Open Source Center   MONITOR 360   CSCC
Center for Strategic Counterterrorism
Communications
A U.S. Interagency Initiative

MASTER NARRATIVES

SPECIAL REPORT:

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda Master Narratives and Affiliate Case Studies: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

September 2011

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Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

Understanding master narratives can be the difference between analytic anticipation and unwanted surprise, as well as the difference between seizing opportunities to undermine adversary messaging and letting those opportunities pass by. Master narratives are the historically grounded stories that reflect a community's identity and experiences, or explain its hopes, aspirations, and concerns. These narratives help groups understand who they are and where they come from, and how to make sense of unfolding developments around them. Master narratives often emerge naturally over time as a community discovers and defends its shared identity. Governments, influencers, and non-state actors can also create master narratives in their efforts to persuade target audiences to support political platforms, reject opposing viewpoints, or take up arms for a cause. Like political, social, and religious leaders, violent extremist organization communicators promulgate their own master narratives in an attempt to discredit adversaries while attracting new recruits. Understanding these master narratives presents US communicators and analysts with the challenge of placing themselves in the mindset of an extremist communicator or sympathizer, and recognizing that foreign audiences may be susceptible to believing carefully crafted stories that—from an American vantage point—may appear conspiratorial and outlandish.

This report is part of a multi-phase effort spearheaded by the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), Open Source Center (OSC), and Monitor 360: its objective is to use master narratives to reveal strategic communications opportunities that can help combat and undermine al-Qaeda (AQ) messaging.* This report represents a first step in that effort by surfacing and articulating six critical AQ master narratives and detailing how those master narratives are used by two case study AQ affiliates: al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This report follows a consistent structure for articulating these narratives, assesses how AQAP and AQIM communicators use them, and analyzes the dynamics and forces that might impact how these narratives evolve over time. For seasoned AQ experts, these narratives will already be familiar — the content contained in this report can be used to check assumptions, surface tacit knowledge, and aid customer communications. For newcomers to AQ messaging and counter-messaging operations, these narratives offer deep insights into the stories used by AQ communicators in their messaging and recruitment efforts. Following this study, two additional reports will surface and articulate the master narratives held by audiences in Yemen and Algeria — critical fronts for AQAP and AQIM, respectively. A fourth report will focus on opportunities for US communicators. The figure on the following page outlines how these reports combine to surface new, actionable opportunities for US communicators.

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*Throughout this report, "AQ" generally refers to master narratives and messaging promulgated by AQ Senior Leaders such as Ayman al-Zawahiri. Because the master narratives outlined in this report are primarily drawn from senior leadership messaging, these master narratives appear with varied frequency across affiliate messaging. These variations are addressed in the Affiliate Level Analysis that accompanies each master narrative profiled in the report.

About the Master Narratives Platform

This report is part of the master narratives platform, a collaboration between Open Source Center, Monitor 360, and other partners across the US Government. The master narratives platform is focused on surfacing and articulating master narratives across a range of important geographies. These insights can be used to better understand critical audience segments and key influencers, build analytic capabilities, and develop actionable messaging and counter-messaging strategies. To learn more about the master narratives platform and how it can be applied to your mission, contact Joe N at the Open Source Center at **JoeN@rccb.osis.gov**.

PHASE I: AQ MASTER NARRATIVES
Report will surface AQ master narratives and analyze how AQAP and AQIM variants of these master narratives appeal to local audiences
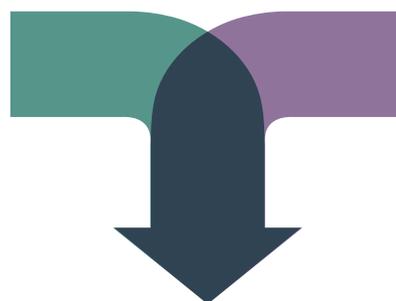
PHASE II: LOCAL MASTER NARRATIVES
Two master narrative country reports will reveal the worldviews and beliefs of a robust array of local audience segments in Yemen and Algeria

PHASE III: INFORMING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
Report will integrate Phases I and II insights to map the intersection between AQ master narratives and local master narratives, revealing actionable opportunities for countering AQ messaging

THE MASTER NARRATIVES

The table below summarizes the six master narratives highlighted in this report. The condensed narrative description simulates the voice of someone who believes in the narrative itself, helping communicators and analysts immerse themselves in the mindset of the adversary organization and their sympathizers.

Master Narrative	Condensed Master Narrative A description of the master narrative as it might be articulated by an AQ communicator or sympathizer	Core Narrative Themes
War on Islam	From the earliest days of Islam, infidels have conspired against Muslims. Today, enemies on all sides surround the *umma*: from foreign infidel troops to those who try to weaken Muslims by promoting the lies of a "moderate" Islam. Muslims must take up arms alongside their fellow *mujahidin* and prepare themselves for the call to jihad.	Enemy Encirclement, Conspiracy, Humiliation
Agents of the West	Islam's earliest leaders were distinguished by their passion for Sharia, rejection of excess, and love for jihad. Today, hypocrite rulers betray the legacy of these model leaders, following Western masters, ignoring Sharia, stealing their peoples' wealth, and spreading idleness. The *umma* must awaken from its slumber and free itself from corruption and oppression.	Conspiracy, Apostasy, Corruption
The Nakba	Israel is an abomination on Muslim holy land. This *nakba* (catastrophe) persists to this day, with a holocaust in Gaza being covered up by false peace treaties and secularist Arab leaders. Muslims everywhere must rectify this humiliation and restore the Blessed Land to its rightful people. Through this struggle, Muslims will ensure retribution for the great injustice perpetrated against the *umma*.	Humiliation, Tragedy, Justice, Occupation, Oppression
Violent Jihad	While Muslims have always sought peace, the Prophet and his companions never shirked their duty to fight. In the face of oppression, however, the *umma* and its *ulema* (scholarly leaders) have put money and stability before God and religious obligation. Muslims are faced with a choice: let the house of Islam burn to the ground or rise up to defend it.	Survival, Duty and Obligation, Retaliation
Blood of the Martyrs	During the time of the Prophet, mujahidin readily plunged into battle against the enemies of Islam, steadfast in the face of death. Over time, however, the *umma* lost sight of the fact that the road to victory is paved with the blood of martyrs. Muslims must now rekindle their commitment to self-sacrifice against Islam's enemies.	Obligation, Self-sacrifice, Righteous Cause
Restoring the Caliphate	The creation of an Islamic Caliphate turned lost desert tribes into leaders and scholars of monotheism. After centuries, however, Western scheming and attacks divided the *umma* into a multitude of torn pieces, and traitorous Muslim rulers allowed the Caliphate to be destroyed. With their blood and arms, Muslims can rebuild the Caliphate brick by brick, putting an end to injustice and suffering, and restoring the *umma* to its magnificent glory.	Restoration, Revival, Unity, Victory, Rebuilding

KEY FINDINGS

Primary research and interviews with 25 subject matter experts (SMEs) demonstrated that the AQ master narratives outlined here make up a unified, self-reinforcing, and enduring communications system designed to promulgate AQ ideology while answering key questions relevant to AQ's global mission. The graphic below maps the six master narratives analyzed in this report to critical questions that AQ communicators aim to answer in their messaging. Recognizing the relationship between each of these master narratives and these questions can help US communicators and analysts identify opportunities to better understand or undermine core elements of AQ messaging and recruitment efforts.

What is the state of the *umma* and who are its enemies?	What must Muslims everywhere do in response?	What will victory achieve?
▪ War on Islam ▪ Agents of the West ▪ The Nakba	▪ Defensive Jihad ▪ Blood of the Martyrs	▪ Restoring the Caliphate
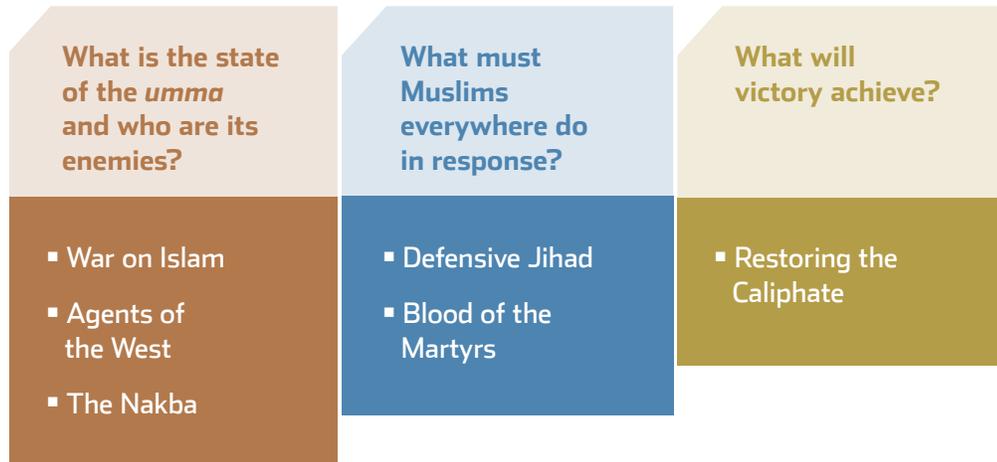
What is the state of the *umma* and who are its enemies?

These master narratives lay out the external threats confronting the *umma* today. They draw on a long list of historical and contemporary grievances to depict the global *umma* as under siege and in need of defense. Further, they reflect the most significant and damning accusations AQ communicators levy against outside adversaries, including the United States.

What must Muslims everywhere do in response?

These master narratives model what is expected of Muslims in response to persistent existential threats facing the *umma*. Together, these master narratives represent a call to action that may play a role in AQ recruitment efforts. Further these narratives stand apart in that they direct accusations and criticism inward toward the *umma* itself, alleging that the *umma's* failure to embrace the obligations of jihad and martyrdom is in part to blame for the suffering of Muslims today.

What will victory achieve?

This master narrative explains AQ's greatest objective: the restoration of a global Islamic Caliphate under Sharia rule. By depicting an idealized system of governance modeled after the earliest days of Islam, AQ communicators offer potential recruits or supporters a chance to satisfy a sacred duty, be a part of rebuilding Islam's glory, and freeing the *umma* from oppression, poverty, and corruption—at local, national, or international levels.

Collectively, these master narratives present target audiences with a clear and structured argument: a problem is laid out in clear terms and with high stakes, a course of action is prescribed, and a reward is offered to those who take action. The narratives emphasize themes of shared humiliation, injustice, faithful duty, and the promise of reestablishing a golden age. Further, they draw on a robust set of historical evidence — from the earliest days of Islam to today's hot zones — applicable to diverse audiences and geographies, giving AQ communicators the flexibility they need to use these master narratives across varied strategic and communications fronts. Historical depth and geographic breadth makes these stories enduring, dramatic, and highly resilient. This resilience is likely to impact the success of counter-messaging efforts designed to directly combat or undermine these master narratives.

However, this master narrative system is neither impervious to changing conditions nor without weaknesses. Like US communicators, AQ communicators face the daily challenge of responding to unpredictable change dynamics and local audiences' complex belief systems. Their attempts to navigate these changing conditions are not perfect, and gaining a deeper understanding of the nexus between AQ messaging — tailored to local contexts by affiliate communicators — and the local audiences themselves can reveal new opportunities to exploit schisms and conflict between the worldviews of AQ communicators and the local audiences they try to influence or attract. By laying out both the master narratives that are most prominently featured in AQ messaging as well as explaining of how those master narratives are deployed by the affiliates at a local level, this report can serve as the foundation for revealing these opportunities for strategic communicators and analysts.

REPORT STRUCTURE & METHODOLOGY NOTE

The remainder of this document provides greater analytic detail for the six master narratives outlined above. Each master narrative is articulated and analyzed in four pieces:

1. **Master Narrative & Background Analysis:** How might an AQ communicator or sympathizer articulate this master narrative, what evidence reinforces these views, and how do AQ communicators use this master narrative in their recruitment and messaging efforts?

2. **Affiliate-Level Analysis — AQAP & AQIM:** How do communicators from the two case study affiliates use this master narrative in their own messaging, and to what extent do they tailor or customize these master narratives to their local contexts and objectives?

3. **Change Dynamics & Trends:** What forces or conditions could undermine or strengthen this master narrative, or might cause it to change? What preliminary opportunities could these dynamics present for analysts and strategic communicators?

4. **Appendices:** The appendices for each master narrative highlight key phrases, symbols, or themes associated with the master narrative as well as relevant sourcing and validation.

This report is focused on helping US communicators and analysts better identify opportunities to undermine AQ messaging. With this in mind, the report analyzes how AQ portrays itself and its objectives to the public through statements and multimedia releases – the messaging used to attract recruits, build public sympathy, and undermine adversaries such as the United States. Research for this analysis included AQ messaging dating back to 2000, with particular attention paid to recent messaging from 2009-2011. In addition to primary sources and open source research, interviews with 25 SMEs were used to surface master narratives, test hypotheses, and validate assertions. These SMEs were asked a combination of expansive, open-ended questions designed to surface new hypotheses as well as targeted questions designed to verify assertions. Combining these interviews with open source research, this report highlights how each master narrative reflects perceived history, themes, and objectives that are central to AQ's public identity. Each of these master narratives appear with varied frequency across AQ messaging and propaganda, and collectively they represent a unified narrative system used by AQ and affiliate communicators.

This report is not a silver bullet: identifying and capitalizing on opportunities to undermine AQ messaging will continue to rely on the creativity and expertise of communicators and analysts confronted with complex mission goals, changing local conditions, and bureaucratic constraints. What this report can do is lay the foundation for systematically assessing how AQ master narratives and messaging align or conflict with existing local beliefs in strategically significant locations, such as Yemen and Algeria. The insights and analysis provided in this report serve as a first step in providing communicators and analysts with the resources they need to seize upon those opportunities. In doing so, they will be better equipped to augment US efforts to combat and undermine AQ messaging.

Master Narratives

"War on Islam"

KEY THEMES

Enemy Encirclement, Conspiracy, War, Apostasy, Humiliation

MASTER NARRATIVE: "WAR ON ISLAM"

With divine guidance and inspiration, Islam spread across vast lands and peoples like no other religion before it. From the earliest days after the Prophet's revelations, however, infidels have conspired against Muslims through nefarious machinations and deceit. Today, the *umma* is surrounded by enemies on all sides: *murtadd* (apostate) agents of the West plunder Muslim resources while allowing infidel troops in the land of the Two Holy Mosques, Zionists slaughter Palestinian brothers and sisters while stealing their homes and livelihood, and American infidels drop bombs from the sky on Muslim women and children. Together, these enemies attack the *umma* not only with violence, but also with lies designed to weaken and demobilize Islam through cultural manipulation and media propaganda. They yearn to create a "moderate" Islam that is a diluted, secularized, and demilitarized shadow of the *umma*'s former greatness. In the face of these enemies, Muslims must take up arms alongside their fellow *mujahidin* and prepare themselves for the inevitable call to jihad. Only if Muslims heed this obligation will Islam deliver a crushing defeat against the forces that have conspired against the *umma* for centuries.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

A cornerstone of AQ messaging, this master narrative aims to instill both fear and anger among its subscribers and sympathizers. By depicting a global conspiracy against Islam featuring a long list of enemies, this master narrative also provides AQ communicators with a foundation for promulgating several other related master narratives that are focused on discrete fronts in the global war, including confrontations with state leaders [see "Agents of the West"] and Israel [see "The Nakba"]. This war, they argue, is simultaneously a war of military might and an ideological war. Militarily, AQ communicators draw on conflicts between Muslim and non-Muslim countries that date back centuries: the Christian Crusades of the 11th-13th centuries, European colonialism across the Muslim world, Western support for Israel, and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan provide AQ communicators with a robust historical catalog from which to draw. Today, AQ media draws heavily on imagery related to ongoing military operations in Muslim countries, pointing to the presence of non-Muslim military forces in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. Ideologically, AQ communicators accuse Western media and academic literature of promoting "moderate" or "mainstream" Islam in an effort to pacify Muslims in the face of widespread oppression. AQ communicators even single out organizations such as the RAND Corporation, alleging that "American Islam or RAND Islam" is designed to be more amenable to US and Western interests.[1] Collectively, these messages reinforce a master narrative that depicts a war fought on multiple fronts, some of which are fought with arms and soldiers while others are fought through media and literature. The

breadth of this war as depicted by AQ communicators likely contributes to its resilience, as changing grievances and enemies can easily and coherently be incorporated into AQ messaging describing this worldwide conspiracy and conflict.

According to AQ communicators, US-backed antiterrorism campaigns are euphemisms for a global war against Islam. A 2011 video production from AQ's primary media wing, *Al-Sahab*, juxtaposes images of US General David Petraeus against narration alleging that the language of counterterrorism is designed to mask a broad, full-fledged war against Muslims everywhere: "The United States, along with the West and the Zionists, have made their war against the Muslim *ummah*…an open war in terms of time and place. They continued to declare through their statements that they would leave the mujahidin with no safe place under the name of international cooperation to fight extremism and Al-Qa'ida…Moreover, the practices in the war show in unequivocal manner that for them the entire earth is a theater to hunt down, kill, and arrest not only the mujahidin, their supporters, and sympathizers; but also the common Muslim people."[2]

AFFILIATE-LEVEL ANALYSIS: AQAP & AQIM

AQAP and AQIM communicators vary their depiction of the "War on Islam" by identifying, prioritizing, and emphasizing distinct sets of enemies according to local conditions and audiences.

AQAP's roster of enemies is multinational and multifaceted. These enemies include an array of "far enemies"* across the West, the United States being foremost among them. AQAP messaging also targets "near enemies," including Arab governments such as the Yemeni and Saudi governments [see "Agents of the West"] and Shi'a, who are described disparagingly as *rafida* (rejectionists) of Sunni Islam. AQAP messaging in Yemen, for instance, frequently depicts Huthist Shi'a insurgents as agents of Iran bent on corrupting Islam or as "pagans" hoping to defeat Sunnis in the Arabian Peninsula.[3] However, given their Wahhabi background, Saudi members of AQAP are also prone to view all Yemeni Zaydi Shi'a — not just Huthist insurgents — as rejectionists and enemies of the faith.[4] AQAP antipathy toward Shi'as is grounded in a belief that they have not only betrayed the true Islam, but also divide and weaken the *umma* while it is enmeshed in a global war. According to AQAP religious leader Sheik Ibrahim al-Rubaysh, "This division gave our enemy the chance to be only an observer, because the people from within the *ummah* are carrying out the work on behalf of the enemy."[5] While AQAP is not the only AQ affiliate to depict Shi'as as enemies of Islam, it does so with an intensity and frequency rivaled only by their counterparts in the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI, or Al-Qaeda in Iraq). This could present AQAP communicators with both challenges and pitfalls. ISI attacks against Shi'a under the direction of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi became a political and communications liability for AQ in the mid-2000s, leading Ayman al-Zawahiri to send a private letter to Zarqawi discouraging him from conducting further anti-Shi'a attacks.[6] AQAP may walk a similar tightrope: in Yemen, where Zaydi Shi'as make up between one-third and one-half of the total population, many Sunnis view Shi'as as fellow countrymen.[7] In such cases, emphasizing Shi'a as a paramount enemy could alienate audiences who reject anti-Shia violence. US communicators may be able to capitalize on local audience aversion to sectarian tension or conflict, simultaneously promoting sectarian cooperation and unity while highlighting conflict between AQAP messaging and local convictions.

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*"Far enemy" generally refers to the West, which includes the United States and Europe; "near enemy" refers to local governments and target populations (e.g. Shi'as).

AQIM messaging focuses heavily on European enemies, especially France, as well as local governments. AQIM's choice of enemies reflects the groups' roots in the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), an armed resistance founded in the late 1990s fighting against the Algerian government and French influence in Algeria. Informed by this history, AQIM frequently frames its enemies in the "War on Islam" narrative in terms of French colonialism, as demonstrated by a 2010 AQIM video release: "The war that is being waged by the jihadist group in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb is a legitimate war that seeks to defend against the diverse Crusader attack against Islam and its people in our Maghreb countries. This began with the wicked French occupation of Algeria in 1803 and is still continuing until this very day."[8] AQIM describes the "near enemy" as local secularist governments considered insufficiently Islamic or overly westernized. The Algerian government—labeled the "Sons of France"—holds a special place in AQIM messaging as the most frequently referenced and reviled near enemy [see also: "Agents of the West"].[9] In this respect, AQIM's use of this master narrative reflects priorities firmly rooted in Algerian and North African colonial history. Messaging focused on this regional history can be modified by AQIM communicators should new regional fronts become priorities, such as Libya.[10] Alternatively, deviations from this local or regional focus over time may represent an effort to project messaging to new audiences, and align more closely with the global objectives outlined by AQ senior leaders.

CHANGE DYNAMICS & TRENDS

This master narrative is historically and geographically expansive, allowing AQ and affiliate communicators to adapt it to local objectives and events while drawing on a vast repository of evidence to support their claims. As a result, this master narrative is likely to remain resilient in the face of direct critique or counter-messaging from US or allied communicators. It is not, however, static in the face of changing surroundings and conditions. One component of this master narrative that is particularly malleable is the location or geography on which it focuses. AQ communicators are likely to shift and adapt this master narrative's focal locations in response to adversary military actions and communications strategies. Troop withdrawals in Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance, may prompt AQ communicators to emphasize new military fronts in order to keep this master narrative current and relevant to target audiences. As a result, analysts and communicators may be able to better anticipate how this narrative will evolve based on surrounding conditions: these conditions could force AQ communicators to seek out new focal geographies to feature in the "War on Islam" master narrative.

"Agents of the West"

KEY THEMES

Conspiracy, Apostasy, Corruption

MASTER NARRATIVE: "AGENTS OF THE WEST"

The *umma* was once led by the Righteous Caliphs, who preserved the true traditions of the Prophet and laid the seed for Islam's global dominance. This great generation of leaders distinguished themselves through their passion for Sharia, rejection of worldly excesses, and love for jihad. Muslims continued these traditions for centuries until traitors like Anwar al-Sadat betrayed the *umma* and initiated a tragic pattern of contemporary leaders putting greed before God, and the West before their own people. Today's hypocrite rulers knowingly betrayed the examples set by these model leaders and instead have chosen to follow the wishes of their Western masters, who order them to rape the wealth of their own countries, ignore the mandate to implement *Sharia*, and pacify Muslims by spreading the roots of laziness and idleness. These *murtadd* (apostate) tyrants are the hands, eyes, and feet of the West, which pollutes the faith with its falsehoods, steals Muslim oil while women and children starve, and humiliates Muslims for the benefit of the crusader cause. These corrupt apostates remain in power only thanks to their infidel supporters and the Muslims who neglect the call to jihad. The *umma* must awaken from its slumber and assume its obligation to wage jihad against these regimes. Only then will Muslim lands be rid of corruption, suffering, and the evil influence of the West.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

This master narrative aims to capitalize on widespread frustration with economic and governance conditions in Muslim countries. By framing the leaders of these countries as Western agents, this master narrative serves as a bridge connecting the "far enemy" (the West) and "near enemies" such as Arab and North African governments. Furthermore, AQ communicators use this master narrative to emphasize the endemic poverty and political marginalization faced by many Muslims, blaming their purported suffering on corrupt leaders who allegedly exploit natural resources to enrich themselves and their Western supporters.[1] AQ communicators regularly employ this relationship with the West to justify attacking Muslim government targets [see also: "War on Islam"]. The concept of *takfir*—the practice of declaring a Muslim an infidel—has played an implicit role in justifying attacks against Muslim targets or institutions associated with Muslim governments. Drawing on the 13th century scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, who declared that Muslim Mongol rulers were not true Muslims and thus legitimate targets, AQ communicators argue that Muslim governments across North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia are legitimate targets regardless of their professed faith.[2,3] AQ communicators

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today celebrate the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, whose diplomatic opening with the United States is characterized as an early example of Arab and Muslim leaders acting as co-conspirators with the West.[4] The list of alleged agents since Sadat is extensive, including figures such as former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Algerian President Abdelazziz Bouteflika, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salih, the Saudi royal family, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Pakistani Presidents Pervez Musharaf and Asif Ali Zardari.

AQ communicators using this master narrative describe Western-backed conspiracies that permeate all aspects of Muslim societies. The wide scope of this conflict was described in a September 2009 release from *Al-Sahab*, "…the Crusader West aligned itself with the tyrants of the Islamic world, those that have carried out their roles by bringing forth an array of scholars, academics, media personalities, and artists to aid in the spread of defeatist ideas to promote inaction, spread atheisms, tinker with the Shari'ah, and spread the roots of laziness and idleness among the ranks of the Muslims."[5] Accounts such as this target audiences already disenchanted or enraged by endemic corruption or political oppression and paint a grim picture of untrustworthy leaders engaged in wide ranging plots designed to make local populations submissive and pacified.

AFFILIATE LEVEL ANALYSIS: AQAP & AQIM

With shared objectives focused on the violent overthrow of local governments, both AQAP and AQIM communicators use this master narrative to delegitimize leaders while justifying attacks against state institutions and figures. AQAP and AQIM differ, however, in how they characterize the connection between local rulers and the West. For AQAP, Saudi King Abdullah and Yemeni President Salih are portrayed as self-serving co-conspirators betraying their obligations to the *umma* by bending to the will of foreign economic, political, and military figures at the expense of local populations.[6,7] A February 2011 video released by AQAP's media wing, *Al-Malahim*, described the Yemeni government as, "A corrupt agent regime that relies on the humiliation of people and looting the wealth of the country by a tyrannical, arrogant army that kills and destroys."[8] While AQAP communicators do not limit their messaging attacks to Saudi or Yemeni leaders alone, these local leaders remain central in AQAP messaging. Should AQAP messaging broaden its critique of Arab and Muslim leaders to those outside of the Arabian Peninsula, it could reflect changing communications strategies.

Compared to their counterparts in AQAP, AQIM communicators place a greater emphasis on regional colonial history in their messaging attacks on local leaders.[9] Aiming to delegitimize Bouteflika and other regional leaders, AQIM communicators frame them as Western creations and vestiges of the colonial era. Perhaps the most pronounced and frequent manifestation of this is AQIM labeling the Algerian government as "Sons of France."[10] This depiction of the Algerian government as a colonial offspring aims to delegitimize the Algerian government. First, it draws an explicit connection between the government and a Western secularist country known for its tense relations with its own domestic Muslim population, which includes a large number of Algerian expatriates. Second, this label aims to undermine the historical legitimacy of Bouteflika's government, which is grounded in the anticolonial National Liberation Front (FLN) that played a leading role in ending colonial rule in 1962. Sustained relations between France and its former colonies — particularly when they pertain to joint counterterrorism operations — provide AQIM communicators with evidence that North African governments are illegitimate colonial creations, an affront to both postcolonial independence and Islamic

culture.[11] Given AQIM investment in this line of messaging, shifts in relations between North African and European states — France, in particular — could impact the amount of available evidence AQIM communicators are able to draw upon in framing Algerian and other African leaders as foreign "agents."

CHANGE DYNAMICS & TRENDS

This narrative is both enduring and versatile: allegations of rulers acting as "agents" can persist indefinitely in all but the rare situations where relations between a particular Muslim government and Western governments are overtly hostile. As political environments change and evolve, new governments can be substituted for old in order to maintain the connection between local grievances and AQ's global and anti-Western objectives [see also: "War on Islam"]. The resilience of this master narrative, however, has largely gone untested in potential scenarios where governments enjoy broad popular mandates legitimized by fair elections. Shifting conditions in North Africa could undermine or strengthen AQIM messaging that uses this master narrative. On the one hand, should new governments emerge in places such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, or Syria, the potency of this fixture of AQ messaging could be threatened by audiences unmoved by allegations that their respective post-revolution government is acting as an agent of the United States, France, or other Western powers. On the other hand, should these same governments fail to provide basic services and secure economic gains in post-revolution or post-transition contexts, this master narrative could be reinvigorated by public frustration or disenchantment.

"The Nakba"

KEY THEMES

Humiliation, Tragedy, Justice, Suffering, Occupation, Oppression

MASTER NARRATIVE: "THE NAKBA"

Palestine has always been an integral part of Muslim territory. However, the Zionists conspired with Christian crusaders to forge an abomination state on Muslim holy land, the great *nakba* (catastrophe) and a humiliating blight on holy soil. To this day, crusaders and Jews humiliate Muslims in the interest of Israel, supporting a holocaust in Gaza and orchestrating Muslim surrender at Oslo and Camp David. Worse still, the secularist Palestinian apostates reject Sharia and care only for their own personal interests and those of their Zionist and American masters. These Zionist Arab defeatists willingly participate in a peace process that yields only suffering for Muslim brothers. Muslims everywhere must stand up to rectify this humiliation and restore the Blessed Land to its rightful people. Violent resistance to this great atrocity is the only way to stop the suffering of Palestinian brothers and sisters, and to show the oppressors that they should not dream of peace until Palestine is a Muslim land once again. Through this struggle, Muslims will ensure retribution for this great injustice perpetrated against the *umma*.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

Characterizing Israel's creation as "the Nakba" or "catastrophe" represents a viewpoint that is widespread in the Muslim world.[1] AQ communicators aim to capitalize on the broad appeal of this narrative to build support and reinforce the global aspirations of AQ's mission. In his book, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri encourages jihadist communicators to frequently invoke this master narrative because "the slogan which the masses of the Muslim *umma* have understood and responded to well for 50 years is the slogan of calling for jihad against Israel."[2,3] However, AQ has drawn criticism from Muslim and Islamist commentators who argue that the organization takes advantage of the suffering of Palestinians to advance its own communications objectives, and that its anti-Israel rhetoric is not supported by concrete action. In an extensive attack on Al-Zawahiri published in Egyptian daily *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (aka "Dr. Fadl"), a former associate of Al-Zawahiri who has since renounced violent jihad, criticized AQ for utilizing the Palestinian cause as an empty talking point: "It is well-known that the fastest way to gain popularity among the Arab and Muslim masses is to bash the United States and Israel and talk a great deal about the Palestinian issue. Nasser did it, Saddam did it, Ahmadinejad does it, as do others. However, these people have actually done something for Palestinians…whereas Bin Laden and Z [Al-Zawahiri] just talk."[4] Such criticisms appear to have been noticed by Al-Zawahiri: while the 2001 edition of his book *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner* featured similar calls for jihadi communicators to capitalize on "the Nakba" master narrative, these recommendations were

removed in the book's second edition released in 2010.[5] Al-Zawahiri's revisions may suggest that high-level AQ communicators are aware of the potential communications pitfalls that the organization faces in using this master narrative. Further, these calculations may be influenced by public critiques offered by prominent Islamists or respected scholars, which US analysts and communicators can track over time.

Despite criticism from other Islamists and militant groups, AQ continues to invoke this master narrative in an effort to bolster its image as a global jihadi movement while tapping into a widely-held sense of empathy with the Palestinian people. A March 2009 audio message from Osama bin Laden is representative of AQ efforts to capitalize on emotions associated with the Palestinian people: "For how long must our family in Palestine live in fear, while we enjoy security — albeit a false, temporary security? For how long must the people of Gaza live under siege, while we live in comfort and luxury — at least for the time being? And for how long will we sit while their hearts burn for their children, who were burned by the white phosphorous bombs with the collusion of Arab rulers…Their crying here is more eloquent and expressive than thousands of sermons about the magnitude of the calamity."[6] AQ statements such as these represent messaging designed to capitalize on the deep emotional connection many audiences feel with Palestinians.

AFFILIATE LEVEL ANALYSIS: AQAP & AQIM

AQAP and AQIM communicators use this master narrative as a thematic anchor: a messaging and rhetorical device for connecting localized operations and objectives with those of AQ senior leaders and a global jihadi movement. Comparatively, AQAP communicators emphasize this narrative with greater frequency and intensity than their counterparts in AQIM.[7]

AQAP messaging suggests that it views the Palestinian cause as a religious and theological priority, one that AQ communicators believe will resonate with local audiences in the Arabian Peninsula.[8] A February 2011 *Sada Al-Malahim* article emphasizes the importance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem — the third holiest site in Sunni Islam— as a religious and strategic goal: "Today, we are facing a Zionist-Crusader campaign. We, at the Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula organization, will never forget Palestine. How can we forget it while our slogan is: 'We start from here [Arabia] and we will meet at the al-Aqsa Mosque?'"[9] According-ing to AQAP messaging, the existential threat presented by Israel applies to the entire Arabian Peninsula, and not Palestine alone. In February 2009, senior AQAP leader and former Osama bin Laden secretary Abu-Basir Nasir al-Wuhayshi stated in an audio message: "The objective of this new Crusade is to establish the alleged Jewish state from the river to the sea, demolish Jerusalem, destroy the steadfast heroes in Gaza, and to completely control the peninsula of Islam. You should understand the dimensions of their plan and plot."[10] In this way, AQAP messaging suggests a communications strategy designed to connect "The Nakba" master narrative to the survival of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula — the religion's birthplace — as well as beliefs that foreigners are engaged in a broader anti-Islam conspiracy [see also: "War on Islam"]. US analysts and communicators may be able to better anticipate the impact of this messaging by tracking how audiences and influencers do or do not draw connections between the Israel-Palestine issue and existing local aspirations, frustrations, or grievances. Where audiences are already prone to drawing these connections, AQAP communicators may have more success in convincing them that Israel poses a real and present threat.

In contrast with AQAP efforts to localize this master narrative, AQIM frames the Palestinian cause in the broader context of global jihad, potentially as a way to broadcast their connection and commitment to the global jihadi objectives espoused by AQ senior leaders.[11] AQIM messaging seldom singles out Palestine with messaging dedicated to the Palestinian cause or "The Nakba" master narrative alone. Instead, AQIM communicators frequently prioritize more immediate local issues and objectives. A January 2010 video released by AQIM's media wing, *Al-Andalus*, is typical of AQIM treatment of Palestine, listing it among other regional and global fronts in a call to action directed at Muslim audiences: "You will roam the whole world and destroy the power of all infidels and each arrogant tyrant. You will thus uphold the vulnerable for the cause of God in Palestine, Afghanistan, Algeria, Chechnya, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and everywhere on earth."[12] Statements such as these suggest efforts on the part of AQIM communicators to demonstrate that AQIM is committed to AQ's broader global agenda, even if the majority of their messaging remains focused on local objectives like toppling the Algerian government. If this is the case, US analysts and communicators may be able to assess AQIM use of this master narrative to track the organization's efforts to depict itself as more than a solely North African entity.

CHANGE DYNAMICS & TRENDS

AQ communicators face a delicate balancing act in using "The Nakba" master narrative in their messaging. On the one hand, empathy with the Palestinians for alleged Israeli-backed persecution is so widespread that AQ communicators cannot afford to ignore this master narrative altogether. Opposition to Israel is a basic building block of contemporary jihadi ideology. On the other hand, AQ's use of this master narrative brings with it considerable public relations risks since AQ has little concrete evidence that it actively supports Palestinian fighters or confronts Israeli forces. In the absence of tangible results, AQ use of this master narrative can serve as a lightning rod for criticism from extremist and moderate Islamist groups alike. These critiques are likely to be especially pronounced during periods of heightened tension between Israel and Islamist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Unlike AQ, these organizations can claim to have carried out numerous military actions against Israeli targets. Tense public exchanges between AQ communicators and organizations like Hamas or Hezbollah could make AQ vulnerable to further criticism that their messaging attacks on Israel are merely empty rhetoric.[13] Without tangible operations in Israel to support their anti-Israel rhetoric, criticisms and messaging from outside Muslim influencers could impact the frequency and intensity with which AQ communicators invoke this master narrative.

"Violent Jihad"

KEY THEMES

Survival, Duty and Obligation, Retaliation

MASTER NARRATIVE: "VIOLENT JIHAD"

Islam has always been a religion that embraces peace and shared prosperity. Despite this, the Prophet and his successors never shirked their duty to fight for the *umma* in a world filled with enemies and infidelity. As time passed, however, Muslims abandoned their duty to jihad and have invited suffering upon the *umma*. Muslims today need only look to the atrocities being committed against Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Kashmir, Somalia, Chechnya, and China to see that the *umma* is under attack. In the face of great enemies, the *umma*'s sheiks have failed them when they are needed most as Muslims have put money before God and the façade of stability before the duty to their religion. If they continue to concede to evil, Muslims will have only themselves to blame as the crusader empire spreads across more Muslims lands. The *umma*'s women, homes, and mosques must be defended against the crusaders' rampage—Muslims must rise to this call by taking up arms against Islam's enemies. Muslims are faced with a choice: let the house of Islam burn to the ground or rise up to defend it.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

AQ communicators invoking this master narrative draw on an extensive list of grievances as evidence that the *umma* is under attack— a view supported by other master narratives espoused by AQ communicators [see: "War on Islam," "Agents of the West," and "the Nakba"]. Violent jihad is depicted as a warranted and obligatory reaction to these persistent threats.[1] AQ communicators characterize this obligation as *fardh 'ayn*, an individual religious duty such as engaging in daily prayer. Whereas other AQ master narratives project blame outward, however, this master narrative stands apart by directing that blame inward toward the *umma* itself. In this respect, this master narrative reflects a messaging strategy designed to draw Muslims to AQ's cause by inspiring a sense of obligation, urgency, and guilt. According to this master narrative, deviating from the path of Islam and jihad makes Muslim audiences complicit in the *umma's* state of humiliation so long as they fail to stand up to ongoing drone strikes, military confrontations, poverty, government oppression, and civil unrest. The accusations are not limited to broad audience segments alone: key influencers such as the *ulema* (Islamic scholars and clerics) are also singled out in these accusations, with AQ messaging drawing a distinction between the "true scholars" who support AQ ideology and the "scholars of the Palace" who support the whims of corrupt leaders.[2] As alleged by high-ranking AQ official Abu-Yahya al-Libi in a 2010 statement, many Muslim scholars today are guilty of leading Muslims astray while collaborating with rulers who act as Western agents. These religious leaders, Al-Libi alleges, use *fatwas* (religious decrees) not in the interest of the *umma*, but to advance their own

interests and those of their rulers: "They [Western-backed Muslim leaders], however, employ some of those *ulema* to bring out… rotten and repulsive caprices as religiously-based fatwas, so that the poor layman becomes a victim and a prisoner of these *fatwas*."[3] Using this argument, AQ communicators are quick to reject scholarly views or *fatwas* that do not comport with their objectives or worldviews. These views, however, could also place AQ communicators at odds with prominent or well-respected figures, including sheiks and imams with dedicated followings.

AQ communicators invoke this master narrative as a call to action, aimed particularly at those who might be reluctant to take up arms in the name of jihad. AQ communicators such as America-born AQ spokesperson Adam Yahiye Gadahn release lengthy expositions designed to convince Muslims that jihad is *fardh 'ayn* or an individual religious obligation. These messages attempt to deconstruct and undermine reasons or excuses one might offer for abstaining from jihad, such as family commitments or a lack of funding. In a 2010 video, Gadahn draws on both Koranic authority as well as emotional appeals. As a reminder of the cost of neglecting jihad, Gadahn quoted a Koranic passage: "If you don't go forth (to fight in the cause of Allah), He will punish you with a painful punishment, and will choose in your stead a people other than you." Gadahn accompanied such warnings with an emotional plea underscoring the obligation facing all Muslims: "My brothers: the matter is extremely grave, and not to be taken lightly. There is no good in us if we don't defend our religion, sacred things, lives and homelands…"[4] Public releases such as Gadahn's statement appeal to reasoning, faith, and emotion, and use this master narrative's sense of duty and obligation to draw in audiences that may be otherwise reluctant to support AQ.

AFFILIATE-LEVEL ANALYSIS: AQAP & AQIM

AQAP and AQIM communicators direct this master narrative at local audiences in an effort to convince them that waging jihad is both justified and obligatory. AQAP and AQIM communications differ, however, in their use of variants of this master narrative to apply to unique audiences and address circumstances in their respective local contexts.

In Yemen, AQAP communicators deploy messaging that both praises Yemeni tribes as well as accuses tribesmen of stepping aside as the Salih regime and other enemies steal from the impoverished masses. A 2010 AQAP statement made an emotional appeal, singling out local Yemeni tribes: "O Honorable Tribes of Ma'rib [capital of the Ma'rib Governorate in Yemen]: Your silence toward these crimes emboldens the enemy and pushes him to take your homes and violate your sanctities. Just recently, your women were killed, and you said nothing. Today, your women are killed again, so where are the freemen who jealously guard their freewomen of Ma'rib?...Why do they have no protector, no defender?...The missiles strike the homes of Al Hatik [region in Yemen], and the tribes of the valley stand by watching, as though their turn will not come some day… By God, if you remain silent about this forbidden action and do nothing, humiliation and disgrace will be brought upon you, and will not be lifted. Those who disappoint a Muslim will be forsaken by God, and those who accept injustice will have it brought upon them."[5] Like AQ communicators, AQAP communicators also emphasize the individual responsibility for jihad. AQAP places particular emphasis on the notion that jihad can occur at an individual level regardless of where a would-be jihadi is located. According to AQAP communicators, a Muslim's *fardh 'ayn* makes it religiously permissible to carry out jihad outside the auspices of an established terrorist group and without the validation of an emir. The goal is not solely to recruit new members to AQAP, but to inspire individuals to act

on their own in a dispersed way by carrying out what many refer to as "lone wolf" attacks. As stated by AQAP Commander Shaykh Abu-Sufyan al-Azdi in a 2010, participating in jihad can be adapted to an aspiring jihadi's individual context: "The targets that must be focused on in individual jihad vary according to the country in which the mujahid lives, and the extent of its involvement in the modern Crusader war on Islam and Muslims. Regarding the Muslim countries under indirect occupation, you need do nothing more than strike the nearest Crusader military base in your country, my Muslim brother. How plentiful they are in Muslim countries."[6] Combined with statements emphasizing obligation and culpability, statements that emphasize how jihad can be carried out virtually anywhere and without centralized approval could reflect communications strategies designed to undermine excuses potential recruits might offer for not taking up arms in AQ's fight.

AQIM communicators generally invoke this master narrative by making sweeping accusations against the global *umma*. A 2010 *Al-Andalus* video employed this master narrative with a pointed accusation: "It is not just the tyrants and infidels who are to blame for the state of humiliation in which the Muslims are living today. The unarmed Muslims who fail to prepare and do not do all that they can to get weapons in order to defend themselves, their religion, and their Ummah are also to blame, and they offend the text of the Koran."[7] Furthermore, a 2010 AQIM video showcasing the teachings of Palestinian Islamist Abdullah Azzam explains how Muslims share in the blame of the *umma*'s state because of their failure to answer the call to jihad: "Anybody who looks into the state of the Muslims today will find that their greatest misfortune is their abandonment of jihad (due to love of this world and abhorrence of death). Because of that, the tyrants have gained dominance over the Muslims in every aspect and in every land."[8] Without singling out a particular subnational audience segment, statements such as these may be an indication that AQIM communicators are optimizing their use of this master narrative for broad, diverse North African audiences.

CHANGE DYNAMICS & TRENDS

By directing the blame for Muslim suffering inward upon the *umma* itself, AQ communicators use this master narrative to rigidly divide Muslims between those who assist foreign agents or stand idly by in the face of widespread oppression, and those who answer the call to jihad and take action in defense of the *umma*. The broad accusation that the *umma* is, in part, to blame for Muslims suffering worldwide is likely to remain a fixture of this master narrative for years to come. However, the specific audience segments and key influencers that are singled out in AQ messaging will evolve as AQ adapts to new or changing messaging environments. As AQ communicators reprioritize or adjust messing directed at particular Muslim audience segments and key influencers, this master narrative will likely evolve with those changing priorities. In this respect, the relevant Muslim audiences and influencers featured in this master narrative present AQ communicators with flexibility to adapt the narrative to unique local conditions, ongoing events, and messaging priorities. Changes in which Muslim audiences and influencers are and are not blamed for the suffering of Muslims worldwide could, in turn, shed light on evolving AQ messaging strategies, including how AQ is prioritizing new or existing target audience segments for recruitment or which key influencers AQ views as ideological or political competitors.

"Blood of the Martyrs"

KEY THEMES

Obligation, Self-sacrifice, Righteous Cause

MASTER NARRATIVE: "BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS"

During the time of the Prophet, *mujahidin* readily plunged headlong into battle against the enemies of Islam and stood steadfast when selected for martyrdom by God, fortified by the knowledge that victory is only possible through sacrifice. Over time, however, the *umma* lost this fervor despite the relentless threat of its enemies, forgetting that the path to victory is paved with the blood of martyrs. Instead, the *umma* traded courage and faith for money and temptation. Today, Muslims ignore the path to martyrdom and fail to realize that embracing the desires of this world leads only to humiliation, loss, and dishonor for the *umma*. The time has come for Muslims everywhere to rekindle the fervor of their forbearers, to steadfastly embrace battle, death, and self-sacrifice against Islam's enemies, to fearlessly speak truth to tyrants, and to recognize that the happy one is he who God receives as a martyr. Those chosen for this path are touched by the divine and are rewarded for eternity. And with each new martyr, the *umma* moves one step closer to victory.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

Martyrdom is a fixture of AQ messaging, representing the highest and most important call to action directed at Muslims when participating in jihad [see also: "Violent Jihad"]. AQ communicators use this master narrative in numerous ways: they defend it theologically in order to justify suicide operations, they invoke it to attract new recruits, and they cite it as evidence that AQ can emerge victorious in the face of numerically and militarily superior enemies. The term "martyr" has varied interpretations across the Muslim world, and is applied to instances ranging from civilian bystanders killed during conflicts to assassinated figureheads and fighters killed in combat. AQ messaging stands apart from that of many other Islamist thinkers and activists in its strong endorsement of suicide operations. Theologically, AQ communicators justify and defend these operations by pointing to early followers of the Prophet who sacrificed themselves in battle. The *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet) of the "Boy and the King," in which a devout subject readily faces death by defying a tyrant, is frequently used as further evidence that the Prophet condoned willingly sacrificing one's life in defense of Islam.[1] This interpretation of Islamic history and tradition, however, remains controversial: many Muslim scholars view the intentional or willful pursuit of martyrdom as amounting to nothing more than the forbidden act of suicide. In AQ messaging, this master narrative can serve as a powerful recruitment tool: it glorifies death as the greatest personal sacrifice a Muslim can make, promises vast rewards in the afterlife, and offers a chance to stand up against oppression and suffering. Further, AQ communicators frequently argue that a "culture of martyrdom" acts as an equal-

izer in the face of powerful foes. As stated in a 2009 AQIM video, sophisticated Western weapons pale in comparison to "…the lethal weapon of the mujahidin; martyrdom culture."[2]

AQ communicators attempt to legitimize the "Blood of the Martyrs" master narrative by connecting it to the celebrated days of early Islam. In a July 2007 statement, Osama bin Laden emphasized how the Prophet provides Muslims today with a model for being committed to the pursuit of martyrdom: "The seal of all Prophethood [the Prophet Muhammad], prayers and peace be upon him, wished for this status [martyrdom]. Thus, be aware and think: What is this status that the best of mankind, prayers and peace be upon him, wished for? He wished to be a martyr. He himself said: By Him in Whose hands my life is, I would love to attack and be killed, then attack again and be killed, then attack again and be killed…This noble Prophet, who is inspired by God, summarizes this life by these words. He wishes for this status. Happy are those who are chosen by God as martyrs."[3] For pious target audiences, AQ depicts martyrdom as not only a key responsibility for the true jihadist, but also a venerable path for following in the Prophet's footsteps.

AFFILIATE LEVEL ANALYSIS: AQAP & AQIM

Both AQAP and AQIM use core features of this master narrative in their messaging and recruitment efforts. They differ, however, in the extent to which martyrdom is a recurring and central component of their overall messaging strategy, and their treatment of the individual martyr in that messaging.

AQAP communicators draw heavily on Muslim history in the Arabian Peninsula, the home of both the Prophet and Islam's earliest martyrs. A June 2010 AQAP statement eulogizing the death of Mustafa Abu-al-Yazid drew on this deep history, casting slain AQ figures alongside the Righteous Caliphs, the most venerated leaders of early Islam [see also: "Restoring the Caliphate"]: "Our past and present is full of martyrdom cases of the leaders and the departure of the masters. Abu-Bakr al-Siddiq, Umar, Uthman, Ali, may God be pleased with them, were killed while they were the caliphs of the Muslims. In our current era, the leaders Abu-Hafs, Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, Dadullah, Baitullah Mehsud, Khattab, Shamil, and many other leaders and heroes were also killed. This is a series of gold, which is connected, compacted, and serried by martyrdom, great leader following the other."[4] In addition to eulogizing prominent figures, AQAP statements profile low-level AQ operatives involved in suicide missions, using their sophisticated media apparatus to give would-be martyrs a platform for releasing personal statements and details of their missions.[5] AQAP's text-statement series, "Martyrs of the Peninsula," glorifies individual suicide operatives from both low-level membership and AQAP leadership, offering audiences a model of how they might go from unknown individuals to symbols or celebrities.[6,7]

This master narrative plays a less prominent role in AQIM messaging when compared to AQAP.[8] Slain comrades and suicide operatives are not frequently celebrated on the individual level. Instead, AQIM videos and statements generally include collective eulogies celebrating an individual's contributions in the context of an operation or battle. This is in line with broader AQIM messaging, in which attribution of particular statements or deeds to discrete individuals carries an implication that the individual is influential in the organization.[9] While AQIM does release a video series — "Lovers of *Houris* [virgins]" — that celebrates individual martyrs, these martyrs tend to be low-level and installments of this series are infrequently released when compared to AQAP's "Martyrs of the Peninsula" series.[10] AQIM's operations and history may

also contribute to the low emphasis they place on this master narrative relative to their AQAP counterparts. AQIM-backed suicide attacks are infrequent, and have been on the decline on an annual basis since 2008.[11] Further, suicide attacks in Algeria during the 1990s were widely unpopular — AQIM communicators may recognize that conducting messaging focused on martyrdom risks conjuring memories of unpopular actions carried out by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) during the early 1990s and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which evolved into AQIM in 2006.[12] These factors may contribute to martyrdom playing a secondary role in AQIM messaging when compared to messaging focused on anti-government and anti-colonial rhetoric [see: "Agents of the West"].

CHANGE DYNAMICS & TRENDS

This master narrative is likely to remain an immovable fixture in AQ messaging. As Osama bin Laden stated: "…so long as the number of young men who carry out martyrdom-seeking operations is increasing, the time of victory gets closer."[13] AQ messaging celebrates "martyrdom culture" as a prized equalizer in AQ's fight against larger and more advanced military adversaries: this asset, they argue, is both foreign to and feared by opponents such as the United States, France, and well-funded Arab governments. Local conditions, however, could impact whether audiences believe that martyrdom operations are justifiable. The presence of foreign troops in Muslim countries presents AQ communicators with the greatest opportunity to emphasize the disparity between AQ and foreign forces at the local level, justifying martyrdom operations as necessary in the face of seemingly immovable foreign "occupiers." What remains less clear is how this narrative might evolve in environments where the presence of an immovable occupier recedes or disappears entirely. Troop withdrawals in locations such as Iraq and Afghanistan present AQ communicators using this master narrative with a critical uncertainty: in the absence of foreign forces or military activities, this master narrative may be a less palpable recruitment tool.

"Restoring the Caliphate"

KEY THEMES

Restoration, Revival, Unity, Victory, Rebuilding

MASTER NARRATIVE: "RESTORING THE CALIPHATE"

God established the rightly-guided Caliphate by uniting Muslims under the banner of Islam and Sharia, freeing the world from the *jahaliyyah* ("ignorance" predating Islam). This unification transformed lost desert tribes into leaders and scholars of monotheism. The Ummayad and Abbasid states continued this noble work despite crusaders conspiring to destroy the Caliphate. After centuries, however, a Western scheme divided the *umma* into a multitude of torn pieces. The infidels took advantage of the *umma's* weakened and fragile state: crusaders marched toward Jerusalem, infidels conspired to divide Muslim lands in Sykes-Picot, and Zionists colluded to steal Palestinian land in the Balfour Declaration. Muslim rulers allied with the West to stab the Ottoman Caliphate, allowing the godless Ataturk to destroy the last vestiges of the Caliphate for his Zionist masters. Today, apostate rulers continue to ally with the infidels to pollute Muslim minds with calls for nationalism and secularism. Muslims must join the fight toward the great goal of uniting the *umma* and establishing a Caliphate under Sharia from Morocco to Indonesia. Gradually and patiently, Muslims can rebuild the Caliphate brick by brick, putting an end to injustice and suffering, and restoring the *umma* to its magnificent glory.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

By celebrating a time of glory, victory, and religious purity, AQ uses this master narrative to inspire audiences while reminding them of what is described as a sacred obligation. In doing so, it invites the angered or disenchanted to become a part of reestablishing a golden age in Islamic history, a time characterized by just rulers, sweeping military victories in the face of powerful foes, and the unquestioned application of divine law. AQ's interpretation of this history depicts the Caliphate as an enduring and cohesive bastion of Sharia-led rule. This master narrative and its objectives, however, are not focused on physical territory alone. AQ messaging asserts that the world needs not only political renewal, but religious renewal as well: the implementation of Sharia is inextricably tied to the restoration of the Caliphate. AQ messaging emphasizes the unified Caliphate as it existed under the "Four Righteous Caliphs" who succeeded the Prophet and ruled from 632 to 661: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. In fact, the Caliphate's history was more complex and contentious: the death of Ali gave way to centuries of strife among competing Caliphates, each with its own geographical boundaries and set of rulers. AQ's emphasis on the early years of the Caliphate reflect not only a desire to depict the Caliphate as powerful, united, and governed by strict Sharia, but also to emphasize a time when small bands of Muslim forces triumphed against superior military forces, just as the Prophet did at the Battle of Badr in 624.[1] In this respect, AQ communicators draw parallels

between the Prophet's early efforts to build the Caliphate and their own efforts to reestablish it today against numerical odds.

AQ communicators employ this master narrative to multiple ends, using it to lament the loss of past greatness or to inspire audiences to take part in rebuilding something great. This master narrative expresses AQ's highest and most ambitious goal of restoring a united Muslim *umma* to its former greatness under Sharia, a goal frequently expressed by AQ leadership in their messaging. Speaking in an audio statement released in July 2010, Ayman al-Zawahiri expanded upon this vision for the Caliphate by invoking the Rightly Guided Caliphs and outlining his desire to see the Caliphate spread across the entire world: "Our participation in jihad is for the sake of the religion of God, to establish the caliphate over the entire world based on the program of the rightly-guided caliphate, and to establish an Islamic government."[2] While local audiences may not share in these lofty aspirations, these references to a far-reaching and powerful Caliphate could nonetheless resonate with audiences who associate such a Caliphate with a widely-celebrated period in Islamic history.[3]

AFFILIATE-LEVEL ANALYSIS: AQAP & AQIM

AQAP and AQIM contextualize this master narrative in terms of local or regional history, drawing on themes, historical events, and figures more likely to resonate with local audiences. In this respect, affiliate communicators are able to connect messaging related to an international Caliphate with struggles to secure power and stability through local insurgencies. AQAP communicators tailor this master narrative for local audiences by focusing on restoring the Arabian Peninsula — or the "Peninsula of Mohammed" as they often refer to it — to its Sharia roots. An August 2010 AQAP statement discussed the goal of restoring Sharia to the Arabian Peninsula: "We will continue with jihad until the law of God is established, worship is solely for the sake of God, the wise Caliphate is established along the prophetic doctrine, we have evicted the infidels from the peninsula of Muhammad, peace and prayers upon him, we have delivered the people from tyranny and injustice and until we have established justice, truth, and security between people, under the shadow of the sharia of the Merciful."[4] This focus on restoration in the Arabian Peninsula reflects both the organization's strategic priorities as well as the deep history upon which it draws. AQAP messaging emphasizes that the Arabian Peninsula is exceptional as the homeland of the Prophet and the location of the two holiest sites in Islam (Mecca and Medina). Furthermore, AQAP communicators frequently invoke *hadiths* that emphasize the exceptionalism of the Arabian Peninsula. In one *hadith*, the Prophet states that there should be no two religions in Arabia. In another, the Prophet proclaims that a great army will emerge from Aden-Abyan (modern-day Yemen) to cleanse Arabia of foreign elements.[5] By laying claim to the mantle of the prophesized Aden-Abyan Army, AQAP depicts itself as the vanguard in the struggle to reestablish the Caliphate in Islam's original and most hallowed territories.[6]

AQIM communicators do not emphasize the role of Sharia in the Caliphate to the same extent as counterparts in AQAP, which may reflect an effort to appeal to Maghrebi cultural traditions and audiences less inclined toward strict Islamism than those found in the Arabian Peninsula.[7] Instead, the AQIM interpretation of the "Restoring the Caliphate" master narrative focuses on broad notions of reclaiming lost political and military greatness across North Africa and southern Spain. Muslim heroes such as Tariq ibn Ziyad and Yusuf ibn Tashin, famed for their conquests of Christian Spain, feature prominently in this messaging. The name of AQIM's own media arm, *Al-Andalus*, is a direct reference to Andalucía, the name traditionally ascribed to

Muslim Spain (711–1492). As demonstrated by AQIM leader Abu Ubaydah Yusuf in a video message released in March 2010, AQIM messaging depicts the era of the Caliphate as the only time when Africa witnessed peace and prosperity: "You must remember that Africa did not reach the peak of glory, power, and civilization and did not witness the pinnacles of security and stability except under the banner of Islam and under the state of the Koran."[8] In this way, AQIM often emphasizes the political and cultural greatness of the Caliphate in North Africa over the necessity of implementing Sharia. Messaging strategies such as these may represent a calculation on the part of AQIM communicators that calling for strict Sharia may not resonate with Maghrebi audiences, especially those who prefer adhering to tribal customs or are more interested in governments providing basic services than administering holy law.

CHANGE DYNAMICS & TRENDS

AQ and its affiliate groups are able to tailor this master narrative to target audiences by drawing on the historical Caliphate's long and diverse history. Despite this diverse history, however, certain components of this master narrative remain fixed and inflexible, such as: the removal of Western influence, the reunification of a divided *umma*, and the implementation of strict Sharia. These components of the "Restoring the Caliphate" master narrative could be a source of tension and conflict between AQ messaging and local beliefs and traditions. For instance, AQAP's efforts to implement Sharia in Yemen could be perceived as an indirect challenge to established tribal governance structures and a threat to cherished tribal authority.[9] In this respect, the strict Sharia promised in this master narrative could be a communications liability for AQ communicators crafting messaging for target audiences with beliefs or customs that conflict with strict Islamist rule.

Appendix & Sourcing

Appendix & Sourcing

"WAR ON ISLAM"

Key Phrases, Symbols, or Images

- *Murtadd*: Meaning "one who turns away" in Arabic, *murtadd* is used by AQ to describe apostate leaders who they believe have turned away from the Muslim faith.

- **"The War on Terror":** Although the term has fallen out of use in the United States, AQ continues to reference this phrase as evidence that the West has not only engaged in a war against terrorists, but engaged in a broader war against Islam.

- *Rafida*: Literally meaning "deserter" or "rejectionist" in Arabic, AQ uses this term to describe the Shi'a population who, in the eyes of AQ, has rejected the true Sunni Islam.

- **Drone strikes:** AQ points to US-backed drone strikes in Muslim countries as evidence of the West's intention to spread the "War on Islam" to new fronts.

- **The Crusades:** The Crusades were a series of European-led military campaigns in the Middle East during the 11th–13th centuries that were led by monarchs and nobility, and sanctioned by the Catholic Pope. AQ references the Crusades as evidence that the West's conspiracy against Muslims to take their land and resources is deeply rooted in history.

- **"Moderate" Islam:** AQ asserts that the West's focus on democracy, secularism, and personal freedom ultimately aims to promote a "moderate" form of Islam that AQ believes will keep Muslims subjugated under Western rule and influence. This, AQ communicators argue, will prevent Islam from returning to its former political, military, and religious greatness.

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3. "Audio by AQAP's Al-Shihri Urges Sunnis to Attack Shiite Huthists in Yemen," *Al-Ansar al-Muhahidin* Network (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 28 January 2011: GMP20110128117002.

4. Monitor 360 interview with Greg Johnsen (Princeton University), 21 June 2011.

5. See: "Al-Rubaysh Urges Muslims To Unite, Fight in Cause of God," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Media Establishment) via www.opensource.gov. 16 April 2010: GMP20100417083005.

6. The full text of Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi is available online at: http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/203gpuul.asp?page=3.

7. Monitor 360 interviews with John Willis (University of Colorado, Boulder), 14 July 2011; Jillian Schwedler (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), 28 June 2011; Marta Colburn (CARE International Yemen) 22 July 2011.

8. "AQLIM Video Warns of Western Plots Against Africa, Urges Support for 'Mujahidin,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 09 March 2010: FEA20100309002492.

9. See: "OSC Analysis: Terrorism—Algeria-Based AQIM Increasing Regional Focus," *OSC Analysis* via www.opensource.gov. 13 July 2011: GMF20110713216001. See also: "Al-Andalus Releases Audio by AQLIM Leader to People of Algeria," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 13 Jan 2011: FEA20110203014105.

10. See, for instance, a statement from AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel, in which he invokes celebrated historical figures from Libya including Umar al-Mukhtar, a famed *mujahidin* who fought against Italian occupation of Libya: "My freeborn brother in Libya, the time has come. The hour of salvation has come, and the winds of liberation and martyrdom are blowing in Libya. The mujahid Shaykh Umar al-Mukhtar waged the first battle of liberation, and now the time has come for his grandchildren to finish the march of jihad and the wage the second battle of liberation to eject the corrupt rulers which the Crusaders and the Zionists have empowered against us to enslave us, steal our wealth, and battle our creed. Umar al-Mukhtar said, 'We will not surrender. We will be victorious, or we will die.' Libya will either be liberated from the worship of men in order to worship the God of all men, and from the life of this world to the striving for life and the afterlife, or there will be martyrdom for the sake of God, and there will be great victory." "AQIM Amir's Audio Message to Libya, 'The Descendants of Umar al-Mukhtar,'" *Shumukh al-Islam* Network (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 17 March 2011: GMP20110318405002.

Sources

Master Narrative & Background Analysis

■ This master narrative was identified and validated in Monitor 360 interviews with AQ experts. Barak Barfi of the New America Foundation explained that AQ communicators routinely frame the "War on Islam" master narrative as a worldwide conspiracy, and that audiences in the Arab world often believe allegations of global plots and conspiracies. Chris Boucek of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace added that widespread suffering and political oppression in Muslim countries contributes to the opinion that the global Sunni Muslim community is under siege from malevolent forces. Brian Fishman of the New America Foundation explained that the certitude of victory in this struggle is a centerpiece of AQ messaging. Fishman pointed out that, according to AQ communicators, the United States and its allies will lose in their struggle against mujahidin just as the Soviet Union did in its occupation of Afghanistan. Additional subject matter expert interviews validated this master narrative's role in AQ messaging. Monitor 360 interviews with Brian Fishman (New America Foundation), 15 June 2011; Barak Barfi (New America Foundation), 5 July 2011; Chris Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011; Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011; Bruce Hoffman (Georgetown University), 13 July 2011; Alistair Harris (Pursue Ltd.), 15 July 2011; and Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

■ During a Monitor 360 interview, Georgetown University's Dennis Pluchinsky explained that imagery of civilians killed in US drone strikes and other US-backed military operations are a particularly potent aspect of AQ messaging as they try to strengthen beliefs that the United States is engaged in a war not just against terrorists, but against all Muslims. Pluchinsky noted that the West is frequently accused of engaging in violence that targets women and children and aims to destroy mosques, and that the United States attempts to systematically humiliate prisoners. Monitor 360 interview with Dennis Pluchinsky (Georgetown University), 15 June 2011.

■ In an interview with Monitor 360, Jarret Brachman of Cronus Global explained that AQ communicators support allegations that the United States is engaged in a war on Islam by pointing to the collaboration of "apostate" or "agent" Arab regimes, the alleged plundering of natural resources in Muslim countries, and alleged efforts to undermine Islam through media and "terminological" manipulation (such as promulgating "moderate" Islam). Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

■ A treatise credited to Osama bin Laden entitled, "Moderate Islam is a Prostration to the West" outlines some of the objections that AQ communicators have toward the concept of moderate or mainstream Islam, as well as those who encourage interfaith dialogue. In this treatise, Bin Laden describes moderate Islam or efforts to encourage coexistence with other religious groups as both "defeatist" and a deviation from true Islam. Osama bin Laden, "Moderate Islam is a Prostration to the West," in Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*. New York: Broadway Books. 2007. Pp. 22-62.

■ In a 2008 statement, AQ leader Abu-Yahya al-Libi extrapolates on allegations that Western countries are engaged in a coordinated effort to undermine Islam from within by weakening it ideologically. This, he says, will result in the creation of a "new religion" unlike Islam: "These distorted calls that slowly and in secrecy infiltrate religious issues by misrepresentation and elusiveness and many underestimate its effect, but some of them consider it the utmost victory and a ruling above rules. I say, if these calls are not resolutely, boldly and openly confronted by the nation's truthful scholars and the zealous proselytizers, its consequence will be the creation of a new religion. I see its features have begun to be formed. It is a new religion in its terminology, new in its perception, new in its measures and principles, new in its creed and its branches, and even new in its worship and transactions and new in its reception sources. Then we will be told that this is moderate Islam, prudent Islam, Islam of the 21st century, Islam of openness, brotherhood, and peace, Islam of moderation and reason. It is only the Islam of the Rand Corporation and the enemies. The Islam that the infidel proselytizers are after by their modern Crusade campaign, this will never happen. Die with your anger and sorrow, God's religion is protected. A person can only destroy himself." "In Video Message, Abu-Yahya al-Libi Criticizes 'Moderation' in Islam," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 22 May 2008: GMP20080523212004.

■ AQ communicators draw on a lengthy list of conflict zones where they assert Muslims are under attack. According to a jihadi in one *Al-Sahab* interview, for instance, "The suffering of a Muslim, whether he was in Kashmir, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere is the same. I feel the same pain as if someone attacked my mother or father." "Al-Sahab Video Production 'Thou Art Held Responsible Only for Thyself' Part 1," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 22 May 2008: GMP20110603136001.

■ William Rosenau of the RAND Corporation and Georgetown University explains that "In the judgment of Bin Ladin, these [US and Western] sinister forces seek nothing less than the destruction of Islam. As he declared in 1996, the United States after the end of the Cold War 'escalated its campaign against the Muslim World in its entirety, aiming to get rid of Islam itself.' In Bin Laden's view, the persecution of Muslims in Chechnya, the Palestinian territories, Kashmir, and elsewhere offers ample evidence that the umma is facing an existential threat, and that the United States, through its regional satraps, is working toward the eradication of Islam." For more on the connection between AQ ideology and the notion that the West is bent on destroying Islam, see: William Rosenau, "Waging the War of Ideas," in *McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook*. 2006: http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/RP1218.html.

Affiliate-level Analysis

AQAP

- According to Princeton University's Greg Johnsen, AQAP anti-Shi'a sentiments can be attributed, in part, to the Saudis within the organization's ranks. During a Monitor 360 interview, Johnsen noted that Saudi members of AQAP are prone to viewing Yemeni Zaydi Shi'a as rejectionists and enemies of the faith. Yemenis among AQAP, however, are more prone to only single out Houthi rebels—and not Zaydis writ large—as enemies. A study from the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation demonstrates how this complexity sometimes plays out in AQAP messaging, such as the organization's English-language publication, *Inspire*: "AQAP states its aim as fighting the 'triangle of enemies' which it defines as 'the Zionist-Crusader alliance, the apostate regimes and the Shi'a.' Significantly, this edition of *Inspire* states, 'our war is with the Rafidha Shi'a sect which is alien to Yemen and was only imported from Iran, and not with the Zaydi Shi'a sect which is considered to be the closest sect of Shi'a to ahl as-Sunnah.' This is a rare statement of conciliation towards any Shi'a sect by al-Qaeda, which normally regards the Shi'a as universally heretical. Zaydi Shi'as are currently involved in an insurgency against the Yemeni government, and as such AQAP do not wish to alienate them. This is a far more practical approach than previous al-Qaeda affiliated groups, like al-Qaeda in Iraq, who have alienated the majority of their host populations due to their uncompromising doctrinal stance." Monitor 360 interview with Greg Johnsen (Princeton University), 21 June 2011; "ICSR Insight—Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula releases new copy of Inspire magazine," International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation. January 2011: http://icsr.info/publications/newsletters/1305032088ICSRInsight_AlQaedaintheArabianPeninsulareleasesnewcopyofInspireMagazine.pdf.

- In a *CTC Sentinel* analysis, Barak Barfi notes that AQAP's dilemma is that sympathetic views toward Zaydi Shi'as could alienate support from potential Saudi recruits. "AQAP's Soft Power Strategy in Yemen." *CTC Sentinel*. 01 November 2010: http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqap%E2%80%99s-soft-power-strategy-in-yemen.

- In an effort to reinforce views that Shi'a rebels are backed by Iranian forces hoping to conquer the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP Commander Shaykh Abu-Sufyan al-Azdi warns that, "the Magi Rejectionists in Iran want Mecca and Medina in general, and the [Arabian] Peninsula in particular." "AQAP Commander Audio Message: 'Together To Overthrow Al Sa'ud'," *Al-Fallujah* Islamic Forums (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 9 Aug 2010: GMP20100810569002

- According to a 2011 Jamestown Foundation analysis, "AQAP's first clear stance on the Houthi issue came after the Saudi involvement in the fight against the Houthis in late 2009. In an article written by AQAP deputy leader Sa'id al-Shihri in the AQAP on-line magazine *Sada al-Malahim*, Houthis were labeled rawafidh (rejectionists), a pejorative term AQAP commonly uses to describe the 'Twelver Shi'a' of Iran, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. Zaydis are 'Fiver Shi'a' and follow a form of Islam closer to local Shafi'i Sunni forms than to the Islam practiced in Iran…Al-Shihri also accused the Houthis of being controlled by Iran and acting as part of an Iranian plan to dominate the Middle East (*Aljazeeratalk.net*, February 18, 2010)." Rafid Fadhil Ali, "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's Growing War with North Yemen's Houthist Movement." Jamestown Foundation. 14 January 2011: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37363.

AQIM

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Brian Fishman of the New America Foundation noted that although AQIM is formally aligned with AQ senior leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan, their messaging and operational focus remains centered on the Algerian "near enemy." According to Fishman, AQIM messaging focusing on more global jihadi aspirations (i.e., beyond messaging attacking North African governments and France) may be a fundraising strategy. Monitor 360 interview with Brian Fishman (New America Foundation), 15 June 2011.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Former Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Mahmoud Mahamedou noted that a 2010 statement from the French Prime Minister that France is "at war with al-Qaeda" in North Africa was used by AQIM communicators as a rallying cry for stepping up operations, and has since been used by AQ communicators as evidence in support of this master narrative. Monitor 360 interview with Mahmoud Mohamedou (Graduate Institute of International Development Studies, former Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation), 22 June 2011. See also: "PM says France 'at war' with al Qaeda over hostage," *Reuters*. 27 Jul 2010: http://af.reuters.com/article/maliNews/idAFLDE66Q0B620100727?sp=true.

- According to an OSC Analysis, Algeria and France featured most prominently in AQIM messaging focused on particular countries in 2010. See: "OSC Analysis: Terrorism -- Algeria-Based AQIM Increasing Regional Focus," OSC Analysis via www.opensource.gov. 13 July 2011: GMF20110713216001.

- In a January 2011 statement to the Algerian people, AQIM commander Abdelmalek Droukdel depicts the Algerian government—labeled "Sons of France"—as violent oppressors who not only subjugate the Algerian people, but distance those people from Sharia: "Your mujahidin brothers in the Al-Qa'ida organization in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb are incensed at what is happening to you at the hands of the sons of France, whether that be the distancing of the Shari'ah of Islam from the policies of the nation, or their subjugation, injustice and enslavement. So in order to implement the Shari'ah of God Almighty and in order to defend you against this inequity and misguidance, they left their homes and made their way up the mountains in order to do battle against your hangmen." "Al-Andalus Releases Audio by AQLIM Leader to People of Algeria," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 13 January 2011: FEA20110203014105.

- Geoff Porter notes that although AQIM makes frequent rhetorical and messaging attacks on Western countries such as France, "rarely does rhetoric about attacking the far enemy translate into real action… The reason for this

shortcoming is likely a lack of capabilities, rather than prioritization of other targets. AQIM in the Sahara simply seems unable to carry out sophisticated attacks in the urban locales where important 'crusader' targets are located. This is even more true of the Saharan AQIM's ability to actually carry out attacks in French or Spanish territory. It is not for lack of desire, but lack of ability." Geoff Porter, "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa." *CTC Sentinel*. 01 Feb 2011: http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqim%E2%80%99s-objectives-in-north-africa.

Change Dynamics & Trends

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Will McCants of *Jihadica.com* discussed how the presence or absence of foreign troops on Muslim lands can have a significant impact on the nature of AQ messaging and operations in general. Monitor 360 interview with Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

"AGENTS OF THE WEST"

Key Phrases, Symbols, or Images

- **Ibn Taymiyyah:** Islamic scholar (1263–1328) known for his controversial theological support for carrying out jihad. Ibn Taymiyyah's theological works in favor of jihad are frequently referenced in AQ messaging. His most famous *fatwas* (religious decrees) were issued against Mongol rulers who he argued were not true Muslims because they relied in part on Mongol tribal codes and did not enforce strict Sharia. AQ and other militant Islamist groups have pointed to Ibn Taymiyyah's writings to justify *fatwas* and attacks against Muslim leaders.

- *Rashidun*: Arabic word that Sunni Muslims use to refer to the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" that governed the Caliphate for the first thirty years after the death of Mohammed – Abu Bakr (632 – 634), Umar (634 – 644), Uthman (644 – 656), and Ali (656 – 661). According to AQ, these Caliphs led the Caliphate in its purest form before infighting and foreign influence corrupted Islamic society.

- *Takfir*: Referring to the practice of declaring a Muslim an unbeliever, AQ uses this term to deem Muslim rulers apostates.

- **Anwar al-Sadat:** Serving from 1970 until his assassination in 1981, Anwar al-Sadat was Egypt's third president and was famous for negotiating the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, which normalized relations between the two countries. AQ views Al-Sadat as a traitor of the Muslim community who allied himself with Western interests and put Egypt's national interests ahead of Muslim unity.

- *Al-Wala' Wal-Bara'*: Meaning "loyalty and disavowal," *al-wala' wal-bara'* is an Islamic doctrine that promotes unquestioned loyalty toward God and other Muslims and rejection and disavowal of all that contradicts Islam. AQ views this doctrine as central to its ideology, and accuses Western "agents" as having betrayed it.

- **Images depicting relations between US leaders and Muslim leaders:** AQ messaging frequently includes images of Muslim leaders and Western leaders together in order to provide evidence of collaboration with the West. In the screenshot below, an AQ video uses footage of President Obama and former Defense Secretary Robert Gates meeting with leaders from Muslim countries, including: King Abdullah II of Jordan, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and Pakistani Army Chief of Staff Ashfaq Parvez Kayani. "Al-Sahab Video Production 'Thou Art Held Responsible Only for Thyself' Part 2," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network via www.opensource.gov. 3 June 2011: GMP 20110603136003.

Quotations & Citations

1. Monitor 360 interview with Ricardo Laremont (SUNY Binghamton), 23 June 2011.

2. While AQ may reference Ibn Taymiyyah to justify attacks against Muslim governments, the organization generally does not publically *takfir* these Muslim rulers in its messaging. In the past, many of AQ's detractors have leveraged the same accusation against AQ, which has caused it to be wary of declaring other Muslims infidels. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

3. Monitor 360 interview with Ed Husein (Council on Foreign Relations), 14 June 2011.

4. See, for instance, Ayman al-Zawahiri framing Al-Sadat as a traitor of the Muslim *umma*: "…the treachery of Sharif Husayn Bin-Ali and Abd-al-Aziz Al Sa'ud when they colluded with the English against the Ottoman State, the

treachery of Al-Sadat in his going to the Knesset and signing the accords of surrender to Israel, the treachery of those affiliated with the previous jihad who are with the Crusader coalition forces led by America in Kabul…" "Al-Zawahiri Calls on Muslims to Wage 'War of Jihad', Reject UN Resolutions," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 11 September 2006: GMP20060912684001.

5. "Al-Sahab Video Discusses Economic Crisis, Arab 'Corruption,' Torture, Part 1 of 2," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Media Establishment) via www.opensource.gov. 22 September 2009: FEA20091113975044.

6. Monitor 360 interview with Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011.

7. Monitor 360 interview with Lianne Kennedy Boudali (former RAND Corporation), 28 June 2011.

8. "AQAP Releases 'The Demise of Traitors 2' Video, Criticizes Yemeni Security," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network (*Al-Malahim* Media Establishment) via www.opensource.gov. 01 February 2011: GMP20110201131008.

9. Monitor 360 interview with Brian Fishman (New America Foundation), 15 June 2011.

10. Monitor 360 interview with Barak Barfi (New America Foundation), 5 July 2011.

11. See, for instance, an *Al-Andalus* statement which characterizes post-independence Algeria as a fallacy: "My Muslim brethren in the Algerian capital and the other provinces of Algeria: your mujahidin brothers, who are fighting your executioners, are delighted by your honorable rage and your anticipated insurgency against the apostate thieves and traitors who transgressed and increased corruption in the country… The insurgency today and this great revolution by our Muslim brothers in most areas of Algeria and their demand of their usurped rights by the people of France, is an expected matter and honorable and positive position. How can it make sense that after a half century of fallacious independence, that Algerian families would be struggling in the same dire living situation they had endured during the French occupation, and sometimes even more severe than that." "Al-Andalus Releases Audio by AQLIM Leader to People of Algeria," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network (*Al-Andalus* Media Establishment) via www.opensource.gov. 13 January 2011: FEA20110203014105.

Sources

Master Narrative and Background Analysis

■ This master narrative was identified and validated in Monitor 360 interviews with AQ experts. Thomas Sanderson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies explained that there is a widespread belief in the Muslim world that the West controls everything, including Muslim governments. Chris Anzalone of McGill University stated that AQ believes that apostate Muslim governments are actively engaged in opposing Islam. Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies noted that AQ uses this master narrative to symbolize the battle against Westernization and the fight against corruption. Lianne Kennedy Boudali, a former RAND analyst, concurred with Schanzer, stating that AQ believes apostate rulers steal natural resources from Muslims and give the wealth away to the West. According to Ricardo Laremont of SUNY Binghamton, AQ believes that the fact so many Muslims live in poverty is a result of Muslim rulers stealing resource wealth. Thus, according to Brian Fishman of the New America Foundation, AQ believes that nonviolent resistance cannot succeed and Muslims must rise up violently to defeat the West and their apostate agents. Additional subject matter expert interviews validated this master narrative's role in AQ messaging and details frequently used in that messaging. Monitor 360 interviews with Ed Husain (Council on Foreign Relations), 14 June 2011; Brian Fishman (New America Foundation), 15 June 2011; Martha Crenshaw (Stanford University), 17 June 2011; Ricardo Laremont (SUNY Binghamton), 23 June 2011; Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011; Lianne Kennedy Boudali (former RAND Corporation), 28 June 2011; Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 29 June 2011; Barak Barfi (New America Foundation), 5 July 2011; Chris Anzalone (McGill University), 6 July 2011; Murad Batal Al-Shishani (Jamestown Foundation), 7 July 2011; Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011; and Bruce Hoffman (Georgetown University), 13 July 2011.

■ Criticisms leveraged against Muslim governments by AQ include their failure to uphold Sharia, theft of natural resource wealth, lack of morality, and alliances with the infidel West. In a 2011 audio statement, Ayman al-Zawahiri states: "Every free and honest person must be aware of the crimes of these corrupt regimes, which repress our ummah and fight its creed, prevent its daughters from wearing the hijab, squander its wealth, and encourage immorality, profligacy, and moral and social degeneration. These regimes are an inseparable part of a global system that aims to fight Islam and Muslims, led by the United States. These regimes are proxies for the global powers. They aid them and implement their policies represented in fighting Islam and the hijab, changing the education curricula, normalizing relations with Israel, preventing the Islamic Shari'ah from ruling the people, and usurping the Muslims' resources. Thus, these global powers extend their support to these local regimes and overlook their crimes, oppression, repression, deception, rigging, and looting." "Al-Sahab Releases Al-Zawahiri Audio Message to People in Egypt, Part 3," *Ansar Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islamiyah* (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 28 February 2011: GMP20110228086002.

■ AQ emphasizes that the Muslim *umma* is in a state of subjugation as a result of Western influence over apostate governments. Therefore, Muslims must reclaim their dignity and rise up to defeat these apostate governments in order to liberate themselves from the West, which only cares about stealing riches and wealth from Muslim countries. Abu-Yahya al-Libi says in a 2011 video statement: "We say all this so that our Muslim people might know

that they will never attain the freedom and dignity which they are seeking, nor the luxury which they desire, unless they come to realize their own personal power, cut off their subordination to the West and liberate themselves from psychological defeat. This will never happen as long as those who rule them are dazzled by the cultures of the West, enamored of their policies and blinded by their charlatanism. The governments of the West, who pretend to feel sorry for you and pretend to care about your interests are the ones who enabled these tyrants who fed you torture and pain for decades. [These governments] are the ones who unleashed [the tyrants] upon you, so that they could steal your riches and wealth…So, if we are really serious about attaining our rights and living in true dignity without deception, we must liberate ourselves from that inferiority complex which has been planted by the West within our souls. So many now think that there can be no glory, honor, freedom or opulence except if we follow their example, emulate them and become the tail-end of their wretched caravan." "New Abu-Yahya al-Libi Video: 'To Our People in Libya,'" *Shumukh al-Islam* Network (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 12 March 2011: FEA20110313015516.

- While AQ will rarely publically *takfir* one of its enemies (e.g. apostate Muslim governments), it has stated that it is perfectly legal to do so if the conditions exist. Abu-Yahya al-Libi writes: "So if he is not a scholar, mufti, or *mujtahid*, let him tell us how he can legitimately take it upon himself to apply such labels to particular persons and specific events. It is a well-known fact that one does not declare someone to be dissolute (*fasiq*), just as one does not declare someone to be a non-believer (*kafir*) until the legal conditions are clearly present and the impediments not present," "Abu-Yahya al-Libi's 'Refuting the Falsehoods of the Rationalization Document' Posted," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 13 December 2008: GMP20081215452003.

Affiliate-level Analysis

AQAP

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Gregory Johnsen of Princeton University stated that Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Salih is seen by AQ as nominally Muslim, but is considered a collaborator with the West due to his allowing of American counterterrorism operations on Yemeni soil. According to Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the same applies to the Al-Saud family of Saudi Arabia—while the Al-Sauds have allied with the West, the family is still seen as nominally Muslim. Monitor 360 interviews with Gregory Johnsen (Princeton University), 21 June 2011; Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011.

- According to AQAP, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salih only has his own interests at heart and allies with the West because this relationship benefits him. An article in AQAP's *Sada al-Malahim* magazine states that Salih "…gives precedence to the satisfaction of the West over that of the people who accept only Islam as a ruler and refuse to be led by an agent of the West. Actually, this constituted a big problem and a pivotal crisis for Ali Abdallah Salih by being unable to balance between the two wishes, or give precedence to what is most beneficial to him." "Sada al-Malahim Article Denounces Yemeni President's Policy, Hails Al-Qa'ida's," *Shumukh al-Islam* Network (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 24 December 2010: GMP20101227086003.

- According to AQAP, Saudi Arabia's Al-Saud family continues to ally with the West despite being Muslim and knowing the righteous path. Shaykh Abu-Sufyan al-Azdi, AQAP's second-in-command, discusses the apostacy of Al-Saud: "Due to the fact that they [Al Sa'ud] know about the righteousness which we call for in order to expose the non-belief of Al Sa'ud, their apostasy, and their committing [of sins] that contradict Islam, and their ruling without the laws of God and allying with the infidels, Jews, and Christians, their participation in the Crusader campaign against Islam, and other contradictions that require disobeying these apostate governments." "AQAP Commander Audio Message: 'Together to Overthrow Al Sa'ud,'" *Al-Fallujiah* Islamic Forums (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 9 August 2010: GMP20100810569002.

AQIM

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Bruce Hoffman of Georgetown University stated that AQIM views North African governments as secular Western creations espousing Western ideals. This view was also validated by other AQIM experts. Monitor 360 interviews with Bruce Hoffman (Georgetown University), 13 July 2011; Brian Fishman (New America Foundation), 15 June 2011; Martha Crenshaw (Stanford University), 17 June 2011; Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011; Barak Barfi (New America Foundation), 5 July 2011.

- AQIM views France as the primary supporter of the secular governments in North Africa. In an article entitled, "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa," Geoff Porter writes: "AQIM's messages directly target the governments that support the so-called un-Islamic governments of the Maghreb and Sahara. The primary thrust of this is France." "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa," *CTC Sentinel*. 01 February 2011: http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqim%E2%80%99s-objectives-in-north-africa.

- In AQIM messaging, North African governments are viewed as the "sons of France," allying with France and Christian crusaders to weaken the Muslim *umma*. A July 2011 AQIM message reporting on a recent raid in Northern Algeria states: "Once again, the knights of martyrdom and the lions of Islam compete for the satisfaction of God in defense of their religion and their ummah [community of Muslims worldwide] and to massacre the agents of the Cross among the apostate sons of France, who have extended the trial of Islam and intensified the tribulations upon the ummah." "AQIM Details 16 Jul Attack on Police Station in Northern Algeria," Global Jihad Network (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 19 July 2011: GMP20110719405002.

Change Dynamics & Trends

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Jarret Brachman of Cronus Global said that the strength of this narrative lies in AQ's ability to substitute new actors into the narrative to adapt to shifting political environments. For instance, if one Western-backed government were to fall, another could easily be substituted in its place. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Bruce Hoffman of Georgetown University cautioned against assuming the Arab Spring will weaken this narrative. If, for example, reform in Egypt languishes, this narrative could be easily reframed to accuse the United States and the West of having conspired with the interim Egyptian government to manipulate the outcome. Monitor 360 interview with Bruce Hoffman (Georgetown University), 13 July 2011.

- In recent years, AQ has focused on attacking the "far enemy"—the United States and its allies—believing that weakening the West would in turn weaken apostate regimes in the Muslim world. However, with the Arab Spring showing that popular movements can accomplish the same goal, AQ's argument that these governments continue to be manipulated by the West may no longer hold. An article in *The Washington Quarterly* by Juan Zarate and David Gordon states: "The first ideological innovation threatened by the Arab Spring is al-Qaeda core's focus on the United States and its Western allies, commonly referred to as the 'far enemy.' Prior to al-Qaeda core, violent Islamist discourse focused on the 'near enemy': the rulers of Muslim-majority regimes who were accused of apostasy. Despite tactical victories such as the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, violent Islamists were unable to achieve their strategic goal of toppling apostates and implementing Shari'a. This failure prompted bin Laden and his followers to direct their enmity toward the United States and the West, which they saw as the hidden hand propping up the apostate regimes throughout the Muslim-majority world. As bin Laden put it in his 1996 fatwa, 'the situation cannot be rectified…unless the root of the problem is tackled. Hence, it is essential to hit the main enemy [the United States]…'" "The Battle for Reform with Al-Qaeda," *The Washington Quarterly*. Summer 2011: http://www.twq.com/11summer/docs/11summer_Zarate_Gordon.pdf.

"THE NAKBA"

Key Phrases, Symbols, or Images

- **The Nakba:** Meaning "catastrophe," this term refers to the Palestinian exodus during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War when hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled their homes. The eventual defeat of Arab forces in the war and the establishment of Israel are held up by Muslims as examples of their humiliation.

- **Al-Aqsa Mosque:** Located in Jerusalem, the Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third-holiest site in Sunni Islam. The mosque is located at the site of the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, a fact which has caused years of political and religious conflict between Muslims and Jews. AQ uses the mosque as a symbol of the *umma's* rightful claim to Jerusalem. AQAP videos frequently sign off with images such as the screenshot below, featuring the phrase "We're coming, 'O Aqsa" written over the blurred image of a masked jihadi fighter. Image via: http://occident.blogspot.com/2010/02/al-qaida-in-arabian-peninsula-toward.html

- **Camp David Accords:** The Camp David Accords were signed in 1978 by President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin of Israel, and were facilitated by US President Jimmy Carter. These talks led to the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty that still stands today. To AQ, the Camp David Accords represent Sadat's betrayal of the Palestinian people and Muslim interests.

- **Oslo Accords:** Signed in 1993 in the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, and US President Bill Clinton, these accords provided for the creation of the Palestinian Authority and established a framework for future negotiations between the Israeli government and Palestinian leaders on "final status" issues toward the establishment of a Palestinian state. AQ holds the Oslo Accords as an example of Muslim surrender to Western interests.

- **Hamas:** Founded in 1987 and officially titled the "Islamic Resistance Movement," Hamas is a Palestinian political party that currently governs the Gaza Strip and is led by Prime Minister Ismail Haniyah. Hamas' refusal to renounce violence against Israel and recognize the legitimacy of a Jewish state has led to its isolation from the international community.

- **Mahmoud Abbas:** First elected in January 2005, Abbas is the President of the Palestinian National Authority. Abbas has advocated peaceful resistance as a means to achieving a Palestinian state, which has put him at odds

with his chief political rival, Hamas, which has not renounced use of violence against Israel. AQ views Abbas as a secularist who seeks to establish a Western-controlled government in the Palestinian territories.

- **Hezbollah:** Based in Lebanon, Hezbollah is a Shi'a Muslim militant group and political party. Since it's founding in the mid-1980s, Hezbollah has launched several attacks on Israel, the most recent major attack on Israel in 2006 launched the Lebanon War of that year. As a result of its Shi'a roots, Hezbollah is seen by AQ as an ineffectual, Iran-backed organization.

Quotations & Citations

1. See, for instance, images from violence that broke out on "Nakba Day" in 2011: "Nakba Day Protests – In Pictures," *The Guardian.* 15 May 2011: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/gallery/2011/may/15/palestinian-territories-israel#/?picture=374634005&index=0.

2. Monitor 360 Interview with Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

3. "The Denudation of The Exoneration: Part 8," *Jihadica.com.* 28 November 2008: http://www.jihadica.com/the-denudation-of-the-exoneration-part-8/.

4. "The Denudation of The Exoneration: Part 8," *Jihadica.com.* 28 November 2008: http://www.jihadica.com/the-denudation-of-the-exoneration-part-8/.

5. Monitor 360 interview with Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

6. "Al-Qa'ida Bin Ladin's New Statement Lists 'Practical Steps To Liberate Palestine,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 14 March 2009: GMP20090314640004.

7. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global, LLC), 11 July 2011.

8. Monitor 360 interview with Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011.

9. "Sada Al-Malahim Article on Goals of AQAP's Explosive Devices on Western Planes," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 15 February 2011: GMP20110220136001.

10. "Al-Qai'da in Arabian Peninsula Leader Urges Yemeni Tribes to Fight Government," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 19 February 2009: GMP20090219050005.

11. Monitor 360 interview with Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011.

12. "Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb Releases Video 'Join the Caravan,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 01 January 2010: FEA20100219001731.

13. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

Sources

Master Narrative & Background Analysis

- This master narrative was articulated in Monitor 360 interviews with AQ experts. Martha Crenshaw from Stanford University stated that this narrative is a central narrative for both AQ and its affiliate groups in the Islamic Maghreb and Arabian Peninsula. Ed Husain from the Council on Foreign Relations argued that this narrative is deeply rooted in historical events including the Balfour Declaration. Other interviews confirmed the existence of and details in this narrative in AQ messaging. Monitor 360 interviews with Ed Husain (Council on Foreign Relations), 14 June 2011; Martha Crenshaw (Stanford University), 17 June 2011; Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 29 June 2011; Murad Batal Al-Shishani (Jamestown Foundation), 7 July 2011; Bruce Hoffman (Georgetown University), 13 July 2011; and Alistair Harris (Pursue, Ltd.), 15 July 2011.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Christopher Boucek notes that the themes of injustice, dispossession, and oppression of Muslims feature prominently in AQ messaging on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Monitor 360 interview with Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011.

- AQ communicators frequently criticize Muslim leaders such as Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas for their willingness to participate in the peace process and allegedly cede Muslim land to Israel. AQ communicators point to a long list of agreements between Palestinian leaders and Israel that have facilitated this "surrender" of land to Israel. For example, Ayman al-Zawahiri stated in 2009: "Have we forgotten that [Palestinian Authority President] Mahmud Abbas was among those who relinquished nine-tenths of Palestine through a series of agreements of shame, disgrace, and surrender? They started by the Oslo Accords, Annapolis Conference, and then the recent tripartite meeting in New York, passing through the Wye River Memorandum, Camp David, and the Mecca Agreement." "Ayman Al-Zawahiri Criticizes National Unity in 'Palestine,' Obama's Policy," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 14 December 2009: GMP20091214083002.

- AQ believes that violent jihad is critical to the liberation of Palestine. For example, Mustafa Abu-al-Yazid, the former financial chief of AQ, once stated: "They have allied with the criminal and killer Jews to annihilate our patient Muslim people in Palestine in general and in Gaza in particular. We should join forces and unite ranks, and invade them, kill them, inflect casualties among their lines, and destroy their green fields. 'A believer to another

believer is like a wall of bricks supporting each other' [from a hadith]. Let each one of us be a marching company and a cluster bomb to kill as much as possible of these criminals who spread mischief on earth, and to cause them a state of unrest, arouse their anxiety, and to deprive them from security, which is their number one priority, until they no longer cause harm." "Audio by Abu-al-Yazid Urges Muslims To Support 'Mujahidin' in Afghanistan," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 15 June 2010: GMP20100615050001.

- The disdain for secular governance features prominently in AQ messaging. AQ views the Palestinian cause as central to its goal of reestablishing Islamic rule and views the calls for secularism and nationalism as Western ideals that have polluted Muslim minds. For instance, Ayman al-Zawahiri states: "I just ask: is it not clear to us who Mahmud Abbas, and what the national Authority is? Is it not clear to us that they are a secular group that does not refer to the Islamic Shari'ah? The principles, which they claim, are a mix of nationalism, secularism, pragmatism, and sanctification of the international legitimacy. However, the truth is that they sanctify their personal interests, contest each others to squander public funds, and serve the interests of the Zionists and Americans." "Ayman Al-Zawahiri Criticizes National Unity in 'Palestine,' Obama's Policy," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 14 December 2009: GMP20091214083002.

- Despite being unable to point to direct operational successes against Israeli targets, AQ communicators have made direct threats aimed at Israel and have claimed responsibility for actions against Israel. See, for instance: "Al Qaeda takes aim at Israel," *Christian Science Monitor*. 13 January 2006: http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0113/p06s01-wome.html.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Jarret Brachman stated that criticism of AQ's use of the Palestinian cause as an empty talking point has led to AQ needing to show leadership and action on the issue. For example, in March 2009, Osama bin Laden released a statement on "Practical Steps to Liberate Palestine," outlining key steps that Muslims could take to assist in the cause of jihad. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global, LLC), 11 July 2011. "Al-Qa'ida Bin Ladin's New Statement Lists 'Practice Steps to Liberate Palestine,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 14 March 2009: GMP20090314640004.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Will McCants of *Jihadica.com* stated that Ayman al-Zawahiri removed references to encouraging other jihadists to utilize the Palestinian cause as a talking point in the second edition of his book, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, after he encountered criticism of AQ's lack of action on waging jihad against Israel. Monitor 360 interview with Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

- While AQ views Palestine as a religious priority, AQ also views the Palestinian cause as just part of the larger global struggle against the enemies of Islam. As a result, Muslims should not limit their goals to the liberation of Palestine. In a video message released by AQ's Al-Sahab media arm in September 2009, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, a senior AQ leader from Libya, affirms that "…jihad in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places is jihad for Palestine as well. We should not limit ourselves to tight boundaries where the enemy can surround and starve us, thereby hindering our efforts." "Al-Sahab Video 'The West and the Dark Tunnel,' Part 2 of 2," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 22 September 2009: GMP20090923488002.

- Amr Hamzawi of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace points out in a January 2010 *Al-Arabiyah* interview that referencing the injustices committed against the Palestinian people by Israel and the US provides legitimacy for AQ's terrorist activities. Hamzawi says that AQ has "linked…the attacks on the United States and the situation in the Palestinian territories…what is dangerous here is that this strategy has always been successful inside the Arab Islamic world and has always garnered wide popular acceptance." "Researcher: Bin Ladin Focuses on Palestinian Issue To Achieve High 'Acceptance,' *Al-Arabiyah Television* via www.opensource.gov. 24 January 2010: GMP20100124643001.

Affiliate-level Analysis

AQAP

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Barak Barfi of the New America Foundation explained that AQAP uses this narrative as proof of a broader conspiracy that the West has created against Muslims. He goes on to say that AQAP uses this narrative to connect to the local population of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, with whom this narrative resonates according to Barfi. Monitor 360 interview with Barak Barfi (New America Foundation), 5 July 2011.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Christopher Boucek of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace noted that both Yemeni and Saudi Arabian societies are strongly anti-Israel and this narrative is one that would be important to these populations. Yemen, for example, sends aid to the Palestinian people despite being one of the poorest countries in the Arab world. Furthermore, compared to AQIM, an organization comprised mostly of members originating from within the Islamic Maghreb, a large percentage of AQAP's membership hails from outside the Arabian Peninsula and a primary motivating driver for these jihadis is the Palestinian cause. Monitor 360 interview with Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011.

- Further emphasizing AQAP's view that Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan are high priority jihad fronts, *Al-Malahim*, AQAP's media arm, stated in a May 2010 audio production: "The *Ummah* has experienced these tragedies since the fall of the Islamic caliphate. The forces of global non-belief seized upon the Muslims. They allied in a global campaign against terror, with the protector of the Cross America at the fore. It came after the Muslims with every-

thing it had. It planned, carried out, and continues to carry out what it can to wage war against Islam and Muslims. This matter does not need to be proven, for it is seen and felt by people in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Arabian Peninsula, and elsewhere through the lands of Islam." "AQAP Releases New Audio 'Who are the Mujahidin in the Arabian Peninsula,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 14 May 2010: FEA20100515004984.

- According to AQ expert Bruce Riedel, AQAP messaging demonstrates that the organization hopes that conflict between Israel and Iran will stimulate conflict that will spread across the region, drawing Arab states into direct conflict with Israeli and Shi'a adversaries. See: Bruce Riedel. "Al Qaeda Plans for War with Israel," The Brookings Institution. 18 August 2010: http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0818_al_qaeda_israel_riedel.aspx?rssid=riedelb.

AQIM

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies stated that because this master narrative is part of AQ's core messaging, AQIM's use of "The Nakba" allows it to connect itself to AQ's broader global jihad. Monitor 360 interview with Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011.

- Other than Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya, AQIM has also referenced fronts in Nigeria, Sudan, and Somalia, potentially indicating AQIM's growing interest in these countries. Abdallah al-Shinqiti states in a August 2010 video seminar: "On the occasion of this Id, I'd like to send my regards to my Muslim brothers, and to my mujahidin brothers in particular everywhere, in the Islamic Maghreb, in Nigeria, in the lands of Sudan, in Afghanistan, in Palestine and Chechnya, in Somalia and in the Land of the Two Rivers, who raised our heads [in pride]. I greet them all." "AQLIM Releases Video Seminar Entitled 'Fighting is Prescribed for You,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 21 August 2010: GMP20100823101002.

- Further demonstrating AQIM's desire to align itself with AQ senior leadership, Abdelmalek Droukdel, AQIM's emir, references Osama bin Laden's past declaration that "By God you will not even dream of peace until we live it as reality in Palestine." Droukdel says: "That message clearly summarized the dimension of our fight against you [France] and clearly stated the security equation between us, which is: you will not enjoy security in the land of God until we enjoy it as an experienced reality in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, the Islamic Maghreb, and others..." "AQIM Leader Abd-al-Wadud: Bin Ladin's Death To 'Foment Flames of War' Against US," Hanin Network Forums (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 26 May 2011: GMP20110526136001.

Change Dynamics & Trends

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Murad Batal Al-Shishani of the Jamestown Foundation explained that this master narrative is an essential component of all political movements in the Muslim world given its wide appeal. Monitor 360 interview with Murad Batal Al-Shishani (Jamestown Foundation), 7 July, 2011.

- AQ has criticized Hamas for its insularity and nationalist aims that ignore the broader global jihad. Shaykh Abd-al-Majid Abd-al-Majid, a member of AQ's Shura Council, states: "However, regarding the political stance of HAMAS, we have called upon them to make some corrections. They said that they enjoy their own privacy. Thus, they resulted in isolating themselves from their nation in order to become an easy bite to the enemies of Islam, such as the Jews, the Crusaders, and the so-called quartet. Nowadays, the situation is as it is revealed to everyone." "Al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan Shura Council Member Interviewed on Jihad, HAMAS, Ulema," Jihadists Websites (*Al-Balagh* Media Center) via www.opensource.gov. 12 June 2010: GMP20100612136004.

- However, AQ is not always critical of Hamas. In fact, recent AQ statements may indicate a warming rhetoric toward Hamas. In his eulogy of Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri thanks Ismail Haniyah, the current header of Hamas, for his praise of the former AQ leader: "On this occasion, I would like to express my and my brothers' gratitude to anyone, who took part in this great epic. I would like to express the same gratitude to the thousands, who offered the funeral prayer in absentia for the martyr of Islam all over the Islamic world, as well as those who praise the Shaykh, may God rest his soul ion peace, and his jihad, including but not limited to, Shaykh Hafiz Salamah, Mufti Kifayatullah, Shaykh Hasan Oways, Mr Isma'il Haniyah, and many others. May God reward all of them." "Al-Fajr Media Center Releases Ayman Al-Zawahiri Video Eulogizing Usama Bin Ladin," *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 8 June 2011: GMP20110608136002.

- AQ has criticized Hezbollah for its connections to Iran, secularist tendencies, and its lack of courage. Ayman Al-Zawahiri states in an audio message: "Hizballah is a party that fights and then accepts to retreat 30 km behind the borders of the homeland and pledges to secure the Crusader occupation forces that occupy the borderline. This party describes any rockets, other than their rockets blessed by their chief in Iran, as suspicious rockets. The party accepts, or rather gets deeply involved in, the secular political process." "Al-Zawahiri Audio Eulogizes Taliban-Pakistan Leader Mehsud," Jihadists Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 28 September 2009: FEA20090928947542.

"VIOLENT JIHAD"

Key Phrases, Symbols, or Images

- **Abu Musab al-Suri:** An AQ member and a writer, he is considered one of the most important promoters of modern jihadist ideology and strategy. His best known book, *The Call for Global Islamic Resistance*, continues to define and shape AQ's core beliefs on jihad.

- *Fardh 'Ayn:* Meaning "individual duty," *fardh 'ayn* is a mainstream religious doctrine that is widespread across Muslim communities and most commonly refers to religious obligations such as daily prayer. Its use in the context of jihad is held by a small subset of the global Muslim community—this concept has been adapted by jihadist groups to make individual jihad against the West and apostate governments—outside the auspices of an established organization—religiously permissible.

- **"Scholars of the Palace":** Pejorative term used for members of the *ulema* (Islamic scholars and clerics) said to be working at the behest of corrupt Arab and Muslim leaders ("the Palace").

- **The Hijra:** Term used for the emigration of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 to avoid persecution. The Prophet later returned to and conquered Mecca, having expanded the ranks of his followers in Medina. AQ messaging often makes references the Hijra as a testament to the ability of small bands of Muslim fighters being able to topple militarily superior forces against the odds and in the face of major setbacks.

- **Muslim women:** AQ messaging frequently emphasizes the alleged killing or maiming of Muslim women in an effort to rally male recruits, invoking a sense of duty to protect women that is prevalent in many conservative societies.

Quotations & Citations

1. In a 2010 article written by Abu-Yahya al-Libi, the necessity and obligation to pursue jihad in the face of such aggression is described as self-evident: "What a grave crime that smears Islam and Muslims. If you want an example, compare the talk of many of the present-day ulema between jihad in Palestine and in Iraq and jihad in Afghanistan after the occupation of the Russians and then after the US Christians and their allies took over. These are perfect examples that do not need proof. They are similar or even identical in terms of the Shari'ah description that any fair person can clearly see. The matter does need much philosophy, delving into analyses, or discerning the nuances that do not change the truth, which, if you look at them thoroughly, find them sheer following of the countries' policies and the change of their interests. These countries are no different than the lowly and despicable caprices of their rulers, darkness after another. The sane people then have the right to safeguard their religion and heed this saying: 'As if every time a different man comes we abandon our religion because of what he says. By God no! The truth should be heeded and veracity should be listened to.'" "Abu-Yahya Al-Libi Article Counters 'Dubious Claims' Against Jihad," *Al-Fallujah* Islamic Forums via www.opensource.gov. 09 June 2010: GMP20100610569004.

2. Monitor 360 interviews with Chris Anzalone (McGill University), 6 July 2011; and Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

3. "Abu-Yahya Al-Libi Article Counters 'Dubious Claims' Against Jihad," *Al-Fallujah* Islamic Forums via www.opensource.gov. 09 June 2010: GMP20100610569004.

4. "Adam Gadahn Video on Mardin Converence." Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 22 October 2010: FEA20101024010655.

5. "AQAP Statement Condemns Airstrikes in Yemen, 'Silence' From Tribes," Jihadist Websites via www.opensource.gov. 17 June 2010: GMP20100618535002.

6. "AQAP Commander Audio Message: 'Together To Overthrow Al Sa'ud,'" *Al-Fallujah* Islamic Forums (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 09 August 2010: GMP20100810569002.

7. "Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb Video: 'The Al-Damus Raid,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 23 April 2010: FEA20100728007791.

8. "Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb Releases Video 'Join the Caravan,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Media Establishment) via www.opensource.gov. 01 January 2010: FEA20100219001731.

Sources

Master Narrative & Background Analysis

- This master narrative was identified and validated in Monitor 360 interviews with AQ experts. Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies described this master narrative as one with wide appeal because diverse audiences can agree that the global Muslim community is currently facing serious hardships. Thomas Sanderson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies explained that this master narrative serves as a palpable call to action for many potential recruits, and is reinforced by the "War on Islam" master narrative which further justifies AQ communicators' call to jihad. Jarret Brachman of Cronus Global noted that AQ messaging, in general, is prone to drawing sharp dichotomies between good and evil, right and wrong, loyalty and betrayal, faith and apostasy, etc. Brachman explained that AQ messaging uses an individual's or group's response to this

master narrative as one determinant of whether that group is defined as fighting for "true" Islam or fighting for evil. Additional subject matter expert interviews validated this master narrative's role in AQ messaging and details frequently used in that messaging. Monitor 360 interviews with Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for the Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011; Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 24 June 2011; Murad Batal Al-Shishani (Jamestown Foundation), 7 July 2011; Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011; and Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

- During an interview with Monitor 360, McGill University's Chris Anzalone explained that AQ messaging distinguishes between two different kinds of Muslim scholars: those who support AQ views and are considered "true" Muslims, and those who do not and are considered traitors to Islam. AQ messaging especially singles out Islamic clerics or scholars employed by governments, often described as "scholars of deceit" or "scholars of the Palace." Monitor 360 interview with Chris Anzalone (McGill University), 6 July 2011.

- For an example of an AQ spokesperson calling for obligatory jihad in response to enemy threats, see: "Adam Gadahn Video on Mardin Converence," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 22 October 2010: FEA20101024010655.

- According to a London-based risk analysis firm, AQIM threatened to target approximately 50,000 Chinese working in Algeria in retaliation for alleged violence committed against Muslim Uighurs in China. See: "Al-Qaeda vows revenge on China over Uighur deaths," *The Telegraph*. 14 July 2009: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/5822791/Al-Qaeda-vows-revenge-on-China-over-Uighur-deaths.html.

- For an example of AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri using the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah in order to support AQ's views regarding jihad, see: Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Loyalty and Enmity" in Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader.* New York: Broadway Books. 2007. Pp. 80-87.

Affiliate-level Analysis

AQAP

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Christopher Boucek noted that anti-government sentiments and frustration with widespread poverty are commonplace in Yemen, making it easier for AQAP to capitalize on local grievances in supporting this master narrative. Further, Boucek explained that AQAP messaging frames the Salih government as especially pernicious because Salih is a Muslim—i.e., implying that Salih, as a Muslim, should know that he is following the "wrong" path and that he should be fighting to implement Sharia in Yemen. Monitor 360 interviews with Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 24 June 2011; and Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011.

- According to jihadist observer and former Australian Federal Police analyst Leah Farrall, AQAP places a special emphasis on encouraging would-be jihadists to take up jihad on the individual level wherever they may already be located. This theme is especially pronounced, Farrall explained, in AQAP's English-language *Inspire* magazine. Monitor 360 interview with Leah Farrall (Former Australian Federal Police, Counterterrorism Unit), 29 June 2011.

- Abu Musab al-Suri writes in his book, *The Call for Global Islamic Resistance*, that individuals who wish to participate in jihad need not join a central organization and have their actions sanctioned by a collective body. Al-Suri writes that individual jihad is sanctioned in cases such as when terrorist organizations no longer have the ability "…to absorb all the nation's youths who wish to fulfill their Jihad and resistance duty through the participation in an activity without having to join the membership of a central organization." "Availability of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's 'The Call to Global Islamic Resistance'," OSC Feature via www.opensource.gov. 24 May 2006: FEA20070912315906.

- Al-Suri's writings are frequently featured in *Inspire*, AQAP's English-language magazine. According to BBC Monitoring, "as with previous editions, the magazine included content aimed at inciting readers to carry out acts of individual jihad. It included a piece by the imprisoned jihadist ideologue Abu-Mus'ab al-Suri advocating individual jihad, which appeared to be taken from his seminal work, Call to the Global Islamic Resistance." "Web: Al-Qa'idah Yemen issues new edition of English magazine Inspire," BBC Monitoring via www.opensource.gov. 19 July 2011: GMP20110719950046.

- In another example of AQAP communicators tailoring the call to jihad to target audience segments, AQ religious leader Ibrahim Bin-Sulayman Al-Rubaysh singles out Yemeni government soldiers in a 2011 statement: "Who transgressed against the Muslims' houses in Lawdar [town in southwestern Yemen], destroyed some of them, and killed people? Was that Obama, Bush, Ali Abdallah Salih, or you, O miserable soldier? Who terrorized Muslims in Ma'rib, destroyed houses and mosques, and killed elderly people? Who is killing the demonstrators with his bullets now? Who ran a woman over in Hadramawt [region in central Yemen]? Who throws people in prisons but you, O soldier? After all this, some people come to blame us because we want to kill you, arguing that it is not permissible because you pray and you fast. What prayer [are they talking about] after all this criminal acts on your part?" "Al-Malahim Releases AQAP's Al-Rubaysh Audio Calling on Govt Solider to Revolt," Global Jihad Network (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 09 April 2011: FEA20110409016612.

AQIM

- In an interview with Monitor 360, AQ expert Brian Fishman explained that AQIM messaging suggests efforts to appeal to diverse North African audiences (especially Algerian audiences) as well as investment in trying to connect North African objectives with those of AQ senior leaders. These views were further validated in interviews with Andrew Lebovich of the New America Foundation and Murad Batal Al-Shishani of the Jamestown Founda-

tion. Monitor 360 interviews with Brian Fishman (New America Foundation), 15 June 2011; Andrew Lebovich (New America Foundation), 24 June 2011; Murad Batal Al-Shishani (Jamestown Foundation), 7 July 2011.

- A 2010 AQIM video statement underscores the view that the survival of the *umma* and Islam depends on the extent to which Muslims answer the call to jihad: "Jihad is the reason for the survival of religion and the glory of Muslims. Had it not been for jihad, the nation would have been extinguished and removed from existence." "AQLIM Video Warns of Western Plots Against Africa, Urges Support for "Mujahidin," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Media Establishment) via www.opensource.gov. 09 March 2010: FEA20100309002492.

Change Dynamics & Trends

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Jarret Brachman of Cronus Global explained that AQ messaging frequently depicts complex situations and conflicts as the result of binary oppositions between good and evil. Brachman explained that Zawahiri is especially prone to making these "black and white" distinctions between what is right and wrong according to AQ. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

"BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS"

Key Phrases, Symbols, or Images

- *Mujahidin:* Meaning "strugglers" or "people doing jihad" in Arabic, AQ uses this term to refer to the "holy warriors" participating in its jihad against the West, Muslim rulers labeled as apostates, or other AQ enemies.

- **Paradise:** AQ believes that all martyrs will be rewarded with guaranteed entrance into Paradise where Muslims have "…a better life, a life that is more spacious, a life which has no death to follow it, no tribulations, no trials, and no fear. The human being there is free and optimistic in anticipation of his meeting with God Almighty."[14] AQ uses Paradise as an incentive to encourage martyrdom.

- *Hadith* **of the Boy and King:** AQ cites this *hadith* as justification that martyrdom operations are legal according to Islamic law. The *hadith* tells a story about a boy who voluntarily offers to be crucified in order to prove Allah's divinity to the people.[15]

- **Battle of Badr:** Fought in 624, this battle is referenced by AQ as an example of a small band of warriors securing victory against a much larger enemy. At this battle, the Prophet's 300-strong army from Medina defeated an army from Mecca three times in size.

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1. Raymond Ibrahim, The *Al-Qaeda Reader*. Broadway Books: 2007. Print. Pp. 137.

2. "AQLIM Releases 'Lovers of Houris 2' Video Showing Attacks," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Fajr* Media Center) via www.opensource.gov. 25 April 2009: FEA20090504851762.

3. "Bin Ladin, Jihadists, Others Eulogize "Martyrdom Seekers' in Al-Qa'ida Video," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 15 July 2007: GMP20070719342003.

4. "Al-Malahim Releases AQAP Statement Eulogizing Al-Qa'ida Slain Leader Abu-al-Yazid," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 20 June 2010: FEA20100621006389.

5. For instance: "AQAP Eulogizes Abu-Khaythamah Al-Hadramil, 'French Oil Tanker Attacker,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 12 November 2010: GMP20101123083003.

6. "OSC Analysis: Terrorism – AQAP Eulogy Series May Serve as Recruitment Tool," *OSC Analysis* via www.opensource.gov. 22 June 2011: GMF20110622256001.

7. These productions also stand testament to the sophistication of their media wing, *Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production, which has the production and dissemination capacity to produce tailored eulogies for even low-level foot soldiers.

8. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

9. In this vein, an OSC Report notes that "The majority of Al-Andalus's productions consist of statements made by AQIM's emir, Abdelmalek Droukdel—aka Abu-Mus'ab Abd-al-Wadud—which cover a variety of topics, including regional tensions, issues regarding captives and prisoners, and eulogies." "OSC Report: Terrorism—AQIM Media Arm Al-Andalus Features Prominent Group Members," OSC Report via www.opensource.gov. 11 March 2011: GMP20110311431001. There are, however, notable exceptions: AQIM's "Lovers of Houris" ("Lovers of Virgins") series—perhaps the most sophisticated AQIM media production—profiles individual suicide attackers, celebrating their actions and detailing their individual missions. "AQLIM Releases 'Lovers of Houris 2' Video Showing Attacks," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 25 April 2009: FEA20090504851762.

10. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

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11. "AQIM suicide bomber kills 4 in Algeria," *The Long War Journal*. 16 July 2011: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/07/aqim_suicide_bombers.php.

12. "AQIM Employs Martyrdom Operations in Algeria," Jamestown Foundation. 20 September 2007: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4412.

13. "AQLIM Releases 'Lovers of Houris 2' Video Showing Attacks," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 25 April 2009: FEA20090504851762.

14. "Al-Sahab Releases Part II of 'Winds of Paradise' Featuring Wills of 'Martyrs,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 27 January 2008: GMP20080129342001.

15. Raymond Ibrahim, The *Al-Qaeda Reader*. Broadway Books. 2007. Print. Pp. 146–149.

Sources

Master Narrative & Background Analysis

- This master narrative was articulated in Monitor 360 interviews with AQ experts. Ed Husain of the Council on Foreign Relations and Jarret Brachman of Cronus Global discussed how AQ views martyrs as the foot soldiers of Islam who will be rewarded in heaven. Jarret Brachman also stated that martyrs are viewed as the building blocks of victory toward the ultimate goals of reestablishing the Caliphate and implementing Sharia. Thomas Sanderson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies stated his view that AQ uses this narrative as a recruitment tool to convince young, disenchanted men that they can positively impact the global jihad by conducting a martyrdom operation against the enemy. Chris Anzalone of McGill University discussed how AQ's definition of martyrdom is broad and inclusive—for example, if a Muslim on pilgrimage to Mecca were to die by accident, AQ would consider this person a martyr. AQ cites many Koranic verses to justify its broad definition of martyrdom, but will ignore those that may contradict its views according to Anzalone. Christopher Boucek of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace stated that the theme of a small group of people defeating a larger enemy features strongly in AQ messaging that invokes this master narrative. For example, AQ references the Battle of Badr in 624 when Mohammed's much smaller army from Medina defeated a much larger Meccan army. Other interviews confirmed the existence of and details in this narrative in AQ messaging. Monitor 360 interviews with Ed Husain (Council on Foreign Relations), 14 June 2011; Tawfik Hamid (Potomac Institute), 16 June 2011; Daniel Byman (Georgetown University), 23 June 2011; Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 29 June 2011; Chris Anzalone (McGill University), 6 July 2011; Murad Batal Al-Shishani (Jamestown Foundation), 7 July 2011; Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011; Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011; and Alistair Harris (Pursue, Ltd.), 15 July 2011.

- Imagery featuring the blood of martyrs and the "musk" that emanates from their blood is featured in AQ messaging; Ahmed Farooq, AQ's propaganda chief in Pakistan says: "Hence, the person who has been injured in the cause of God, and thence the verse concludes: 'He will appear on the day of judgment in a state such that blood will be pouring out from his wound.' There will not be merely drops of blood oozing out of it; instead, it will be pouring out as it does from a fresh wound. 'Its color will be like that of blood but its smell will be like musk.' If pure intentions are present then that wound is accepted before God while if pure intentions are absent, then it is rejected." "Al-Sahab Releases Urdu Audio Sermon: 'Conditions for God's Acceptance of Jihad,'" *Ansar al-Mujahidin* Network (Al-Sahab Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 11 April 2011: GMP20110412082001.

- Martyrs are rewarded with entrance into Paradise, a place that AQ describes as a place with no "trials or tribulations." According to AQ, Muslims should desire to be martyred just as the Prophet desired to be martyred. Abu-Yahya al-Libi, a senior AQ leader originally from Libya, states: "Every human being who exits this world, dies, except for the martyr. God Almighty informed us that he moves from this life to a better life, a life that is more spacious, a life which has no death to follow it, no tribulations, no trials, and no fear. The human being there is free and optimistic in anticipation of his meeting with God Almighty. Because of this, our prophet, prayers and peace be upon him, who was forgiven of all sins before and after him, desired the world from this doorway, from the doorway of martyrdom in the cause of God. Our prophet is the owner of the highest rank. The prophet, prayers and peace be upon him, said: 'If my soul were in my own hands, I would have desired to be killed for the cause of God, then I would be brought back to life, then killed then brought back to life then killed then brought back to life then killed then brought back to life then killed' [Hadith]. This is the prophet of God, prayers and peace be upon him. He desired to leave this world as a martyr." "Al-Sahab Releases Part II of 'Winds of Paradise' Featuring Wills of 'Martyrs,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 27 January 2008: GMP20080129342001.

- In justifying its view that suicide operations are legitimate, AQ selectively chooses the evidence it presents to align with the views of local populations. Historian Raymond Ibrahim notes: "Although there are countless hadiths demonstrating the legitimacy of fighting to certain death, Zawahiri shrewdly selects those that most strike a chord in Muslim readers due to current circumstances. For instance, the first hadith he notes after the 'boy and king' has to do with a 'poverty-stricken and haggard-looking' man who gladly fights to the death in order to gain Paradise. It would seem that this particular hadith was included with the express purpose of motivating the many poor and dispossessed Muslims around the world to martyrdom." Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al-Qaeda Reader*. Broadway Books. 2007. Print. Pp. 139.

■ Martyrdom can be a contentious issue theologically, and Islamic clerics regularly characterize suicide operations as *haram* (forbidden). See, for instance: "Islamic Scholars In Pakistan Condemn Suicide Attacks, Warn Government," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. 02 August 2011: http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic_scholars_in_pakistan_condemn_suicide_attacks_warn_government/9498532.html.

Affiliate-level Analysis

AQAP

■ In an interview with Monitor 360, Jarret Brachman confirmed that AQAP promotes the theme of martyrdom often by using its dedicated martyr text-statement series [Martyrs of the Peninsula], which highlights brief biographies of AQAP martyrs. This was reiterated by Chris Anzalone of McGill University. Monitor 360 interviews with Chris Anzalone (McGill University), 6 July 2011; Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

■ In an interview with Monitor 360, Murad Batal Al-Shishani of the Jamestown Foundation stated that martyrdom has a much stronger religious overtone in AQAP than in AQIM. AQAP views itself as the *umma's* first line of defense given that the Arabian Peninsula hosts the two holiest sites in Islam according to Al-Shishani. Al-Shishani also stated that the martyrdom narrative is used to by AQAP as a recruitment tool. Monitor 360 interview with Murad Batal Al-Shishani (Jamestown Foundation), 7 July 2011.

■ In an interview with Monitor 360, Daniel Byman of Georgetown University confirmed that AQAP places great emphasis on the martyr master narrative by publishing stories of martyrs to encourage young people to join jihad and emulate these celebrated martyrs. Monitor 360 interview with Daniel Byman (Georgetown University), 23 June 2011.

■ A June 2011 OSC Analysis found that martyrdom is an important part of AQAP messaging and may contribute to recruitment for the affiliate: "Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) online eulogy series—Martyrs of the Arabian Peninsula, which highlights select 'martyrs' and their advanced education, leadership, technical, and weapons skills, as well as exemplary piety and religious guidance—implicitly conveys to aspiring jihadists desirable attributes for joining the group. The eulogy series may assist AQAP in its recruitment efforts." "OSC Analysis: Terrorism—AQAP Eulogy Series May Serve as Recruitment Tool," *OSC Analysis* via www.opensource.gov. 22 June 2011: GMF20110622256001.

■ In September 2009, AQAP posted a statement on a jihadist website asking for forum participants to send biographies and photos of martyrs from the Arabian Peninsula, further evidence of the emphasis AQAP places on this narrative. AQAP's *Al-Malahim* media arm states: "As the holy month [of Ramadan] starts, your brothers in the Al-Malahim Establishment are glad to offer you an invitation to participate in a workshop dedicated to collecting the biographies, photos, and news of the of the Arabian Peninsula martyrs; we consider them so, and God is the best to judge. Those martyrs were killed in the land of the peninsula and their blood was shed on the holy soil of the Two Holy Mosques [Saudi Arabia], Yemen, Kuwait, and the rest of the Arabian Gulf countries. The requirement is to collect everything that is related to the martyrs in the way of: Names, photos, biographies of martyrs, video clips, wills, battles, news reports, and anything else." "Al-Qa'ida Affiliate Requests Information on Arab Peninsula 'Martyrs'," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource. gov. 2 September 2009: GMP20090902549001.

AQIM

■ In an interview with Monitor 360, Jarret Brachman confirmed that AQIM utilizes this master narrative more generally than AQAP except for specific operations videos. Monitor 360 interview with Jarret Brachman (Cronus Global), 11 July 2011.

■ On May 8, 2011, AQIM released a eulogy for Osama bin Laden, the first AQ affiliate to release a eulogy of the AQ leader. According to Chris Anzalone of McGill University, the eulogy "…speaks of 'a historic day in which the knight of jihad and lion of lions has left us' in order to be returned to God. He spent his life fighting the United States, the 'head of unbelief (Kufr)', and its allies who are the 'essence of evil and source of vice' as well as epitome of 'injustice and barbarity.' The statement congratulates the Muslim global community (Ummah) on the 'martyrdom of her son, Usama' and promises retaliation. The hearts of the AQIM 'mujahideen' (warriors of faith) are feeling a mix of sadness at bin Laden's loss along with joy that he has 'achieved martyrdom,' which is what he wanted." "Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb First Al-Qa'ida Central Affiliate to Issue Eulogy for Usama bin Laden." *Views from the Occident*. 8 May 2011: http://occident.blogspot.com/2011/05/qaida-in-islamic-maghreb-issues-eulogy.html.

■ In October 2009, AQIM released a eulogy of Baitullah Mehsud, a former leader in the Pakistan Taliban. AQIM's leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel, wrote: "Today, our loved one and martyr (may God accept him so), Baitullah Mehsud, has left us after opening a new front in the fight (one America and her allies have long dreaded). However, we do not claim that there is no loss to the nation in the departure of the man from this proud mountain and lofty peak. The death of Qais was not the death of one person, but rather the destruction of the structure of a people. We say, rather, that it is a price the nation has chosen to pay as a pious deed, and out of the goodness of its soul, so that the tree of Islam may be watered with the blood it needs in order to grow straight and thick. The branches of this tree will then produce leaves announcing the immanent return of the rightly-guided Islamic caliphate, which has been absent for so long." "AQLIM Leader Eulogizes Baitullah Mehsud," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 08 October 2009: GMP20091009569001.

- Unlike AQAP, which dedicates significant resources toward celebrating individual martyrs, AQIM generally elects to release collective eulogies unless the martyr is significant (e.g., Osama bin Laden). AQIM also references historical martyrs such as Shaykh Umar al-Mukhtar, who led the resistance movement to the Italian colonization effort in Libya. In an August 2010 statement, Abdelmalek Droukdel states: "Here are our martyr heroic men, like Abu-Ibrahim, Abu-al-Haytham, Abu-al-Bara, Al-Zarqawi, Al-Baghdadi, and Abu-al-Yazid, may the Almighty God grant them mercy, and their brothers… I declare it to you in a roaring cry, which has its repeated echo, since the desert lion, cavalier of jihad and dignity, and personification of heroism and sacrifice in the Islamic Maghreb, the Mujahid martyr Shaykh Umar al-Mukhtar, may God grant him mercy…" "Al-Andalus Releases Audio Statement by AQLIM Amir Abu-Mus'ab Abd-al-Wadud," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 08 August 2010: GMP20100809117001.

Change Dynamics & Trends

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Will McCants of *Jihadica.com* stated that this master narrative is most effective when invoked when there is an immovable foreign occupier on Muslim land (e.g. the United States in Iraq). Convincing people to undertake martyrdom operations is a much harder sell when the target is domestic as opposed to a foreign entity. Monitor 360 interview with Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

"RESTORING THE CALIPHATE"

Key Phrases, Symbols, or Images

- **Caliphate:** Refers to the system of Sunni Islamic governance first established by Mohammed and continued by the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The Caliphate eventually evolved into systems of dynasties that ruled various parts of the Islamic world until their end in the early 20th century: Umayyad (661 – 750), Abbasid (750 – 1258; 1261 – 1513), Fatimid (909 – 1171), and Ottoman (1299 – 1924). The Caliphate was officially abolished on 3 March 1924 by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

- **Sharia:** Religious law of Islam based on the teachings of the Koran (*Sunnah*) and the traditions of the prophet (Hadith). AQ views the implementation of Sharia as a necessary component of the Caliphate.

- *Rashidun:* Arabic word that Sunni Muslims use to refer to the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" that governed the Caliphate for the first thirty years after the death of Mohammed—Abu Bakr (632 – 634), Umar (634 – 644), Uthman (644 – 656), and Ali (656 – 661). According to AQ, these Caliphs led the Caliphate in its purest form before infighting and foreign influence corrupted Islamic society.

- *Jahaliyyah:* Literally meaning "ignorance," *jahaliyyah* is used to describe the condition of the world – lost and ignorant of the true religion of Islam—prior to the revelation of the Koran to Mohammed.

- **Andalucía:** Also known as *Al-Andalus* in Arabic, Andalucía comprises parts of southern and central Spain that were once governed by Muslims at various times between 711 and 1492. AQ and AQIM reference *Al-Andalus* as part of the vast territory their ancestors once conquered and ruled.

- **Mustafa Kemal Ataturk:** The leader of the Turkish nationalist movement in the early 20th century, Ataturk is considered the founder of the Turkish Republic and served as its first president from 1923 to 1938. He was instrumental in the abolishment of the Caliphate, viewing it as a barrier to his drive for greater national sovereignty for the new Turkish Republic.

- **Balfour Declaration:** The 1917 Declaration was a letter sent from British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron Rothschild, a leader in the British Jewish community, outlining the British government's support of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. AQ presents the Balfour Declaration as an example of the Western conspiracy to steal Muslim land and prevent an Islamic revival.

- **Sykes-Picot Agreement:** Signed in 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was a secret arrangement between the United Kingdom and France that defined each country's spheres of influence in the Middle East after the downfall of the Ottoman Empire post-World War I. AQ views the Sykes-Picot Agreement as evidence of a Western conspiracy to divide the Muslim *umma*.

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2. "Ayman al-Zawahiri: Jerusalem Will Not Be Judaized," *Al-Fallujah* Islamic Forums (*Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 19 July 2010: GMP20100719208003.

3. Monitor 360 interview with Chris Anzalone (McGill University), 6 July 2011.

4. "AQAP Statement Claims Infiltrating a Security Post in Shabwah, 27 Jul," OSC Summary via www.opensource.gov. 07 August 2010: GMP20100807488005.

5. "Audio Statement by AQAP Commander 'On the Recent Events in Aden and Ma'rib," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 29 July 2010: GMP20100729535003.

6. Monitor 360 interview with Alistair Harris (Pursue, Ltd.), 15 July 2011.

7. Monitor 360 interview with Lianne Kennedy Boudali (former RAND), 28 June 2011.

8. "AQLIM Video Warns of Western Plots Against Africa, Urges Support for 'Mujahidin,'" Jihadist Websites (*Al-Andalus* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 9 March 2010: FEA20100309002492.

Sources

Master Narrative & Background Analysis

- This master narrative was articulated in Monitor 360 interviews with AQ experts. Brian Fishman of the New America Foundation stated that AQ believes contemporary circumstances mirror those that existed just before the Prophet founded the religion. The world, they argue, is in a state of *jahaliyyah* (the "dark ages" that preceded the advent of Islam) that can only be solved with the restoration of the Caliphate and the imposition of Sharia. Chris Anzalone of McGill University noted that while AQ messaging references the historical Caliphates under the Umayyads and the Abbasids, and envisions the reemergence of a transnational state, AQ messaging does not specify precise boundaries for a new, restored Caliphate. Thomas Sanderson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies stated that AQ's vision is to "marry the nuclear weapons of Pakistan with the oil of Saudi Arabia" in order reclaim the respect the Muslim *umma* lost with the destruction of the Caliphate. Christopher Boucek of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace believes that AQ views the struggle to restore the Caliphate to be global in nature. The existence of this narrative was further validated in interviews with Ed Husain (Council on Foreign Relations), 14 June 2011; Mathieu Guidere (University of Toulouse), 20 June 2011; Gregory Johnsen (Princeton University), 21 June 2011; Andrew Lebovich (New America Foundation), 24 June 2011; Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011; Lianne Kennedy Boudali (former RAND Corporation), 28 June 2011; Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 29 June 2011; Barak Barfi (New America Foundation), 5 July 2011; Chris Anzalone (McGill University), 6 July 2011; Christopher Boucek (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 7 July 2011; Bruce Hoffman (Geogetown University), 13 July 2011; Alistair Harris (Pursue, Ltd.), 15 July 2011; and Will McCants (*Jihadica.com*), 25 July 2011.

- In a statement vowing to avenge Osama bin Laden's killing in 2011, Ahmed Farooq, AQ's propaganda chief in Pakistan, alludes to the former glory of the Caliphate, referencing the "religious scholars, leaders, and founders of movements" that the Caliphate helped create. He continues by stating that the reestablishment of the Caliphate would not be possible without violent jihad: "Think for a little while… how many famous personalities and experts in various fields of knowledge this nation [the Islamic Caliphate] produced; and with the blessings of God how many religious scholars, leaders, and founders of movements served this nation… Certainly this blessed death [of Osama bin Laden] is a strong testimony, argument and demonstration of the fact that the freedom of the nation, defeat of the infidels, supremacy of Islam, and the establishment of the caliphate is impossible without getting on the blessed path of jihad and qital [armed conflict]." "Pakistan: Al-Qa'ida Leader Vows To Take Revenge For Bin Ladin's Killing," OSC Summary via www.opensource.gov. 07 July 2011: SAP20110707434001.

- AQ believes that rebuilding the Caliphate will be a multigenerational effort that will take years to achieve. For instance, a BBC Monitoring report notes: "Despite their [AQ leaders Abu-Yahya al-Libi, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Abu-Ubaydah Abdallah al-Adm] efforts to link the Arab uprisings causally with jihadist activity, all three writers also sought to manage jihadists' expectations, cautioning that it may still take years to achieve the goal of an Islamic caliphate." "Web: Al-Qa'idah Writers on Jihadist Role in Fostering Revolutions," BBC Monitoring via www.opensource.gov. 23 June 2011: GMP20110624950017.

- AQ messaging frequently features references to a Western conspiracy to divide the Muslim *umma*, the same conspiracy that allegedly led Western nations to partition Muslim land in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (see description in "Key Phrases, Symbols, or Images" section above) and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk to abolish the Caliphate in 1924. AQ views the modern day push for democracy and secularism to be part of this conspiracy, reminding Muslims that it is only through the return to Islam and Sharia that Muslims will rise up to take their rightful place as leaders of the world. In a message to the people of Egypt, Ayman al-Zawahiri states: "My Muslim brothers in Cairo, Baghdad, Mecca, Medina, Algeria, Istanbul and the rest of the great centers of Islam, the Western scheme, which brought down the caliphate, has been trying to divide us into fifty torn pieces. Each of those pieces is preoccupied with itself, calling for nationalism that separates it further from its sisters. They [the West] then attempt to further divide the torn pieces. Therefore, the call for secularism, national state, and pushing Shari'ah out of the scene is dangerous. It has massive negative political, economic, and military effects. It is a call to divide us into fragile and weakened entities that can be taken advantage of by the United States and its allies. This is a call to push Islam away from influencing its societies and ummah until the Muslims lose the strength of their vigorous faith that has transformed them from lost tribes in the desert of its peninsula to world leaders, scholars of monotheism, values and morals." "*Al-Sahab* Releases Ayman Al-Zawahiri Video Message to People in Egypt, Part 5," *Al-Sahab* via www.opensource.gov. 15 April 2011: GMP20110415836002.

- Other than the West and Sunni Muslims rulers, AQ also accuses Shi'a, the Safavid Empire (16th–18th century Persian dynasty), and Iran of conspiring against the Muslim community. Ayman al-Zawahiri states in an audio message, "Yes, they [the Caliphate] were killed by the Crusader-Safavid alliance, which revived the legacy of Isma'il al-Safawi [Shah of Iran, founder of Safavid Empire], who allied with the Crusaders to stab the Ottoman caliphate when its armies were knocking on the walls of Vienna. The traitors, who exploit the legacy of *Al al-Bayt*, allied with the infidel Crusaders to kill those who wage jihad against the infidel Crusader invaders. They are proud and boast of this, and make no effort to hide it. The state is theirs: the state of the American Cross, which brought them

from Iran on its tanks, under the protection of its aircraft, and under its banner. It brought them after colluding with them for rule over the land of the caliphate. Their forces entered from Iran to support the armies of the Cross. The turbans [religious scholars] of collaboration issued *fatwas* [religious decrees] deeming it impermissible to fight the Crusader occupier that invaded the lands of Islam. What a repulsive blunder for which they will be remembered for all of time." "Ayman Al-Zawahiri: Jerusalem Will Not Be Judaized," *Al-Fallujah* Islamic Forums *(Al-Sahab* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 19 July 2010: GMP20100719208003.

Affiliate-level Analysis

AQAP

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Gregory Johnsen of Princeton University stated that while AQAP discusses the restoration of the global Caliphate, its more immediate goals are the implementation of a Sharia-based political and social system and expelling foreigners from the Arabian Peninsula. Monitor 360 interview with Gregory Johnsen (Princeton University), 21 June 2011.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Alistair Harris of Pursue, Ltd. stated that AQAP views itself as the vanguard of the global jihad and believes it has a crucial role to play in the restoration of the Caliphate. When discussing the Caliphate, AQAP focuses less on territorial gain and more on the social and political benefits of a Sharia-based system. Harris also believes that Sharia-focused messaging resonates with audiences in Yemen, which is deeply religious. Monitor 360 interview with Alistair Harris (Pursue, Ltd.), 15 July 2011.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Barak Barfi of the New America Foundation asserted that Yemen is one of the most pious societies in the Islamic world and messaging with Islamic undertones would likely be relevant to this population. North Yemen and Saudi Arabia were two of the few countries in the Muslim world not to be colonized, so these populations have maintained their cultural and religious traditions. Monitor 360 interview with Barak Barfi (New America Foundation), 5 July 2011.

- AQAP frequently references the prophesized Aden-Abyan Army in an effort to connect the organization with Islamic tradition and the authority of the Prophet himself. A *Sada al-Malahim* editorial states, "The conflict between truth and falsehood continues until the Judgment Day, and Muslims spare no effort to make the nation rise and restore the righteous caliphate system which is based on the Prophet's methodology…By the grace of God, the tactic attained by the mujahidin in the Arabian Peninsula with such simple capabilities was not brought forth by the agent armies and the armies of apostasy despite their huge capabilities. Thus, disturbing the figures of infidelity in the world, and establishing the Aden-Abyan Army, about which the prophet, peace and prayer be upon him, had said: 'They are the best of all those between me and them.' This is to purify the Arabian Peninsula from the filth of the unbelievers and to conquer Jerusalem, God willing.'" "*Sada al-Malahim* Editorial Incites Muslims Against Yemeni Government, US Targets," Jihadist Websites (*Al-Malahim* Establishment for Media Production) via www.opensource.gov. 14 February 2010: GMP20100216121003.

AQIM

- In an interview with Monitor 360, former RAND analyst Lianne Kennedy Boudali stated that AQIM messaging focuses less on theological and religious arguments when compared to messaging from AQAP. The implementation of Sharia law is discussed with less intensity, potentially because the Islamic Maghreb is less religiously conservative than the Arabian Peninsula. For example, women are not required to wear a full body covering in many countries in the Islamic Maghreb. Andrew Lebovich of New American Foundation added that while AQIM does discuss Sharia, its main focus is on fighting the local government, which AQIM views as a vestige of the French colonial enterprise. The primary AQIM goal then, according to Mathieu Guidere of the University of Toulouse, is to unify the Muslim *umma*, free Africa from its colonial masters, and liberate Andalucía. Mathieu Guidere's assertions were also confirmed by Thomas Sanderson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Monitor 360 interviews with Mathieu Guidere (University of Toulouse), 20 June 2011; Andrew Lebovich (New America Foundation), 24 June 2011; Lianne Kennedy Boudali (former RAND), 28 June 2011; Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 29 June 2011.

- AQIM often blames past Muslims rulers for the loss of Andalucía, accusing them of neglect and surrender. The negligence that resulted in the loss of Andalucía continues today, which AQIM believes has resulted in additional "losses" of Muslim land. This sentiment is reflected in a 2009 AQIM statement announcing the launch of its media wing, *Al-Andalus*: "We conclude this statement with lines from the famous and influential poem *Lament for the Fall of Seville* by Abu-al-Baqaa al-Rundi al-Andalusi (may God have mercy on him), where he seeks help from the Muslim Marinids after Muhammad Bin Yusuf (the first sultan of Grenada) gave up a number of fortresses and cities to the Spaniards in the hopes of keeping his rule in Grenada. Unfortunately, Muslims back then neglected aiding Andalucía, which resulted in its fall. With the continued negligence, the result today is consecutive tragedies. 'Muslims are more at a loss than are orphans in a banquet of villains' [Hadith]. Today, not one Andalucía is lost. Rather, a second, third, fourth, and even all the lands of Islam are occupied from East to West." "AQLIM Announces Launch of 'Al-Andalus Establishment for Media Production,'" Jihadist Websites via www.opensource. gov. 08 October 2009: GMP20091008569002.

- In the article, "Revolution in Tunisia and Egypt: a Blow to the Jihadist Narrative?" Nelly Lahoud of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point writes, "The ideology conveyed in these sources is a rudimentary appropriation of Salafi-jihadi thought with a clear North African overtone harkening back to the days of the early Islamic conquest of the Maghreb and the southern portion of the Iberian Peninsula, or to the 11th century when Berbers launched an Islamist revivalism in the Sahara and marched northward to conquer the North African coast and most of what

is now Spain." "Revolution in Tunisia and Egypt: a Blow to the Jihadist Narrative?" *CTC Sentinel*. 01 February 2011: http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/revolution-in-tunisia-and-egypt-a-blow-to-the-jihadist-narrative.

- In its messaging, AQIM references the great empires and heroes associated with the political and religious greatness that North Africa once enjoyed. In the article, "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa," Geoff Porter of NARCO, a North African risk consulting group, writes, "These strong Almoravid [North African Berber dynasty in the 11th– 12 century] overtones, as well as references to Tariq ibn Ziyad, are in line with Salafi-jihadi narratives of restoring a caliphate and returning Islamic authority to lands that it once ruled." "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa," *CTC Sentinel*. 01 February 2011: http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqim%E2%80%99s-objectives-in-north-africa.

Change Dynamics & Trends

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Thomas Sanderson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies stated that the AQIM's interpretation of Sharia has no place for any form of popular rule. However, AQIM has not clearly stated its position on the goals and aims of the Arab Spring, which has often called for greater personal freedoms and a move toward republican government. It is likely that AQIM is hoping democracy will fail in these countries, which will serve as "proof" that popular rule does not work and that Sharia is the only way to achieve successful governance. Monitor 360 interview with Thomas Sanderson (Center for Strategic and International Studies), 29 June 2011.

- In an interview with Monitor 360, Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies asserted that the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA), one of AQIM's precursor organizations, viewed themselves as contemporaries of Afghan jihadists and aimed to implement Sharia in Algeria. However, the GIA's narrative around the implantation of an Islamic state ultimately did not survive in Algeria, a country with customs and traditions that were not amenable to the strict interpretation of Sharia. Monitor 360 interview with Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 24 June 2011.

- Events in the Abyan province of Yemen suggest that AQAP is already facing challenges in adapting its ideology to suit Yemeni customs and culture. An OSC Analysis reports: "The apparently widespread participation by local tribes in the resistance against AQAP's violent Islamist project in Abyan suggests that the group may have overestimated its ability to adapt its hard-core Islamist approach to Yemeni cultural sensibilities and underestimated the resistance its efforts to establish its brand of governance would cause in the region." "Analysis: Southern Yemeni Tribes Uniting To Drive AQAP From Abyan," OSC Analysis via www.opensource.gov. 15 July 2011: FEA20110715019945.

- AQAP's attempt at rebranding itself "*Ansar al-Shari'ah*," has failed to garner tribal support, which do not support AQAP's violent tactics and ideology. An OSC Analysis states: "Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which in May rebranded itself under the name Ansar al-Shari'ah as part of an apparent effort to establish itself in the southern governorate of Abyan, does not appear to have succeeded in adapting its rhetoric and modus operandi to coexist peacefully with the tribes of southern Yemen. The organization's violent and Islamist practices appear to have prompted local tribes to organize and fight to drive AQAP militants from the region, with the tribes, in some cases, coordinating their efforts with a Yemeni military unit stationed in the area." "Yemen—Tribal Resistance to AQAP Widespread in Abyan," *OSC Analysis* via www.opensource.gov. 21 July 2011: GMF20110721431001.

MASTER NARRATIVES

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