority communities will, in part, require policymakers and opinion-shapers to continue to understand the appeal of public statements made by the now-deceased figurehead of militant transnational opposition to the United States.

THE DEBATE OVER THE CAUSE OF MUSLIM DISCONTENT

In a *Newsweek* magazine interview, former 22-year *CIA* analyst and bin Ladin Unit chief, Michael Scheuer noted a new generation of middle class, well-educated Muslims were joining Al-Qa'ida's call to arms.⁴ It is his view that the main reason America is unable to defeat Al-Qa'ida is the U.S. government's refusal to acknowledge—and tell the American people—that its and other Western countries' policies toward Muslim-majority states are the root of the problem. In the interview he asserts that bin Ladin made this point clear in his public statements:⁵

Our leaders say he and his followers hate us because of who we are, because we have early primaries in Iowa every four years and allow women in the workplace. That's nonsense. I don't think he would have those things in his country. But that's not why he opposes us. I read bin Laden's writings and I take him at his word. He and his followers hate us because of specific aspects of U.S. foreign policy. bin Ladin lays them out for anyone to read. Six elements: **our unqualified support for Israel; our presence on the Arabian peninsula, which is land they deem holy; our military presence in other Islamic countries; our support of foreign states that oppress Muslims, especially Russia, China and India; our long-term policy of keeping oil prices artificially low to the benefit of Western consumers but the detriment of the Arab people; and our support for Arab tyrannies who will do that.** (*emphasis added*)

Scheuer cites an April 2007 *Program on International Policy Attitudes* (PIPA) poll, conducted in four Muslim-majority countries.⁶ In it an average of 79% of people polled across all four countries believed that "...a goal of U.S. foreign policy is to 'weaken and divide the Islamic world.'"⁷ (Asked what the *primary* goal of U.S. foreign policy toward Muslim-majority countries was, a majority of those polled were split between "weaken[ing] and divid[ing] the Islamic religion and its people" and "Achiev[ing] political and military domination to control Middle East resources".⁸ A nearly equal number of Muslims, 74%, wanted U.S. forces to withdraw from Muslim-majority nations.⁹

Scheuer also noted that few among the new generation of young Muslims seek to join Al-Qa'ida's ranks. Terrorism researchers like Marc Sageman and Randall Collins¹⁰ find

middle class individuals, not the poor and uneducated, fit the ideal psychological and intellectual profiles for terrorists. According to Collins, their intellectual background and social pedigree make it relatively easy for middle-class suicide bombers to move within societies and attack targets without drawing much attention.

Sageman's research appears to back Collins' claim. In his analysis of 500 international terrorists, the overwhelming majority came from middle class families¹¹ and 62% attended a university.¹² A November 2006 *Gallup World* poll finds middle class, better educated Muslims were more likely to support radical organizations and causes than poorer and less-educated individuals.¹³

Contrary to Scheuer's argument, culturalist analyses, most notably Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis,¹⁴ tend to blame Islamic religious principles for violence and a lack of democracy. In other words, Islam is a violent and backward religion opposing peaceful coexistence, democracy and modernity. Francis Fukuyama, another culturalist, summarized these assumptions by asserting:¹⁵

...But there does seem to be something about Islam, or at least the fundamentalist versions of Islam that have been dominant in recent years, that makes Muslim societies particularly resistant to modernity...

...Islam, by contrast, is the only cultural system that seems to regularly produce people like Osama bin Laden or the Taliban who reject modernity, lock, stock and barrel.

Relevant public opinion polls in Muslim-majority countries shed doubt on this essentialist claim. We leave aside the fundamentally different argument that Islam, like the other major world religions—including Judaism,¹⁶ Christianity,¹⁷ Hinduism¹⁸ and Buddhism¹⁹—have been abused by extremist ideologues for violent purposes. For the moment we will also leave aside the lengthy list of Muslim leaders denouncing terrorist attacks.²⁰ (However we will address this last issue with respect to our findings later in the paper.)

According to the 2007 *PIPA* poll, while a majority of respondents view U.S. foreign policy very negatively, a majority also rejects bin Laden and view democracy positively. Similarly, in the *Gallup World* poll, both radical and moderate respondents had equally positive views of democracy. According to *Gallup's* findings, the difference between the two groups is the radicals are more skeptical that Western countries will allow Muslim-majority countries to have a democratic polity.²¹ Instead, Muslims, rightly or wrongly, assert that Western countries help keep local authoritarian rulers in power. Polling by the *World Values Survey*²² draws similar conclusions.

While Muslims reject many U.S. foreign policies, they also reject bin Laden's indiscriminate killing. *PIPA's* April 2007 poll and a more recent February 2009 poll found Muslims supported Al-Qa'ida's strategic goal of driving out U.S. forces from Muslim-majority countries, but rejected attacks on civilians.²³ Similarly the *Gallup* poll found only 7% of Muslims believed the 9/11 attacks was justified. However, the same poll found, "Overall, residents of the Muslim[-majority] countries studied [by *Gallup*] tended to mistrust the

intentions of the United States toward their region—but the radical group was somewhat more likely [to mistrust] than the moderate masses.”

Empirical research by the *World Values Survey* tested the culturalist assumptions and found the Islamic faith was a statistically insignificant factor in determining whether or not a country could adopt democracy.²⁴ Assertions by Fukuyama of a so-called cultural “Christian universalism” underpinning any democratic development fail to explain why some culturally Christian-majority regions like Orthodox-majority Eastern Europe and Russia and Catholic-majority countries in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa continue to struggle to develop stable democracies. It also fails to explain why Confucian/Shinto-majority Japan has a vibrant democracy.²⁵ A more likely explanation is the perpetuation of authoritarian political systems by local despots with foreign economic and political assistance.²⁶

Likewise, claims of Islam as more inherently prone to violence than other religions—implied by Huntington’s assertion, “Islam’s borders are bloody and so are its innards”—²⁷ does not stand up to empirical scrutiny. According to a study by the Oslo-based Centre for the Study of Civil War at the *International Peace Research Institute*, Islam, when examined as a separate variable, is no more violence-prone than any other religion.

In fact that study found Catholic-majority Latin American countries tend to be the most violence-prone. (According to the study a disproportionate amount of the violence that occurred within Muslim-majority countries, occurred in Arab-majority states.) However the study found religion was a statistically insignificant factor for incidence of violence. Cross-culturally, political and economic issues—specifically oil, economic well-being, and a lack of democracy—are the main factors correlating with violent behavior in countries.²⁸

In an interesting thought experiment in *Foreign Policy* magazine, Graham Fuller argued that even if Islam did not exist, the same bloody geopolitics of natural resources, ethnicity, nationalism and colonialism in the Middle East and other Muslim-majority regions would remain. Anti-American and anti-European sentiment would remain.²⁹ This conclusion is no surprise to those who remember that many Middle Eastern radicals, until at least the 1980s, have been Christians,³⁰ who, like the Muslim majorities, are overwhelmingly opposed to U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East and other Muslim-majority countries, but not to American political values and economic prosperity.

Given the evidence of opinion polling of Muslims, empirical testing, historical context, and thought experiments as to the sources of Muslim discontent with Western states, it would be surprising if Al-Qa’ida and its affiliates sought recruit support using religious rather than policy justifications. Our research, reported here, indicates that the (now deceased) figurehead of Muslim militant transnational opposition to the United States, Usama bin Ladin, used policy justifications rather than religious ones for his outreach.

Before presenting our findings, we provide background on how terrorists use the media. Then we provide an overview of past studies on bin Ladin’s statements. Important terms are defined and a description of the research methodology is provided. After describing the results, we conclude with a brief consideration of policy implications.

AL-QA'IDA'S USE OF MEDIA

Congressional Research Service analyst Raphael Perl, has identified at least four things terrorists want from the media that is relevant to our study:³¹ **Free publicity; a “favorable” understanding of the justice their cause; harming to their enemy** (by spreading fear and economic loss, and instigating pressure on governments and people to overreact to their militancy); and **control of media outlets, if possible**. To better facilitate the above-stated objectives terrorists might seek their own forms of media. Short of that, they at least want sympathetic journalists providing more favorable coverage.

Perl wrote his report in 1997, when uses for the Internet were still emerging. At that time the human element involved in mass communication, particularly contact with journalists, was much greater. Underlying Perl's analysis is what terrorism media expert Hanna Rogan calls “a symbiotic relationship.” However this symbiosis also involves:³²

...mutual distrust. While on one hand, terrorists often feel used by the media in sensational reporting that may fail to mention their grievances and goals, the media, on the other hand may have reason to fear terrorists, as journalists have become the victims of terrorist attacks.

In the past, the existence of journalist intermediaries lent itself to greater sensationalist coverage and negatively affected the public impression of the terrorists.³³ Government censorship and physical geographic distances added further barriers to favorable coverage for terrorists.³⁴ Though traditional forms of media, namely television stations and newspapers, continue to be an important part of terrorists' communications strategy, the Internet's emergence also allows terrorists to largely bypass these outlets to directly reach their audience. Furthermore, the time and economic costs of establishing alternative media outlets (and/or placing favorable journalists in outlets) is drastically reduced or eliminated. This gives them greater ability to directly manipulate the quality and quantity of their message.³⁵

However, terrorists have purposes beyond merely political messaging. Gabriel Weimann, a former Senior Fellow at the *United States Institute of Peace*, identified eight uses for the Internet by terrorists (psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda, data mining, fundraising, recruitment and mobilization, networking, information sharing, and planning and coordination).³⁶ We shall restrict ourselves to bin Ladin's public statements, focusing mostly on Al-Qa'ida's publicity and propaganda uses. We do find that bin Ladin discussed tactics, but this discussion is a very small portion of his total number of words. When analyzing our findings, we will apply our data to current theories about terrorist recruitment and counterterrorism policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF STUDIES ON USAMA BIN LADIN'S STATEMENTS

Bruce Lawrence and Raymond Ibrahim have published important compilations and analyses of bin Ladin's statements. The sources of Lawrence's book *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Ladin* pre-date the 1996 Declaration of Hostilities. They go as far back as 1994 in a public letter addressed to former Chief Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdul-Aziz Abdullah bin Baz. Lawrence's book contains 24 fully-transcribed statements authorized or written by bin Ladin, from 1994 through December 2004.

Lawrence notes bin Ladin employs extensive anti-imperialist language to justify his militancy against Western nations. While taking note of the strong power imbalance favoring Western nations in Muslim-Western conflicts, Lawrence ultimately finds a warped interpretation of Islam held by a tiny minority of Muslims, more specifically Sayyid Qutb's radical version of Islamism, as the source of bin Ladin's motivation for militancy.³⁷

Raymond Ibrahim's approach is different. His book *The Al-Qaeda Reader* is organized along thematic lines rather than chronologically. Furthermore, much of his book is dedicated to Ayman Al-Zawahiri, including an interview with, a public statement and three lengthy essays by Al-Zawahiri. However he also includes 11 statements from Usama bin Ladin, as well as a lengthy essay berating Muslims seeking to peacefully coexist with non-Muslims.

Ibrahim claims Al-Qa'ida has two separate messages for two separate audiences—Muslim and non-Muslim Westerners. Without providing systematic statistical evidence, he asserts:³⁸

Al-Qaeda plays less on anger at the West for specific grievances in most of its literature than on religious sentiments inherent in Islamic doctrine. The propaganda messages are clearly designed for a Western audience, which by nature is more receptive to concise—and emotional—arguments.

The nature and purpose of these different messages is explained in his Preface, where:³⁹

...most of their [Al-Qa'ida's] writings and speeches neatly fit into two genres—religious exegesis, meant to motivate and instruct Muslims, and propagandist speeches, aimed at demoralizing the West and inciting Muslims to action.

Both Lawrence and Ibrahim's analyses are qualitative in nature; they do not attempt to examine Bin Ladin's statements in a systematically quantifiable manner. In 2008 James L. Payne, an independent analyst who previously "taught political science at Yale, Wesleyan, Johns Hopkins, and Texas A&M" conducted a quantitative content analysis of Bin Ladin's 24 statements compiled by Bruce Lawrence. His study found, "The topic that does appear on page after page, amounting to 72 percent of the total, is criticism of the United States and other Western countries for their aggression against Muslim lands and the need to defend against and punish this aggression."⁴⁰

Our research is not psychoanalytical, and we make no effort to determine bin Ladin's personal motivations for militancy. Instead we analyze what he is saying to his audiences. Furthermore, as explained in the next section, our methodology is quantitative and seeks to systematically analyze Bin Ladin's 49 publicly available statements between 1996 and 2011. Understanding of what kind of messages he uses to gain and maintain support for himself and his organization is important to policymakers and analysts seeking to counter bin Ladin's influence and improve relations with Muslim-majority countries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

As Scheuer argued in his interview with *Newsweek*, Western policy toward Muslim-majority states that keep its citizens politically and economically repressed is bin Ladin's *cause célèbre*. Similarly, terrorism expert Brynjar Lia finds al-Qa'ida's resonance with Muslims is due to three key reasons, the first being an effective core message:⁴¹

...al-Qaida has consistently rallied its followers around a simple populist pan-Islamic message, which is that "Islam is under attack", militarily, religiously, and economically. Al-Qaida focuses almost exclusively on the foreign or "crusader" occupation of Muslim land, foreign desecration of Islam's holiest places, and foreigners plundering the Islamic world's natural resources, especially oil.

We test Scheuer and Lia's assertions. Specifically, we ask, "Does Usama bin Ladin invoke policy grievances more often than religion to justify his belligerency," and to what degree does this change by intended audience?

In March 2008 we conducted a pilot study, compiling as many of bin Ladin's fully transcribed, English-translated, publicly available statements on the Internet since 9/11. We analyzed ten statements, dating from October 7, 2001 to January 19, 2006. Our initial results found Usama bin Ladin devoted a preponderant portion of words, 45.4% of our sample, discussing past and present policy grievances, and significantly less time, 9.9% employing religious justifications to justify his militancy.⁴²

In this paper we expand our dataset to 49 fully transcribed and English-translated statements attributed to Usama bin Ladin dated between 1996 and 2011. As far as we are aware, this is the largest open source and publicly available English-language compilation and analysis of his statements conducted so far. We chose this time period because it spans from the year when Usama bin Ladin issued his "Declaration of War" against the United States, Western states and allied Muslim-majority states to the present.

We focus solely on the statements of Usama bin Ladin, rather than other Muslim militant leaders. We analyze his statements from the perspective of political analysts, who assume Usama bin Ladin adhered to an ideology that mixes religion and politics.⁴³ Therefore, our focus is on the political and religious aspects of his statements.⁴⁴ It is outside the scope of this paper to analyze the rhetorical and literary aspects of bin Ladin's statements that may have additional persuasive impact on a target audience.⁴⁵

Though bin Ladin is not considered to be the most influential Muslim militant theorist or strategist,⁴⁶ we believe his statements are worthy of study for two reasons. First, contrary to previously accepted wisdom,⁴⁷ Bin Ladin had consistently maintained active operational control of Al-Qaeda.⁴⁸ As such, he continued to directly play an important role in international terrorist activities, up until his death

Second, irrespective of his operational abilities, Bin Ladin's iconic status as the most well-known symbol of violent opposition to the "Far Enemy" make his propaganda statements a valuable subject of inquiry. Muslims and some non-Muslims regard him as a charismatic individual based on accounts of his supposedly humble and pious lifestyle⁴⁹ and

undisputed eloquence.⁵⁰ Terrorism experts like Peter Berger argue that his persona is also an important factor in recruiting and mobilizing extremist Muslims to commit acts of violence:⁵¹

We underestimate bin Laden at our peril. His influence over al-Qaeda remains enormous - symbolically, strategically and tactically. His ability to stay alive and free is a great morale booster for al-Qaeda and its allies and allows the elusive leader to keep setting the agenda for the global jihadist movement.

Bin Laden's continued sway over that movement is undeniable. Three years ago, the Saudi government commissioned a study of militants in its custody, interviewing 639 extremists arrested before 2004 and another 53 arrested between 2004 and 2006. In both studies, Saudi officials told me, a majority of participants cited bin Laden as their most important role model.

Additionally, his alleged roles in the 1998 embassy bombings, the attack on the USS Cole, and 9/11 attacks make him perhaps the most well known terrorist personality around the world. These factors would make him a highly influential and effective media personality.

Though our study is systematic, it is not exhaustive. There are other statements that may not have been discovered by researchers. Also, some attributed statements may not publicly available because sources quickly change. For instance, terrorist or terrorist-sympathetic websites are frequently shut down but quickly reset themselves under different addresses.⁵² In other instances access to primary source material is limited due to deliberate efforts to block information gathering. Password requirements are a significant issue with terrorist or terrorist-sympathetic websites⁵³ while government agencies like the Open Source Center, have additional security requirements.⁵⁴

Our paper focuses on a textual content analysis of bin Ladin's statements. Some media literacy specialists have defined "text" to include, "...written or spoken words, pictures, graphics, moving images, sounds, and the arrangement or sequence of all of these elements."⁵⁵ However for the sake of methodological focus, we define "text" within the specific confine of this research, to mean transcribed words. We then classified sections of each statement into certain pre-determined categories.

We do not analyze accompanying visual imagery in any of the statements for three reasons. First, our methodological focus is on text. Second, most media produced by Muslim militants are written texts.⁵⁶ Third, words (including in their written form) convey bin Ladin's core message to its audience. Various other forms of communication, like visual imagery (depending on the imagery used), may enhance the persuasiveness of a message,⁵⁷ but they do not constitute it.⁵⁸

We have designed the methodology to be both objective^a and systematic.^b In compiling the total number of words in each transcribed statement explanatory words in

^a Objective because "...each step in the research process must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures." See Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 3.

parentheses “()” and/or brackets “[]” were removed to stick to a more “literal” English translation of bin Ladin’s words. We also removed any possible titles of subsections within the body of the texts to ensure the word count would not be accidentally skewed. Otherwise ambiguous or neutral statements are classified according to the context of the sentiment of the paragraph in which they appear, when that sentiment is unambiguous. Furthermore, as already stated, for the quantitative analysis we limited ourselves to analyzing the “manifest” content. We probe for more latent meanings in our “analysis of findings” section.⁵⁹

We classify the semantic content of the text into seven categories:

1. **Strategy:** Discussing the use of certain tactics and/or strategies against enemies.
2. **Policy Grievance-based Justification for Militancy:** Examples include “the Zionist occupation of Palestine”, “the Crusader forces in Iraq” “the disbelieving [*kafir*] American forces killing our women and children”, etc.
3. **Customary/Formal Usage of Religious Themes:** Religious phrases typically at the opening and closing of statements such as, “In the Name of God, The Compassionate, The Merciful” or a *Qur’anic* quote at the beginning or end of a statement.
4. **Religious Justification for Militancy:** Making religious arguments to justify attacking civilians and military forces. This includes scriptural justification (*Qur’an* and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad [*hadith*]), religious scholars’ religious rulings (*fatwas*), or asserting religious obligation such as, “it is a religious duty to join the jihad.”
5. **Non-militant Religious Appeal:** This is boosting morale, whipping up Muslims through references to their religious *identity* (rather than *piety*) or trying to degrade the morale of enemy or convert them to Islam. Some hypothetical examples are “O lions of Islam, join the jihad”, “You are the descendants of (insert names of Companions of the Prophet)”, “You Americans/Europeans/Westerners are immoral; come to Islam and leave your disbelief”, “Your disbelief has caused your suffering”, etc.
6. **Ambiguous:** These are cases in which religious justification and policy-grievance justification are mixed and there is no context to clearly resolve the ambiguity. A hypothetical example is, “It is the religious duty of every Muslim to liberate Jerusalem from the Zionist occupation”. Another is, “The regime must be fought for its apostasy of replacing shari’a with man-made laws.”⁶⁰ Otherwise ambiguous statements are classified as Religious Justification or Policy justification, based on the context of the sentiment of the paragraph in which they appear, when that sentiment is unambiguous.

^b Systematic because “...the inclusion and exclusion of content or categories is done according to consistently applied rules.” Ibid, p. 4. This not only includes possible evidence contrary to our thesis (to guard against bias), but also means defining categories that include such contrary evidence in order to quantify it.

7. **Other:** Anything not covered by the preceding categories. Examples include boasting of accomplishments, degrading enemy morale through non-religious, non-policy-centered rhetoric, etc

A summary of the database is provided in the Appendix.⁶¹ The texts are categorized by their dates, number of words, medium distributing the communication, and intended audience. Intended audience is broken down into four categories: **Muslim** (in general), **Irhabi** (those engaged in terrorist activities), **Western** (non-Muslim) and **General** (both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences). In the last column of the Appendix we introduce a parameter called the “**Justification Index (JI)**.”

A JI score is simply the number of words devoted to policy-grievance justification divided by the number devoted to religious justification a given statement. Statements containing twice as many policy-justification to religious-justification words will have JI rating of 2. On the other hand, statements containing half as many policy-to-religious justifications will have a 0.5 JI. The higher the justification index, the greater the reliance on policy to justify actions. A JI over 1.0 indicates a preference for policy justifications while a JI under 1.0 indicates a preference for religious justifications.

Another important term to define is “terrorism.” Trying to build a consensus for an objective definition of terrorism is difficult because of the subjectivity introduced by considerations of ideology, politics and power.⁶² Nevertheless, in order to provide analytical clarity of bin Ladin’s militancy and U.S. policy responses, we define terrorism as:⁶³

premeditated violence perpetrated against noncombatant civilian targets in order to create a climate of terror to advance the perpetrators’ political aims.

Finally we adopt the New Penguin English Dictionary definition of “medium” as “a channel or means of communication.”⁶⁴

A WORD ABOUT AUDIENCES

It is impossible to know empirically and with exact certainty to which audience bin Ladin intended to direct a particular message. Sometimes the media source is not a good indicator of the audience, especially when it comes from an Internet-based source like Al-Qa’ida’s own independent media production, Al-Sahab. One must also assume that terrorists know that, even if they address one audience, they will be heard by other audiences due to advances in communications technologies like the Internet. At the very least, terrorist websites are likely to have a Western audience of national intelligence agencies, non-public security organizations and academic observers.

Further, terrorists may be deliberately reaching out to multiple audiences, even if at face value they address only a single audience. Bin Ladin and other terrorists will frequently explicitly state their target audience, such as “To the People of the United States” or “To the Ummah”. However, as Rogan notes, “... messages with such titles may also contain material intended for other audience segments, and in many cases, the target audience consequently appears different than that communicated in the title.”⁶⁵

In our dataset we come across two cases where bin Ladin clearly addresses multiple audiences. The first example is December 29, 2007, which is classified as addressed to Irhabis. However despite the majority of the statement being directed to this specific group, certain portions of the text are also clearly addressed to a broader Muslim audience. The second example is March 1, 2009, which is classified as targeting broader Muslim audiences, but certain portions of the statement are specifically address to Irhabis.

Former FBI counterterrorism instructor Michael German goes a step further than Rogan’s analysis. He argues that whenever bin Ladin tried to make some kind of reconciliatory gesture or offer a cease-fire toward Western audiences, it is merely a façade. The purpose of such empty measures is not to enter into negotiations with Western governments—which he knows they will reject. His offers are really aimed at other terrorists, ideological sympathizers and fellow Muslims, by making himself look like the reasonable party and the Westerners as implacable aggressors.⁶⁶

Notwithstanding these complications, we use two methods to determine to whom bin Ladin is speaking. In some cases bin Ladin names his audience in the document, a “face value” indicator of whether or not he says his message is directly at a specific group of people. Absent that, we look at the source and see what audience the media primarily reaches. This is applicable mostly to certain regional newspapers and television stations, though not to all.⁶⁷ In most cases these two methods not only yield indications consistent with one another, but also with other indicators within the text.

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN RELIGIOUS APPEAL AND RELIGIOUS JUSTIFICATION

Central to our method of analyzing bin Ladin’s statements is making a distinction between religious appeal and religious justification. The difference between these two concepts can be summarized in the following hypothetical scenario:

Three people meet on the street, one poor and the other two rich. All three are Christians. The poor man needs money to feed himself and his family.

He approaches the first rich person and asks, “Ma’am, as my sister in Christ, can you please spare my family and me a dollar for some food?” The poor man then approaches the second person and asks, “Sir, our Lord taught ‘If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven...’⁶⁸ Can you please spare a poor man and his family some change for food?”

The first scenario is what we define as “religious appeal.” The poor man invokes a shared religious *identity*, to persuade the rich woman to give him and his family money. The second scenario is what we define as “religious justification.” Rather than invoking shared religious affiliation, he directly cites Biblical teaching to persuade the rich man to give him money, based on the rich man’s religious *piety*.

One might make the following objection to our distinction between religious justification and religion appeal. Consider two people standing before a television camera.

One is a layman and the other a bishop. Both talk only about the country's tax policies to a religious audience. Both say the exact same speech, verbatim. It is more likely the bishop will persuade to the audience rather than the layman. In this case, one might argue a distinction between religious appeal and religious justification is pointless.

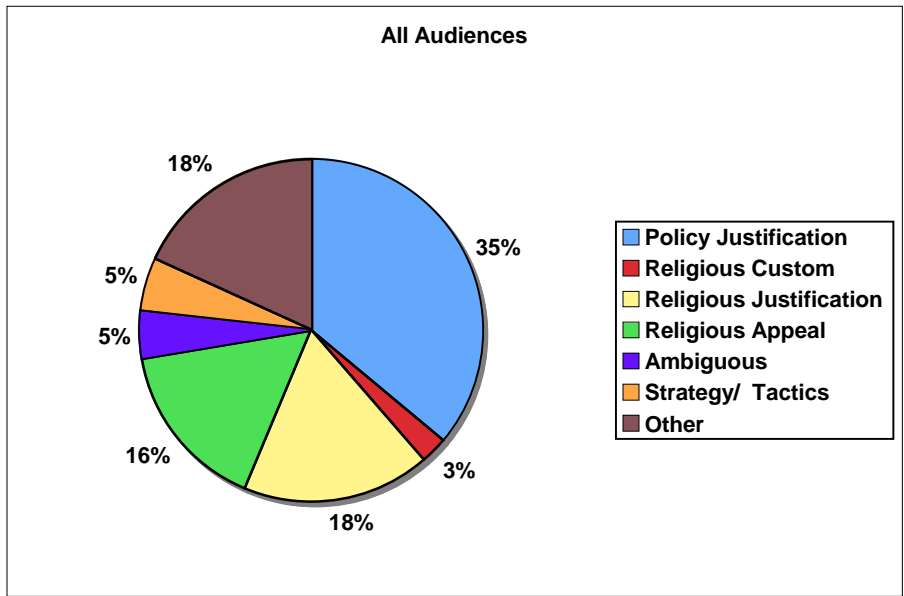
We find such a counter-example unpersuasive for several reasons. First, whether or not a person stands before his audience as a layman or a Bishop, it does not change the *content* of his statement, which is the subject of our investigation. The person is still talking about tax policy, not religious issues.

Second, while the greater credibility of a bishop over a layman involved both religious appeal and religious authority, Bin Ladin was not a religious cleric. While he does invoke a claim of religiosity that has some popular appeal, it does not change the fact that he lacks religious scholarly credentials on which the counter-example depends.⁶⁹ In fact, this has been a weakness that both mainstream clerics⁷⁰ and even other fundamentalists⁷¹ have used to criticize bin Ladin.

Third, any religious appeal bin Ladin may have made, whether by his persona, or in the content of his statements, is functionally distinct from the persuasive nature of religious (or policy) justifications. Bin Ladin never addressed questions of tax policy, but of personal risk of life and death in this world and even more extreme consequences in the hereafter. A person who violates Islamic restrictions on the use of force may face severe punishments in the afterlife.⁷² One choosing to undertake a morally ambiguous and physically hazardous action, like bin Ladin's cause, will need a strong justification for doing so. Justifications, rather than mere appeal, are needed to answer questions like "Why should I die in fighting in a foreign land?" "Where does it say in Islam I should kill the infidels?" "What will happen to me if I die while fighting?" before people will commit themselves to a cause that is risky to their physical and spiritual well-being.

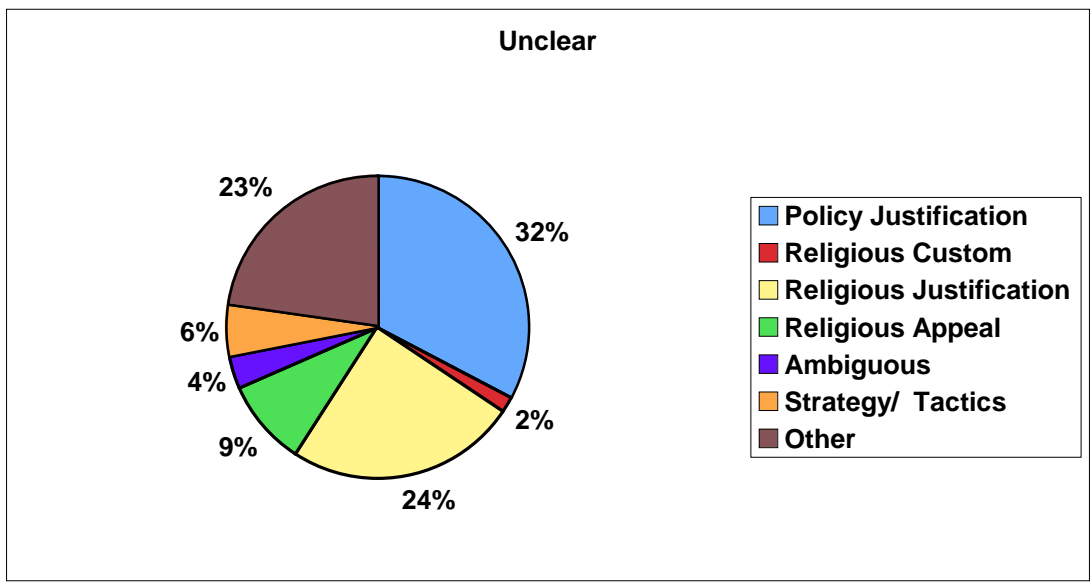
THE RESULTS

Our research covered 49 statements dated from 1996 to 2011 and totaling 124,571 words. Overall, we found Usama bin Ladin spoke about policy grievances the most, 36% of the time. Next came "other" at 18%, followed by religious justification and religious appeal, evenly split at 17% each. This means the ratio of policy grievance-justifying language to religion-based justifying language is nearly 2 to 1, that is, the Justification Index is slightly below 2.0.

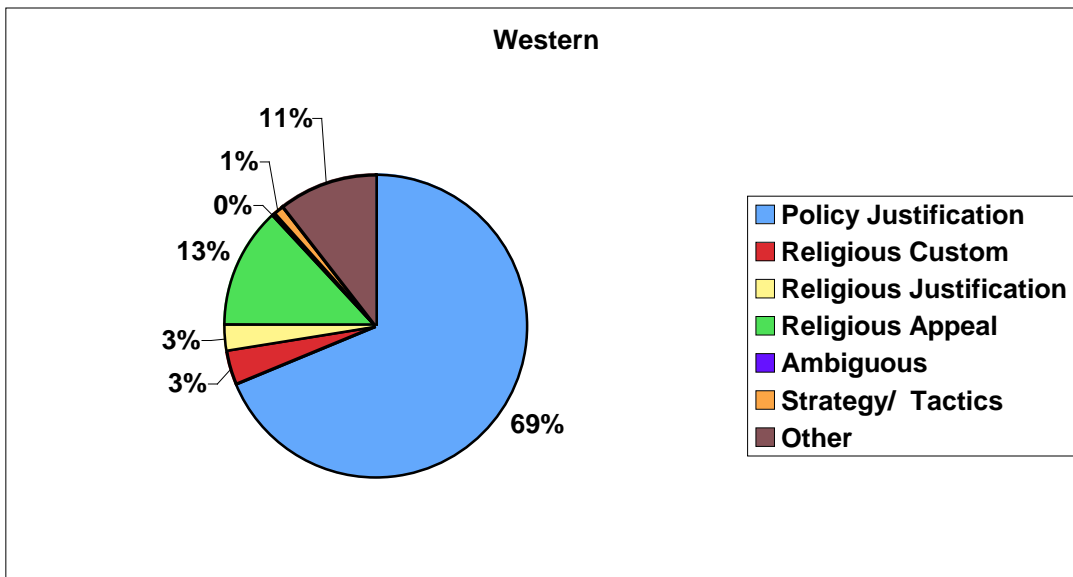


We then broke down our findings by audience. A plurality of bin Ladin’s statements appear to be addressed to Muslims in general (18%), followed closely by Westerners (16%), and Irhabis (8%). Seven % were unclear as to the target.

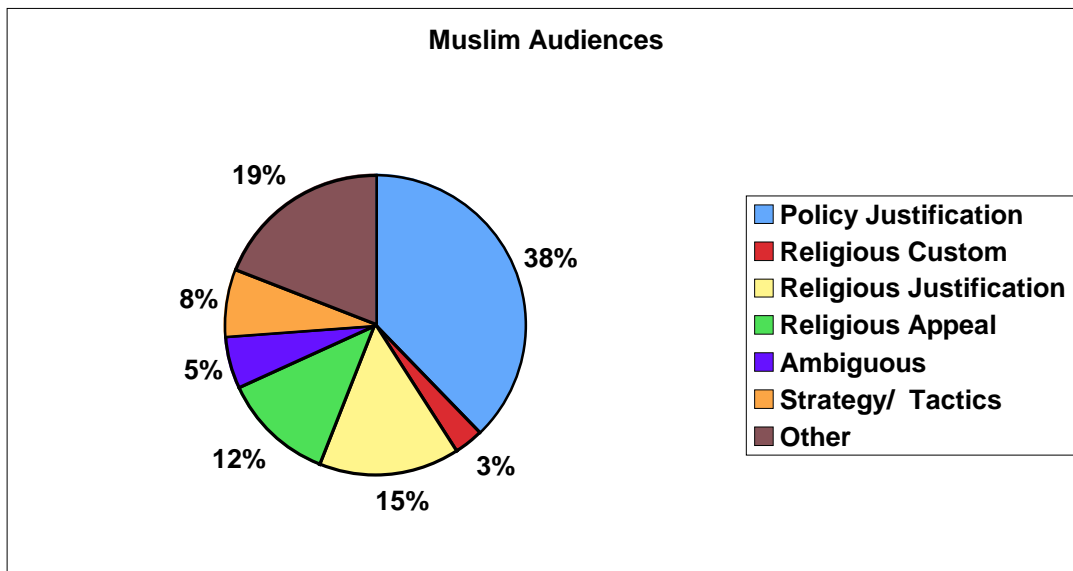
When addressing audiences classified as “Unclear,” bin Ladin spoke about policy justifications most of the time (32%), followed by Religious Justification (24%) and “Other” (23%). The Justification index is thus 1.3.



When speaking to Western audiences, bin Ladin overwhelmingly cited policy grievances in his speeches, 69% of his words. This is followed by Religious Appeal at 13%, Other at 11%, and Religious Justification at 3%. This represents a Justification Index rating of 22.6.

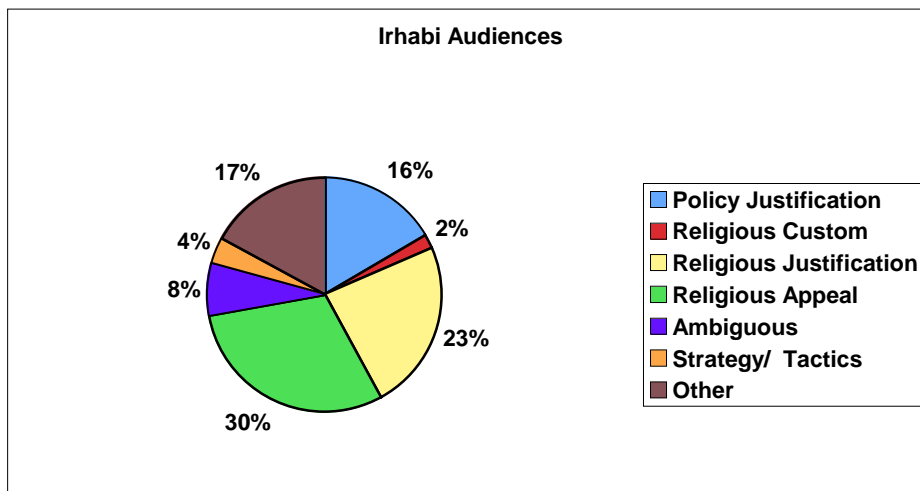


However, as already noted, the majority of statements in our dataset are directed at general Muslims. Even when directed at Muslims the majority of bin Ladin’s words focused on policy grievances. We find bin Ladin’s words focus on Policy Grievances, 38%, followed by Other at 19%, Religious Justification at 15%, Religious Appeal at 12% and Strategy and Tactics at 7%. **This represents a Justification Index score of 2.5.** This clearly contradicts claims that bin Ladin focused on religious justification (or “religious exegesis” as Raymond Ibrahim phrases it), more than policy grievances with Muslims.



With Irhabi audiences, religious justification plays a significantly larger role. In fact it is the only category where religious justifications are more prevalent than policy justifications. According to our findings, bin Ladin cited Religious Appeal the most, 30% of

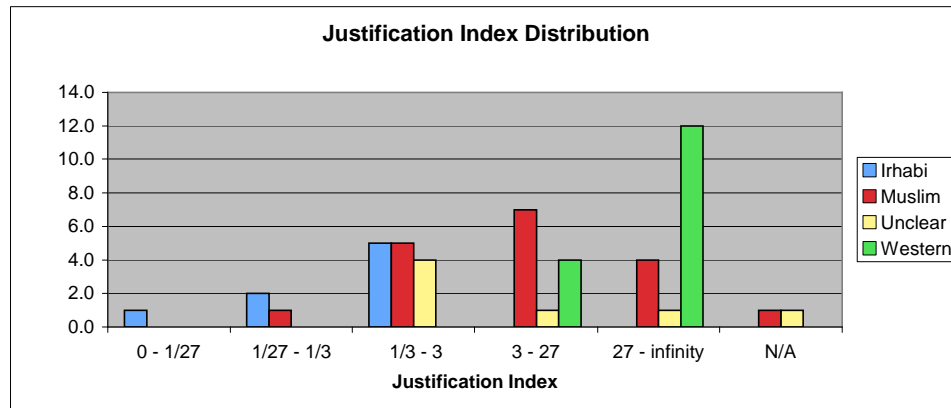
the time, followed by Religious Justification at 23%, Other at 17% and Policy Justification at 16%. This represents an overall JI of 0.7.



In order to ensure our findings were not skewed by a small number of statements containing a disproportionately large number of words, we examined the distribution of Justification Indices across all individual statements unweighted for word number. Out of the 47 statements in our dataset,^c only 10 had a JI score of 1.0 or less. In other words, slightly more than one-fifth (21.3%) of the total statements in our dataset had bin Ladin spending an equal or greater amount of time on religious justifications as opposed to policy justifications.⁷³

Furthermore we analyzed each category of statements based on their frequency and JI rating. This helps us to identify any communication trends toward specific audiences. This distribution would highlight any distortions demonstrating the degree of scatter within groupings according to intended audience. The result depicted in the histogram below clearly demonstrates bin Ladin's emphasis of policy justifications over religious justifications for violence.

^c Statements on 9/16/01 and 5/1/11 are not included in this analysis because both statements simultaneously lacked policy justifications and religious justification. The presence of at least one of these categories is required to provide a JI index rating.



The distribution of each category in this chart shows interesting trends. Irhabi audiences trend toward employing the least amount of policy-justification statements, yet even to this constituency a majority of his statements (5 out of 8, unweighted) have a JI score equal to or greater than 1.0. Western audiences have the highest average of policy justifications and in between are Muslim and unclear audiences.

Though presentations to Muslim audiences show a distribution of a lower JI score, this is due to the fact that the lowest scores in presentations to Muslim audiences occur in the shorter pieces (see Appendix). A graph with the distributions weighted by the number of words in each statement (instead of giving each statement equal weight) would push the distribution of statements to a Muslim audience to a higher range.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

As our results show, bin Ladin spent a preponderant amount of words discussing policy issues. Even when breaking down the data further along Muslim/Western lines, we find bin Ladin discussed policies more than any other subject in both cases. On the other hand, bin Ladin devoted a greater volume of words to policy grievances when speaking to Westerners (68%), as opposed to Muslims (40%). The lower percentage of policy justifications in statements toward Muslims, however is not indicative of “doublespeak.” In our view, the reason bin Ladin resorts to more religious language when speaking mainly to Irhabis is to maintain his base of support. This appears to indicate Bin Ladin was cognizant of the hostile marketplace of ideas he faced when reaching out to Muslims. This conclusion follows directly from several vulnerabilities afflicting bin Ladin. First, he lacks religious scholarly credentials. Thus he needs some defense against his second vulnerability: many prominent religious figures have denounced him.

A third vulnerability is that a majority of Al-Qa’ida (and its ideological affiliates’) victims are Muslims. In 2007 the State Department and National Counterterrorism Center found at least 50 percent of victims from Al-Qa’ida attacks were Muslims; such attacks included approximately 100 mosques being targeted.⁷⁴ A December 2009 report from West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center found at least 85 percent of Al-Qaeda’s fatalities occurred in Muslim-majority countries.⁷⁵ Non-U.S. government sources, such as Europe-based terrorism expert Rik Coolhaet, find, “A very rough estimate puts the number of Muslim victims since the start of the wave of jihadi terrorism in the early 90s at some 175,000 compared to some

4000 Western victims.”⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly this has upset many Muslims, as reflected in polls showing only a minority of Muslims now feel they are represented by bin Ladin.

A fourth vulnerability, bin Ladin and other terrorist ideologues face stiff competition from nonviolent Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. Such organizations employ religious justifications to effectively channel Muslims’ frustrations into peaceful political engagement and away from militant behavior. Therefore the Brotherhood, “. . . is viewed by Al-Qa’ida as one of the primary threats to its long term viability.”⁷⁷ Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that in a recent Q&A with the public, Al-Qa’ida deputy Ayman Al-Zawahiri spent a significant amount of time on criticizing the Muslim Brotherhood, although only 1% of all questions asked him were on that topic.⁷⁸

Bin Ladin employed religious justifications to protect himself from criticism by other Muslims as a matter of short and long-term viability. He must do this as a defensive act to compete with non-violent Islamists for his co-religionists’ hearts and minds. Failing to address his Muslim critics’ and rivals’ arguments would erode his base of support.

The statements ranked as unclear need to be considered individually, since we cannot be certain as to whom they are directed. It may be that such statements are intended for Western, Muslim and Irhabi audiences all at the same time. Two of them are alleged to be “fatwas.” Setting aside the fact that bin Ladin was not qualified to issue a fatwa, and accepting this designation at face value, we would expect fatwas, by their nature as a religious-judicial opinion to contain religious justifications.

Yet, the JIs of the two fatwas are 1.0 and 0.8 showing that even in these cases bin Ladin resorted almost as much to policy justifications as religious ones.⁷⁹ The shortest of the statements in the Unclear category contains no religious justification at all. A press interview had a high number of policy justification words (JI=4.8).⁸⁰ Two TV interviews had relatively low JIs of 1.5 and 0.9, yet even here the policy and religious justifications are roughly equal.

Given the predominance of policy justifications, it is far-fetched to explain new recruits’ motivations to enter into terrorist activities as being based on violent interpretations of Islam. If religion gets people to join his ranks, why not focus on that more than policy? It is also untenable to advance theories that scripturally Islam tends to be more violence prone than other religions.⁸¹ Beyond the empirical studies we cited earlier debunking this claim, the argument flies in the face of bin Ladin’s overwhelming preference for policy arguments over religious ones when he sought to persuade Muslims not already in his ranks.

Can this failure of religion-centered explanations of terrorism be resolved by hypothesizing the majority of Muslims are simply ignorant of their faith or not practicing it? Empirical indicators based on the World Values Survey, Pew Global and Gallup Polls all indicate Muslims have a high-level religiosity. If such a high number of religious Muslims are ignorant of the allegedly violent nature of their faith, one would expect bin Ladin to have spent more time on religious arguments than policy issues in order to educate them as to why the religion to which they are pre-disposed to favor his position.

One must wonder why then the majority of Muslims and religious leaders,⁸² and even some prominent militants,⁸³ oppose violence against civilians? At one point bin Ladin himself conceded, “Islam strictly forbids causing harm to innocent women, children, and other people. Such a practice is forbidden ever in the course of a battle.”⁸⁴ Bin Ladin never has repudiated this statement. Rather, he has grasped at increasingly thin reasons why non-combatants were not really innocent⁸⁵—that is, he made yet more policy-based arguments.

The evidence overwhelmingly points toward the use of policy justifications to recruit new followers because that is where any hope of persuasion lies. As noted earlier, polls indicate Muslims worldwide have very unfavorable views of Western foreign policy. Bin Ladin used this public opinion to his advantage for recruitment and other means of support.

This is not terribly surprising when one compares bin Ladin to other terrorists. Michael German finds this is a typical behavior of terrorists, regardless of ideological persuasion.⁸⁶

The Weather Underground’s “Declaration of a State of War” called for a Communist revolutionary struggle against “Amerikan imperialism,” the Creativity Movement’s *White Man’s Bible* included a “Declaration of Independence against Jewish Tyranny,” and al Qaeda issued a fatwa against the “crusader-Zionist alliance.” These documents all read like criminal indictments. The terrorists list the charges against their oppressor, just as the U.S. Declaration of Independence laid out the American colonists’ grievances against King George III.

However, comparing bin Ladin to violent White Supremacists, like the Creativity Movement, may give the sense the grievances he articulates are completely fictional. A policy-based response to bin Ladin’s propaganda requires an understanding of the degree to which his grievance claims are or are not based on historical reality. Developing such responses requires first knowing whether bin Ladin should be classified with what German⁸⁷ calls “legitimately motivated” terrorists, or “extremist terrorists.”

Legitimately motivated terrorists have well-defined political goals (typically based on protecting communal rights within a country or “a limited, well-defined, but disputed territory”). On the other hand, extremist terrorists are defined by broad political goals and aims, “...to enforce their ideologies throughout the world ... [who] speak of the utopian regimes they want to establish in broad, generalized terms—a new *Reich* or a new caliphate.”⁸⁸ *When examining bin Ladin’s statements, we find he is an extremist terrorist who overwhelmingly cited legitimate political issues to increase support for his organization.*

There is no doubt bin Ladin has made statements that would classify him as an extremist terrorist. For instance in an op-ed to the Rawalpindi-based *Nawa-i-Waqt*, bin Ladin argued for the establishment of a Global Islamic State.⁸⁹ He has also said in the past he fights against non-Muslims simply because of their different faith.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, he much more frequently cites policy justifications for his militancy, to all audience categories, by at least a 2 to 1 ratio and to Muslims by a 2.5 to 1 ratio. It is outside the scope of this paper to debate whether or not bin Ladin sincerely believed his arguments, including the policy justifications. As a militant leader and a charismatic and

eloquent man, bin Ladin knew the value of policy justifications in persuading his target audience to support his cause—whether he believes them or not.

Bin Ladin regularly cites a litany of perceived injustices against Muslims around the world by Western governments and their local allies. These include European imperialism's negative effects on Muslim social and political institutions and changes in the political boundaries of Muslim-majority states (such as the Sykes-Picot agreement). Such examples are well-documented and beyond dispute.⁹¹ However, even more questionable examples tend to have some basis in reality. Analyzing bin Ladin's invocation of UN sanctions against Iraq during the 90s, Bruce Lawrence found while bin Ladin exaggerated the impact of the sanctions, their devastating effects are nonetheless well known.⁹²

By invoking politics rather than religion, it seems bin Ladin is taking the advice of his senior strategists who learned from other radicals' earlier mistakes:⁹³

...Al-Qaida strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri...correctly observes that Muslims will not sacrifice their lives for the abstract notion of an Islamic utopian state. However they will die for Al-Aqsa, and they will sacrifice themselves for liberating Palestine or other countries under occupation such as Afghanistan or Iraq. Al-Suri's conclusion is that Muslims are deeply touched by anything that smacks of foreign occupation.

In other words, people are more willing to die for their people than for some abstract Islamic State. Not only have Al-Suri and bin Ladin seemed to learn from others' failures during the 70s to the early 90s, but they incorporated lessons from others' successes. During the anti-Soviet struggle of the 80s, Abdullah Azzam co-founded *Maktab al-Khidamat* (Services Bureau) with Usama bin Ladin. Bin Ladin gave financial support and ran military affairs while Azzam raised money abroad and gave speeches promoting the Afghan cause.⁹⁴

Azzam preached a type of militant pan-Islamism claiming it was the duty of all Muslims to fight wherever their co-religionists were militarily under attack.⁹⁵ His calls for foreign military assistance were based on an ideology emphasizing a pan-nationalist Muslim *identity*. The approach worked, quickly increasing the *Maktab's* number of foreign volunteers.⁹⁶ As terrorism analyst Thomas Hegghammer observes, "Pan-Islamism had mobilizing power because it was a macro-nationalism centered on the Muslim nation. Arabs went to Afghanistan not because they were extremely religious but because they were extremely nationalistic on behalf of the umma."⁹⁷

Bin Ladin seemed to have learned from Azzam's successes. Dealing with a hostile socio-political environment, crafting a messaging strategy largely shaped by certain historical lessons and lacking religious scholarly credentials, these three factors largely explain why bin Ladin has such a strong focus on political grievances.

It may also explain why bin Ladin spent a considerable amount of time making purely religious *appeals*, as opposed to religious *justifications*. In his context, it may be more appropriate to see his invocation of religious justifications as a subset of appeals to the (pan)"nationalism" of the *Ummah*. Providing religious justifications is meant to appeal to Muslims' religious *identity*, as much as, if not more than, their *piety*.

Returning to the JI distribution graph at the end of the previous section, the data shows a greater proportion of statements to Irhabis are majority-religious justification than any other category. **In other words, Bin Ladin religiously preached to the ideologically converted.**

Putting the JI distribution in the context of bin Ladin's vulnerabilities discussed earlier in this section and bin Ladin's overwhelming preference for invoking policy justifications, it appears religious justifications are not a means of obtaining new recruits, but instead meant to maintain the loyalty and morale of his followers.

It is only after bin Ladin had attracted recruits through an extensive pan-nationalist narrative centered on an oft-repeated and extensive litany of policy grievances, that his indoctrination method switched to a more explicitly scriptural and religious legal tone (i.e. religious justification). Nevertheless, as is consistent in all audience categories—including Irhabis—policy grievances are discussed the most. They are the lifeblood of bin Ladin's recruiting narrative and ideology.

Additionally, it is interesting to note our analysis of this study's findings fits well with the secular backgrounds of Muslims committing themselves to international terrorism. According to Marc Sageman's study of 500 Al-Qa'ida operatives, only 13% had any background in religious training. Sageman also notes about two-thirds of those in his dataset "grew up secular, in secular environments."⁹⁸ They only became religious after they became attracted to Al-Qa'ida's cause. Terrorists' religious knowledge tends to be extremely superficial, and revolves mostly around armed opposition to certain policy grievances.⁹⁹

Finally, we would like to highlight one audience for bin Ladin's statements we have not mentioned thus far and deserves special mention, and that is researchers such as ourselves. Like anthropologists and quantum physicists we need to be keenly aware that the process of observation can affect the outcome. This is demonstrated clearly by bin Ladin's speech of 6/3/2009, delivered just one year after publication a preliminary summary of this research project¹⁰⁰ and one month after its first presentation at an academic conference.¹⁰¹ Although titled a "Speech to the Pakistani Nation," the first half of the speech is atypical for one addressed to a general Muslim audience in that the first half is almost completely religious justification. In the middle it abruptly shifts gears to become mostly policy justification, but before concluding bin Ladin pointedly addresses Americans ("Before we come to the end, I have some words that I wish to address America with"), specifically mentioning, **"Some of the wise and righteous, at the research and investigative centers, as well as others like them, have looked into the reasons that encourage people to combat America and seek revenge against it, based on what I have relayed."** (emphasis added)

These words leave no doubt that bin Ladin was aware his words were being analyzed and suggests strongly that the statement in question is an outlier specifically so he can make the point that he can make religious justifications when he wants to. Nonetheless, in the end he returns to the standard pattern, decrying the fact that:

...no one from the representatives of the major corporations gives the slightest attention to what we have said to the White House. To this, I say the free men that carried out the 11th

of September will never taste the bitterness of oppression and eviction from their homes and their land, only to be sheltered in tents with very little to eat. Rather, those 19 heard what struck their brothers in Palestine in the form of American weapons and through Zionist hands.

The timing of this statement, its wording, and the way it differs from the rest of the data analyzed demonstrates the effect of the observer on the subject and underscores the importance of taking that impact into consideration. In this particular instance it does not change our conclusions, for despite his unusual attention to religious justification in an apparent attempt to refute those who say his action are not religiously justifiable, he nonetheless returned to focus on the fact that the motivations of those who follow him are policy-based.

CONCLUSION

We find that Usama bin Ladin focused primarily on policy arguments. We encourage policymakers to move away from simplistic cultural and religion-centric theories seeking to explain the political behavior of Muslims. We have no concern for political correctness, only with the fact that such theories do not withstand scientific scrutiny, yet form the theoretical basis for many current policies. We say, “let the data lead the discourse” and lead the policies too. Just as bin Ladin focused on policy in trying to incite Muslims against the West, the West must focus on policy if it wishes to improve its relationship with the Muslim world.

We also conclude by noting that greater access needs to be given to scholars researching open source material, particularly the Open Source Center (OSC). We find it odd the public is unable to directly research these materials since they are “open” and do not contain classified information. Arguments invoking national security for rendering OSC products inaccessible are strange.¹⁰² We believe our government and nation are strongest when government is transparent and open. An informed citizenry is the sword and shield of the Republic.

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APPENDIX: DATABASE SUMMARY

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Total Words</u>	<u>Type of Message</u>	<u>Media Source</u> ¹⁰³	<u>Primary Audience</u>	<u>Jl</u>
5/7/2001	881	Speech Transcript	<i>The News</i>	Irhabi	0.0
2/11/2003	2004	Videotape	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Irhabi	2.4
3/6/2003	7751	Friday Sermon	<i>Pro-Al-Qaeda Site</i>	Irhabi	1.0
5/6/2004	2735	Online Text	<i>Al-Qalab.net</i>	Irhabi	2.2
10/22/2007	5017	Personal Transcript	<i>Liveleak.com</i>	Irhabi	1.0
12/29/2007	7843	Online Transcript	<i>Alistishbad.wordpress.com</i>	Irhabi	1.4
10/18/2003 (a)	1518	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Irhabi	0.1
June '00	2678	Friday Sermon	<i>Supporters of Shari'a</i>	Irhabi	0.0
3/18/1997	3467	Newspaper Interview	<i>Pakistan</i>	Muslim	∞
1/7/2001	451	Newspaper Op-Ed	<i>Nawa-i-Waqt</i>	Muslim	0.2
9/24/2001	424	Text	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Muslim	5.4
9/28/2001	2197	Newspaper Interview	<i>Ummat</i>	Muslim	13.6
10/7/2001	713	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Muslim	∞
3/15/2002	1735	Online Text	<i>Jihad.net</i>	Muslim	11.2
10/14/2002	3434	Online Text	<i>Al-Qalab.net</i>	Muslim	2.6
11/28/2002	258	Online Text	<i>Pro Al-Qaeda Site</i>	Muslim	∞
1/4/2004	1971	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Muslim	∞
9/20/2007	3545	Online Transcript	<i>Al-Boraq.info</i>	Muslim	0.5
3/18/2008	3407	Online Transcript	<i>Arrahmah.com</i>	Muslim	17.4
3/22/2008	1402	Online Transcript	<i>Thinkingpoints.thengia.org</i>	Muslim	7.9
1/14/2009	3389	Online Transcript	<i>Arrahmah.com</i>	Muslim	1.7
3/1/2009	1624	Online Transcript	<i>Archive.org</i>	Muslim	3.0
3/14/2009	4929	Online Transcript	<i>Worldanalysis.net</i>	Muslim	1.8
May '98	3361	Newspaper Interview	<i>Pakistan</i>	Muslim	4.6
9/16/2001	9,881	Short Press Statement	<i>Afghan Islamic News Agency</i>	Unclear	N/A
10/2/1996	3140	"Fatwa"	<i>PBS & Various Media</i>	Unclear	1.0

11/27/1996	1029	Interview	<i>Al-Quds Al-Arabi</i>	Unclear	4.8
2/23/1998	102	"Fatwa"	<i>Al-Quds Al-Arabi</i>	Unclear	0.8
10/21/2001	6488	TV Interview	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Unclear	1.5
Dec '98	8898	TV Interview	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Unclear	0.9
10/6/2002	311	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Western	∞
10/26/2002	3817	Online Text	<i>Waaqiah.com</i>	Western	33.3
11/21/2002	653	Online Text	<i>Al-nida.com</i>	Western	8.1
4/15/2004	1086	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Arabiya/BBC</i>	Western	∞
10/29/2004	2306	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Western	∞
1/19/2006	1499	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Western	6.4
9/7/2007	4046	Online Transcript	<i>Alistishbad.wordpress.com</i>	Western	6.1
3/20/2008	752	Online Transcript	<i>Alistishbad.wordpress.com</i>	Western	7.8
5/16/2008	1278	Online Transcript	<i>Forums.islamicawakening.com</i>	Western	∞
10/18/2003 (b)	1026	Video Transcript	<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Western	∞
Dec '07	800	Online Transcript	<i>Alistishbad.wordpress.com</i>	Western	∞
6/3/2009	3,771	Speech Transcript	<i>NEFA Foundation</i>	Muslim	0.9
9/13/09	1,590	Speech Transcript	<i>Worldanalysis.net</i>	Western	∞
9/25/09	716	Speech Transcript	<i>Worldanalysis.net</i>	Western	∞
1/24/10	157	Speech Transcript	<i>NEFA Foundation</i>	Western	∞
2/17/10	1,669	Speech Transcript	<i>TheUnjustmedia.com</i>	Unclear	∞
10/27/10	348	Speech Transcript	<i>NEFA Foundation</i>	Western	∞
1/22/11	193	Speech Transcript	<i>Ansarullah.co.cc</i>	Western	∞
5/1/11	1924	Speech Transcript	<i>Ansarullah.co.cc</i>	Muslim	N/A

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For instance see: Lee Keath, "Obama Wins Praise from Many Muslims," *Associated Press*, April 8, 2009, http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2009/04/08/obama_wins_praise_in_muslim_world/?page=full (Last accessed 6/3/09); Genevive Abdo, "More Than Words." *Foreign Policy*, January 2009, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4650 (Last accessed 6/3/09).
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- ⁴ John Barry, "Our country is in trouble," *Newsweek*, February 13, 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/110937> (Last accessed 6/3/09).
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia.
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- ⁹ Ibid., p. 7.
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- ¹⁷ Andrew Blejwas, Anthony Griggs and Mark Potok, "Terror From the Right." *Intelligence Report*, Summer 2005, <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=549> (Last accessed 6/3/09); Website of Professor Nick Gier, "The Moscow Taliban: Chilling Parallels Between Christian and Muslim Fundamentalists." (University of Idaho: Nick Gier, No date), <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/ngier/parallels.htm> (Last accessed 6/3/09).
- ¹⁸ "We Have No Orders to Save You: State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat." *Human Rights Watch*, April 2002, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2002/india/> (Last accessed 6/3/09).
- ¹⁹ Website of Professor Nick Gier, "Buddhist Nationalism and Religious Violence in Sri Lanka." (University of Idaho: Nick Gier, No Date), <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/ngier/slr.htm> (Last accessed 6/3/09).
- ²⁰ A list, compiled from various sources, is attached as an appendix to this paper.
- ²¹ Esposito and Mogahed, "What Makes a Muslim Radical?" p. 2.
- ²² Mark Tessler, "Arab and Muslim Political Attitudes: Stereotypes and Evidence from Survey Research." *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 4, (2003), pp. 175-180.
- ²³ Dalia Mogahed, "The Battle for Hearts and Minds: Moderate vs. Extremist Views in the Muslim World." *Gallup World Poll*, November 2006, http://www.muslimwestfacts.com/mwf/File/109477/Mainstream_Extremist_Views.pdf, pp. 1-3. (Last accessed 6/3/09).
- ²⁴ Fares al-Braizat, "Muslims and Democracy: An Empirical Critique of Fukuyama's Culturalist Approach." (World Values Survey, November 13, 2003), http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/Upload/5_Islamdem_2.pdf, pp. 15-27. (Last accessed 6/3/09).
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- ²⁷ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. (Touchstone: New York, NY, 1997), p. 258.

- ²⁸ Indra de Soysa and Ragnhild Nordas, "Islam's Bloody Innards? Religion and Political Terror, 1980-2000." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, (2007), pp. 927-943. While the IPRI study ends just before 9/11 it is important to note the salient effect U.S. counterterrorism policy, particularly the invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, likely had in inspiring further terrorist attacks in the post-9/11 period. See: "Terror Attacks Worldwide Rose 25 Percent in 06." *Associated Press*, (April 30, 2007). Available at: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18399660/ns/world_news-terrorism/t/terror-attacks-worldwide-rose-percent/#.ToE8bK6KbGE.
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- ³² Hanna Rogan, "Al-Qaeda's Online Media Strategies: From *Abu Reuter* to *Irbabi 007*." *Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt* (Kjeller, Norway: Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, December 1, 2007), p. 12.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ³⁴ Gabriel Weimann, "WWW.TERROR.NET: How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet." (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, March 2004), p. 3.
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- ³⁶ Weimann, "www.terror.net", p. 5-11; See also: Timothy L. Thomas, "Al-Qa'ida and the Internet: The Dangers of 'Cyberplanning.'" *Parameters*, (Spring 2003), p. 114-122.
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- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xii.
- ⁴⁰ James L. Payne, "What Do the Terrorists Want?" *The Independent Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2008), p. 31.
- ⁴¹ Brynjar Lia, "Al-Qaida's Appeal: Understanding its Unique Selling Points." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 2, No. 8, (May 2008), p. 3.
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- ⁵⁶ Rogan, "Al-Qaeda's Online Media Strategies", p. 55; Daniel Kimmage, "The Al-Qaeda Media Nexus: The Virtual Network Behind the Global Message." (Washington D.C.: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 2008), p. 1, 19.
- ⁵⁷ Tessa Jolls and Elizabeth Thoman, *Literacy for the 21st Century: An Overview and Orientation Guide to Media Literacy Education*. (Malibu, CA: Center for Media Literacy, 2008), p. 56; Punam Anand Keller and Lauren G. Block, "Vividness Effects: A Resource Matching Perspective." *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 24, (December 1997), pp. 295-304. For an empirical critique of the enhanced persuasiveness of visual imagery with messaging, see: Shelley E. Taylor and Suzanne C. Thompson, "Stalking the Elusive 'Vividness' Effect." *Psychological Review*, Vol. 89, (March 1982), p. 155-81.
- ⁵⁸ Jolls and Thoman devise their media literacy curriculum by separating words from other non-verbal, non-written forms of communication, see: Jolls and Thoman, *Literacy for the 21st Century*, pp. 56, 58, 62.
- ⁵⁹ Holsti, *Content Analysis*, p. 12-13.
- ⁶⁰ The policy component of this latter example lies in the fact that such changes in laws and legal institutions were forcibly imposed on the society during colonial and immediate post-colonial periods of Muslim history. See: Wael Hallaq, "Juristic Authority vs. State Power: The Legal Crises of Modern Islam." *Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2003-2004), pp. 243-258. If the context of such a statement unambiguously refers to that imposition on an unwilling populace, the sentence would be classified as policy-motivated, but if in the context of a call to institute a particular interpretation of Islamic law through the coercive power of the state, then it would be classified as a religious justification.
- ⁶¹ An Excel summary spreadsheet of the data on which this paper is based is available on the Minaret of Freedom Institute website at: <http://minaret.org/UBI.datasummary.xls>.
- ⁶² David J. Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader*. Ed. 2nd edition. (Routledge: New York, NY, 2003), pp. 4-13.
- ⁶³ Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, "A Plea for a Consistent Definition of Terrorism," Minaret of Freedom Institute Blog, Entry posted August 15, 2007, <http://blog.minaret.org/?p=394> (Last accessed 6/3/09).
- ⁶⁴ *The New Penguin English Dictionary*. Ed. Robert Allen. (Penguin Books: New York, NY: 2000).
- ⁶⁵ Rogan, "Al-Qaeda's Online Media Strategies", p. 107.
- ⁶⁶ Michael German, *Thinking Like a Terrorist: Insights of a Former FBI Agent*. (Washington, D.C. : Potomac Books, 2007), p. 102.
- ⁶⁷ In our database, the notable exceptions were Al-Quds Al-Arabi and Al-Jazeera (Arabic), both of which have a Pan-Arab slant and are believed to have a significant non-Arab, non-Muslim Western audience.
- ⁶⁸ Matthew 19:21, *King James Bible*, <http://bible.cc/matthew/19-21.htm> (Last accessed 6/12/09).
- ⁶⁹ Noah Feldman, "Becoming bin Laden," *New York Times*, February 12, 2006, http://www.lawandsecurity.org/get_article/?id=45 (Last accessed 6/3/09);
- ⁷⁰ For instance, see: "Coming Together," *Economist*, July 28, 2005, http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=52&Itemid=64 (Last accessed 6/3/09).

⁷¹ They include figures like Saudi Scholar Muhammad Ibn Hadi al-Madkhali and the now-deposed Taliban leader Mullah Omar. See: “Taliban Annuals bin Laden Fatwas Against U.S.” *IslamOnline.net*, Jun 17, 2001, <http://www.islamonline.net/english/News/2001-06/19/article14.shtml> (Last accessed 6/3/09); Abul-Hassan Malik, *In Defense of Islam*. (Toronto, ON: TROID Publications, 2002), p. 97.

⁷² For instance, see: Sherman A. Jackson, “Domestic Terrorism in the Islamic Legal Tradition.” *Muslim World*, Vol. 91, No. 3/4, (Fall 2001), p. 193-211.

⁷³ See the accompanying spreadsheet to this article, with all of the summarized data on the Minaret of Freedom Institute website. An Excel summary spreadsheet of the data on which this paper is based is available on the Minaret of Freedom Institute website at: http://minaret.org/UBI_datasummary.xls.

⁷⁴ Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson, “Highlighting al-Qaeda’s Bankrupt Ideology.” *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, May 7, 2008, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2836> Last accessed 6/10/09.

⁷⁵ Muhammad al-Obadi, Nassir Abdullah, and Scott Helfstein, “Deadly Vanguard: A Study of Al-Qa’ida’s Violence Against Muslims.” *Combating Terrorism Center*, (December 1, 2009). Available at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/deadly-vanguards-a-study-of-al-qaidas-violence-against-muslims>.

⁷⁶ Rik Coolsaet, “Jihadi Terrorism – Where do we Stand?” *2nd IRRRI Conference on International Terrorism*, (February 13, 2006). Available at: <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/speechnotes/06/060213-jihad.terr/coolset.htm>.

⁷⁷ Jarret Brachman, Brian Fishman, and Joseph Felner, “The Power of Truth? Questions for Ayman Al-Zawahiri.” *Combating Terrorism Center*, April 21, 2008, http://ctc.usma.edu/questions/CTC-Power_of_Truth_4-21-2008.pdf, p. 25. Last accessed 6/10/09. Also see: Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood.” *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2007), pp. 107-121; Marc Lynch, “Jihadis and the *Ikbwan*.” In *Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions Within Al-Qa’ida and its Periphery*. Eds. Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman. (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy Combating Terrorism Center, 2010), P. 155-182.

⁷⁸ Brachman, Fishman and Felner, “The Power of Truth?,” p. 3.

⁷⁹ Those statements are dated 10/2/96, 2/23/98.

⁸⁰ Statement dated 11/27/96.

⁸¹ For instance see: Raymond Ibrahim, “Bin Laden’s Latest Message in Context.” *Middle East Strategy at Harvard*, December 6, 2007, http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/bin_laden_in_context/ (Last accessed 6/3/09); Raymond Ibrahim, “Islam’s War Doctrines Ignored.” *Middle East Strategy at Harvard*, May 29, 2008, http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/05/islams_war_doctrines_ignored/ (Last accessed 6/3/09).

⁸² For a list of prominent Muslims denouncing bin Laden, terrorism, the 9/11 attacks and theological excommunication of other Muslims, see: “Muslim Voices Against Extremism and Terrorism,” *The American Muslim*, June 1, 2007, http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/muslim_voices_against_extremism_and_terrorism_2/, (Last accessed 6/3/09); “American Muslims and Scholars Denounce Terrorism.” (Muslim Public Affairs Council, September 9, 2002), <http://www.mpac.org/article.php?id=57>, (Last accessed 6/3/09); “The Amman Message,” (The Amman Message, July 2005), <http://ammanmessage.com/>; Website of Charles Kurzman, “Islamic Statements Against Terrorism,” (University of North Carolina, March 20, 2008), <http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/terror.htm> (Last accessed 6/3/09).

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⁸⁴ “‘Exclusive’ Interview With Usama bin Laden on 11 Sep Attacks in US.” *Ummat*, Sept. 28, 2001.

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⁸⁶ German, *Thinking Like a Terrorist*, p. 38.

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⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 133-34.

⁸⁹ “Daily Prints Usama bin Laden ‘Letter’ Calling for ‘Global Islamic State.’” *Nawa-i-Waqt*, January 7, 2001.

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⁹¹ For instance, see: Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr, “European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States.” in John L. Esposito, Ed. *The Oxford History of Islam*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 549-599.

⁹² Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, p. xix.

⁹³ Lia, “Al-Qaida’s Appeal”, p. 3.

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⁹⁸ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, p. 51, 52.

⁹⁹ See: Marc Sageman, “Jihad and 21st Century Terrorism.” Presentation at the New America Foundation, February 25, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWcH5sDHzPQ> (Last accessed 6/10/09).

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