

The Jihadist Revolt Against Al Qaeda

Presentation by Paul Cruickshank
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- 1) Observations on Jihadist Revolt against Al Qaeda
- 2) How Jihadist Critique has played out in UK.
- 3) Short video on a British Jihadist Recruit who turned against Al Qaeda.

i) Jihadist Criticism of AQ not new

Jihadist movement over years has been **very amorphous**: different ideologies/aims/attitudes towards violence.

- Abdullah Azzam opposed Zawahiri goal of extending Jihad to topple regimes in Muslim countries.
- Muslim Brotherhood's Cairo leadership have been consistent critics of Al Qaeda's "Global Jihad."

That global effort announced in 1998 with formation of "World Islamic Front" to target United States and allies but name of group is a misnomer.

Few Jihadist groups signed on (e.g. Gamma Islamiya opposes; many leave Zawahiri's group).

Up next: Noman Benotman,
early e.g. of Jihadist Critic

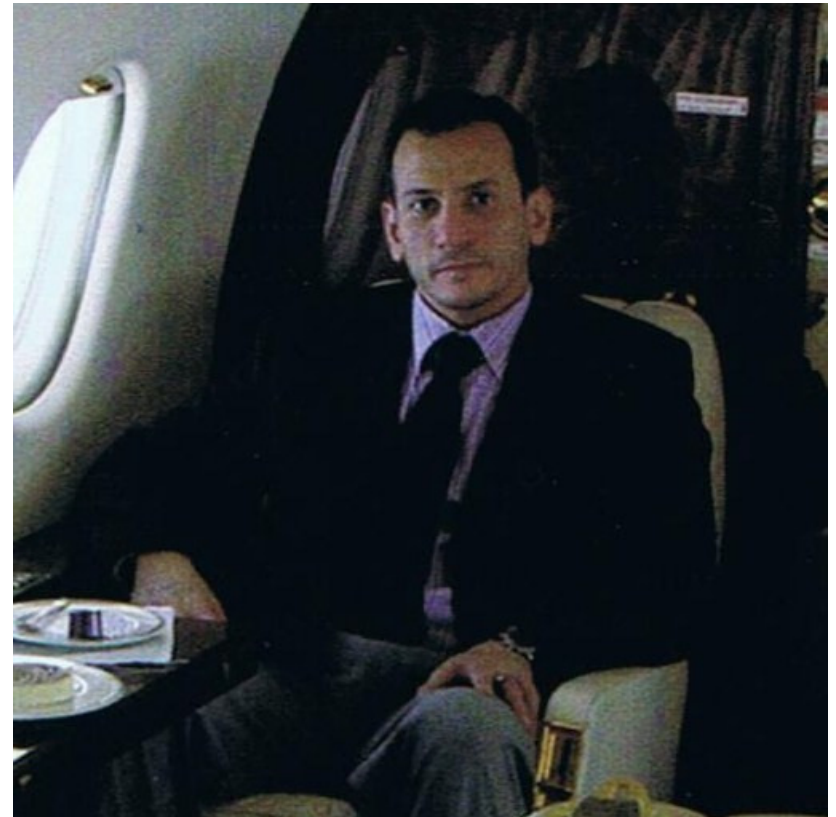
Noman Benotman, early Jihadist Critic

Leading figure in Jihadist Movement; Fought with Bin Laden in 90s. A leader of LIFG until 2002.

Criticized Bin Laden at Kandahar 2000 Jihadist Summit.

- 1) Jihad vs. US = counterproductive
- 2) Al Qaeda's indiscriminate campaign of violence losing it support: "The Jihadist Movement has failed because we have not mobilized the people."

9/11: Shocked at Qaeda targeting of civilians---not a legitimate form of Jihad.



Up next: Iraq War Delays Critique

ii) Iraq war stops Jihadist Critique in tracks.

The war in Iraq - “a cause célèbre in Jihadist circles” - made it difficult for even former Jihadists to criticize Al Qaeda.

Civilian casualties in Afghanistan also created anger and were exploited by Al Qaeda.

(e.g. of Abdullah Anas)



Up Next: Al Qaeda's Violence becomes too much

Finally, a Jihadist Critique emerges.

Al Qaeda's escalating violence produces backlash.

After 2003 Al Qaeda extends campaign to Muslim countries. Most victims are Muslims incl. 10,000 in Iraq

Zarqawi Violent "TAKFIRI" approach became increasingly popular with Al Qaeda rank and file.

RESULT: several leading figures in jihadist movement publicly repudiate Al Qaeda in 2007.

Benotman Open Letter to Zawahiri:

- "[you are] damaging the image of Jihad [by] turning it into merely a terrorist, violent tactic."
- Western civilians are blameless and should not be attacked.



Up Next: Significance of Critique

iii) Significance of Jihadist Critique

Mainstream Muslims Clerics have been consistently critical BUT don't have influence over radical-leaning Muslim youth. Conversely, Jihadist Critics have **credentials/street** cred to make criticisms bite.

A KEY POINT HERE: Anger/ Foreign policy grievances alone don't explain why youngsters are recruited by Al Qaeda. Youngsters must be convinced Al Qaeda fighting **Holy War**. Jihadist Critics directly take on this theological construct when they state that Qaeda's Jihad is illegitimate.

Youngsters won't become suicide bombers if they have **doubts** over rewards.

Up Next: Impact of Critique in UK

2) Impact of Jihadist Critique in the UK

Stakes are High in the UK

More Al Qaeda supporters in UK than any other Western country.

MI5: 2000 pose national security threat because of support for Qaeda.

IRAQ WAR increased pro Qaeda sentiment in UK.

Pro-Al Qaeda groups still operating e.g. Al Muhajiroun.

UK Qaeda Recruits, trained in Pakistan are #1 threat to United States (2006 Airline Plot)



Abdullah Ahmed Ali,
Al Qaeda "Airline Plot" British Ringleader

Up Next: UK Backlash vs. Qaeda

UK Backlash vs. Al Qaeda

JULY 7 + AL QAEDA'S KILLING OF MUSLIMS AROUND WORLD PRODUCES BACKLASH.

Violence means small hardcore group more energized...but also more isolated:

Many who had some sympathy for Al Qaeda have turned against them.

Moderates are bolstered by having former Jihadists lined up alongside them.

MUSLIM COMMUNITY NOW WAKING UP TO THREAT

Jihadist critics key to this effort because can influence radical-leaning young Muslims. Evidence they are having impact:

Al Oudah large following in the UK --- addresses 22,000 in speech critical of Al Qaeda in east London in 2006.

“Al Muhajiroun” meetings half empty:

Choudhary: finding it difficult to get youngsters to attend.

Up Next: UK's Pragmatic Approach

British Pragmatism against Al Qaeda

Brits have taken advantage of Jihadist Criticism of Al Qaeda

Finally, a tough approach towards pro-Al Qaeda preachers (e.g. Abu Hamza).

BUT engagement with former Jihadists, Islamists and Salafists who oppose Al Qaeda.

Aim is to isolate violent extremists.

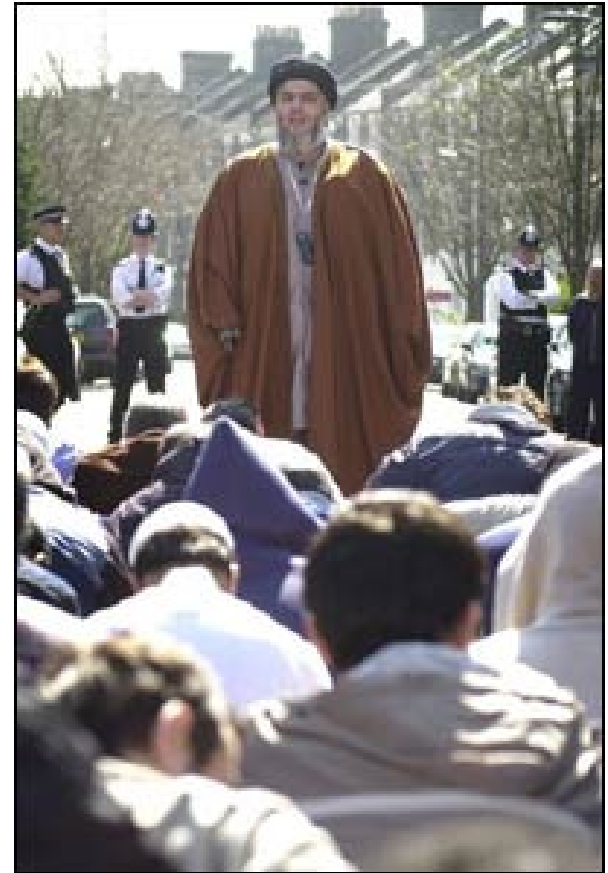
Controversial but appears to have paid dividends.

MAB (M.Bro group) and police worked together to turn around Finsbury Park mosque.

Lambert: “social welfare work and track record on Palestinian cause give MAB street cred.”

Metropolitan Police also work with **Salafist Mosques** e.g. Brixton.

Salafists can be effective at countering Al Qaeda theologically because of their knowledge of Salafist texts.



Abu Hamza outside
Finsbury Park Mosque ©BBC

Up next: Hanif Qadir Video

**3) VIDEO PRESENTATION:
DATELINE NBC ON HANIF QADIR**

Taking on Al Qaeda: Hanif Qadir

As reported in TNR, some of most effective counter-radicalization work in London currently being carried out by Hanif Qadir, who was once himself recruited by an Al Qaeda recruiter.

Here is a Dateline NBC video presentation, which I co-produced that tells his story.

Like many other Muslims, when he saw Al Qaeda's tactics up close, he was repelled.

British Home Office praise Qadir's efforts but there are only so many Hanif Qadirs

