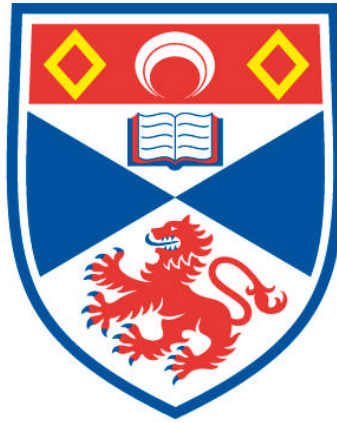


**CONSUMING THE JIHAD: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE
SUBCULTURE OF INTERNET JIHADISM**

Gilbert Ramsay

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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Consuming the Jihad

An Enquiry into the Subculture of Internet Jihadism

Gilbert Ramsay

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

October, 2011

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a great deal of interest in phenomena such as Al Qaida 'terrorism', Islamic 'radicalism' or, increasingly, 'jihadism' - on the Internet. However, as I argue in this thesis, much work in these areas has been problematic for a number of reasons. Much literature has been narrowly focused on the security issues which it pre-judges the content to raise, and has therefore taken some aspects too literally while ignoring others. Conversely, where authors have addressed 'jihadi' content or 'electronic jihad' as a phenomenon unto itself, they have had difficulty making sense of it within religious studies or political communication frameworks. In this dissertation, I propose an alternative approach. Deliberately eschewing frameworks based on pre-existing conceptions of religion or politics, I draw, instead, on the academic literature on fandom and subcultural media consumption. Using this conceptual lens, I attempt to analyse jihadism on the Internet (which I define in terms of online consumption of, and identification with self-described 'jihadi' content) as a subcultural phenomenon on its own terms. I argue that, without necessarily denying the role that beliefs and ideals expressed in 'jihadi' content may sometimes have in sustaining the physical violence of the 'global jihad', the cultural practices which constitute Internet jihadism have a tactical logic of their own which may not always coincide with the 'strategic' interests of 'global jihad'. By better understanding what 'ordinary' jihadis, most of whom will never participate in violence, get out of their practices, and how they negotiate the apparent contradictions of their situation, I suggest that we may be better placed to understand not only why some jihadis 'fail' to negotiate these contradictions, but also, perhaps, to raise questions about how popular media consumption works more generally.

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A Note on Transliteration

In this dissertation I have generally followed the system of transliteration advocated by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Where the original of a text is in Arabic, it is transliterated in full, with the exception that initial *hamza* is omitted. ‘*ayn* is a forwards apostrophe. *Hamza* is a backwards apostrophe. Macrons are placed on long vowels. Emphatic consonants are indicated with a dot under the letter. *Tā marbūṭa* is written ‘a’ normally, and ‘t’ if it is sounded in an *idāfa* construction. *Alif-lām* (connected by a dash to the following word) may lose its *alif* through elision, (necessitating another dash), but never its *lām* as well. Sun letters remain shibboleths as usual.

As recommended by the *IJMES*, proper names are transliterated in part, where they derive from an Arabic original. The letters stay the same, but the diacritics are lost, and ‘*ayn* and *hamza* make do with an apostrophe directed whichever way the word processor decides to put it. They also gain some capitals, so for instance I write Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri, not *abū muṣ‘ab al-sūrī*.

For Arabic names which have been encountered ready-transliterated, this transliteration is used. ‘Younis Tsouli’ stays ‘Younis Tsouli’. Arabic words familiar in English are generally spelled without diacritics.

There are some exceptions to this. Where I particularly mean an Arabic word to be approached as an *Arabic* word - not an Arabic word which gets used in English, I sometimes emphasise this by spelling it as such. So sometimes ‘jihadi’, becomes *jihādī*.

Arabic web forums often have their own suggested English transcription, for example, *Al Mojahden Electronic Network*. Sometimes, I prefer to re-transliterate these into a more conventional English

spelling - *Al Mujahidin Electronic Network*. When I use the former in this case, I am talking about the forum as it talks about itself in English. When I use the latter, I have in mind that I am relaying content as it is encountered in Arabic.

Sometimes, I keep a silent *tā marbūṭa* as a final ‘t’, where the word would be unrecognisable to an English speaker without it. This happens in *ṣalāt* (prayer) and *zakāt* (almsgiving).

For some reason, it felt disrespectful to deny *Allah* the traditional English capital letter reserved for God regardless of context, when His name sounds thus in Arabic.¹

‘lā illaha illā-Allah, Muḥammadan rasūl-Allah’.

1.

Jihadism and the Internet

1.0 Introduction

‘Give me a place to stand on,’ Archimedes is reputed to have said, ‘and I will move the Earth’. The project of this dissertation is less ambitious. But the problem of finding firm ground on which to stand is, perhaps, hardly less difficult. As Volpi observes, with regard to attempts by terrorism and security experts to talk about political Islam, ‘Specialists in both Islamism and terrorism have been divided on the issue of terminology. The myriad labels in use include: political Islam, radical Islam, militant Islam, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic extremism, Islamism, jihadism, salafist jihadism, jihadi terrorism amongst others’.² None of these labels are neutral, and all invoke an artificial construction - in large measure, indeed, the construction of Western, or Western oriented intellectuals. But one has to start somewhere. Later in this dissertation, I shall confront the word ‘jihadism’ and try to show how it can be presented in more emic terms. But this is not the purpose of this chapter.

‘Jihadism’ codes into three parts. In so far as *jihad* is understood (however partially or inaccurately) as entailing specifically violent activity, it seemingly relates to the study of security or crime.³ As an Islamic concept, it relates to the study of Islam as culture and religion. As an ‘ism’, it falls into the category of political ideology. In discussing how Internet jihadism has been written about, one may therefore look to at least three different places: to those with a disciplinary interest in the social study of political violence (or ‘terrorism’); to Islamic studies, Middle Eastern Studies, or religious studies more generally; or to the study of political movements and ideologies. One might further appeal to the fields of Internet studies and globalisation theory; but these represent a different side to the problem. These bodies of knowledge concern the space in which the phenomenon in question is to be encountered, rather than the phenomenon itself.

Since political violence is, ipso facto, *violent* activity, it would seem that of these three potential perspectives, it is this one that is least promising as a starting point for understanding what must be approached – in the first instance at least – as an online phenomenon. After all, Internet content, however radical, disturbing and alarming it may seem is not, in and of itself, violence. Rheingold notes that one advantage of the Internet is the fact that no one, however irate can ‘punch you in the nose’.⁴ And yet as this chapter will show, in setting out the available literature on Al Qaida related material and, more specifically, on ‘jihadism’ on the Internet, the literature on terrorism and political violence has tended to take the lead. Broadly speaking, people interested in Al Qaida as a violent group have pursued their interest (however tentatively or partially) into the more diffuse areas of Islamic studies, social movement theory, globalisation and political ideology. Conversely, though, the reverse transformation has happened only in a handful of instances. People who study Islamic culture online have rarely dealt head on with ‘jihadi’ cyberculture. People who study ‘new’ social movements online have seldom dealt with Islamist social movements - let alone with Islamist social movements online.⁵ People who are interested in political communication, mass media and ideology have - except for those media experts who already had an interest in terrorism as communication - not ventured in droves to apply themselves to the jihadi case.

My argument will be, following from this, that research into the phenomenon of jihadism on the Internet has been dominated by a literature that can only approach it as a problem relating to the security risk of terrorism. My concern is not that there is something wrong with such an approach *per se*. It is quite understandable that people and institutions (especially governments), worried about the prospect of terrorist violence, might be interested in what role online activity might play in promoting this violence (or alternatively, what Internet content might have to teach about the nature of this violence). Robert Cox points out that theory is always for someone and for some purpose.⁶ But when government backed security researchers study jihadism, the desire to obtain

thereby some measure of control over the object of enquiry is at least to that extent explicit.

(Though the same might not be said when they study Islamic phenomena or Middle Eastern culture in a wider sense). Following from this, I don't mean to use this dissertation, as such, to oppose a 'problem solving' theory with a 'critical' theory which envisages the possibility of a fundamental change in social structures.⁷ Rather, my concern is that, by virtue of their narrow focus on a particular problematic aspect (namely, physical violence), of an otherwise discursive phenomenon, researchers have produced superficial analyses of jihadism *as it occurs on the Internet*, producing little more than descriptive accounts of Internet jihadi texts and the beliefs they espouse, and proceeding from this immediately to make assumptions about the presumed threat such texts pose. I do not intend to comment on whether or not this is bad politics. But I do think it is bad science.

By contrast, a small handful of researchers have approached the issue of jihadism on the Internet less as an aspect of 'terrorism' or as an ideological opponent to be vanquished in a 'war of ideas'⁸ than as a phenomenon of contemporary religion or politics which is of interest in its own right. Unfortunately, as I shall argue, such approaches have yet to find a satisfactory set of conceptual tools for exploring the phenomenon. Examining jihadism as an essentially religious phenomenon, researchers face (simplifying somewhat) an unsatisfactory dilemma: either to condemn jihadism as an aberration to 'true' or 'mainstream' Islam, and in so doing abandon scholarly impartiality, or to accept it as a historically precedented extension of the traditional meaning of 'jihad' and risk accusations of negatively essentialising the religion as a whole, or, finally, to face the problem of, as Volpi puts it, of 'how one can move away from essentialist accounts of Islam without simply saying "there are different Islams"'.⁹ On the other hand, viewing jihadism as an essentially political phenomenon, with only a superficial relationship to religion means facing the same problem implicitly, by assuming that Western assumptions about what is 'politics' can be sustained in the face of claims to have religiously transcended these very distinctions.¹⁰

My task in this chapter, then, shall be to review the contributions which each of these three perspectives on Internet jihadism - as an adjunct to 'terrorism', as religion and as politics - have made, and to consider where they appear to fall short.

1.1 Information War and Cyberterrorism

In their book *Making Sense of War*, Alan Stephens and Nicola Baker¹¹ make the acerbic observation:

Many of the Western strategic analysts orphaned by the Cold War were so impressed by the conventional technological capabilities of the United States that they attributed a similar or even more advanced level of prowess to potential adversaries. This type of threat inflation was driven in part by the realisation that anyone wishing to fight the United States would have to resort to asymmetric warfare... This kind of mindset was also influenced by the common strategic tendency to 'mirror image'. Having concluded that adversarial forces would seek to use non-conventional tactics and weapons, analysts focused their attention on the kinds of threats that actors in a high-technology environment like their own might generate. Thus, a whole literature sprang up on cyber warfare... These kinds of preoccupations led many to ignore the possibility that less conventionally capable actors might opt instead for a low-technology approach, sneaking under the radar rather than trying to attack it... Al Qaida fighters in Afghanistan did not hide in multi-storey, air-conditioned bunker networks as envisaged, but in caves scarcely big enough to shelter a goat. And they were just as likely to contact each other by human messenger, by post or even by pigeon as they were to hide encoded instructions on the Internet.¹²

For many, however, September 11th came not to abolish prophecies of high-tech terrorism, but to fulfill them. In 2003, for instance, Lt Col. Timothy Thomas described Al Qaida's use of the Internet in terms of a 'virtual battleground' similar to that which had previously provided for 'peacetime hostilities between Taiwan and China, Israel and Palestine, Pakistan and India and China and the United States'.¹³ Thus, while he conceded that 'cyberplanning may be a more important terrorist

tool than the much touted and feared cyberterrorist option',¹⁴ he presented Al Qaida's use of the Internet for hosting websites and some of the planning behind the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in terms of a continuity with previous strategic thinking. In a similar vein, Dorothy Denning - a professor of computer science at the US Naval Postgraduate School argued that phenomena such as the dissemination of beheading videos or 'training' manuals such as Al Qaida's *Al Battar Training Camp* were to be understood as examples of terrorist use of 'information operations'.¹⁵

The term 'information war' dates back to Thomas P. Rona's presentation on the subject to Boeing¹⁶ in 1976. And, in science fiction, the idea of Internet like data grids as conflict zones predates the Internet itself.¹⁷ It was not, however, until the mid 1990s - when the Internet actually emerged as a widely used civilian technology - that ideas of threats to state authority from the medium began to become a serious concern for governments. As a typical example, in 1996, three security analysts (Devost, Houghton and Pollard) won the Sun Tzu Art of War Research Award¹⁸ with an article called 'Information Terrorism: Can You Trust Your Toaster?' It sketched out a scenario in which a fictional group, the 'Serb Council for the Liberation of Bosnia' launches a devastating cyber attack. First hacking into the control systems of NATO aircraft, they cause a mid air collision. Riding on the publicity of this, they direct the world's Internet users to a website they have created, explaining their motives. For their troubles, these interested readers are rewarded by being infected with a devastating computer virus, which proceeds to wreak widespread economic havoc.

The article reflected the coming together of a number of themes. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States seemed to have acquired unapproachable military dominance. It had the largest economy, the most advanced technology and the most powerful military. But all of this seemed only to beg the question: in the face of a power which looked like it very well could be a single, global hegemon, what then, was the future of war? The threat of a nuclear confrontation seemed to

have receded, and no country seemed in a position to take on the United States' conventional power. That left, so it seemed, two implications.

First, if there were no states willing or able to fight, then the enemies of the future would have not to be states at all.¹⁹ In a world in which people were starting to question whether the state really had a future at all in the face of what seemed to be ever accelerating commercial globalisation, the idea seemed not implausible. At RAND corporation, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt started to develop, the idea of a new²⁰ model of 'netwar' in which the antagonists would not be the monolithic, easily recognisable hierarchies of the industrial age, but rather amorphous, adaptable networks.

Second, if the physical dominance of the United States remained unquestionable, then the fighters of the future would have to take the fight to a new arena - that of information. Given the unparalleled sophistication of the United States' communications systems – both military and civilian – it seemed easy to envisage that the ability to subvert these from within could present a new front for attack. This idea was developed in the form of 'information war', or (for Arquilla and Ronfeldt, idiosyncratically) 'cyberwar' and 'netwar'.²¹

For these thinkers, Al Qaida was a classic example of the latter. Indeed, perhaps the most obvious pre-9/11 reference to Al Qaida's use of the Internet is to be found in Michele Zanini and Sean J. A. Edwards' 'The Networking of Terror in the Information Age' - a chapter of Arquilla and Ronfeldt's edited RAND monograph *Networks and Netwars*, in which it was noted that:

In the Greater Middle East, terrorist organisations have diverse origins, ideologies and organisational structures, but can be roughly categorised into traditional and new generation groups. Traditional groups date to the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the majority were (and some still are) formally or informally linked to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). Typically, they are also relatively

bureaucratic and maintain a nationalist or Marxist agenda... in contrast, the newer and less hierarchical groups, such as Hamas; the Palestinian Islamic Jihad; Hizbollah; Algeria's Armed Islamic Group; the Egyptian Islamic Group; and *Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, Al Qaida* [my emphasis] have become the most active organisations. In these loosely organized groups with religious or ideological motives, operatives are part of a network that relies less on bureaucratic fiat and more on shared values and horizontal coordination mechanisms.²²

That these 'horizontal coordination mechanisms' were meant to include information technology is made clear in the opening paragraphs of the chapter, in which it is claimed:

The information age is affecting not only the types of targets and weapons terrorists choose, but also the ways in which such groups operate and structure their organisations.²³

Thus, notwithstanding Arquilla and Ronfeldt's insistence that the principles of 'cyberwar' were rooted in age-old ideas, new technology was key to producing new interest in the strategic importance of information. Indeed, a major intellectual resource for the new thinking on war was Alvin Toffler's notion of the 'Third Wave' of human civilisation - a gigantic paradigm shift which this sociologist believed to be sweeping the world from the 1970s onwards, in which the technologies of the agrarian age (from the Neolithic onwards) and of the industrial age were being superseded by a new age dominated by the superior processing and manipulation of information.²⁴ The extent to which this notion had entered into strategic thinking was revealed when, in 1993, Alvin (and Heidi) Toffler themselves produced a book on military strategy - *War and Anti-War*.²⁵ Here, the authors underlined what they saw as the crucial, post-industrial shift towards the 'de-massification' of militaries, in favour of everything from robot weapons, to smart bombs to computer hacking to subtler media strategies - as exemplified by the authors' call for the establishment of a 'rapid reaction contingency broadcasting force'.²⁶

A virtue, then, of the information war concept, was its breadth. It stretched all the way from a debate about the most efficient way to annihilate Cold War formations of tanks and infantry to a problematic of the meaning of war itself - all the time, however, without abandoning the salience of the actual term 'war'. The sheer (apparent) perfection of warmaking as represented televisually during the 1991 Gulf War²⁷ provided the starting point for Baudrillard's provocative thesis that, given the extent to which the event was shaped by media to resemble a 'war' in the normal public sense of the word, 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place'.²⁸ And yet, as outrageous as Baudrillard's claims appeared²⁹, they bear comparison with the observations of a far from post-structuralist military theorist - Martin C. Libicki. In a methodical work on 'information war', Libicki describes witnessing an attempt at an 'information war game' carried out by the Pentagon in 1994 in which two countries, 'blue' (the U.S) and 'red', a 'middle sized, middle income nation with an advanced electronics industry' were pitted against one another. The game resulted in complete confusion, with neither side able to determine what 'information war' was, and whether it was taking place – let alone whether they were losing or winning. Crucially, 'blue' seemed to believe that information war consisted in using an army of hackers to attack the enemy's computer systems, whereas 'red' believed that information war consisted of psychological manipulation through the media. From this, he concluded: 'Information warfare, as a separate technique of waging war, does not exist... The concept of information warfare has as much analytic coherence as the concept, for instance, of an information worker.'³⁰

1.2 Terrorism 'on' The Internet

And yet, taking account of the strategic obsession with information war and, consequently, with diffuse, 'networked' actors is a necessary backdrop to understanding the way in which 'terrorism' has come to be identified as an amorphous but genuine online threat. The ideas of terrorism and of

information war are, after all, closely akin to one another. Indeed, for many scholars, terrorism is by definition violence as communication. As Schmid puts it in his ‘consensus definition’ of terrorism:

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi)-clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative of symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat and violence based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and the main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion or propaganda is primarily sought.³¹

The argument that terrorism is intended to generate publicity for the terrorist is, in fact, of axiomatic importance for understanding terrorism within a strategic framework, since it provides a rational motivation for the actions which terrorists undertake. As such, the political science project of understanding terrorism strategically³² has been closely allied with ideas drawn from communications research. Thus, for instance, Schmid and de Graaf³³ and Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida³⁴ have deployed ideas about media ‘contagion’³⁵ as a possible cause of terrorist violence. On the other hand, communications scholars such as Nacos³⁶ and Weimann and Winn³⁷ have analysed how terrorist incidents help to upset normal relations of media dominance and editorial decisions about coverage.

Given this body of concerns, it is perhaps unsurprising that discussion of the relationship between Al Qaida, Islamist violence and the Internet after 9/11 was dominated by general notions of ‘terrorist use of the Internet’ which seemed at least implicitly to assume a relatively static and identifiable terrorist actor, committed rationally and strategically to taking advantage of the capacities offered by the Internet - for ends which were, it could be presumed, unquestionably and *ipso facto* ‘terrorist’.

This tendency is readily observed in two preoccupations which dominated work on the subject: quantification of the terrorist 'presence' in cyberspace, and enumeration of the various ways in which terrorists were supposed to use the Internet.

Since, at least, the publication of Weimann's *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges*, various claims as to the overall number of terrorist websites have been advanced.

Weimann wrote in 2006 that:

In 1998, fewer than half of the thirty organizations designated as foreign terrorist organizations by the U.S Department of State maintained Web sites; by the end of 1999, nearly all thirty terrorist groups had established their presence on the Net. Today there are more than forty active terrorist groups, each with an established presence on the Internet. A thorough and extensive scan of the Internet in 2003-5 revealed more than 4,300 Web sites serving terrorists and their supporters.³⁸

Weimann further claimed that 'Our findings reveal a proliferation of radical Islamic websites. This is not a methodological bias, but rather a significant trend highlighted by our study.'³⁹ Indeed, by 2008, he asserted that Al Qaida alone maintained more than 5,300 websites⁴⁰ - a claim which would seem to imply that 'Al Qaida' sites made up a significant proportion of the 4,300 'sites serving terrorists and their supporters' he mentioned two years previously.

Weimann's claim was in fact relatively conservative. In 2008, the Anti Defamation League kept an official tally of 8,000 'terrorist' websites, whereas the Dark Web Portal project of the University of Arizona claims that, as of 2007, there were as many as 50,000 'terrorist' websites online.⁴¹ This figure - again - compares interestingly with Dubowitz's unsourced claim that 'In 1998, there were only 12 jihadist websites. By 2007, that number had increased to 50,000.'⁴²

The problem, of course, with these tallies is one of definition. Weimann asserts in his book that he was ‘Using the US State Department’s list of terrorist organisations’⁴³ to arrive at his total, and, in a correspondence with the author, declined to elaborate further. But the problem is not one of defining terrorism or terrorist organisations, but rather of defining what it means for a website to be ‘serving terrorists and their supporters’. After all, many *counter* terrorist websites offer access to material produced by ‘terrorists’ - indeed, in the author’s experience, beginning the research that was to become this dissertation, it was not uncommon for Al Qaida videos to surface in ‘jihadi’ contexts that bore the brand of the SITE Institute⁴⁴ - a private intelligence and analysis service specialising in the collection and analysis of such material. If merely expressing support for terrorists is enough, then what about left wing sites which argue that groups such as South America’s Shining Path are legitimate resistance organisations, and that accounts of their brutality are governmental fabrications?⁴⁵ If the requirement is that the site actually advocate *violence* then what is to be made of the fact that - as Weimann himself (with Yariv Tsfati) was the first to report - the official websites of groups listed as terrorist very seldom publicise (let alone advocate) the acts of violence they are accused of committing?⁴⁶

The notion, then of a ‘terrorist website’ (however loosely invoked) seems to imply the possibility of a relatively monolithic terrorism which, somehow, inhabits cyberspace. In reality, of course, it has from the beginning been widely recognised that ‘terrorists’ use the Internet ‘like everybody else’ - in many different ways. In a paper in 2006, for example, Conway⁴⁷ compared four lists of ‘terrorist uses of the Internet’ stretching back to 1999 - Furnell and Warren,⁴⁸ Cohen,⁴⁹ Thomas, and Weimann and Tsfati.⁵⁰ Similar attempts at synthesising definitive typologies are to be found in the work of, for example, Reid,⁵¹ Weimann⁵² and Sieber.⁵³

While there is an understandable need for people studying violent groups to attempt to gain some general sense of how they make use of particular technologies, discussions of such uses of the

Internet become dogged by circularity when – as has been the case – most research into this has been conducted online. In Weimann's work, for example, attempts to argue primarily on the basis of Internet research for terrorist uses of the Internet such as 'networking the terrorists'⁵⁴ or 'training'⁵⁵ would seem questionable. Regarding the first, the network might be very real. But how exactly terrorist violence emerges from it (and to what extent Internet use is an effective cause, rather than indicative or epiphenomenal) might be open to question. In the latter, the assumption that the online availability of training manuals equates to the 'instrumental' use of the Internet for 'training terrorists' would seem to make unacceptable leaps from content on the screen to what must necessarily be much more complex individual and social learning processes.

As it happens, in fact, such assumptions have increasingly come under empirical critique.

Stenersen⁵⁶ has observed, the 'training material' which authors such as Weimann have attributed great importance⁵⁷ is generally of low quality, and is not backed up by any systematic interactive learning process. Sageman⁵⁸, - drawing on the theoretical insights of Kenney⁵⁹, has further noted that in practice, learning skills such as bomb making from online manuals is not realistic without opportunities to physically practice and perfect this practical, hands-on skills, buttressing his case with real life examples of unsuccessful attempted attacks by self starter terrorists.

Similarly, the communicative usefulness of the Internet as an organisational platform has been called into question by Internet groups themselves. Notwithstanding the observation of Kohlmann⁶⁰ that jihadist forums such as Al Ansar were on occasions used to provide members with assistance in travelling to join the jihad/insurgency/resistance in Iraq, contemporary postings on successor forums now seek to dissuade individuals from such 'naive' behaviour.⁶¹ This potentially invites a reassessment of claims by, for example Gohel,⁶² that networks such as that uncovered by the UK police operation Praline are evidence of the *usefulness* of the Internet as an operational platform,

rather than representing an overall liability. As Pantucci has suggested, in relation to this particular case:

...it also raises the adjacent question of whether the Internet is really as useful a tool in such planning as was previously thought. It may provide very disparate groups with an ability to connect and develop plots together, but it also likely leaves some electronic trail which provides an all-important link for counter-terrorism police to target⁶³

Overall, an irony of the approach of scholars such as Weimann is that - for all its talk of the revolutionary and transformative potential of the Internet for terrorist groups, it seems to remain methodologically stuck in a world of 'old terrorism' in which groups are reasonably enduring and stable, and can therefore be treated as institutional 'terrorist' actors with reasonably coherent strategies. And yet it is precisely because 'Al Qaida' is not this sort of entity that makes its online 'presence' so seemingly significant.

1.3 From 'Terrorism' on the Internet to 'Jihadism' on the Internet

One approach to this problem has been a growing interest in identifying loose, networked actors as the main terrorist adversary. Thus Al Qaida has been replaced with terms such as the 'Global Salafi Jihad' – a usage apparently coined by Sageman in his influential book *Understanding Terror Networks*.⁶⁴ Here, Sageman attempts to deploy a basic social network approach as an alternative to more structured, top down views of Al Qaida as a coherent organisation. Sageman's work marked the beginning of a new wave of network informed research in the Al Qaida phenomenon, which ranged from the work of Magouirk and Atran⁶⁵ which, similar to Sageman's was based primarily on databases of biographical and plot information, to the prolific collaborative work of the Dark Web Portal, a project under the directorship of Hsinchun Chen which uses automated software to map networks of 'jihad', 'extremism' or 'hate' on the un-indexed 'darkweb', as well as to carry out

various forms of automated or semi-automated text analysis.⁶⁶ With the advantage of overwhelming thoroughness and quantity of data, the Darkweb Portal has been able to overcome the methodological paradoxes associated with ‘purposive sampling’ or qualitative content analysis of ‘terrorist’ websites by producing identifiably network clusters associated with particular ideologies or regional interests. At the same time, the insistence of affiliated researchers on retaining ‘terrorism’ as the object of enquiry means that some of the basic problems discussed above remain: exactly where does the terrorism inhere in terrorist content? Does it apply to group affiliation, worldview, or presumed ‘operational’ relevance?

The quest for an identifiable focus for counter terrorism – particularly with regard to the Internet – has thus led to increased interest in ideology and iconography as issues in themselves, rather than on ideology and iconography as more or less implicit markers for locating the ‘terrorism’ online. Rogan, for instance, who focused her 2007 study on ‘jihadist’ rather than Al Qaida materials specifically makes this point (following Lia):

...media producers [of jihadist material] sometimes seem to have a weak organizational affiliation to militant groups or to the command structure, which allows them to speak with a relatively autonomous voice, and to operate through networking, rather than according to hierarchical structures.⁶⁷

The project of mapping out jihadist thinking and its presence on the Web has, at least until recently, been dominated primarily by professional researchers into the topic (for instance, Katz, Kohlmann, Kimmage), and by academic researchers working or publishing through military staff colleges (Brachman, Fishman, Lia, Rogan, Stenersen and - to a lesser degree - Hegghammer).⁶⁸ Perhaps as a result, much work has been primarily descriptive, or has retained, with regard to ‘jihadism’ a strategic focus not dissimilar to that directed towards Al Qaida as an organisation. Indeed, it is perhaps ironic that acceptance that ‘the enemy’ is an ideology rather than a physical entity, rather than being taken as evidence that military approaches may be of limited use has, instead, been

seized on enthusiastically by military thinkers (perhaps particularly in the US) as a means of refocusing the war on terror around the notion of a ‘war of ideas’⁶⁹ or of ‘fourth generation warfare’.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, the empirical depth and value of research produced either by private entities or by military colleges should not by any means be disregarded. Indeed, such work has made substantial headway in mapping out and demystifying the thought of ideologues associated with the ‘global jihadist movement’ or more specifically with Al Qaida, and the networks, agencies and methods by which such material appears on the Internet. Thus, Katz⁷¹ has presented a convincing picture of a ‘decentralised but hierarchical’ system for jihadist media dissemination, whereby ‘Islamic Media Agencies’ are responsible for producing and packaging new propaganda items which then proceed through a pyramid of first tier and second tier forums, before spreading out to the Web as a whole.⁷² This process has been empirically mapped out in detail by Daniel Kimmage,⁷³ whose report ‘The Al Qaida Media Nexus’ has neatly captured the difficulty of terminology which afflicts study of the area. The ‘nexus’ that Kimmage refers to in the title in itself attempts to deal with the problem of talking about a specific group in a situation where, as he writes: ‘the “original” Al-Qaida led by Osama bin Laden accounts for a mere fraction of jihadist media production’. Recently, work on jihadi Internet content by the Mohammed Ali Musawi⁷⁴ and by Stephen Ulph⁷⁵ has begun to approach the level of concrete detail necessary (though this is not the intention of the authors) to provide the groundwork for appreciating online jihadism almost in an ethnographic sense.

Similarly, researchers working perhaps particularly at Westpoint in the US and at the Norwegian Defence College have produced a good deal of useful work examining the specific content of notable jihadist texts disseminated online. Indeed, the desire to understand the underlying ‘meta-narrative’ and ‘strategy’ of the jihadist movement could perhaps be described as an ideological, theological or even, in a broader sense, cultural⁷⁶ ‘turn’ in counterterrorism strategy. For some, in

fact, the transition from an identifiable organisation (which may or may not have originally been called ‘Al Qaida’) in Afghanistan to an amorphous ideological network is itself a product of strategic calculation. Notably, for analysts of the work of the ‘jihadi strategist’ Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri such as Lia⁷⁷ and Cruikshank and Hage Ali⁷⁸, the new shape of the global jihadist movement can be located in Al Suri’s strategic concept of ‘organisation without *an* organisation’ (*nizam la tanzim*).

A useful illustration of this trend can be seen in the way in which formerly arcane matters of Islamic theology have come to take up significant space in the *Sentinel* - the in-house periodical put out by the Countering Terrorism Centre of Westpoint since 2007. These have included, in addition to examinations of relatively well known concepts of *jihad*⁷⁹ and *takfir*,⁸⁰ relatively detailed discussion of hitherto obscure topics such as *tatarrus*,⁸¹ *inghimas fil ‘aduww*,⁸² and comparative Sunni and Shi‘i apocalyptic literature.⁸³

Rather oddly, then, the movement away from thinking about Al Qaida as a distinct organisation⁸⁴ has not necessarily led to an increased focus on the agency of individual supporters of violent jihad. Indeed, notwithstanding the long insistence on the rationality of recruits to violent groups, and the many behavioural, environmental and chance factors that lead to actual involvement,⁸⁵ concern over global jihadism on the Internet has, in a sense, invoked ideology as an actor in its own right, if need be identifying ideologues as the new, quasi hierarchical leaders in the supposedly ‘leaderless jihad’.⁸⁶⁸⁷ So much so, in fact, that notwithstanding a recognition of the importance of ‘turning consumers into producers’,⁸⁸ ordinary Internet supporters of Al Qaida have not only been largely ignored, but have been treated almost disparagingly in the literature as mere ‘jihobbyists’ (a term coined by Brachman).⁸⁹ Alternatively, ideology has almost become reified (in the wider field) as an explanation in itself. This, for instance, seems to be broadly the thesis of Assaf Moghadam’s work on suicide bombing,⁹⁰ which neatly avoids the potential tautology of using ideology to explain a

type of behaviour that is by definition ideologically motivated,⁹¹ by dispensing altogether with the term ‘terrorism’ in his analysis.⁹²

1.4 Jihadism as Internet Islam

In moving away from a conventional, pre 9/11 ‘terrorism studies’ approach, it can be seen that the study of jihadism has found itself engaging increasingly with often obscurely theological or medieval Islamic topics. This can perhaps be seen as part of the old tendency, denounced most famously by Edward Said, for orientalist knowledge to be used for purposes of domination.⁹³ At the same time, however, Al Qaida’s association with the Internet can also be located within what is (to use the distinction made by Poster)⁹⁴ a culturalist rather than instrumentalist body of enquiry represented by religious studies and (particularly anthropological) area studies of the Middle East and the ‘Muslim World’.

However, for the most part, writing about jihadism on the Internet and about Islam on the Internet more generally has not coincided a great deal. Scholars such as David Cook⁹⁵ whose interests in Islamic thought and history also extend to interest in the sort of ‘jihadi studies’ mentioned above have certainly used jihadi sources on the Internet. But in such cases the concern is firmly with the message rather than the medium.

By contrast, it might be suggested, scholars of contemporary Islamic culture and politics, while they have taken significant interest in the way Internet has impacted on Islamic practices in a wider sense, have seldom directly addressed specifically jihadi phenomena online. Indeed, where discussion of the intersection between Muslims, the ‘War on Terror’ and the Internet does exist, it has generally focused only on broader concerns of this area such as online Muslim reactions to 9/11,⁹⁶ use of the Internet by minority Muslim communities who may for this reason be viewed in

their countries as a potential ‘radicalisation’ concern,⁹⁷ or on the demonisation of Muslims on the Internet.⁹⁸ This is despite the fact that the relationship between the Internet, Islam and the Middle East - while still underexamined - is an area of rapidly growing interest, as evidenced by, for instance, the foundation of the online journal *Cyber-Orient*.⁹⁹

The general absence of work on Internet jihadism by scholars of contemporary Islam is, in a sense, puzzling, given the extent to which discussion of ‘digital’ Islam tends to proceed from an intellectual framework which - at first glance - seems well able to incorporate the phenomenon. For instance, the essays in Anderson and Eickelman’s groundbreaking *New Media and the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (perhaps particularly Anderson’s chapter ‘The Internet and Islam’s New Interpreters’¹⁰⁰ present the arrival of the Internet into Muslim societies not (as some scholars of the Internet have seen its impact on Western societies)¹⁰¹ as a retribalisation of society which heralds precisely the fragmentation of the rational Habermasian public sphere,¹⁰² but rather as a further extension of the processes of modernity which have profoundly changed Muslims’ understanding of their religion over the past half century.¹⁰³ According to this argument, the arrival of mass education in Muslim societies has upset traditional hierarchies within Islam in much the same way it upset those hierarchies in early modern Christianity in Europe. That is, by simultaneously privileging new scientific forms of knowledge over old, oral forms and rote memorisation, and by producing a newly literate, technocratic class of people interested in approaching religious texts directly.¹⁰⁴ This has produced new forms of religious engagement which are simultaneously more diverse and at the same time more scripturalist and, in this sense, ‘fundamentalist’.¹⁰⁵

On the other hand, it may be suggested that the apparent reluctance of researchers operating broadly within this framework of getting deeply involved with jihadi content may be as much because of as in spite of the potential relevance of such ideas to the emergence of this type of material. In so far as

prominent scholars of contemporary Islamic culture (John Esposito might be a particularly notable example)¹⁰⁶ have tended to find themselves cast in the role of public apologists for Islam, so claims about the heterogeneity and diversity of Islam have tended to become not an *explanation* for the possibility of militant jihadi trends, as a rebuke to them.¹⁰⁷ Simultaneously, observing a scripturalist tendency to new forms of Islamic piety becomes problematic if extended to the jihadi case, since it might seem to imply that the violence of networks such as Al Qaida is actually encoded in, so to speak, the Islamic 'source code', as opposed to being a product solely of contingent political and historical circumstances - an argument which seems to fall close to the essentialism which most scholars of contemporary Islam try strenuously to avoid.¹⁰⁸

Another problem - following from this - is that, in the very insistence on seeing Islamic use of the Internet in rational, modernistic terms, Islamic phenomena on the Internet tend to be reduced to a similarly 'instrumental' set of concerns as those which have characterised the search for 'terrorism' on the Internet. This difficulty is noted by Cesari, who observes that the study of Islam on the Internet 'has primarily concerned itself with Islamic oriented activism'.¹⁰⁹ This means that, in her view, the tendency has been to study 'Islam on the Internet', rather than 'Islam of the Internet'. And yet, despite noting this weakness in contemporary research, Cesari does little herself to remedy this lack. While she identifies 'cyberjihad' as an online activity, consisting of 'a web waged war of ideas consisting primarily of increasing instances of agitation and propaganda in order to manipulate the thinking of the community',¹¹⁰ or, alternatively, as a range of hacking activities. She gives no attention to the internal meanings which might be ascribed to such activities by the (presumably) virtual communities which partake in them. Indeed, her uncharacteristically unbalanced use of language in 'manipulate the thinking of the community' seems to place her almost in the cyberwar context as reviewed above. Her discussion returns, for all its concern with 'Islamic' activity specific to the Internet, to a concern with the impact on the Islamic community of the 'activism' which she considers to be only a limited part of the phenomenon under examination.

A rare exception to such tendencies is to be found in the work of Gary Bunt. As one of very few non-security focused scholars of contemporary Islam to devote close attention to jihadi content on the Internet, Bunt's work offers a refreshing alternative to approaches which would see such content solely in terms of a potential threat, viewing it, rather as one aspect among many of a heterogeneous patchwork of 'cyber Islamic environments' - a term which, for Bunt, '[a]cknowledges diversity among and within different zones in cyberspace that represent varied Muslim worldviews within the House of Islam, all of which present a reference point of identity.'¹¹¹

By placing virtuality and non-physical notions of spatiality at the core of his approach, Bunt avoids reducing Islamic phenomena encountered on the Internet to mere extensions of wider spheres of Muslim politics or public life. Indeed, extending the spatial metaphor, he compares his researches in these to, on the one hand, the travels of Ibn Battuta and, on the other, the residency of Edward Lane in Nineteenth Century Cairo.¹¹²

This in turn opens up the core problem (for Internet religion) of authenticity. He opens *Virtually Islamic* by writing:

To an extent, the Cyber Islamic Environments I visit are simulations too, representations of the real and also representations of the ideal. Some contain depictions of physical objects: mosques, sacred texts, and images of Muslims. They also contain hard information and data, pure text without physical mass. The Qu'ran in cyberspace does not physically resemble the Qur'an on my desk. The difference between Cyber Islamic environments and *Flight Simulator* is that the 'fragmentation' can impact on the real lives of individuals, at significant and mundane levels.¹¹³

Since religions are already, in part, constructed out of texts and ideas, the borderline between the virtual and the real is necessarily a complex one. And yet it is not always clear that Bunt's densely

descriptive accounts always work through such ideas to the degree that they seem to require.

Indeed, notwithstanding Bunt's heavy use of virtualising terminology, his preoccupations tend to remain broadly similar to those scholars just mentioned - that is, with the transmission and changing nature of Islamic authority. Bunt (and also, very likely, the Muslim Ummah itself) has increasingly emphasised the centrality of the Internet to contemporary Islam. In 2004, he opens *Islam in the Digital Age* by observing:

Islam does not need computers; in many parts of the 'Muslim world', Islam is practised without computer interfaces or the use of a mouse, and the Internet may remain a rumour or a luxury in the hands of the elite.¹¹⁴

He goes on to summarise what the Internet *does* have to offer Islam. 'Without the Internet...

...a substantial minority of Muslims and Islamic organisations would be bereft of their significant propagation and networking tool, unable to dialogue, research and disseminate their message to followers or to interested (Muslim and other) observers.¹¹⁵

By 2009, he feels able to strengthen this assertion considerably.

One critical question is: to what extent has using the Internet for Islamic purposes become a religious obligation for some?... There are many people for whom being online for the sake of Allah represents an obligation.¹¹⁶

At the same time, Bunt is consistently sceptical of the possibility of inferring from the existence of material on the Internet pertaining to 'militant jihad in cyberspace', anything about Islamic militancy in the real world. At the opening of his chapter on 'defining e-jihad', he writes that: 'The thesis that the hyperlinks between one site and another are indicative of specific allegiances of an individual or an organisation is a problematic one'.¹¹⁷ Later, he points out that: 'the extent to which

the Al-Neda site represented bin Laden “officially” is perhaps open to question, given that his whereabouts or existence was difficult to ascertain during 2002’.¹¹⁸ In *iMuslims* he puts the point still more forcefully:

Does it matter that, as I noted when undertaking this research, 800 individuals downloaded an Al Qaida related file in twenty-four hours? We do not know who the 800 people were, or their motivations; we do not know how many copied the file and distributed or showed it to others; we do not know whether it had a substantive effect on them, or how many academics, researchers, journalists and analysts were among them.¹¹⁹

Bunt’s comments serve as a valuable corrective to implicit assumptions that jihadi content is, *ipso facto* a security threat. However, taken within the broader thrust of this work, there seems to be a contradiction. If studying the ‘Cyber-Islamic environments’ which form the basic unit of his analysis relates in some ‘real’ way to the ‘real world’ practice of Islam, then it would seem difficult to argue that jihadi content alone is somehow insulated from wider relevance. In fairness, this contradiction can to some extent be resolved by appealing to the fact that, for instance, an ‘e-fatwa’ may be a *real* Islamic fatwa in the sense that an ‘e-jihad’ *may* not be a real jihad.¹²⁰ But it seems questionable that Bunt really allows himself this escape route. For while Bunt speaks of an Islam ‘of’ the Internet, he does not seem (which would appear to be necessary) to disavow the possibility of speaking about the ‘Muslims’ he there encounters as people whose Islamic practices extend also to the real world.

A deeper problem with Bunt’s work is, as Karim has pointed out with regard to *Islam in the Digital Age*, is that it lacks a ‘sufficiently vigorous theoretical framework’.¹²¹ As the self-styled virtual equivalent of the 19th century travel writer, he seems always more comfortable with descriptive accounts than with taking the ethnographic risk of interpreting what he sees. The diagrammatic framework he offers in *iMuslims* is less a conceptualisation than a map. For Bunt, it seems, it is sufficient simply to observe that something is ‘Islamic’ and that it is ‘cyber’ - almost as if the

juxtaposition of Islam and technology still remains something to be surprised at. Indeed, in so far as Bunt places his work in a larger theoretical problematic, it is - he insists - to be understood as 'a challenge to what has been described as Electronic Colonialism Theory'.¹²² This is telling in that it requires only the positioning of cyber-Islam *en bloc* as something culturally different as refutation of the idea that the Internet will turn us all into English speaking Americans, rather than any very nuanced consideration of how cyber-Islam works for the people who participate in it, or what - in a particular sense - they do with it.

At first, it might appear that the conceptual thinness of Bunt's work (especially in relation to jihadism) is simply an outcome of its premises - of its insistence on finding an Islam of, rather than merely on the Internet, which to a degree constrains him to locating one 'Cyber Islamic' phenomenon only in relation to others. But this seems insufficient. After all, many researchers into other online environments have been able to produce conceptually rich accounts of their functioning. Rather, it might be suggested, the issue lies more in the very diversity which Bunt strives to acknowledge, leading him to fall into the difficulty identified in Volpi's caveat - quoted above - that, in escaping essentialist positions, one ends up saying only 'there are different Islams'. As such, Bunt's almost unique preparedness to acknowledge and give attention to jihadi environments seems to present him literally as 'the exception that proves the rule'. That is, the very fact that Bunt seems unable to discuss jihadism on the Internet without producing a conception of 'Islam' so thin and heterogeneous as to mean almost nothing beyond the reported speech of those Muslims who engage with it seems to offer a useful indication of why researchers into contemporary Islam find Internet jihadism so hard to talk about. In offering us a map of Islam on the Internet, it seems, Bunt must abandon hope of providing also a compass.

1.5 Internet Jihadism as Internet Politics

The scholarly discomfort associated with discussing jihadism as a religious phenomenon has, perhaps, been paralleled by a determination to normalise jihadism (and other types of ‘political Islam’) as politics which merely uses religious motifs as a means to an end. With regard to the relationship of jihadism to the Internet, this appears to have two potential implications. In so far as jihadism is viewed as a social movement, so jihadism’s ‘use of the Internet’ would seem to be mappable onto the existing literature about how social movements use ICTs.¹²³ Alternatively, in so far as jihadism is seen as an ideology, or as a ‘meta-narrative’,¹²⁴ it seems to invite analysis using existing theories of political ideology and political communication.

Social movement theory has had a good deal to say about how social movements (especially ‘transnational social movement organisations’ or TSMOs)¹²⁵ have made use of the Internet for purposes of mobilising, organising and campaigning. Indeed, it can be argued that it is the Internet’s potential for enabling new types of transnational politics upon which much of its claim to be a politically liberating and transformative medium lies. Social movements, for instance, play a crucial role in Castells’ vision of the ‘network society’.¹²⁶ However, work in this area has tended to focus on actors such as global anti-capitalist and environmental movements, rather than on Islamists - and certainly on ‘jihadists’. Indeed, this would seem to relate to a familiar criticism of new social movement theorists in general - that they prefer to study groups which they themselves appear to sympathise with, rather than groups often thought of as extremist or even ‘hateful’ such as ‘radical’ religious movements or those on the extreme right.¹²⁷

This is not to deny the growing importance of social movement theory in the literature on Al Qaida, ‘terrorism’ and violent jihad. At a conceptual level, Tilly has argued the case for replacing the idea

of a reified phenomenon of terrorism altogether with a view of political violence as a part of a wider repertoire of social movements generally.¹²⁸ Hafez has shown how a combination of resource mobilisation and structural strain approaches familiar to SMT can serve to explain 'Why Muslims Rebel'.¹²⁹ More specifically, Sutton and Vertigans have tried to show how Al Qaida itself could be understood as an example of a 'new social movement'¹³⁰ and Wiktorowicz has provided a practical demonstration of how a social movement theory approach can be applied to a non violent, but clearly 'radical' Islamic group.¹³¹

In practice, however, analysis of jihadi Internet content as an instance of social movement use of ICTs has been hampered by the sparsity of reliable information about the actual interface between online data and the physical functioning of the jihadi 'movement'. Recently, researchers have, however, begun to apply the social movement theory concept of collective action frames to the propaganda materials of particular Al Qaida affiliates.¹³² But such research - while clearly a step forwards - would seem to remain bound by the problem outlined above, of being primarily limited to material (such as the identifiably 'official' content of specific, violent groups) in which the direct intent to mobilise, and the existence of something to mobilise into, is clear.

In consequence, it can be suggested, attempts to render jihadism on the Internet accessible to analysis as a social movement have run into problems very similar to those encountered by researchers approaching from a 'terrorism' or 'security' perspective: the problem of disaggregating a comprehensible political actor from a morass of more or less 'jihadi' political content. Hence, even where jihadism has been studied as political discourse, rather than as quasi-violence, it has generally fallen within the purview of semi-academic investigations of political 'extremism' or 'hate'. For instance, one of the earliest studies of 'Islamist' content on the Internet (published in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence*) was authored by Michael Whine,¹³³ Director of the Community Securities Trust - a British NGO which has been described as 'the defence agency of

the British Jewish Community'.¹³⁴ Whine's publications generally address issues of 'extremism', 'hate' and antisemitism.

A glimpse at an alternative approach is offered by those researchers who have focused more on the discursive dimensions of the phenomenon. Here, as suggested above, there has been a tendency to avoid direct engagement with 'jihadi' material, in favour of broader (and, as above, problematically holistic) analyses of the political potential of Islamic Internet use in general – an approach of which the work of Siapera provides a useful example.¹³⁵ An interesting exception to this is the work of Chase Knowles, which concerns herself with what it calls 'Islamist Neorealism' as a 'new Web genre',¹³⁶ thus placing the onus back on (*de facto*) jihadi material as content and as 'culture', rather than simply as strategic action. But as Knowles acknowledges, finding a way of adapting existing paradigms of political communication (in particular, the understandings offered by the Frankfurt School), is deeply problematic precisely because of the specifically religious claims made by the content in question, which, as she points out, seem not to be adequately recognisable without falling back on essentialist, orientalist or 'reverse orientalist' theories such as that advanced by Mowlana.¹³⁷

For Knowles, the central paradox provided by the Islamist content she surveys is, however, not merely tied to the difficulty of making sense of religion within the context of political discourse, but also with, as she puts it, 'a major theoretical puzzle... in short: why are a range of non-fiction and fiction formats being hybridized into one collective visual, virtual paradigm?'.¹³⁸ Knowles seeks answers to this question through comparison between the Islamist 'web genre' and that of 'socialist realism',¹³⁹ through the dependence of the material, as she sees it, on the 'fictional epic',¹⁴⁰ and lastly through a 'dualism between text and spirit' which she calls 'infospirituality'.¹⁴¹

While certain difficulties in interpretation which may arise from the author's lack of specific expertise - for example she, probably incorrectly, understands the form 'the word' in the refrain of the nashid *The Word is the Word of the Sword Until the Wrongs are Righted*)¹⁴² as meaning 'the Qur'an and the Sunnah'.¹⁴³ However, a deeper problem seems to arise from the author's ultimate inability to reconcile the political and religious meanings which she finds in the texts. Having initially problematised this very issue, she concludes by arguing that there are two main rhetorical purposes to what she calls 'Islamist Neorealism': the communication of a message of resistance through strategic narrative (the crafting of narratives for specific strategic aims), and the production of 'infospiritualism'.¹⁴⁴ But how these two ends are connected - or, if not, why they persistently coincide with one another in the same content 'genre' remains unexplained.

1.6 Conclusion

Jihadism on the Internet poses conceptual challenges which no approach thus far applied has been able satisfactorily to address. While some jihadi content is certainly produced by entities which are closely affiliated, or incorporated into violent 'terrorist' groups, it is not simply reducible to a notion of 'terror on the Internet'. Such perspectives unhelpfully reify and securitise what is - however defined - undoubtedly a polyvocal and heterogeneous body of content which is, in turn, reincorporated by users into a yet larger and more complex body of narratives. But in moving away from this perspective, it is not clear that there are any very attractive looking alternatives. Jihadi content is self-evidently 'Islamic'. But this observation does not seem to take us very far on its own. Islam is what people make of it. So this simply raises the question of what those who engage with jihadism on the Internet are using Islam to make. On the other hand, trying to rationalise away the 'spiritual' and 'epic' elements of jihadism on the Internet seems to force the content into assumptions about political communication, or political mobilisation, in which it does not sit easily.

In finding an alternative perspective then, there are a number of criteria which must be met. First, given that jihadism ‘in real life’ is necessarily highly secretive, we must find a way of talking about Internet jihadism - as far as possible - *as we find it*, without making further assumptions about authorship, authenticity, purpose and effect which can be validated only with reference to external data. Following Bunt, it would seem that, broadly speaking, a phenomenological and cultural approach is needed.

Secondly, it would seem to follow from this that jihadism on the Internet must be approached, as far as possible, *on its own terms*. Ideally (and this may seem at first a paradoxical initiative), jihadi texts should be appreciated emically as jihadi texts without forcing onto them larger ideas about what Islam is, or where the boundary lies between religion and politics.

Lastly, however, an investigation of jihadi texts on the Internet cannot be merely descriptive. Understanding the phenomenon on its own terms and in its own vocabulary is a crucial first step. But if that is all that we do, we risk being misled by claims whose production may have more to do with the textual practice of ‘jihadism’ than the actual violent practice of ‘jihad’. As an example of this, one might consider the many examples of jihadi ‘strategic studies’,¹⁴⁵ which may be read at face value as genuine information on what ‘the jihad’ is trying to do, but which might perhaps also be seen as post hoc rationalizations which serve not so much as effective blueprints for action, but as a way of upholding the apparent coherence of jihadi practice as a whole.¹⁴⁶ There is, then, a difficult trick to be accomplished here. On the one hand one must deal with a set of surfaces, without presuming the necessary relevance of these surfaces to broader notions of ‘Islam’, the practice of ‘politics’ and, still less of ‘Islamic politics’. On the other hand some means must be found to understand these phenomena on a deeper level than their own description of themselves – to produce some theory, however tentative, of why jihadism, as it presents itself may *matter* to those who engage with it. It is this that the following chapter shall attempt to supply.

2.

Fandom and Subcultural Consumption

2.0 Introduction

In 'The Question Concerning Technology', Heidegger distinguishes between an 'instrumental' definition of technology as a 'means to an end', and a 'human activity' and, on the other hand, technology as 'poiesis' - a 'way of revealing', something that 'enframes'.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps one of his meanings is that we tend to look at technological artifacts as if what is done with them can be separated from the new reality that they create (or, for Heidegger) 'reveal' or 'bring forth'. We forget that technology doesn't just help us to get more of what we want. It changes what we want, and how we understand our very existence.

In the previous chapter, I tried to make the case that there has been too much focus on the 'instrumental' side of Internet technology in the study of jihadism on the Internet - particularly in the absence of consistently good answers as to exactly who is wielding the 'instrument' and to what effect. But if we are to decouple 'jihadism' on the Internet from assumptions about its precise role in larger concerns such as 'Islam', 'terrorism' or 'globalisation', how then are we to make sense of it? What, exactly, is technology 'bringing forth' in this case?

One useful place to start would seem to be precisely where the previous chapter left off - with Knowles' concern regarding the unclassifiability of what she calls 'Islamist Neorealism'. As I noted, Knowles has found that Frankfurt School approaches to political communication cannot seem to make sense of the 'epic' and religious themes included in this material while, at the same time, distinctively 'Islamic' approaches to the question appear to be culturally 'essentialist'.

What is interesting with relation to this problem is that it is seen as problematic and essentialist to propose that the content in question ought to fit one (as it happens, Muslim) scholar's supposedly 'Islamic' model of communication, but that things would be well and good if the content could be made to fit a model of communication produced by a particular group of mid twentieth century German-Jewish philosophers. The implication that all cultural practices, properly understood, must fit the universal models devised by Western thinkers seems to risk replacing essentialism with chauvinism – and thus perhaps, subtly, with another kind of essentialism.

This, in fact, relates to a wider set of concerns about the applicability of critical theory approaches to specific cultural situations. For example, feminist Muslim anthropologists such as Saba Mahmood¹⁴⁸ and Lila Abu-Lughod¹⁴⁹ have questioned the validity of Western conceptions of 'resistance' in certain Islamic contexts, while others have asked whether insistence on finding a close analogue to the Habermasian public sphere has blinded scholars to the emergence of certain important new kinds of public dialogue in Muslim society.¹⁵⁰

In this chapter, I wish to draw on work in an area where scholars have been particularly dynamic in devising alternatives to Frankfurt School approaches: that of post-industrial popular culture. My argument will be that, by reassessing the agency of consumers – particularly when conceptualised as 'fans' – in relation to ideological and supposedly hegemonic discourses, this area of scholarship has provided a fruitful set of tools for reconceptualising what is going in the case of jihadism on the Internet.

To this end, I shall attempt to provide a brief account of the evolution of certain areas of popular cultural studies, addressing some of the conceptual concerns these raised in their development, before going on to consider in more depth some key thinkers and underlying issues. I propose to follow this approach - rather than a more straightforwardly thematic one - as I feel that before 'expropriating' some of the concepts developed in this area, it is necessary to present the contexts and problems regarding which they were used.

2.1 Popular Culture and Cultural Studies

In exile from Nazi Germany, Rolf Wiggerhaus notes¹⁵¹ how the Frankfurt School philosophers Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer came into contact for the first time with American commercial mass culture. From this distasteful experience they drew their theory of the 'culture industry', which they saw as a means by which capitalist societies are able to ideologically indoctrinate and satiate the masses in a 'circle of manipulation and retroactive need'.¹⁵²

From this conceptual starting point, Adorno and Horkheimer - as well as a long succession of media scholars who followed and continue to follow their lead - proceeded to develop a critical analysis of popular culture aimed at exposing the ideological ends served by mass media content.

As such, the historian Dennis Dworkin presents the Frankfurt School as the main alternative to the approach offered by what he sees as a unified tradition of cultural Marxism in postwar Britain - including not only the sociological work of British Cultural Studies, but also that of Marxist historians such as E.P Taylor and Eric Hobsbawm. According to Dworkin, both the British and Frankfurt schools shared a preoccupation with culture as a means by which capitalist power maintained its hegemony over the working class, based on Gramsci's rejection of deterministic views of culture implied by 'economism'. However, while the Frankfurt School's critical theorists 'tended to see contemporary culture as the debased mass entertainments of the culture industry... a culture that encouraged the masses to think as passive consumers', British tradition 'saw [popular] culture as more contradictory' - seeing within it 'subversive' potential. They also 'attempted to understand cultural consumption from the point of view of consumers, rather than producers'.¹⁵³

In other words, scholars following the British cultural studies approach offered two main arguments in opposition to the pessimism of the Frankfurt School.

First, against the idea that the 'industrial' technologies of mass media were inevitably bound to convey only the ideology of capitalism, they explored the possibility of these media becoming the conduit for alternative messages. This was, in fact, an idea that had previously been put forward by

Walter Benjamin - a thinker peripherally associated with the Frankfurt School, but not one whose ideas were embraced by Adorno and Horkheimer.¹⁵⁴

Second, (a point which we shall return to shortly), they proposed that mass media audiences were more discriminating than might be supposed.

2.2 Youth Subcultures as Authentic Popular Culture

Taking this first idea further implied the possibility that, rather than there being a single industrial culture, popular culture in capitalist societies existed in both positive and negative variants. One distinction, for instance, noted by Buxton, recognises 'authentic' forms of popular culture, such as rock music, as opposed to 'commercial' forms, such as 'manufactured' pop music and television series. He quotes Gleason¹⁵⁵ to the effect that 'radio and pop music belong to youth. Television belongs to their parents'. For Tania Modleski, these alternatives can be labelled as, on the one hand 'mass' culture, which is 'imposed from above' by a dominant culture industry and 'popular' culture which arises 'from the people'.¹⁵⁶

Concern with (in Modleski's formulation) 'popular culture' as a bottom up alternative to mass culture can be seen as a key aspect of one of the major projects of British cultural studies at the end of the 1970s - the incorporation into Marxist frameworks of post World War II youth subcultures.

At its most general, a subculture is simply, according to Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 'a normative system of some group or groups smaller than the whole society'.¹⁵⁷ In principle, then, the notion of the subculture is widely applicable - as much as a methodological perspective or as a conceptual tool as a coherent body of theory. Gay, Ellison and Powers talk, about 'demoninational subcultures', for example, within an American church.¹⁵⁸

In reality, however, the study of subcultures has tended to focus on those cultures which are perceived as lying for some reason outside of the mainstream of society. Thus, the work of the Chicago School of sociology - which, according to Gelder and Thornton,¹⁵⁹ represents the starting

point for contemporary subcultural studies, involved work such as Anderson's *The Hobo*¹⁶⁰ - an ethnographic examination of the culture of homeless men in the Chicago area, and Thrasher's *Gang*.¹⁶¹ Historical studies of subculture reach back as far as the cultures of 'rogues and vagabonds' of early modern Europe. Accordingly, Gelder proposes that subcultures are distinguished by the following characteristics:

- Through their often negative relation to work (as idle, parasitical, hedonistic, criminal etc)
- Their negative or ambivalent reaction to class
- Their association with territory rather than property
- Their movement away from home into non-domestic forms of belonging
- Their ties to excess and exaggeration (as opposed to restraint and moderation
- Their refusal of the banalities of ordinary life and, in particular, of massification. [ie, of being incorporated into wider 'mass' society].¹⁶²

For British cultural studies scholars, primarily working at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, the concept of subculture gained a new sociological momentum as theorists sought on the one hand to understand the rise of distinctively dressed youth cultures; and on the other to explain the apparent decline of Marxist-style class consciousness among people who were traditionally 'working class'. Works by researchers at the Centre such as Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*,¹⁶³ and the essays of Mungham and Pearson (eds) *Working Class Youth Culture*¹⁶⁴ and Hall and Jefferson (eds) *Resistance Through Rituals*¹⁶⁵ sought to identify in youth subcultural groupings seemingly based on shared clothing style and musical taste, an underlying possibility of political resistance to the prevailing capitalist order. Hebdige, for instance, argued that groups such as Skinheads and Teddy Boys, far from losing a sense of proletarian class consciousness were in fact using exaggerated and stereotyped references to working clothes of the older generation as a way of symbolically re-establishing the communal solidarity of working class communities which had been fragmented by changes in the industrial economy.¹⁶⁶

In the 1990s, such romantic characterisations of youth culture began to lose some of their sheen. This was partly due to a theoretical and empirical re-examination of those same subcultures which had concerned Hebdige and his colleagues, and partly due to actual developments in youth subculture itself, which seemed to raise important questions about the political potential and meaning of the phenomenon. Clarke observed, for instance, a tendency by these researchers to focus narrowly on visual style - particularly of small 'authentic' subcultural elites while ignoring both the larger mass of 'straights' of the same social class, or even what the subcultures under consideration actually had to *say* about themselves.¹⁶⁷ Taking this further, Muggleton sought to undertake a comprehensive re-examination of subculture, substituting the Marxist theoretical assumptions which were practically *de rigueur* for scholars of popular culture in favour of a 'neo-Weberian' approach, based on a 'nominalist' rather than a 'realist' methodology which 'privileges subjective meanings' of those being studied.¹⁶⁸ Arguing that Birmingham CCS researchers such as Hebdige had presumed to read, from youth style, meanings which would have been incomprehensible to the youth themselves, Muggleton proceeded to insist instead that working class subcultures, rather than representing relatively stable forms of group solidarity were far more fluid than had been supposed, and far closer to supposedly middle class subcultures such as the hippy movement. As such, they were rooted - he claimed - in the internalisation by working class youth of liberal ideas of 'hyperindividualism', leading on to a conception of subculture as a playful, postmodern activity, with important elements of performativity and the use of 'masks'.¹⁶⁹

In rethinking things thus, Muggleton made similar claims for relatively old movements such as punk as were being made at roughly the same time by scholars working on distinctively new youth trends. For Thornton,¹⁷⁰ and later, Redhead,¹⁷¹ the emergence of the phenomenon of the rave in particular seemed to present something very different to earlier subcultures based (supposedly) on exclusivity and authenticity. While in theory (if not necessarily in practice) being both a hippy and a punk had been a contradiction in terms, these researchers observed that attendees at raves came from a wide variety of subcultural backgrounds - uniting culturally around the sheer aesthetic joy of

a particular occasion before going their separate ways back into their ordinary lives. The common thread for such research was thus the movement away from subculture as a way of fighting capitalism to subculture as a way of living within capitalism. For Redhead, this could be understood in terms of the 'orgiastic' and 'aesthetic' sociology of the theorist Michel Maffesoli.

2.3 Fans as Subcultural Consumers of Mass Media

Let us now pick up on the second front which British cultural studies opened against the Frankfurt School. While Hebdige and others were investigating the revolutionary potential of youth subcultures, scholars such as John Fiske were attempting to rethink the ideological role of mass media such as television. As has already been observed, British cultural studies had consistently taken a more nuanced view of this issue than had Horkheimer and Adorno and, later, Habermas, for whom television bore much of the responsibility for 'transforming a public that made culture an object of critical debate into one that consumes it'.¹⁷² According to Stuart Hall, communications followed a model of 'encoding' and 'decoding' by which the intended message of a sender could be rejected or renegotiated by a recipient. Fiske built on this, drawing from Hall's encoding/decoding model,¹⁷³ the notion of 'polysemy' and Bakhtin's concept of 'heteroglossia',¹⁷⁴ to present a view of television as a 'producerly' discourse potentially open to a variety of interpretations by viewers.¹⁷⁵ For Fiske television viewers, rather than simply soaking up content, actively 'read' it, sometimes 'resisted' it, and always reworked its meanings through their own social lives and the 'oral culture' of gossip.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the act of reappropriating culture was not simply relevant in terms of the alterations implied to the final understanding of the message. The very process of reappropriation, as a subversive activity based on escaping established social codes served to produce a particular set of pleasures which Fiske - drawing on Barthes notion of *jouissance* - placed at the heart of his theory of popular culture.¹⁷⁷

Coming from a different scholarly perspective, and initially working unaware of developments in British scholarship (although later heavily influenced by Hebdige and other CCS scholars such as

Angela McRobbie), Janice Radway came independently to roughly similar conclusions in her study of how a group of American women from the small town of Smithton read romantic novels of the kind generally thought to be both intellectually lowbrow and rife with sexist clichés.¹⁷⁸ In rethinking the impact of such literature, Radway observed that the *practice* of media consumption, and the impact this had on how people organised their lives might be as important as the ostensible content. ‘Smithton women’, she pointed out, ‘repeatedly answered my questions about the meaning of romances by talking about the meaning of romance reading as an activity and a social event in a familial context’. It turned out that for the women she studied, spending money on romance books and demanding time in which to read them meant standing up to the demands of their husbands, and mutually supporting each other in doing so.¹⁷⁹

At the same time, Radway also insisted that, whatever scholarly critics might think, viewed from the point of view of the ‘interpretive community’ formed by the Smithton women, the *content* of romance novels was understood not in terms of patriarchal domination, but rather of liberation. For example, the readers appreciated particularly the tendency of romance novel heroines to occupy unconventional gender roles and defy male expectations of what women were supposed to do.¹⁸⁰

Work such as Fiske’s and Radway’s provided much of the inspiration for the first serious academic investigations of the phenomenon of media fandom which began to appear at the beginning of the 1990s. In a sense, however, the phenomenon of fandom - and the body of scholarship that set to work on it - can be seen as lying at the meeting point of the two lines of cultural scholarship just discussed. As autonomous subcultures, fan groupings were seen as deviant outsiders by members of ‘normal’ society. But they faced the added stigma of being groupings premised on a supposed addiction to consuming mass cultural texts widely considered to be the worthless, trivial, mass produced rubbish of the culture industry.

Indeed, the negative stereotypes which Jenkins observed in media treatment of fan cultures correspond closely to those set out by Gelder as hallmarks of subculture in general. For Jenkins, fans have been stereotyped as:

- Brainless consumers who will buy anything associated with the show and its cast
- [People] who devote their lives to the cultivation of worthless knowledge
- Are feminised and/or desexualised
- Are infantile, emotionally and intellectually immature
- Are unable to separate fantasy from reality¹⁸¹

In fact, as Jensen noted, fandom was frequently seen in an even more negative light - as a 'pathology', with violent mob behaviour, stalking or even celebrity assassinations seen as inevitably outcomes of the fan's supposed obsessiveness, deviancy and frail grip on reality.¹⁸² Viewing similar stereotypes from a fan point of view, Bacon Smith recalled the discomfort which organisers of a women's fan convention had felt in conversation with an outsider whom they, jokingly, suggested had viewed them as a 'terrorist society'.¹⁸³

For what the scholars whom Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington identify as the 'first wave' of fandom theorists,¹⁸⁴ the main task was to overturn such assumptions. Against the notion of fans as 'brainless consumers', Jenkins and Bacon Smith showed how real fan communities were actually based less on the obsessive desire to own commercial merchandise as a creative impulse to engage in the fictional world created by the media text - one which drove many fans to produce artistic work of their own, such as fictional stories, 'filk' songs or visual art relating to characters from television shows.

For Jenkins, fans were to be seen as ‘rogue readers’, who - using the terminology of the theorist Michel de Certeau, ‘poached’ on texts which were supposed to be the property of others.¹⁸⁵ As such, they were not victims of the industrial media that produced the texts they consumed, so much as cultural activists who confronted their producers, demanding a measure of creative agency over their production. As illustrative of this - and in contrast to others’ ideas of fans as a ‘powerless elite’¹⁸⁶ - it was noted how organised fan groups put together letter writing campaigns demanding that studios revive axed series, or protesting new plot trajectories that they felt betrayed the spirit of a particular show.

Indeed, as ‘interpretive communities’, Jenkins argued that fans operated on the objects of their fandom with much the same intellectual vigour and passion that connoisseurs applied to ‘high’ culture. As such, he argued, much of the stigma against fans appeared to derive not so much from their intellectual vacuity as from the close similarity of their reverence for supposedly devalued texts to the textual practices exercised by connoisseurs of ‘high culture’. By seeming to ape and parody what were supposed to be inherently valuable and worthwhile activities, fans produced in consumers of high culture the unpleasant feeling that the inherent superiority of their own cultural texts might, too, be ultimately without foundation.¹⁸⁷

2.4 New ‘Waves’ of Fandom Theory

For ‘first wave’ fandom theorists, the main task was to take a much maligned and mocked social group and present it in a heroic new light. As such, the meaning of this project depended to a significant degree on the existence of the very boundaries it set out to challenge: the status of fans as social outsiders, the existence of widely recognised ‘high’ cultural forms and socially sanctioned types of fandom, such as sports fandom. Therefore, thinking about fandom was set on a new trajectory as the 1990s progressed and many of these boundaries started to erode. Increasingly, the taken for granted superiority of high culture seemed to come under question. At the same time, fandom became more and more socially acceptable. Indeed, in contrast to the conflictual

relationship which had set the scene for the heroic treatment of fan groups by media scholars, media companies increasingly started to court fan groups.

One consequence of this was a more sceptical view of the liberating potential of fan groups themselves. While earlier fandom theorists had emphasised how fan groups were socially inclusive, and used their interpretive relationship with texts to reimagine them, too, as paradigms of inclusivity (writing homerotic relationships into *Star Trek*, for example, or filling out larger roles for female characters), newer theorists started to look at how fan groups helped to replicate in miniature the same prejudices as society as a whole.¹⁸⁸

Perhaps more far reaching, however, was a new questioning of what texts were appropriate objects for fandom. According to some critics, early scholars of fandom had - in privileging interpretive communities of texts over readings of the texts themselves¹⁸⁹ - arrived at the paradoxically patronising position that texts didn't matter, and that any one text was as good as any other. In fact, these scholars had always insisted that fans chose particular texts not arbitrarily, but because they were from the outset open to being read for those things fans sought in them. At the same time, however, this insistence did open up an important question about whether the 'popular culture'/'high culture' distinction might have some validity after all.

For Fiske - writing at the beginning of the 'first wave' in 1992, fans' engagement with popular cultural rather than high cultural texts was not simply arbitrary, or something forced upon them by their being shut out from acquiring this level of 'cultural capital' (a concept drawn from the widely used cultural theories of Pierre Bourdieu). Rather, fans drew on popular cultural texts because they offered different possibilities.¹⁹⁰ It was not so much a matter of whether texts were 'good' or 'bad' but rather (as McKee succinctly puts it) of what they were good *for*.¹⁹¹ Unlike 'high' cultural texts, popular cultural texts were, Fiske believed, less rigidly bound to ideas of authenticity and authorship. They were, for this reason, more open to creative re-interpretation or re-writing. At the same time, however, Fiske recognised that the boundary between what was high culture and what

was popular culture was not an eternal one - items which had once been popular culture (such as Shakespearean drama) became enshrined as high culture and, potentially, vice versa.

This idea seemed to invite the possibility that fandom, rather than being defined as a connoisseur-like relationship to devalued popular texts, might instead be definable as a certain kind of relationship to *any* text.

2.5 Redefining Fandom

This development naturally required a new attention to what was meant by the term 'fandom' - or, as became a common usage, 'fannish engagement' with a particular text. For Jenkins, the essential difference between fandom and ordinary cultural consumption had been threefold: fans exercised a high level of selection and *distinction* - making conscious choices about media consumption and often re 'reading' favourite texts; secondly, they then went on to form an interpretive *community*. Thirdly, this community in turn developed into a distinctive *art world*, allowing for the production, evaluation and consumption of further works of art produced by the community itself.¹⁹²

Uricchio¹⁹³ put it more simply, arguing that a fan is differentiated from a non-fan by the fact that fans 'incorporate... cultural texts as part of their self identity, often going on to build social networks on the basis of shared fandoms'. Yet more generally, Matt Hills has asserted that¹⁹⁴ 'intense affective relationships' with texts are what lie at the heart of the phenomenon, although he is at pains to point out that it is an 'inevitably contested term,' and that it is, 'what fandom does, culturally' that is more important than reifying the phenomenon into a precise object for enquiry.¹⁹⁵

The implication of this was that it became possible to speak (hypothetically, at least) of people as engaging 'fannishly' with texts such as Shakespeare, Chekhov or Bach. Alternatively, a new category of the 'anti-fan', whose active, productive and well-informed *dislike* of a particular text became the basis for personal identity and community.¹⁹⁶

The simultaneous widening of the parameters for fandom, and (to some extent) depoliticisation of the relationship between fans and producers did not, however, invalidate all of the core

preoccupations of early fandom theorists such as Jenkins and Bacon-Smith. Indeed, in stripping away some of these concerns, it can be suggested that the relevance of certain core arguments about 'what fandom does' present in work such as *Textual Poachers* and *Enterprising Women* actually became highlighted still further. In so far as fandom related not to a macropolitical agenda about the relationship between a capitalist media industry and its consumers but to individual concerns about identity and the re-creation of community amidst modernist anomie, both writers had argued that fandom - in their cases most especially science fiction fandom - worked by producing both a shared fantasy, or myth which incorporated within it 'utopian' possibilities and, at the same time, an actual human community which seemed to actualise some of these values. Thus, for instance, Jenkins observed how fans were attracted to the world of *Star Trek* precisely because of its optimistic view of a future in which technology, rather than leading to alienation and totalitarianism could help make people 'more fully human'.¹⁹⁷ Fans looked longingly to the *Star Trek* world both for a model of a better society and for an escape from the everyday world of 'mundania'. And when the series failed to live up to the ideals they saw in it, they used their own fan art to imagine new possibilities.¹⁹⁸

A key concern of Jenkins' was to refute earlier scholars who, perplexed by the devotion and apparently ritualistic behaviour of *Star Trek* fans, had come to the conclusion that the phenomenon was to be seen as a new form of religion.¹⁹⁹ Jenkins emphasised against this the 'nomadism' of fan reading and its critical, rather than slavish and literalistic attitude to its objects. But while engaging with multiple texts (for example, different SF series such as *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Blake's Seven* and *Doctor Who*, or science fiction novels), as well as certain real life political issues (such as funding for NASA), Jenkins and Bacon Smith did insist that fans were able thereby to affirm certain core underlying ethical values. At the same time, they were also able to imaginatively cope with some of the stresses and anxieties of modern life by imaginatively projecting themselves into the possibility of a better future.

Then, at a collective level, some fans ‘inhabited’ a ‘weekend world’ of travelling fan conventions held in hotels and conference centres which, although not spatially or temporally contiguous, was nonetheless very real. By engaging in this world performatively (through costume, song and dance) fans were able to produce a society which provided for them the sense of inclusive community, sociality and ‘carnival’ that their ordinary lives lacked. As such, fan communities can be seen, arguably, as yet another manifestation of the part time ‘clubculture’ which subcultural research had begun to identify at roughly the same time.

2.6 From Fandom to Consumer Culture

Given the cultural Marxist roots of fan scholarship, it is something of an irony that as media companies have started to woo fan groups, as the social supremacy of high culture has fallen into doubt, and as the political potential of subcultures has been rethought, the study of fan cultures has become a subject of increasing interest to a discipline which would appear to be the perfect nemesis of cultural studies: marketing research.

Some cultural scholars might argue, however, that the increasing interest of market researchers in subcultural aspects of consumption has represented not just the unmitigated triumph of capitalist hegemony over all forms of resistance, but rather the movement of the political potential of fan activity elsewhere, and the emergence of a much more complex and ‘playful’ paradigm of ‘resistance’ and cooption by commercial ventures.

For instance, for Jenkins, one implication of the emergence of what he calls a ‘convergence culture’²⁰⁰ has been that the experience of engaging in participatory media has also begun to shape participatory ways of engaging in politics and religion. Rather than fan groups engaging in quasi-political activity (for example, by organising protest campaigns against the cancellation of favourite series), political subtexts make it into the performance of entertainment. He observes, for instance, how popular cultural brands such as *The Apprentice* were used in order to mount a political critique of George Bush’s presidency,²⁰¹ and how anti-brand ‘culture jamming’²⁰² (also discussed by, for

instance, Kozinets and Handelman,²⁰³ Sandlin and Callahan,²⁰⁴ Carducci²⁰⁵) has become a form of political expression; or, alternatively, how Christian fans of the Harry Potter books have found creative ways to negotiate a potentially controversial position, re-deploying and re-reading the texts as Christian allegory.²⁰⁶

Indeed, for marketing scholars Desmond, McDonagh and O'Donohue, this apparent irony actually reflects what they see as a transition 'from revolutionary to aesthetic counter-culture'.²⁰⁷ For Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, whose edited volume *Consumer Tribes* represents an important development in this trend, it is the outcome of consumers becoming 'hip' to the rules of the capitalist game. As they write 'Consumers, in other words, are not naive about living in their commercial-material world... They know the game plan; they read the playbooks, they know the strategy'.²⁰⁸

The application of market research as a perspective for looking at cultures of fandom and of consumption, and consequent abandonment or toning down of Marxist assumptions, has enabled a rather more complex view of the sets of relationships that exist between fans and media producers. Going beyond the rather black and white analysis by which fans must either be consumption addicted cultural dupes or heroic cultural rebels, Cova, Kozinets and Shankar produce a two dimensional framework for understanding the actions of groupings which they refer to as 'consumer tribes'. According to how far they (1) appropriate the market for a product and (2), how far they annex the market for a product.²⁰⁹ In practice, this schema produces four categories. First, there are 'activators' - groups which take an essentially non-commercial brand, and create value by engaging with it as, for example, people who keep alive the 'brand' of the British Royal Family by collecting paraphernalia.²¹⁰ These are opposed to 'entrepreneurs', who take an already valued brand and start distributing and marketing their own home made spin-offs of it, as with those who write and distribute their own DIY Harry Potter stories.²¹¹ The other dyad in the framework is between 'double agents', and 'plunderers'. The former take a commercial brand thought to stand for one thing and imbue it with a different set of values, thereby opening it up to a new market. For example, as when a group of cool indie kids decided to make an unloved but proletarian brand of

beer the new in thing to drink.²¹² The latter are groups such as ‘culture jammers’ who ‘hijack’ brands by spoofing their advertisements and satirising their claims to stand for particular values.²¹³

2.7 Cultural Theorists: De Certeau, Bourdieu, Maffesoli

Thus far, we have occasionally glimpsed at certain theorists which researchers into fandom and ‘subcultures of consumption’ have themselves drawn on. For his work, Jenkins has made particular use of Michel de Certeau. Kozinets and his peers - sometimes via Redhead - have drawn on Maffesoli. Fiske notes his particular debt to the work of five theorists: Bourdieu, de Certeau, Barthes, Hall and Bakhtin.²¹⁴ As they have been particularly drawn on in this dissertation, it shall be worthwhile at this point to consider in greater depth the ideas of three theorists in particular: Bourdieu, de Certeau and Maffesoli.

Bourdieu’s work has been much admired by theorists of cultural studies, although the relationship has not been mutual (for a discussion of this, see, eg Robbins: 1991).²¹⁵ In the context of fandom and subculture, three of Bourdieu’s concepts are particularly important: those of *habitus*, *capital* and *field*. These are, in fact, interdependent ideas central to Bourdieu’s work as a whole. The concept of *habitus*, which Bourdieu first introduced in his study of peasantry in Bearn, and properly developed in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*²¹⁶ with reference to his previous ethnographic research among the Kabyle in Algeria represents an attempt to escape from the tendency of social scientists, as outside observers, to ‘elicit’ solid-seeming, timeless structures from the day to day life of the societies they study.²¹⁷ In place of this, Bourdieu attempts to produce a way of thinking about how structured conventions such as practices of reciprocal gift giving or killing can emerge out of the time-bounded choices made by individuals living their lives. Bourdieu’s central idea is that individuals in such practical circumstances act tactically to advance their interests within the possibilities pre-set by a subconsciously learned repertoire of cultural behaviours, attitudes and expectations.

Extending this idea to complex industrial societies such as France produces the notion of the 'field', which Bourdieu describes as 'a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy'.²¹⁸ His concept is explained by Patricia Thompson in terms of the science fiction idea of the force field - an invisible barrier which shuts off an area to the outside world; and real life physics' idea of a field as a mathematical space described by vectors, which act as axes of a coordinate system.²¹⁹

In Bourdieu's conception of things, the axes of the field are provided in turn by varying levels of different types of *capital*, which introduces the third key concept. Indeed, if a field is, as Bourdieu suggests, a game without formally set out rules, played tactically but unconsciously²²⁰ by players who are guided by their individual habitus, then the object of the game would seem to be the acquisition of the various (to some degree interchangeable) types of 'capital' which Bourdieu distinguishes: economic capital (that is, economic resources of more or less universal fungibility), social capital (networks of social obligations), educational capital (qualifications) and, of most specific relevance, cultural capital - meaning the acquisition of tastes and aesthetic competencies indicative of high levels of acceptance in a given field. This latter is in turn divided by Bourdieu into three forms: the 'embodied state', the 'objectified state' and the 'institutionalised state'.²²¹

Since Bourdieu sees fields as capable of overlapping and containing one another, this would seem to mean that high value cultural capital in one field (for instance, ownership of certain types of art) might be low value or even worthless in another. For Fiske, fan communities can be seen as fields within the larger field (what Bourdieu would call the 'field of power') of society, which, by bounding themselves - sometimes aggressively - against the outside world, are able to add a sense of value to the symbolic capital they possess.²²²

Michel de Certeau defined himself, when pressed, as a historian,²²³ and arguably his most important personal work was historiographic. Buchanan,²²⁴ laments how de Certeau has become known in the Anglo-Saxon world almost exclusively through his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (accurately:

L'Invention du Quotidien), with subsequent translations of Volume 2 of *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking*, *The Capture of Speech* and *Culture in the Plural* being presented as 'companion volumes'. However, it is this work which has been most influential (particularly via Jenkins) in the development of thinking on fandom, and therefore it is primarily with *The Practice of Everyday Life* which I will now be concerned.

Compared with Bourdieu, de Certeau's thinking in *The Practice of Everyday Life* provides a useful contrast. In simple terms, if Bourdieu is concerned with the big sociological question of how large scale social structure arises from individual agency, de Certeau's main concern is with how – these great cultural systems having come into being – individual 'users – commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules',²²⁵ are able to survive within them. For de Certeau, this means being able to engage creatively, even subversively with the seemingly humdrum and private activities which make up 'the quotidian'.

De Certeau's concern here is with how, by opportunism and cunning, ordinary people are able to score little victories against the 'technocratic and scriptural' strategies which seemingly dominate the world they live in, and in this way to make their lives liveable. In doing so, he distinguishes between two kinds of actor (or of action), There is the 'strategy', which 'assumes a place which can be circumscribed as *proper*',²²⁶ and which, by virtue of having a proper place is able to 'produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces'.²²⁷ And on the other hand there is the 'tactic' which, 'because it does not have a place... depends on time', and 'can only use, manipulate and divert these spaces'.²²⁸ De Certeau's vision is about (yet again) the folk-heroic fable of the weak overcoming the strong. And he talks about low income French workers who practice the fine art of diverting office time and resources to little personal projects²²⁹ and about native South Americans who, without changing the laws and religious practices imposed on them by their colonial masters, *made of them* (using De Certeau's own emphasis), something else.²³⁰ 'A tactic is determined by the absence of power, just as a strategy is organised by the postulation of power'. But this does not mean that strategies lack very particular characteristics. By the very fact that they are able to control

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space, they are able to effect ‘a triumph of place over time’ - which is to say that they are able to plan, systematically, for the future.²³¹ But their very power makes them vulnerable to trickery. For the rationale of strength is such as to make mere feints impolitic.²³²

One particularly influential working out of this scheme (the one that names Jenkins’ best known book on fandom) is de Certeau’s notion of reading as ‘poaching’. For de Certeau, writing seems to have inherently totalitarian potential - a point which (perhaps underscored by his own Jesuit commitment) helps to underscore his concern with the Reformation project of fixing a supposedly corrupt society with recourse to immovable systems of written law. The end of this, he (rather prophetically) states is that a ‘scriptural system moves forward on its own; it becomes self-moving and technocratic; it transforms the subjects that controlled it into operators of the writing machine that orders and uses them: a cybernetic society’.²³³ Against this - and more specifically against the apparatus ‘mass artistic consumption’,²³⁴ he offers the tactical practices of readers as ‘poachers’ who bypass the literal meaning of the elite through the ‘transformation of the social relationships that overdetermine his relation to texts’.²³⁵

De Certeau addresses and takes issue with Bourdieu on a number of points. He is suspicious of how, as he sees it, ‘even more clever than usual in this case, Bourdieu, outwitting the practices themselves in order to fix them in the labyrinthine developments of his own language, discerns in them several essential procedures’.²³⁶ His argument is that, while Bourdieu’s theory of the habitus appears to offer people agency within culture, it ultimately falls back on ‘the most traditionalist sort of ethnology’, in which culture is rendered ‘coherent’ and ‘unconscious’.²³⁷ And yet, it may nonetheless be argued that Bourdieu and de Certeau’s respective thinking can still be reconciled. As de Certeau himself observes, Bourdieu’s theory ultimately explains how culture perpetuates and structures itself, in spite of being produced, in the final analysis, by individual agency. By contrast, de Certeau’s thinking relates to another trend which is equally present: the way in which individuals gain by subtly subverting these structures, and by ‘colonising’ those dominant practices which have gained discursive supremacy.

As theorists have moved on from the the idea of subcultures as relatively rigidly defined groupings within a grand, Marxist scheme, so some have turned²³⁸ to the ‘neo-tribal’ sociology of Michel Maffesoli and, in particular as found in his book *The Time of the Tribes*.²³⁹ If Bourdieu is concerned with the grand sociological question (alongside other major contemporaries such as Giddens)²⁴⁰, of how apparently stable social structures emerge from individual level behaviour; and if de Certeau is concerned with the way in which individuals creatively take advantage of the possibilities offered by these structures in order to make living space for themselves, then Maffesoli’s central concern is the way in which living space is produced in the face of large scale structures, not by individuals, but by the spontaneous sociality of ad hoc groups. Maffesoli holds that the ‘mechanical’,²⁴¹ ‘mass’ society of modernity has become ‘saturated’ - that it is no longer capable of further development. As a result, the political, bureaucratic power (*pouvoir*) in his terminology, has become opposed (antithetically, rather than politically as such) to the raw, primal and, in a Bergsonian sense, *vital*²⁴² power of the mass of ordinary people, which, to contrast from formal *pouvoir* he calls *puissance*. The fragmentation of the modernist mass society, Maffesoli believes, has therefore meant not that people have become ever more individualistic, but rather that they have increasingly reassembled into ‘tribal’ groups formed ultimately around nothing more than basic ‘sociality’ - what Maffesoli calls the ‘glischmorphic’ tendency of humans.²⁴³ Given their primal nature, these groups tend to be bound internally by the *aesthetic* - a word which Maffesoli uses to mean ‘group feeling’,²⁴⁴ and by such basic features as secrecy toward the outside world, dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and by the use of ‘masks’ - by which Maffesoli means, for example, particular requirements for dress and hair as seen in youth subcultures of certain kinds.²⁴⁵ But the very importance of ‘masks’ as indicators of membership means that the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in these groups are, in a sense, more performative than essential. In living ordinary modern life, a person can become caught up in a succession of different tribal groupings, moving from one to the next by changing masks, each one hanging together by aesthetic performativity rather than enduring structure.

Maffesoli is adamant about avoiding analytical distance, about getting caught up in the carnivalistic ‘paroxysmal’ nature of his subject matter - so much so, in fact, that he is scornful even of Bourdieu’s efforts to critique this distance. For Maffesoli, Bourdieu’s ideas of ‘practical beliefs’ and ‘popular theoretical sense’, produce what he calls a ‘centrifugal perspective whose reference lies beyond the object with a more or less explicit judgemental attitude’.²⁴⁶ Nonetheless, in building his theory of the power of group feeling over formal institutional structures, Maffesoli has recourse on a number of occasions to one of the key ‘thinking tools’ of Bourdieu’s sociology: the ‘habitus’ - which, however he traces back to the *hexis* of Aristotle, rather than directly to Bourdieu’s work.²⁴⁷ For Maffesoli, this concept serves as an alternative building block for sociality to what he sees as Enlightenment insistence on verbal communication as the *sine qua non* of social relationships. In his view, it may be equally important for people to do things together, to feel things together, or simply to share space - which, indeed, may in itself be real or emotional. This means that his non-technocratic, non-scriptural tribal formations may not so much replace the larger social forms of modern society, as co-exist alongside them, or even within them. Indeed, Maffesoli’s central concern - like de Certeau’s is with ‘the quotidian’ - the experience of everyday life, which he seeks to valorise in the face of what he understands (some would say simplistically)²⁴⁸ as a collapsing modern order. In a sense, then, Maffesoli’s thought occupies a mid point between that of the two thinkers just discussed, in that it offers a roughly similar idea of tactical, impromptu and non-linear ‘resistance’ to that of de Certeau - but at the level of the group, while stopping short of concerning itself (except in an oppositional sense) with a bigger notion of society. Indeed, in spite of Maffesoli’s determination to present his work in opposition to that of Bourdieu, as with de Certeau, it can be argued that he may be seen as offering a complementary, rather than contradictory perspective. If Bourdieu provides a set of ‘thinking tools’ for understanding the inner mechanics of subculture, Maffesoli offers an imaginative vocabulary for appreciating its gestalt.

2.8 Conclusion: Making Use of Concepts of Fandom

Why, in a dissertation about jihadism on the Internet, ought we to care about Star Trek fans, coffee lovers, romance readers or the rave movement? Having set out an account of the evolution of thinking about fandom – the context in which it emerged, and some of the theoretical work which has most influenced it, it is now time to produce a synthesis, to (following De Certeau's turn of phrase), *make of* this body of work something which will be useful in what follows.

At the beginning of this chapter, I pointed out that critiques of Critical Theory approaches to resistance and hegemony are not exclusive to popular cultural studies. Nor indeed is the idea that consumer contexts may matter more in relation to potentially radicalising use of the Internet than the material itself. Indeed, this point has been very aptly made by de Koning, who argues that - with relation to concern about Muslim 'radicalisation' on the Internet:

The basic assumption seems to be that on the one hand the individual user on the Internet is completely free to construct his or her own Islam (which leaves the possibility that the Internet has its own structures of inequality and exclusion and inclusion unaccounted for) while on the other hand the Internet seems so powerful that it must lead to radicalisation (thereby seeing the Internet user as a passive and powerless observer).

At the same time, however, the language of 'youth culture', 'transforming consumers into producers',²⁴⁹ 'marketing' and 'brand'²⁵⁰ have become increasingly fashionable in discussions of Al Qaida and Muslim 'radicalisation' generally. Olivier Roy, for instance, wrote in a 2008 report:

...it is more productive to understand Al Qaida in Europe as a youth movement which shares many factors with other forms of dissent, either political (the ultra-left), or behavioural: the fascination with suicidal violence as illustrated by the paradigm of random shootings in schools.²⁵¹

Such ideas - if they are to be taken seriously - place the study of the phenomenon within the broader remit of cultural studies. Indeed, as the title of Jenkins' recent book suggests, we are now living in a 'convergence culture' in which old assumptions about news versus entertainment, politics versus lifestyle and mass versus popular media are being overturned.²⁵²

In making this transition, however, one might suggest that something has been lost. Emblematic of this is the way in which the role of grand theorist taken up by de Certeau in *Textual Poachers* is in *Convergence Culture* taken up by Pierre Levy, a thinker whose work, arguably, represents the antithesis of de Certeau's project. Where de Certeau is committedly anti-utopian, Levy speaks of his 'collective intelligence' as an 'achievable utopia.'²⁵³ Where de Certeau is fundamentally concerned with the individual 'user', Levy seeks to reject 'the individualistic "cogito" of Descartes' in favour of an 'immanent social order' built, politically around the 'virtual agora'.²⁵⁴ Forced to grow up and take responsibility in an age of supposedly flattened media hierarchies, the witty *double entendres* of practice are replaced with a more literalistic interest in speech. The politics of form are replaced by the politics of content.

For example, Fiske, in 1989, argued against 'the familiar division of television's programming into information and entertainment, which assumed that the former was 'objective, true, educational and important', while the latter was, 'subjective, fictional, escapist, trivial and above all, harmful'.²⁵⁵ For Fiske, it was necessary not for news to be less, but more 'popular' - presenting necessary public interest stories in such a way as to make people wish to incorporate them into their own cultural practice. And yet, when Fiske talks about how people consume news, he is still concerned with a 'struggle over meanings' more, seemingly, than the question of what people do *with* those meanings. Similarly, when Jenkins turns his attention to the white supremacist computer game *Ethnic Cleansing*, it is to observe that – for many who play it – it will serve not to encourage, but to educate about racism.²⁵⁶ Or when Gray starts out by describing the case of a woman who avidly followed Canada's parliament channel not in order to become informed about Canadian politics, but as a soap opera, he ends up referring to Marcus' notion of 'emotive citizenship'.²⁵⁷

The reasons for this may perhaps be located in the optimistic political vision which informed the development of cultural studies. Because the original reason for studying the consumption of popular texts was in order to save some notion of progressive potential even in a culture which (for them) was utterly permeated by the hegemonic power of capitalist order, cultural studies scholars

have been arguably very ready to see consumers as rejecting (say) the ‘techno fetishism’ of *Star Wars* in favour of its emphasis on resistance to totalitarianism.²⁵⁸ But they have been less interested, for example, in how films such as *This is England*²⁵⁹ or *American History X*²⁶⁰ (which respectively deal with their protagonists’ disenchantment with white power movements in these two countries) have been expropriated by some far right sympathisers as nostalgic, romantic statements *in favour* of these groups. For the same reason, while it is possible to talk about how television fans seem only to be concerned with amassing ‘trivia’ and mobilising politically for the cause of more programming they like, they are *actually* advancing an underlying progressive agenda which is all about forming inclusive communities and challenging power structures the opposite argument seems rarely to be addressed in this literature. That is, that people who *seem* to be engaging in ‘progressive’ politics through the media might *actually* be helping to reinforce the very structures they claim to oppose.²⁶¹

In building a theoretical approach for this dissertation then, I shall therefore seek to return to notions of a micropolitics of fandom rather than a larger concern of political media consumption across public spheres. And it is the lessons with regard to the nature and meaning of phenomena of this former kind that I intend to draw from the theoretical developments charted above. As heterogeneous as thinking about fandom and, in the wider sense, consumption culture has been, it has been unified by some core preoccupations. Fandom is far from passive. Fans’ consumption of media is very much something that they engage in, which they – to use a term frequently employed in the literature – *invest* in. Doing so is at once about acts of interpretation (finding things that ‘matter’ to one in the text), and acts of distinction (determining what qualities about texts make them worthy of acquisition and display). Individual investment in the consumption of media provides a basis for collective investments, which further increase the value of the texts by making them the foundation for a community which, (perhaps Metcalfe’s law might be invoked at this point)²⁶² is more than the sum of its parts. Within such a community, the texts which members have chosen to consume help to bound the set of cultural capital relations which give meaning and

‘value’ to community members’ actions – including their own creative productions. Moreover, by offering a basis for community which is ‘virtual’ in the sense of being premised neither on spatial nor on temporal contiguity it provides members with a distinct ‘world’ which they can enter and leave with relative freedom. By making such investments, fans are giving meanings to texts or objects which are unique for the fan community. They are therefore seemingly challenging the logic of industrial mass production. They are, in this sense, subversive, since they wrest meanings away from authors, producers and owners, to assert a kind of ownership of their own. But this does not mean that the texts from which fans draw meaning are simply arbitrary, that any one is as good as any other. On the contrary, fans are drawn to particular texts for particular reasons – for potentials which lie, albeit in a complex sense, in the text itself.

In approaching jihadism on the Internet in this dissertation, then, I propose to take the template offered by the study of fandom - or, more broadly, of consumer culture - without necessarily taking on board its political teleology. In reading jihadism on the Internet as what it *is* (that is, media consumption and associated online subculture/s) rather than what it *seems* to be (part of a violent political movement, an extension of aspects of Islamic practice into cyberspace, and so on), I propose to do two things. Most simply, I hope to offer a way of understanding jihadism not through a priori assumptions, but on its own terms. Perhaps more ambitiously, by showing how jihadi engagement on the Internet may have a cultural logic of its own, I hope – tentatively – to construct a possible alternative reading of where it leads, and what its potential may be.

3.

Netnography and Methodologies

3.0 Ethnography and the Internet

The Internet has been a natural home for fandom and consumption cultures. Rheingold, writing about ‘The Well’ – the bulletin board that formed the basis for his pioneering discussion of the Virtual Community, noted the crucial initiating role of the ‘Deadheads’ (fans of the rock band The Grateful Dead), who ‘came online and seemed to know instinctively how to use the system to create a community around themselves’.²⁶³ One reason for this may have been the extent to which fans had already been creating virtual communities for themselves before the commercial availability of the Internet, by means of travelling conventions, photocopied fanzines and mailing lists. Thus the latent potentialities or ‘affordances’ of the Internet²⁶⁴ were perhaps more rapidly recognised and exploited by such groups for whom they fulfilled an existing need.

Indeed, since fan communities are almost by definition not defined in terms of spatial contiguity or uninterrupted temporal continuity, there is some question, in studying them on the Internet, where interest in online fan community as an object of empirical study ends, and where interest in the online traces left by the proceedings of fan communities as a methodology begins. Michael Jindra,

for example, in writing on the fan culture of Star Trek as a religious phenomenon remarked how, in researching this question:

I was introduced to a different kind of 'community', that of the computer on-line networks, and quickly found there was no way I could follow all the talk on these nets, for the volume of the ST Newsgroups exceeded 1,000 messages every week.

I found this 'electronic' ethnography to be quite unique. One could call it 'participant-observation', but without posting anything on the net, one remains only the total, anonymous observer. The observation is of a kind that is almost ideal if one wants to avoid the postmodern problem of the observer affecting the participants. It has its disadvantages in that one cannot always know who (gender, social position) is saying what.²⁶⁵

Indeed, as research into media audiences and their communities has developed, so has Internet ethnography or, 'netnography' arguably emerged as one of its central methods. The purpose of this brief chapter will be to outline in what sense Internet research in general, and the type conducted for this dissertation in particular can be considered 'ethnographic', the particular concerns with conducting 'ethnographic' research in this instance and how, more practically, the data for this thesis was gathered and analysed.

Ethnography as a method in general is described by John Savage as being applicable to 'any small scale research that is carried out in everyday settings; uses several methods; evolves in design through the study; and focuses on the meaning of individuals' actions and explanations rather than their quantification'.²⁶⁶ Traditionally, the ethnographic method has been particularly the preserve of social and cultural anthropology. Indeed, Bronislaw Malinowski - arguably the founder of modern social anthropology has said about the method:

The field ethnographer has seriously and soberly to cover the full extent of the phenomena in each aspect of the tribal culture he studies, making no difference between what is drab, or ordinary, and what strikes him as astonishing and out of the way. At the same time, the whole area of tribal culture in all its aspects has to be gone over in research. The consistency, the law and order which obtain within each aspect make also for joining them into one coherent whole. An ethnographer who sets out to study only religion, or only

technology, or only serial organisation cuts out an artificial field for inquiry, and he will be seriously handicapped in his work.²⁶⁷

Given Savage's insistence on *direct* contact with human agents, it might be considered questionable as to whether Internet ethnography - particularly as described by Jindra above - is not a contradiction in terms. And indeed, as Kozinets observes: 'with some notable exceptions, anthropologists, on the whole, have been rather slow and reluctant to follow social groups online'.²⁶⁸ This is in spite of the fact that, as Wilson and Peterson observe 'anthropology is uniquely suited for the study of socioculturally situated online communication within a rapidly changing context'.²⁶⁹ One reason for this is the intense insistence of anthropologists on 'being there'²⁷⁰ as a claim to ethnographic authority - even perhaps as the sole claim social and cultural anthropologists retain to distinguish themselves from sociology, a claim which threatens to be eroded when applied to the quasi-metaphorical, 'telepresence'.²⁷¹ This insistence is one which, for instance, Varisco argues to be increasingly out of step with reality in a world in which online interactions are taken for granted by many as a part of daily life, suggesting, indeed, that the anthropological notion of 'being there' be modified to encompass a 'virtual *Dasein*'²⁷² - the Heideggerian notion of being in the world as a necessary precondition for anything, subjectively, to be.²⁷³

Indeed, if the validity of ethnographic research conducted online may be questionable when viewed from the point of view of traditional ideas of what ethnography is, the seriousness of potential objections diminishes when considered in the light of the wider methodological debates and developments in ethnography over the past forty years. These have served both to widen the idea of what counts as ethnography and narrow the expectations of what it can achieve. To focus on two notable moments in this, first there is Geertz's argument in *Interpretation of Cultures* that ethnography is a 'symbolic-constructivist' endeavour, in which a culture is read as a text,²⁷⁴ and translated by the anthropologist into an account which is, etymologically speaking, literally a 'fiction'²⁷⁵ (i.e, something made). This has shaken the idea of ethnography as a truly positivist endeavour and invited the notion, explored by Atkinson, for example, of ethnography as a literary

as much as a scientific endeavour.²⁷⁶ Moreover, the ‘literary turn’ implied in the idea of reading culture as text has perhaps helped to make possible its obverse: reading text as culture. Accordingly, a genre of ‘ethnographies’ have been produced of such subjects as Regency England as presented in the novels of Jane Austen,²⁷⁷ the New Testament,²⁷⁸ and classical Athens.²⁷⁹

Second, the progressive disappearance of the ‘primitive’ societies which were once social anthropology’s central object of study,²⁸⁰²⁸¹ combined with the increasing interconnectedness of all societies as a result of globalisation has made it increasingly difficult for anthropologists to believe in the ‘bounded’ sites within which founding figures such as Malinowski conducted their research. As a response to this, Marcus has called for a ‘multi sited’ ethnography of the ‘world system’ - a concept which seems implicitly to undercut the central tenet of ethnographic authority argued for by Geertz (following Gilbert Ryle)²⁸² - that of the power to produce, through intensive participant observation - a ‘thick description’ of a particular culture.²⁸³ In place of this, Marcus advocates a number of different ways for an ethnographer to organise a study no longer bounded by geographical space.²⁸⁴

Given the turn towards an ethnographic practice in which both the area of enquiry and the account produced of it are understood as objects constructed by the researcher, online ethnographic research can even be understood in some senses as a return (at least a ‘virtual’ return) to some of the characteristics of classic ethnography. Virtual communities may, for example, be neatly bounded by ‘space’ (a particular Web forum, for example), and while their subcultural otherness may be affected (perhaps as the self expression through ‘rupture’ talked about by Hebdige)²⁸⁵, it may nonetheless be an otherness which is quite real to the researcher, not a theoretical, internal distance²⁸⁶ cultivated by the ethnographer who walks in cultures which are no longer ‘other’ in the sense that they were to, say, a Malinowski, an Evans Pritchard or a Margaret Meade.

This seems to be the point made by Tom Boellstorff, whose *Coming of Age in Second Life*²⁸⁷ deliberately echoes, through its title, the classic ethnographical work of Margaret Meade.²⁸⁸ Indeed,

Boellstorff's central methodological argument seems to be that his work in this virtual world was not, in fact, 'virtual' ethnography at all, but rather, real ethnography in a place which, while represented by computer technology, is in effect a real place. In fact, Boellstorff's justification of his research into a wholly virtual community actually seems to arise from his *rejection* of the call for a multi-sited ethnography, when he points out that he could not conduct simultaneous research into more than one virtual world, just as he could not conduct research in Thailand at the same time as conducting research in Indonesia.²⁸⁹ Consequently, Boellstorff is sceptical of the idea that the sole purpose of Internet ethnographies must be to shed light on practices in the 'real world'. 'Why,' he asks, 'is the punchline of so many studies of online culture identification with the offline? Why does it feel like a discovery that the online bleeds into the offline, and vice versa?' As he points out: 'if Koreans and Swedes really do participate in Second Life differently, that difference will show up in Second Life itself.'²⁹⁰

Whether 'netnography' – which has become the normal term for ethnographic market research conducted on the Internet – is Internet ethnography to the level of purism avowed by Boellstorff is, perhaps, questionable. Sometimes, the approach as typically applied can be seen not so much as ethnography *on* the Internet (as typified by Boellstorff) or ethnography *of* the Internet (as, for example Miller and Slater's ethnography of Internet use in Trinidad and Tobago,²⁹¹ or Hine's 'Virtual Ethnography' of the Web itself) as ethnography *by means of* the Internet. For instance, in the study of online 'coffee culture' used by Kozinets to illustrate the methodology paper²⁹² in which he first discussed his previously coined term²⁹³ 'netnography', it seems the author is concerned with using the Internet as a means to gain pragmatic insights into people's attitudes towards a real world activity - consuming coffee. And yet, at the same time, his study is concerned not with finding out about coffee drinking habits per se (how much coffee is actually drunk, whether those in the forum he investigates actually possess the elaborate coffee making equipment the enthuse about) but rather about the beliefs and attitudes which members of the community express towards coffee and, further, the values they express *through* their enthusiasm for coffee.

As such, it can be argued that netnography - deriving, as it does, from the preoccupations of audience research and consumer research - cuts through many of the problems and ambiguities of the Internet as a 'field' for ethnographic research. Since it is premised (generally) on an object of enquiry which is defined by a 'central consumption activity',²⁹⁴ it naturally tends to treat the issue of siting more as a tactical concern than as a defining problem. In contrast to Azande, Portuguese Aristocrats or even American hoboes (who, in spite of their homelessness and migratory nature, were spatially defined by their being semi-permanently confined to certain parts of a city such as Chicago), Star Trek fans or coffee aficionados generally manifest themselves in real or cyberspace as, when and where it suits them.

Thus, for netnography, it is a built-in assumption that one will be working not with spatial, but with conceptual ways of ordering things. The use of Internet search engines is taken for granted as a first stage of enquiry, and the selection of forums and similar 'locations' as places in which to conduct research is dictated purely by the usefulness of such locations as places in which the researcher can obtain appropriate cultural data for the subject under investigation. On the other hand, the very fact that netnography concerns itself with communities which are not spatially bounded (even in a virtual sense) means that it is potentially vulnerable to the question as to whether the Internet alone is an adequate site for exploring the objects of its enquiry. Kozinets draws a distinction here between 'online communities' (those which only exist on the Internet) and 'communities online' (those which exist in any case, but have an online dimension).²⁹⁵

At first, it might appear obvious that '(salafi) jihadism', as a conceptual entity, extends beyond cyberspace. It is, however, of necessity, a secretive phenomenon which generally reveals itself publicly only through violent acts or, in some cases, their pre-emption. While, in certain contexts, there may be physical signs or places which are, in practice known to be indicative of 'jihadism',²⁹⁶ or strongholds of jihadi feelings, jihadism *qua* jihadism has no overt physical public space.²⁹⁷ In this sense, it may be argued that, as an overt, public activity distinct from general forms of 'radical Islamism' on the one hand, and actual engagement in violence on the other, jihadism as a global

culture is almost by definition confined to the Internet. This point (which raises significant empirical questions) will be explored at greater length in subsequent chapters.

A more pragmatic response to the problem of whether netnographic research can adequately explore jihadi culture would be to turn the problem on its head. Given a highly secretive social phenomenon which only reveals itself publicly online, it can be argued that Internet research, whatever its drawbacks, is in fact one of the only means available to obtain authentic data. A close parallel of this is offered by Kozinets²⁹⁸ in the work of Campbell in using an online community to research attitudes to race in skinhead culture.²⁹⁹

3.1 The Application of Netnographic Method to Covert Internet Research

Another potential ambiguity in netnographic method - foreshadowed by the experience of Jindra - is the extent to which netnography entails active participation by the researcher. In 'The Field Behind the Screen', it is unclear that Kozinets participated in the coffee discussion group he investigated beyond posting his final study to the group for comment. In his later, book length methodology, however, he insists that 'netnography is an adaptation of "participant observational ethnographic procedures"'. At the same time, he notes that others, such as Langer and Beckman have argued the case for using netnography as a means of conducting 'covert research on sensitive topics'.³⁰⁰

This debate relates directly to the production of this dissertation, which was envisaged, along Langer and Beckman's lines as a (quasi)³⁰¹ ethnographic project. As such, these researchers' modified approach to Kozinets' list of steps for carrying out a netnography provided a basis for the research. Kozinets lists five methodological stages for a successful netnography, as follows:

- Entrée
- Data collection
- Analysis and interpretation
- Research ethics

3.2 Entrée

Beckman and Langer's approach to 'sensitive research' differs from Kozinets' at a number of stages. Kozinets describes 'entrée' both as the process of formulating a research question, and as 'to reach out, find and enter the field of a culture or community'. Practically, he recommends, for instance, the use of search engines by the researcher in order to identify suitable forums for study. He also recommends, however, that the researcher find a way of introducing herself or himself to the community in question. For Beckman and Langer, *entree* was primarily understood as the process of formulating the research question, partly in view of the 'sensitive' nature of the research, which precluded interaction with community members, but also (perhaps) due to the researcher's prior familiarity with the topic under investigation, which seemingly meant that they were able to immediately identify a suitable online 'field' in which to conduct the research.

For this dissertation, identification of field was, in itself, an integral part of the research process. Rather than employ a prior definition of 'jihadism', a series of systematic web searches for various permutations of the word 'jihadi' were used to generate results which formed the initial point of entry for the analysis. This enquiry, which takes up the following chapter was used to produce both an understanding of (1), how 'the jihadi' is talked about in accessible Arabic language Web material, (2) where self-styled 'jihadi' items are located online, (3) how they are classified (both in terms of media form and semantic content), and (4) broadly what motifs and themes they contain.

As such, it might be argued that, in a manner of speaking, this was not only a virtual, but also a 'multi-sited' project - an ethnography (to paraphrase Marcus above) in/of a world system. Since 'the jihadi' as an aspect of Arabic and Islamic culture, as a genre of media items, and as an online subculture in its own right³⁰² does not properly occupy an single area of webspace, and since,

practically, Internet ‘jihadis’ freely traverse from online location to location so too the research for this dissertation took place in a number of different virtual places.

3.3 Data collection

Kozinets’ second stage of ‘data collection’ is intended to draw on both interactions by the researcher with forum members, and the qualitative analysis of content posted by members of the community under examination. With regard to data gathering, Kozinets draws not only on the ethnographic literature, but also the Grounded Theory tradition, as put forward by, notably, Glaser and Strauss,³⁰³ Strauss and Corbin³⁰⁴ and Charmaz.³⁰⁵ This is a qualitative research methodology which aims to reverse the normal scientific method by laying out systematic techniques for generating theory inductively from data. Kozinets uses in particular the Grounded Theory terminology of ‘saturation’.³⁰⁶ This refers to a situation in which a researcher finds that the conceptual codes which have emerged from qualitative data keep on being reinforced by analysis of new data without new codes emerging. In general, grounded theory sets out to produce, via a process of memo writing and coding, a framework of interlinked codes (axial codes, in Strauss and Corbin’s terminology)³⁰⁷ leading ultimately to a single ‘core category’ which forms the basis for the grounded theory. In the ‘constructivist’ grounded theory of Kathy Charmaz (which has been strongly criticised by Barney Glaser³⁰⁸ - one of the originators of the method), it is possible to speak of a ‘grounded theory ethnography’.³⁰⁹

In this dissertation data was gathered in a three main ways, informed by the need to develop and test emerging hypotheses, and bounded more by conceptual than ‘spatial’ limitations.

(1) Web searches

Web searches were frequently used to locate content on specific issues (e.g. ‘media jihad’, ‘the intelligence penetration of Al-Hisbah forum’ and so on. However, searches were also used in a more systematic way to produce quantities of analyzable data. As already mentioned, the starting point for analysis was with the seemingly naïve question ‘what content gets described as “jihadi” in

Arabic?’ This question evolved through the course of a series of searches carried out between March 2008 and August 2010.

The first series of searches – which occurred before the question had been properly formulated - was carried out simply with the broad aim of capturing content which might intuitively be understood as, in a purely subjective sense, ‘jihadi’, and therefore suitable for generating questions for further research.³¹⁰ Terms such as ‘jihadi websites’ (*muwāqī‘ jihādiyya*), ‘jihadi forum’ (*muntada jihādī*), ‘jihadi preparation’, ‘media jihad’ (*jihād al-i‘lāmī*), ‘supporters of jihad’ (*anṣār al-jihād*), ‘lions of jihad’ (*usūd al-jihād*) and the inanimate plural/feminine form of ‘jihadi’ itself (‘*jihādiyya*). For each of these terms, the first 50-100 results were manually downloaded. Where sites provided a list of further ‘jihadi’ sites, links to these sites were followed manually in turn.

In September 2009 a more formal series of searches was conducted, this time with the specific intention of investigating how the word ‘jihadi’ is used in Arabic material on the web. These searches were based on the various possible cognates of the word ‘jihadi’ in Arabic (*jihādī*, *jihādiyya*, *jihādiyyūn*, *jihādiyyīn*, *jihādiyyāt* as well as, for comparative purposes, *mujāhid(īn)* and *jihād*). The first aim of this exercise was simply to answer very simple questions about how the term was used in readily accessible Arabic material: is ‘jihadi’ material simply identical to material ‘of jihad’? How far is ‘the jihadi’ relatable to political ideas about ‘jihadism’ in its various forms? Even more basically, does Arabic know ‘jihadi’ as a noun, or solely as an adjective? And if the former, when does ‘jihadi’ apply rather than *mujāhid*?³¹¹

Based on the previous results, searches were also conducted (in June 2010) for particular types of ‘jihadi’ item. These included ‘jihadi’ songs and books. Additionally, Google’s dedicated image search engine was used to locate images returned for various permutations of the word ‘jihadi’ as well as ‘jihad’. This produced a sample of five hundred ‘jihadi’ images. Thirdly, Google’s advanced

search facility was used to conduct a year-by-year search for the occurrence of various possible forms of the word ‘jihadi’ on the web since 1999 paired with those words which the previous search results had suggested to be common. The purpose of this exercise was not precise quantification; and indeed contrast between actual searches conducted in 2008 and 2009 and the number of hits returned for the same terms retrospectively indicated the unreliability of this method. Rather, the purpose was to gain some broad indication of the validity of apparent frequency relationships encountered in previous searches. In particular, the search seemed to confirm that the most common words associated with the word ‘jihadi’ in Arabic are consistently ‘operation’ and ‘nashid’.³¹²

(2) Jihadi literature

While there has been increasing interest in ‘stealing Al Qaida’s playbook’ by exploring the wealth of ‘jihadi’ literature available on strategic and ideological topics, there is – as commented on in the first chapter – a tendency to read such work literally with a view to understanding the ‘strategy’ which is presumed to govern the global jihad movement’s activities. Less common has been to read this literature to obtain an ethnographic understanding of the ‘jihadi current’ as a subcultural phenomenon in its own right. As a result, it may be suggested that certain works have been overlooked (for example, Abu ‘Amru Al-Qa’idi’s *A Course in the Art of Recruitment*, which I draw on quite heavily, has been derided for its supposed limitations as an actual recruitment course without consideration of the interesting things it reveals about the writer’s background assumptions on society and the natures of different Islamic movements, and the meaning of jihadi engagement online). This material was obtained from various online sources: jihadi forum posts, Web searches and sites such as Scribd and Archive.org.

(3) ‘Webservation’

The third source of information derived from the process of what Daniel Varisco, in a paper cited earlier in this chapter, calls (participant) ‘webservation’ – that is, virtual presence (perhaps ‘telepresence’) in online locations. To some extent this entailed observing the essential features in

terms of organisation, presentation and organisational functioning of, specifically, ‘jihadi’ forums. In this sense, this form of data gathering was genuinely more akin to ‘observation’ in real life than to textual analysis. Necessarily, however, passive observation of forums readily led into the acquisition and analysis of text. For this purpose, Firefox’s ‘Scrapbook’ add on was used. This is an ‘offline browser’ programme which automatically downloads linked files, preserving the original link structure. In this way, large sections of forums were obtained for later analysis. A particular use of this programme for this dissertation was to download the complete posting records of selected forum members, who could then be (metaphorically) followed, in order to obtain a relatively naturalistic, in a sense ‘longitudinal’ insight into the experience of participation in a forum community. This was particularly used in the case of the very large forum ‘muslm.net’ which is discussed in chapter 7. Here the experience of engagement as a ‘jihadi’ in this forum was viewed through the case of a particular member, ‘al-Hatf2’. This principle was extended in the instance of a small ‘jihadi’ forum *Al-Sayf*. This forum was downloaded in its entirety and qualitatively coded post by post.³¹³

3.4 Analysis and Interpretation

The method by which data was analysed varied. Some data (for example, the posts on Al-Sayf forum or much of the content obtained through the initial web searches) was coded using the emergent, qualitative approach recommended by grounded theory, particularly in its Straussian variant.³¹⁴ On other occasions (for example in drawing on books written by jihadi authors) a more literary ‘immersive’ method was adopted.³¹⁵ Since the material collected was in Arabic - a second language for the researcher - texts deemed important were translated fully into English, in order to ensure complete comprehension. All translations were carried out by the researcher.³¹⁶ Other material was translated partially or read in Arabic.

Translation is, of course, a highly contentious and much theorised endeavour.³¹⁷ ‘Skopos’ theory in translation studies argues that a translation must vary depending on what purpose it is intended for -

for example, a translation of a text intended to be enjoyed as literature will be translated differently to one intended to be used for legal purposes.³¹⁸ Drawing on the philosopher Alasdair McIntyre, Chesterman argues that translation is a practice which necessarily entails an engagement with history and tradition.³¹⁹ Generally, literal accuracy was the emphasis in this dissertation even to the extent that, on some occasions, I have preferred my own direct translation certain expressions of Arabic texts to the looser and more idiomatic expressions in jihadi translations of the same document. Where a point turns on a specific word or phrase in Arabic, the original is given (see note on transliteration at the beginning of the dissertation).

While translation necessarily adds another point of potential failure in interpretation, it can be argued that in some ways it was an advantage, rather than a liability. The very act of translation necessarily requires a process of ‘text analysis’³²⁰ The intensity of the translation process therefore added, in practice, another stage to the process of analysis, as the need to reproduce exact meanings - sometimes for very specific and technical terms - necessarily forced the process of categorisation and interpretation. Indeed, in so far as content analysis entails engaging with a ‘content’ which is conveyed by, but not dependent on the precise linguistic form of the text by which it is conveyed,³²¹ it might be argued that qualitative content analysis is already in itself either a form of ‘intralingual’ translation or (when it transfers syntactical sentences into diagrammatic schemes), a form of ‘intersemiotic’ translation.³²²

The process of ‘emergent coding’ is central, in general, to techniques of qualitative content analysis.³²³ Shaw³²⁴ argues that this ‘emergence’ is the outcome of a necessary identification by the researcher of ‘latent’ themes, which in turn give meaning to the ‘manifest content’ of the text. As such, this process is a necessary underpinning to almost all social research into semantic content - ultimately including quantitative methods. At the same time, it is a difficult one to fully rationalise, being premised on an intuitive ability for ‘sensing themes’,³²⁵ or what Glaser and Strauss call ‘theoretical sensitivity’,³²⁶ which can come only through the continual, sometimes bruising confrontation between the researcher and his or her data.

A deeper methodological consideration which - because it shall be easier to discuss in the context of the research actually having presented - shall be discussed more properly in the concluding chapter is also worth signposting at this point. Given that this thesis entails making claims about latent motivations for why those who engage with jihadism on the Internet may act as they do which - necessarily - would likely be rejected by these people themselves, it might be objected that I have violated a key ethnographic principle of privileging subjective meanings of the people studied over prior theoretical assumptions.³²⁷ While I cannot altogether exonerate myself from this accusation, I have done my utmost to support my arguments with claims made directly by 'jihadi' sources, and at all times to take seriously indigenous meanings (even if I have not always accepted them at face value).

3.5 Research Ethics

Sensitive netnographic research of the sort recommended by Beckman and Langer necessarily breaks the normal ethical rules of ethnography in so far as it entails the researcher carrying out covert research without informing those who are under examination. Conducting such research in the context of what was in the recent past framed as a 'war on terror' calls for still greater sensitivity on the part of the researcher. Boellstorff is at pains to differentiate his own online ethnographic research from the 'culture at a distance' approach used by anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict in order to attempt to gain some insight into the cultures of enemies during the Second World War.³²⁸ But while Benedict's work may now have become a byword for compromised ethnographic practice, it was not always so, and in recent years there has been more interest in her legacy.³²⁹

Indeed, rather like the uncomfortable fact that the supposedly anti-authority, free for all medium of the Internet came into being largely under the aegis of the US military, it is perhaps worth drawing attention to the extent to which the approaches and methods of cultural studies were actually pre-empted by the 'culture at a distance' approach created by Benedict, Mead and others on behalf of

the US Office of Naval Research. In fact, William Beeman, in introducing the new edition of Mead and Métraux's *The Study of Culture at a Distance*³³⁰ actually contrasts the systematic methodological emphasis of the University of Columbia teams conducting this research to critiques of cultural studies as overly theoretical and paying inadequate attention to methodology.

In drawing this parallel, it seems hard to escape what has been called 'the cultural turn in studying war'³³¹ as recently epitomised, perhaps, in works such as Kilcullen's *The Accidental Guerrilla*.³³² On the one hand, some anthropologists (perhaps particularly those involved in the US's 'Human Terrain System') have argued that the application of anthropological knowledge has great potential to make war more humane, by avoiding needless spirals of suffering and recrimination resulting from misunderstandings between occupying forces and civilian populations.³³³ For others, however, the use of anthropological knowledge in the service of military ends can be seen as nothing more than an attempt 'to fill the culture "slot", providing a general sense of the enemy culture so that military operations can be more effectively carried out and foreign policy objectives realised'.³³⁴ Behind this, of course, lies a long historical debate about the colonial ends served by the research of such foundational figures in anthropology as E. Evans Pritchard, and the extent to which not only the ethical justifiability of such people's work, but also its accuracy may have been compromised thereby.³³⁵

To some extent the issues raised in the rancorous anthropological debate on the legitimacy of engaging in 'human terrain mapping' are somewhat different from those that are raised by the prospect of attempting to study jihadism on the Internet. First, since the intention is not to study, a broad, supposed unit of 'culture' such as, say, 'Pashtuns,' or 'Iraqis',³³⁶ the idea that an innocent civilian population is being exploited would seem to be less convincing. This is not to say, of course, that anyone who engages with jihadi content on the Internet is a criminal who automatically forfeits his right to fair treatment as an object of research (even criminals retain such a right, after all). But it does mean that one is not exploiting a population who have, after all, hardly chosen to belong to their particular cultural grouping, but rather a deliberate, performative set of social actions

which are productive of an antagonistic attitude towards outsiders. One cannot abuse trust, it might be suggested, where there is of necessity no possibility of trust to begin with. There is a more interesting point here, which relates to matters that will be discussed in later chapters. ‘Jihadis’ on the Internet are perfectly well aware that their forums are not secure, that they include, both as observers and as participants, people from intelligence agencies and the like. However, they continue to frequent jihadi online communities because – so it seems – that they enjoy the feeling of sociality - the ‘jihadi ambience’ of such places. As such, the self declaration of a person to be anything other than a jihadi is far more disruptive, far more injurious to the experience of participants in this situation than is covert viewing by non jihadi others which is taken for granted as an ill that must be endured.

Secondly, of course, in carrying out the research for this dissertation, there was neither the need nor the possibility of being ‘embedded’ in a military project. While the position is not taken in this dissertation that it is necessarily and automatically inappropriate for any social research into issues of this sort to be directed towards helping to produce more intelligent, effective, and just government policy, there was no sense in which the researcher owed anything to any other power for his access to the data that was used.

For Beckman and Langer, the justifications for breaching the normal rules of ethnographic procedure in online research are that, first, the data being gathered are in any case publicly available texts rather than deliberately private communications; second, the data could not be obtained in other ways; third, the study is being conducted in the interests of a public good, and is not being conducted in to the detriment of those being studied.

This study appeals to similar ethical justifications. At no point does it draw on information that cannot be obtained freely and openly, the only possible exception being data on the registration procedures of jihadi forums. It is worth noting that *all* members of such forums assume nicknames, and that registration on the forums entered is freely open to anyone without any need for deception

other than this. It was judged that given the nature of these forums, not registering under a nickname would have had ethical implications greater than using one would have done. Even so, the data in question - given, after all, that it pertained to forums on the Internet, clearly could not have been obtained other than from forums on the Internet. From a public interest point of view, the value of gaining some insight into the online culture of people who *may* pose a risk of conducting acts of political violence is clearly significant. But the study was not conducted with a view to advising on how best to eliminate a supposedly threatening jihadi presence on the Internet, and still less with a view to gaining information of use for law enforcement purposes against people on or off the Internet. No jihadis were harmed in the making of this dissertation.

A final question relating to the legitimacy of the research conducted for this dissertation relates to its legality. It is illegal in the UK, under section 2 of the 2006 Terrorism Act, to disseminate 'terrorist publications'. According to the Act:

A publication is a terrorist publication, in relation to conduct falling within subsection (2), if matter contained in it is likely—

(a) to be understood, by some or all of the persons to whom it is or may become available as a consequence of that conduct, as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to them to the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism; or

(b) to be useful in the commission or preparation of such acts and to be understood, by some or all of those persons, as contained in the publication, or made available to them, wholly or mainly for the purpose of being so useful to them.³³⁷

In the course of the research conducted for this dissertation, some material that might be judged to fall into this category was, inevitably, obtained. However, it is not sufficient to be guilty under this act merely to possess such content. Rather, one must also be judged to possess it for the purpose of disseminating it. Even then, it must further be judged that the one who does so:

- a. intends an effect of his conduct to be a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism;
- b. he intends an effect of his conduct to be the provision of assistance in the commission or preparation of such acts; or
- c. he is reckless as to whether his conduct has an effect mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b).³³⁸

None of the material gathered for in the course of the research was made available to anyone else.

3.6 Complicity?

There is a conceptual issue in using an ethnographic approach to understand jihadis which is also, potentially an ethical issue of the opposite kind to most of those discussed above. When audience researchers started looking ethnographically at fan communities they were accused by some of becoming too complicit in their subject matter. Jenkins and Tulloch observe³³⁹ how Tania Modleski has argued that ethnographic fan researchers ‘may unwittingly wind up writing apologias for mass culture and embracing its ideology’. In a similar vein, Walter Laqueur complains that the rise of casualty rates in terrorist attacks may be the outcome of an insistence on explaining evil, rather than condemning it.

As a critique of the ethnographic approach in general, this is (as Jenkins and Tulloch go on to point out), misplaced.³⁴⁰ Ethnography is not about uncritically accepting the world view of those studied, but rather about developing the skill of moving between ‘critical distance’ and mutual knowledge’.³⁴¹ As Boellstorff observes, cultural relativism is about methodology, not necessarily about the conclusions that one draws. As he vividly illustrates, in the hypothetical example of the tribe who slay every third born child, it still makes sense to try to see the cultural logic that makes this acceptable, even if one will never come to accept it oneself.³⁴²

But indeed it is possible, out of such assertions, to make a more proactive case both for ethnographic understanding of this subject in general, and the validity even of the sorts of limited, covert approach it necessitates employing. A little ethnography is better than none at all. For even if the types of methods implied in studying jihadism on the Internet, (which ultimately come down, as Kozinets puts it, to the ‘coding exercise’ of analysing text, image and moving image) are in the end nothing more than ‘culture at a distance’, yet even so, one might argue that even the sort of compromised, second-hand insight which Mead, Benedict and their team were capable of achieving remains sorely lacking in its equivalent exercises today.

For the sake of comparison, let us consider on the one hand the work of Reid, Salem and Chen in analysing the content of jihadi extremist groups’ videos with that of a member of the University of Columbia ‘culture at a distance’ team on the contents of Nazi propaganda film. In the former case, the concern is almost exclusively with issues such as audience and ‘groups’ communication approaches’, with actual discussion of the thematics of the visual content itself limited to comments such as that: ‘The majority of the videos fell into the group-oriented violent acts [category], which include documentary, beheadings, and hostage takings. This finding supports the Western media descriptions of extremist groups’ videos as “callous” and “insensitive” for displaying brutal attacks that are morally repulsive.’³⁴³ By contrast, an anthropological researcher such as Gregory Bateson approached a film like *Hitlerjunge Quex* from the perspective not simply of trying to understand what media effect the propagandist behind the film was trying to achieve, but of trying to decode the symbolic language of the work in order to understand deeper tensions within Nazi and, by extension, wartime German culture. Thus, for instance, in this film’s portrayal of licentious, animalistic disorderly communists, as opposed to the almost ‘empty’ life of clean living, strenuously disciplined Nazi youth, Bateson sought to read a statement about the Nazis’ own fears of what they might become.³⁴⁴

As ‘overdetermined’ as Bateson’s analysis may perhaps be, the contrast in terms of ambition between his work and that of Reid is striking. If anthropologists in the context of a *real* war, facing a *real* existential threat, with far less access to data than their 21st century successors were capable of making such comparatively nuanced and penetrating enquiries, then it seems that the limitations to gaining access to a phenomenon such as the culture of jihadism on the Internet - significant though they may be - can hardly be taken as an excuse.

4.

In Search of ‘the Jihadi’

4.0 Introduction

At the outset of this dissertation, I used the word ‘jihadism’ to describe my object of study. In using this word, my intention was not to present some monolithic notion of Islam-flavoured militancy. Rather, I hoped to foreshadow a problematic. Indeed, I used the word as much to avoid terms such as ‘Al Qaida’, ‘Islamic terrorism’, ‘radical Islamism’ on the one hand, and ‘jihad’, or simply ‘Islam’ on the other. What I wanted to stake out was a space for enquiry which was neither ‘terrorist’ in the sense of having clear affiliation to a particular violent actor, nor unproblematically ‘Islamic’ in the sense of being specifically explicable with reference to Islam, whether as theology, or as ‘cultural system’.

Having demarcated things in this way, it is now time to consider how this conceptual space can be justified, and what it is that we may find within it. The main problem here would seem to be that the terms of the enquiry are paradoxical. Having spoken earlier of looking for a more ‘emic’ approach, am I not – in looking for something called ‘jihadism’ – imposing my own conceptual boundaries from above?

Adopting the perspective of fandom, and, methodologically, of ‘netnography’ offers, I propose, a solution to this, by focusing the discussion around the activity of *consumption*. For Kozinets, who claims to have originated the term, the ‘culture of consumption’ is first and foremost about the ‘material culture’ of a particular consumption activity and only secondarily about the ‘tribes’ that it forms.³⁴⁵ Thus the idea of the ‘culture of consumption’ effectively turns the problem of bounding the object of enquiry on its head. Rather than trying to determine how we define ‘jihadism’ or ‘a jihadi’ on the Internet, and then considering how jihadism expresses itself, it forces us to begin with content. We must ask first, ‘what constitutes “jihadi” content?’ Only then can we move on to consider what sorts of putatively ‘jihadi’ consumption behaviours occur in relation to this content.

Surprisingly, the question ‘what is jihadi content?’ is one that still does not seem to have been explored in so many words. There are, of course, numerous studies of jihadism, or ‘jihadi’ phenomena on the Internet, a number of which have already been referred to. But all of these appear to be based on prior assumptions about what the term means. Even Bunt, who extensively discusses the sort of material which refers to itself as ‘jihadi’, seems to be applying his own definition.³⁴⁶

In this chapter, I shall consider two questions: how the word ‘jihadi’ is used in Arabic Web content, and what it means for content to describe itself as ‘jihadi’. The aim is not, of course, to produce an exhaustive understanding of either of these. Rather, the purpose is to produce an exploratory study which, it is to be hoped, will adequately demonstrate that it is possible, working up from the basis of content which self-identifies as ‘jihadi’ to reconstruct a notion of online ‘jihadism’ which adequately resembles conceptions of ‘jihadism’ and ‘salafi-jihadism’ put forward in existing academic typologies.

4.1 Jihad, Jihadism and ‘the Jihadi’

One possible reason why scholars have not tended explicitly to base their discussions of online ‘jihadi’ phenomena on that which describes itself as ‘jihadi’ is an unwillingness to concede to ‘jihadists’ the meaning of the word ‘jihad’ – from which the form ‘jihadi’ seems an obvious and direct derivation. Many eminent scholars have, of course, considered the question of how the word *jihad* has been used in medieval and modern Islamic history,³⁴⁷ and among contemporary Muslims.³⁴⁸ Others, on the other hand, have looked at ‘jihadism’ as a contemporary political phenomenon which may or may not have much to do with traditional understandings of the word. For these, ‘jihadism’ is seen as a ‘mental shortcut’ which ‘helps heuristically to deal with a difficult subject’,³⁴⁹ not a phenomenon which is necessarily meaningful for the subjects concerned.

With regard to the latter, the definitional debate has thus largely turned on the question of how best to typologise a wider set of political Islamic phenomena. Wiktorowicz, influentially, sees ‘jihadis’ as emerging from the salafi movement, particularly in Saudi Arabia, within which they are to be contrasted with quietist ‘purists’ (who focus on personal and community piety, foregoing political engagement) and activist ‘politicos’, who engage in peaceful types of party politics within existing state structures.³⁵⁰ This division is only slightly modified in the work of Hegghammer and Lacroix,³⁵¹ for whom there is a contrast to be drawn between properly ‘jihadi’ salafism, which is politically focused and (in the Saudi context) predominantly concerned with global issues and extreme, millenarian ‘reformism’ such as that of Juhayman al-‘Utaybi, whose followers carried out an armed occupation of the Haram al-Sharif in Mecca. In a ‘meta-review’ of the literature on jihadism, Armbrorst argues that jihadism can be defined with reference to ten ‘criteria’ arising from the distinct spheres of ‘jihad (military conflict)’, ‘jihad (dogmatic)’ and ‘Islamic activism’.³⁵²

One point agreed on unanimously is the essential novelty of the term. For Kramer, (a point agreed on by Roy), before 2001, ‘use of jihadism [as a term] was largely confined to the Indian and

Pakistani media.³⁵³ And indeed, as recently as 2007, the notion of there being a distinctive ideological phenomenon of ‘jihadism’ was suspect enough for Sedgwick to write:

A mujahid is not necessarily the same as a “jihadist”, although it is sometimes used... to mean *mujahid*. For many, a “jihadist” is not just a participant in a jihad, but a believer in “Jihadism”. I am not myself convinced that “Jihadism”, which is often taken to mean the practice of jihad as an end in itself, actually exists.³⁵⁴

And yet, there seems to remain a certain doubt that notions of ‘jihadism’ or the ‘jihadist’ may even so retain a certain grain of apparent authenticity, by virtue of incorporating the word ‘jihad’.

Brachman and McCants,³⁵⁵ for instance, propose that Western policy discourse use instead the term ‘*Qutbi*’, which they believe to reflect a distinctive emphasis on the thinking of Sayyid Qutb that puts jihadis theologically at odds with core salafi thinkers such as Nasir al-Din al-Albani.³⁵⁶ Even so, Brachman still concurs on the novelty of the phenomenon. ‘As staggering as it may seem’, he observes, ‘the global jihadist movement in its current incarnation stepped out of its adolescence and into adulthood remarkably recently (circa 2003)’.³⁵⁷

4.2 Problems in the Meaning of ‘Jihadi’

Despite having been generally ignored in the gap between ‘jihad’ as a preoccupation for religious studies, and ‘jihadism’ as a concern for political science, it may be that the question of what is ‘jihadi’ is a little more complex than it might seem. Firstly, if we take ‘jihadi’ in its most obvious linguistic sense as simply meaning ‘pertaining to jihad’, we are still left with the question of whether the sum total of ‘jihadi’ things actually reduces to the concept of ‘jihad’ itself. To provide an analogy, an ardent Christian might concede that a room decked out with boughs of holly, a Christmas tree, brightly wrapped presents, tinsel and sprigs of mistletoe does indeed look ‘Christmassy’, but might still insist that the ‘true meaning of Christmas’ has been lost. In the same way, then, we might imagine a pious Muslim who would agree that a picture of Abu Mus‘ab Al-

Zarqawi with an AK47 superimposed on the Dome of the Rock is ‘jihadi’, while at the same time insisting that Al-Zarqawi was a murdering thug whose actions had nothing to do with the ‘true meaning’ of *jihād*. To take the same notional example a little further, let us suppose that the same hypothetical Muslim were shown two further images – one of Qassami militants in the context of Operation Cast Lead, and a second of a person in a library reading a volume of *Sahih Bukhari*. This person might, perhaps, be more immediately ready to identify the former as ‘jihadi’ than the latter. But this would not necessarily imply that he understood ‘jihad by the sword’ to be more valid than ‘jihad by scholarship’. It could simply be that the word ‘jihadi’, in its practical usage, derives from a culturally constructed prototype³⁵⁸ of ‘the jihadi’ which does not relate in any simple way to the formal, religious definition of the word ‘jihad’.

On the other hand it is worth considering whether – linguistically speaking – there may be more to the form ‘jihadi’ than meets the eye. In form, ‘jihadi’ is a *niṣba* or ‘gentilic’: part of a subset of Arabic substantives which normally function as adjectives of ‘membership of a class’. Badawi, Carter and Gully³⁵⁹ observe that in early classical Arabic (including, therefore, in the language of the Quran) the form was used in relation to tribes or locations (eg, *Makkī*, for an inhabitant of Mecca, or *Qurāshī* for a member of Muhammad’s tribe, *Quraysh*). In later classical Arabic, the category was expanded to apply to classes in general such as *Islāmī* (Islamic). The practice of producing such adjectives ‘as the need arises’, however, did not appear until modern times. Moreover, while adjectives in Arabic are not rigidly distinguished by form from nouns, the *niṣba* form is only rarely used in the first instance as a noun. Grammatically, this can happen in two ways. First, the mechanics of Arabic syntax are such that the *niṣba* form can simply be used in the sense of a noun for a particular thing with that attribute. So just as one can talk about ‘*al-kabīr*’ – ‘the big one’ so too one can, in principle, talk about *al-jihādī* – ‘the jihadi one’. Secondly, the *niṣba* form is also used to make abstract nouns in the sense of English ‘ism’. This is done using the feminine/inanimate plural ending, *tā marbūṭa*. So ‘jihadism’ in Arabic translates as ‘*al-jihādiyya*’,

which would also be the form of the word used to refer to a singular feminine person or an inanimate plural as being ‘jihadi’.

An apparent implication of these purely morphological points is that whereas in English the endings on ‘jihadism’ or ‘jihadist’ clearly mark these terms out as foreign from *mujahid* or *jihad*, the transition is potentially more nuanced in the Arabic. Simply put, the Arabic for ‘jihadist’ is also ‘jihadi’. But the Arabic word ‘jihadi’ does not necessarily mean the same as ‘jihadist’. Hence, in referring to a violent operation as ‘jihadi’ one is not automatically saying that it is ‘an operation inspired by a contemporary political ideology which claims to represent Islam’. But, on the other hand, neither is one necessarily saying ‘here is a clear example of the true *jihād fī sabīl Allah*’. The word seems, grammatically, to hover somewhere in between the two.

4.2 Searching for ‘the Jihadi’

Let us turn to the first question first. How is the word ‘jihadi’ used in Arabic Web content? The most obvious (and probably unsurprising) distinction to be made here is between the set of senses given to the term by content such as mainstream news articles which generally talk about distinctively *jihadi phenomena*, and content (mainly posted to Web forums) which advertises *jihadi texts*. So, for example, a news story such as ‘spread of the salafi jihadi group in Morocco’ seems to imply that ‘salafi jihadism’ is a distinctive ideology followed by a certain group.³⁶⁰ On the other hand, a forum post advertising ‘wonderful jihadi nashids’³⁶¹ (apart of course from its positive assessment of the content), apparently uses the term to designate a particular *genre* of nashid, rather than a nashid with a specifically partisan outlook. The difference seems analogous to that between talking about a ‘Christian hymn’ (as opposed to a hymn from some other religion) and a ‘Christmas hymn’ (as opposed to one for Easter or the Harvest Festival).

This leads naturally to a second – also obvious – distinction: that is, between instances in which a text refers to something ‘jihadi’ from the standpoint of neutrality or even opposition, and instances in which a text refers approvingly to something ‘jihadi’. For example, ‘Al Qaida loses support of jihadi groups in the Arabic world’³⁶² – a story by the US CENTCOM sponsored website Al-Shorfa³⁶³ seems implicitly to take a different stance in relation to the ‘jihadi groups’ it talks about than does ‘the military camp of jihadi groups’³⁶⁴ on the ‘jihadi’ forum *Al-Ma‘arik Al-Salafiyya*. And yet even at this point, it is possible to appreciate a blurring of the line between ‘jihadi as jihadism’ and ‘jihadi as jihad’. Are the ‘jihadi groups’ referred to by *Al-Ma‘arik Al-Salafiyya* ‘jihadi’ simply because they are doing jihad? Or is it also because they have a particular stance *in relation to the matter of jihad*?

Drawing on the search results discussed in the previous chapter, we can construct the following tables of usages of the term ‘jihadi’ both from ostensibly ‘jihadi’ and non-‘jihadi’ standpoints.

Ostensibly Neutral/Opposed

As System of Thought	As Individual Status	As Social Entity	As Practice
jihadism	jihadis	movements	violence
salafi-jihadism	salafi-jihadis	supporters of	work
thought		groups	project
revisions		leaders	operations
fatwa		forums	journey
poetry		websites	

As System of Thought	As Individual Status	As Social Entity	As Practice
		current	

Pro ‘Jihadi’

As Commitment	As Individual Status	As Social Entity	As Practice
manhaj	‘a’ jihadi	groups	operation
beacon	as online nickname element	units	march
way	as ‘laqab’	leader(ship)	work
star	as characteristic (jihadi woman, jihadi hacker)	movement(s)	battle
‘my jihad’		current	mission
dreams		announcements	excursion
biography		foundations	expedition
		corporations	assistance
		history	

While there are certainly differences between what gets labeled as ‘jihadi’ in these two instances, there are also commonalities. Both those uses of ‘jihadi’ in an apparently supportive and in a non-supportive context apply the term in such a way as to suggest both organized social groupings (the

‘jihadi’ group, movement, current) and a programme of violent activity which, unsurprisingly, takes on a more military connotation in supportive mentions: ‘violence, operation, battle, mission’.

Perhaps more surprisingly, both contexts seem to speak of *people* as ‘jihadi’. This, however, is done in a more nuanced way in the second set of contexts than the first. Whereas mainstream media sources clearly talk about people as ‘jihadis’, situations in which a person is described as a jihadi in the second are a little more ambiguous. In online nicknames such as ‘veiled jihadi’, or phrases such as ‘yes, I am a jihadi, and I do not deny it’³⁶⁵, there may be some sense of a rebellious and self-conscious adoption of a sobriquet originally bestowed by the ‘other’. Alternatively, where the term forms part of a real person’s *nom de guerre* – as in ‘Abu Anas al-Jihadi’, it retains an adjectival sense.

Indeed, the fact that ‘jihadi’ as a noun for a person committed to jihadism remains relatively unusual in Arabic generally, and particularly unusual in pro-jihadi contexts can be demonstrated by the fact that the animate plural forms of ‘jihadi’ (*jihādīyūn*, *jihādīyīn*) return notably fewer results than the singular and inanimate plural forms.³⁶⁶ In the 2009 search (as mentioned above), these produced 5,700 and 11,300 results respectively compared to 274,000 hits for ‘jihadi’ and 572,000 for ‘jihadiyya’. When this was repeated in 2010, the same terms produced rather more results: approximately 18,000 for the first, and 45,600 for the second. But these were still many fewer (just over 6%) of the hits returned for the singular and inanimate plural forms, which this time amounted to 501,000 and 511,000 results respectively.

Moreover, results returned for ‘jihadis’ used the word almost exclusively in non-‘jihadi’ contexts. A sole exception was a forum dedicated to the Al-Quds Brigade³⁶⁷ – a unit of Palestinian Islamic Jihad³⁶⁸ - which called itself ‘jihadiyun’. But this was in itself revealing, since it seemed to refer not to ‘jihadis’ in the sense of ‘global jihadis’, but rather to the local Palestinian usage of ‘jihadi’ for a

member of Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This was revealed by another post from a pro-Fatah forum, which addressed ‘hamsawiyun, jabhawiyun [ie, members of the Popular Front – *jabha* – for the Liberation of Palestine], and jihadiyun’.³⁶⁹

Indeed, even in the mainstream media stories about the activities of ‘jihadis’ which made up most of the results, the word tended to be placed in quotation marks. This presumably indicates a sense of unfamiliarity and, perhaps also, a questioning of the legitimacy of the ‘jihad’ contained in the word. *Al Sharq al-Awsat* for example tells us about explosions ‘attributed to misguided “jihadis”’.³⁷⁰ ‘Jihadis’ call for the death of a BBC reporter (Alan Johnston - then imprisoned in Gaza),³⁷¹ ‘jihadis’ demonstrate in an Egyptian prison.³⁷²

Perhaps the most important difference between the two sets of usages relates to the usage of ‘jihadi’ as referring to a distinct body of thought – ie, ‘jihadi’ as *jihadism*. As well as the term ‘(al-salafiyya) al-jihadiyya’ appearing on a number of occasions with this apparent sense, non-jihadi sources used terms such as ‘jihadi thought’ with similar implications. This notion did seem to appear in evidence in pro jihadi results. However, these did sometimes place the word ‘jihadi’ alongside words indicative of being ‘jihadi’ as a distinct moral commitment, or way of life.

Overall then, the basic set of usages which the search results suggested broadly confirmed what might have been expected: that there is a distinction to be made between ‘jihadi’ in regular Arabic news media, where it means something like ‘jihadist’ in English – that is, adherence to a modern ideological project only notionally premised on the concept of ‘jihad’. On the other hand, ‘jihadi’ in more popular usage can mean ‘pertaining to a legitimate project of Islamic jihad’. And yet, the very need by those using the term in the latter sense to identify certain things as happening to be relevant to this project (whether dreams and paths, films and books, operations and expeditions or even self-styled ‘jihadi’ individuals) nonetheless requires the extension of the sense of ‘pertaining to jihad’ to

a point at which the concept begins, after all, to bear some resemblance to the notion of a distinctive ‘jihadism’ envisaged by the mainstream sources.

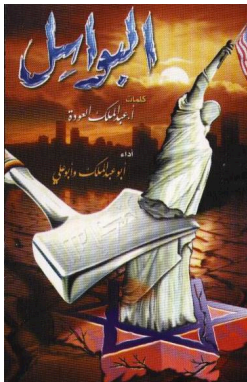
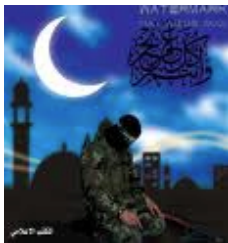
4.3 Constructing ‘the Jihadi’

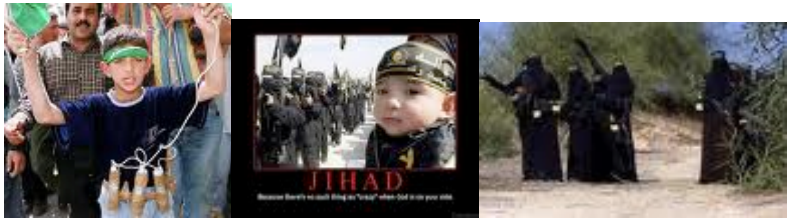
Having considered in what senses the word ‘jihadi’ is used, we now turn to the second question posed above. How is ‘the jihadi’ constructed? What things does the label happen to adhere to? An initial way into this question – bypassing issues of language and linguistic context – is through the visual. In asking how ‘the jihadi’ is pictured, or what a picture ‘of jihad’ looks like, it might be suggested that we can obtain an idea – to use the word in its etymological sense – of the ‘imagination’ of jihad within Arabic Web content.

Contemporary weapons	
Enemy/regular military	
Paramilitary forces	

Suicide bomb vests	
Medieval weapons	
Lion	
Horsemen	
'Traditional' costume	
Explosions/flames	
Scenes of destruction	

Countryside/landscape	
Banners	
Maps	
National flags	
Group logo	
Arabic text as image	

Particular individuals	
(Desecration of) Enemy Symbols	
Al Aqsa Mosque	
Globe in space (and other celestial bodies represented astronomically)	
Prayer/Mosque	
Qur'an	

Women and children as participants/combatants	
Victims	
Martyrs	
Demonstrations/Crowds	
Satirical cartoon/morph	

There is, it should be pointed out, nothing especially surprising or original about the categories of image identified here. Indeed, the basic types of image overlap to a substantial extent with those identified by Brachman, Boudali and Ostovar's 'Islamic imagery project'.³⁷³ This is precisely the point, however. For it demonstrates that a study based on Westpoint military academy's 'extensive collection of jihadi imagery' (presumably based on that institution's subjective understanding of what constitutes 'jihadi') is dealing, in its essentials, with the same body of imagery that just

happens to be turned up by Google web spiders looking for images tagged with this word. It may, of course, be objected that this fact is no coincidence, but rather is explained by mainstream Arabic media picking up on the same notion of ‘jihadism’ put forward by the US led ‘war on terror’. Except that – as we saw with reference the previous searches, and as is true for these as well – the ‘jihadi’ material turned up by Google searches of Arabic content derives from forum posts, user generated sites, and even self-styled ‘jihadi’ forums just as it does from mainstream news.

An agglomeration of ‘jihadi’ images produced in this way is clearly a very artificial text to work with, and attempts to advance towards what Strauss and Corbin would call an ‘axial’ level of coding³⁷⁴ must, of course, proceed with caution, lest patterns be found where none really exist. And yet, the basic themes that can be discerned within this set of categories seems so clear, and so coherent as to be expressible with reasonable confidence. ‘The jihadi’ – according to these search results – is consistently about violence (both given and received), solidarity and – certainly in the most iconic and superficial sense – Islam.³⁷⁵

A somewhat more complex and extensive set of (sometimes overlapping) sub themes might tentatively be developed along the following lines.

First, there are images which seem to be quite straightforwardly about *fighting*. Images of paramilitaries, of guns and rocket launchers, as well as groups of fighters in military clothing, disciplined or patrol formations and covered faces present the notion of the central importance of armed activity. Medieval weapons and equipment are relevant here too, but have more complex implications.

Secondly, and nearly as straightforward are images of *oppression*. This would include portrayals of conventional military forces which, in a ‘jihadi’ context seem almost always to be engaged in

illegitimate violence, generally aimed at civilians. This in turn links into images of vulnerable civilians bloodied, killed, screaming or hiding. Oppressive enemies can also be represented through their own symbols, particularly the hateful image of the Star of David. And this, in turn, offers the possibility of symbolic resistance - for instance, through the destruction of such symbols.

Thirdly, images such as maps, national flags and certain kinds of traditional clothing (such as the Palestinian *hatta*) illustrate the importance of *geographical community*. It should be noted that this may be less significant in parts of the world where 'traditional' clothes are simply part of everyday dress.

Fourthly, place overlaps with but does not necessarily reduce to *history*. In the context of 'jihadi' images this is primarily invoked through the generic medievalism of swords, horses and banners. Slightly more obscure is a reference such as that in the logo of the Islamic State of Iraq to the seal of the prophet Muhammad which, apart from the distinctive writing style and design, consists only of the Muslim declaration of faith. Significantly, (though not surprisingly) historical images in content labeled as 'jihadi' appear to invoke only the most generic notions of 'Islamic' history, rather than histories of particular groups and communities.



Fifthly, there is the theme of devotion to *the group*. Here might be placed specific group logos and images of leaders and martyrs. Conceivably, certain images also relating to violence might too be placed in this category. The guerrilla style of covering the face – which suppresses identity in more senses than one – the use of clothing styles unique to a particular group or even, perhaps, the gesture of solidarity implied by the image of the suicide bomb vest (allowing, of course, for the complex range of resonances such an image might have).

Sixthly, there is a wider theme of solidarity within the *community*. Most obviously this can be seen in images of crowds and demonstrations. Pictures of armed children and (particularly where they do not seem to be of an age or appropriately clad for actual combat), women can perhaps also be read not so much as images of violence per se, but rather as deliberate incongruity, showing that the whole community, combatant and non-combatant is united in the cause.

Seventhly, there is in addition to the theme of collective solidarity, a theme of devotion to the *cosmic* or *transcendent*. This is achieved through images of prayer, of mosques, or the Qur'an. It is also achieved through astronomical depictions of the globe in space, of the moon, or of other planets or, sometimes of images of nature: landscapes, sunsets or seascapes. Such images might bring to mind at once Qur'anic passages concerned with the awesome spectacle of the night sky, the demand that Muslims 'read' the signs (*ayat*) of nature, and the marvels of the Universe as revealed by modern science.

Thus 'the jihadi' might be seen as being characterized as the representation of violence in response to oppression by particular organized groups on behalf of a wider community occurring within the bounds of three spheres: a geographical one of space, a temporal one of (shared) history and a moral one of the physical and ethical laws of the cosmos. This is, as has already been pointed out,

scarcely a new point to make. Indeed, Armbrorst's definitional fields of 'jihad – military conflict, jihad – dogmatic and jihad – Islamic activism' seem well represented here. 'The jihadi' on the Web is then, it seems, tolerably close to 'jihadism' as Western academic literature seems to understand it.

4.4 Jihādī Anāshīd/Poetry

The corpus of 'jihadi' images located by search engine algorithms provides a useful starting point for analysis precisely because it suppresses much of the complexity introduced by the editorial choice of the individual online contributor. As such, it would seem, potentially, to offer us a basic ideographic vocabulary of 'the jihadi' as a universal, shorn of partisan and ideological difference, individual artistry and contextual nuance. It helps to provide the contours, in other words, for what might be called (following Manovich's ideas on new media artistry), a 'database of jihad' - the set of stock motifs available for constructing more complex 'jihadi' items. But jihadi images in the form we have considered them are not jihadi media in their natural contexts: rather, they are artificially broken down elements. The next stage then must be to examine jihadi content items as unified pieces of work.

Along with 'operation' the single word most commonly combined with the word 'jihadi' in Arabic material on the web is the word *nashīd*. The jihadi nashid is a subgenre of the Islamic nashid generally. As such, these are (usually) à capella songs for one or more male voices. Instruments, which are often considered *ḥarām* by strict Muslims³⁷⁶ rarely appear in accompaniment. However, voices are generally multi-layered and manipulated with studio effects. The nashid form - as a general term for religious singing - is a well established Islamic tradition.³⁷⁷ However, the contemporary form of the Islamic nashid as represented by most 'jihadi' nashids may be a relatively modern introduction.³⁷⁸ The lack of instrumentation and use of harmonic vocal lines - almost choral in style - does not seem to be reminiscent of previously widespread Middle Eastern musics, with the

possible exception of certain ancient chants such as the *Hajj* anthem *Labbayk Allahumma*, whose words, at least go back to the dawn of Islam and beyond, and are said to have been sung by Adam on his arrival at the original Ka‘aba.³⁷⁹

Jihadi nashids can be found in a wide range of online locations. They are posted to sites such as YouTube or Archive.org and to mainstream and secular Arabic bulletin boards (such as *Majida*,³⁸⁰ *Ibtesama*³⁸¹ or *Al Jazeera Chat*³⁸² just as they are also posted to ‘Islamic’ sites such as Muslm.net, Palestinian sites such as Paldif³⁸³ or ‘jihadi’ forums such as *Al Fallujah*,³⁸⁴ *Shumukh al-Islam*³⁸⁵ and so on. Commonly, however, such posts link back to ‘Islamic’ websites, or to Islamic websites specifically specialising in the nashid genre such as www.enshady.com or www.dawa.ws.

Moreover, they are often found as part of collections of other ‘Islamic’ or ‘da‘wi’ nashids. As such, the jihadi nashid appears to represent a relatively ‘mainstream’ form, with famous ‘munshids’ (nashid singers) such as ‘Abu ‘Ali’ releasing large numbers of nashids on jihadi as well as other Islamic themes.³⁸⁶ This compares usefully with online references to jihadi ‘operations’ which are more often found on - and which generally refer back - to a specifically ‘jihadi’ website. As such, nashids can be seen as representative of a more ‘popular’ jihadi tradition than other jihadi items, with relatively less dependence on access to the official or semi official propaganda productions of fighting groups.

Where only the words of jihadi nashids are posted, these may be described as ‘jihadi poetry’. And indeed, since the following analysis will not take account of musicological considerations, the two genres can be treated as essentially the same.³⁸⁷

At the simplest level, the nashids examined exhibit the same set of themes suggested above. They are about violently fighting an oppressive and murderous enemy. The vengeful heroes are marked out by their qualities of ‘steadfastness’ or ‘solidarity’ (*ṣumūd*); by their pious yearning for the

rewards of paradise and the accounts of the Day of Reckoning over the transient pleasures of the world ('they did not care whether there was rice or anything between their teeth'. Their primary weapon is the machine gun, from which nothing will separate them. But explosives, too, have their part to play. Through this combination of piety, loyalty, devotion to the point of sacrifice and aggressive violence, the heroes will redeem their people, liberating 'Al Aqsa today - Al Andalus tomorrow.'

Nashid collections are sometimes labelled so as to indicate that they represent a particular jihadi group - for instance, a 'collection of 300 hamasi jihadi nashids'.³⁸⁸ However, in general there appears to be a good deal of ideological plasticity to the genre. A nashid commemorating an attack by, for instance, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, such as *fajrī al-mal'ūn ya bint al-jihād* (Blow Up the Cursed One, O Girl of Jihad), may turn up as the soundtrack for a montage of attacks by the Al Qaida affiliate Islamic State of Iraq.³⁸⁹ On the other hand, it would seem that jihadi nashids enjoy a fairly broad audience. For instance, a nashid relating to the Chechen jihad such as *ḥayy al-kata'ib* can be appreciatively received by very secular presenting forum goers.³⁹⁰

In the same collections of jihadi nashid lyrics, it is possible to encounter nashids which appear to relate to jihad by groups in Palestine, by groups in Iraq, and specifically by Al Qaida. It may be suggested that there are particular shared characteristics to the former group as opposed to nashids relating to other fields of jihad. Specifically, in ostensibly Palestinian nashids, the authorial voice suggests a narrator who is profoundly engaged in what is portrayed as a collective and enduring struggle by a whole people. What is distinctive is a quality of solidity and permanence - even of the eternal - to the set of relations embodied in this struggle. Indeed, so intertwined are themes of the natural world, of fertility, the shared fate of the people and the land, and the redemptive courage of the martyr hero (which will 'plant' a seed which will grow into 'thorns of vengeance' among the coming generation)³⁹¹ that they almost seem to bring to mind romantic notions of pagan sacrifice to

appease the forces of nature of the sort imagined in, for instance, James Frazer's notion of the year king.³⁹²

Sacrifice, as presented in such songs, appears to be an event of tightly circumscribed symbolic significance.³⁹³ There is, for instance, an important motif of body parts: 'our skulls are offered so that your [Islam's] honour can remain whole'. 'I have given you' [Jerusalem] a pledge of my blood'. 'They were covered in blood and smiled in great jubilation'. The idea of sowing the dragon's teeth is almost explicitly used in *Blow Up The Cursed One O Daughter of Jihad*, when it says 'pour out your blood, for if good blood falls upon the ground it will grow into soldiers in the time of need'. The hero's denial of the body is that of the inward-looking ascetic. Its value is mediated by the good of the community, which through the sacrifice, is connected directly to the eternal. In this poetic scheme explicitly religious themes – prayer, mosques, religious labelling of opponents and, more important, Paradise and Judgement Day are invoked more as powerful abstractions than as concrete realities. Indeed, in one poem, the end of service through jihad as a good in itself seems almost to be elevated above that of attaining salvation in paradise.

To the gardens [of paradise], and the gardens are an abode... they are a resting place and a shelter
for the *shahid*. And more wondrous than their yearning for Eden...their yearning for God, the Majestic
If they were called upon they said, in hope... we would have returned and fought all over again.
For to have fought for you once is satisfaction enough... and in satisfaction we aspire still more

The same song culminates: 'And if we die it does not matter to us... we are not pleased with the life of the slave.' It is, therefore, not the prospect of achieving Paradise which 'teaches solidarity' as the song puts it, but rather the determination not to *live* in dishonour and 'slavery'. In these songs religion seems to be as Durkheim insists, 'a figurative expression of the society'.³⁹⁴

Indeed, so closed is the imaginative system - so fixated on the triangular relationship between martyr, community and the eternal - that even violence against the enemy seems to disappear into abstraction. The hero dies fighting the enemy. But it is the gore of his own demise that is valorised - not that of his opponents. It is somewhat paradoxical that even the violence of the fighter is subsumed into wider story of victimhood. 'A generation refusing injustice' is raised by the blows and injustices of the enemy. But the main role of the heroes thereby produced is, in turn, to die heroically. The concern here is not, it seems, the actual physical destruction of the community, but its social death, its dissolution through loss of honour.

Other nashids - while not using a fundamentally different 'vocabulary' of images, differ in some important ways from this template. Here, the community - or at least the narrator's membership of it - seems not necessarily to be a given. Feelings of commonality may be temporary, and the narrator may even appear to express notions of alienation and nostalgia. No longer does the author merely celebrate the outstanding dedication of a third person hero. Rather, he is at pains to declare his own loyalty. In the case of one example by a person who writes under the pen name of 'poet of Al Qaida', it is the very act of producing poetry itself which affirms the writer's commitment.

Do not doubt my heart, O friend
I am the pure one, and your outpouring that cries out
My arm rhymes precious verses
Over the concert of the swords, and the shields
Proud, sweet rhymes
Calls- 'come to prayer, come to salvation' to the people of jihad.
It paints its letters, it makes my hymn become
As sharp as the spear of *Al-Samhariyyat*
I have given my slaughter to the Islamic state
I have sworn allegiance to it, and forfeited all return.
I reach out to the Amir with an overflow of longing

So reach out so that we can swear allegiance by hand

Indeed - as can readily be noted, the possibility that the writer's sincerity might be doubted is offered at the very inception of the work. Elsewhere, the community and solidarity expressed in the first category is represented as a longing for a time which has now vanished.

Where are our days? Where? ... Where have we spent them?

They went in the blinking of an eye... O my place, remember them

O blessed Kandahar... the Lord keep her

.... by jihad... The Guide build her

Paradise of the merciful... noble Kabul

By God, we are not pleased... with injustice anywhere

Perhaps as a consequence of this, these poems seem simultaneously more concerned with violence against a specific enemy, and less sure about the prospect of salvation. As one nashid asks: 'One day a whole Ummah will kneel... in healing gloom... To an important question... did you do your duty to the prophet?'. No longer is the existence of an afterlife merely a matter for celebration. Now, it is a matter for concerned personal reflection, which presumably is compounded for some by feelings of distance and lack of agency, as for the author of *O World What is this Silence?* Who in conclusion to events in Chechnya can offer only that:

The Russians will continue the fighting... and we shall continue to be pious while others sleep.

This apparent angst is not explicitly present - but perhaps it can be discerned in the unprecedentedly hysterical violence in the popular Iraq war song: *Blow Them Up*, where issues of martyrdom all but disappear in the call to:

...kill them

Shred them, scatter them, capture them... and slaughter them

Burn them, drown them, round them up and reap them...

ask the Lord for steadfastness and longanimity...and defeat them.

4.5 Jihadi Animation

The medium of the jihadi flash animation³⁹⁵ offers a useful combination of the two types of material so far analysed: isolated images and poetic text. Indeed, jihadi flash videos can be considered an extension of the nashid genre into a new medium. They are to be found on the same forums as nashids - indeed, they are sometimes distributed by specialist nashid sites.³⁹⁶ Jihadi flash videos are invariably accompanied by nashids. Many of them also present the texts of poems as part of their visual display. These texts may or may not be the same as the accompanying sung words. In a technique discussed by the new media theorist Lev Manovich, cinematic techniques are often used on the text itself, which scrolls, or is panned over or zoomed in on by an imaginary camera.³⁹⁷ In one flash video 'Open Fire!'³⁹⁸ (the imperative is, interestingly, in the feminine form), strikingly simple use is made of angry red text in order to produce an effect of violence and menace which is underscored by the text itself, which calls: 'open fire, burn the Romans, my war is dear to me, it wears down the crusaders'. The same words boom out on the soundtrack. In another example - *Prison is a Paradise or an Inferno*³⁹⁹ text is combined with visuals still more ingeniously, to provide an interactive element: the viewer 'unlocks' the video by clicking on a key. This reveals a photographic image of a sparse and gloomy prison cell with a stool, a slop bucket and thick metal bars over the window. Outside these bars, a succession of photographs (of prisoners, presumably) passes by. Moving the cursor over the image produces a stream of sparks which scatter in the darkness. Passing it over a particular section to the left of the image illuminates the words of the poem which gives the work its title.

Jihadi flash animations (like all jihadi media) vary greatly from quite sophisticated productions to relatively crude assemblages of clip art and pasted-in photograph. Even relatively slick productions, however, generally remain efforts at packaging a limited collection of images, mostly culled (it would seem) from mainstream media reporting. These retain the closed range of the images discussed above: crowds, wounded civilians, enemy soldiers, masked mujahidin and representations of the conventionally religious and, more generally the ‘sublime’.

The extensive intertextual possibilities of the jihadi flash video, combined (perhaps paradoxically) with the apparent limitations placed on some of the more excessive imagery conjured by jihadi poetry seem to make the thematics of jihadi flash slightly more difficult to read. The seeming ‘distance’ of the narrator which can be used as a main distinguishing feature between two categories in the case of the former may be complicated or subverted in the latter. For instance, in a video entitled *The Arrow of Yesterday Continues*, a standard narrative about solidarity in the face of Zionist oppression is complicated by the fact that it is presented as happening inside a television, within a simple CG rendering of a prosperous, Western-style living room. As a result, the themes of suffering in Palestine which are often so distinctive in the nashid form tend to be subsumed into narratives about mediated Muslim suffering in general. Images of Palestinian figures (Shaykh Yasin, Abdulaziz Rantisi are commonly to be seen alongside heroes of other conflicts (Khattab, Shamil Besayev). Images of dead, wounded and dismayed civilians may as easily be Afghan, Chechen, or simply generic as Palestinian.

Distinctions here are better made between categories which may loosely be termed ‘politics’, ‘militancy’ and ‘religion’. This is to say that certain ‘jihadi’ flash videos (such as *Prison is Paradise or Inferno*) for instance, make essentially no direct mention of violence. Others invoke religion primarily as a label: the ‘people of truth’ versus the Romans and the Crusaders, taking as their main

dimension the violence necessary to defend the one against the other. Finally, yet others make a more serious attempt to subsume worldly events into the eternal. An English language script runs:

Why do I love thee O Afghanistan?
It isn't your land, it isn't your dust
It's the law that you have from Allah the just

This is almost the precise inverse of the 'first category' of nashid above. In contrast to the shackling of religion to the worship of the land - a concern which may, perhaps help to explain recurrent use of the *hadith* prophecy in which - as one nashid recounts it:

...tomorrow we shall hear sense from inanimate objects
Stones and rocks there in our Jerusalem... it is promised that inanimate objects shall become Muslim
'O Muslim of God... O servant of God...behind me is a Jew, progenitor of treachery
'Kill him, and purify our soil of his filth...'

Here the value of the natural landscape is utterly discounted in favour of the abstract and eternal values embodied in Islamic law.

Indeed, it is possible to find flash videos labelled as 'jihadi' in which there is nothing more militant than a concern with the global interests of Islam as a whole. A work such as 'Strangers' (*ghurabā*) - composed, apparently, with a non-Muslim in mind, asks the question 'Islam: Do you really know what it is?' before proceeding to ask a set of leading questions (in English) about double standards relating to non-Muslim attitudes to Muslims:

...have you ever wondered why a nun can be covered from head to toe, and she's respecting God, but when a Muslimah does that, she's "oppressed"... why a Jew can grow a beard and he's just practicing his faith, but

when a Muslim does that he's an extremist? ... when a Christian or a Jew kills someone, religion is not mentioned, but when a Muslim is charged with a crime, it is Islam that goes to trial?

By contrast, *Our Brothers* [sic] *Return* takes a notably militant subject - Amir Khattab of Chechnya, and links it to the eternal. The muscular, burly mujahid is seen, perhaps incongruously, seated - a ghostly, superimposed presence - over an ocean sunset by a tropical desert island, complete with palm tree. The animation takes standard montage images - Khattab in his iconic grenade throwing pose and, the weeping heads of omnipresent wronged civilians, disembodied, in black and white, and washing languorously across the screen before, at last, the beatic, martyred head of Khattab himself - all against the backdrop of sun and sea. The overall effect appears to be the disassembly of the material realities of combat and its dissolution into the eternal.

The broad themes of flash videos, then, seem to reconstitute at the level of a 'globalised' and deterritorialised discourse, the same triangle of concerns seen in the 'category one' nashids above: violence, community and the eternal - in which, in any one example, it is usual to treat two in detail, with the third either invoked but unexplored, or merely implied. While some of the subtleties of this discourse may be lost with regard to attachment to specific places, what is perhaps more interesting is the manner in which the distinctive features of the second category of nashid also seem to be dissolved. The angst of the narrator's distance from the subject, the fear of inadequate commitment, the concern of words not binding to their meanings is either harder to represent visually - or possibly, is somehow *resolved* through the visual language of montage, which does not so readily privilege the superior authority of those physically present in the conflict zone, and confers on the creator a certain authority simply for the fact of having produced, as opposed to mere speech, a digital artifact.

4.6 Jihādiyyāt and Ideological Factionalism

We have already seen that there is a relationship between certain types of content, and levels of ostensibly ideological boundedness. Jihadi nashids, flash videos and graphic design *may* have a partisan focus, but quite often do not. Indeed, in spite of the apparent distinctiveness of Palestinian nashids, it would be a mistake to presume that jihadi material simply represents contrasting ‘global’ and local, or ‘irredentist’ (particularly Palestinian) jihads.⁴⁰⁰ Rather, a more accurate picture might be to suggest that there are - at the level of the Web - two distinctive ‘global’ jihads being represented. On the one hand, there is what might be called a ‘translocal’ jihad. This consists of the generic, ‘lowest common denominator’ images of ‘the jihadi’ which are to be found in the wider context of ‘da‘wi’, or, ‘Islamic’ materials (*islāmiyyāt*) such as *anāshīd* and flash animation.

These consist of a combination of relatively generic ‘Islamic’ images (a silhouetted horseman brandishing his sword beside the form of the Ka‘aba), together with images which relate more specifically to actual militancy in particular theatres (Palestine, Iraq, Chechnya) and to certain, widely supported groups (the Al-Qassam Brigades), and individuals (Amir Khattab).⁴⁰¹

Contained within this vocabulary of images (which is very much the same as the images returned in the image search which began this enquiry), is a subset that seems to invoke a more specific notion of what might be called a ‘transcendent jihad’. This is expressed by those images which relate to abstracted, historical violence, to quintessential images of Islam as a generality, to the moon, space, and to ‘the globe’ itself.⁴⁰² This vocabulary can be encountered routinely within ‘Islamic’ materials. There is, however, a more specific set of ‘jihadi’ images which are commonly omitted from this set: those of the leading figures of Al Qaida - bin Ladin, Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi and Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi, as well as other icons such as the collapsing World Trade Centre. These images, therefore, seem to represent (together with the other images of ‘transcendental’ jihad which usually accompany them) what called a ‘higher tier’ or, if we must, a more ‘extreme’ end of a jihadi continuum.⁴⁰³

Indeed, the existence of such a continuum can be demonstrated with reference to yet another type of ‘jihadi content’ - the ‘jihadi book’.⁴⁰⁴ If one searches the Web for the Arabic term ‘jihadi books’ it turns out that, of the first forty six hits that actually return a result for ‘jihadi book(s)’ as such, twenty three link directly to sites which can be with some confidence designated as ‘salafi-jihadi’ forums: that is, sites with banners at the top advertising official releases by Al Qaida affiliate groups and media agencies. The category of the ‘jihadi forum’ and its defining characteristics will be discussed more fully in a subsequent chapter. But for the most part, these are sites such as ‘Al Mujahidin Electronic Network’,⁴⁰⁵ ‘Ansar al-Mujahidin’, ‘Al-Fallujah’,⁴⁰⁶ ‘Ishaq al-Hur’,⁴⁰⁷ and ‘Shumukh al-Islam’,⁴⁰⁸ which actually refer to each other as such.⁴⁰⁹ Others, such as ‘Ukht bin Ladin,’ ‘Leyouth,’ ‘Jihadway’, ‘Al Qimmah’ (a forum primarily associated with Shabab al-Mujahidin in Somalia) and Bayt al-Maqdis (a network of sites which is mainly devoted to ‘Jaysh al-Ummah’ a ‘salafi jihadi’ group in Gaza) fall broadly into the same category also. Of the remainder, most are either book hosting sites, or salafi, but not jihadi websites, such as Muslm.net, ‘Sahab Salafi Network, slfya.maktoobblog, and so on.

By contrast, entering the term ‘jihadi nashids’ brings up - in its first fifty hits, only two such sites. On the other hand, it also brings up (which ‘jihadi books’ does not), sites sympathetic to non salafi groups such as Qassimy.com, or Palestinian sites (which often lean towards similar groups) such as Fursan Al Aqsa, or Palestine Network. A much quicker and simpler search further confirms the trend. Placing quote marks around the term ‘Hamasi Jihadi books’ returns not a single result. Placing quote marks around the term ‘Hamasi books’ returns just five hits (three of which are for the same text), which point towards the work of the Muslim Brothers ideologues Sayyid Qutb and Hassan al-Banna. By contrast, looking for “Hamasi nashids” delivers more than 54,000 results for that precise phrase.⁴¹⁰

If we take the one reasonably extensive list of ‘jihadi book’ titles from a website which is not overtly either salafi, or jihadi salafi, (from the Yemeni forum ‘Hadramut’), we find a list which begins as follows:

- *The Future of the Peninsula and of Iraq* by the martyr (God willing), Yusuf al-‘Uyayri.
- *The American Presence in the Peninsula: Its Truth and its Aims*, Yusuf al-‘Uyayri (may God accept him)
- *Guidance for the Confused on the Permissibility of Killing Prisoners*, Yusuf al ‘Uyayri
- *O Mujahidin, the Spirit, not the World*, Abdullah Al-Rashid
- *Thus we See the Jihad, and we Desire it*, Hazim al-Madani
- *The Creed of the Saved Sect*, Abdul Majid Muhammad Muni’, may God accept him in the heights
- *The Whinnying of the Horses in Explanation of the Book of Jihad* Abd al-Rahim al-Shafi’i
- *The Late Warning Concerning the Most Important Important Matters Necessary* ‘Izz al-Din al-Maqdisi

There is little point in reproducing this list of fifty books in its entirety.⁴¹¹ It goes on to offer eleven books by Abdullah Azzam, as well as volumes by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Salman al-‘Alwan and other identifiably ‘salafi’ jihadi writers. Moreover, the fact that all the lists of ‘jihadi books’ encountered included items along similar lines cannot be explained simply by an absence of books from other perspectives on the subject of jihad. For instance, although plainly it is a book ‘of jihad’, nowhere is the mainstream Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi’s (2009) *Fiqh al-Jihad* listed as a ‘jihadi book’.

As intuitively satisfying as is the notion of a single jihadi continuum from ‘moderate’ to ‘extremist’, whereby the person who engages with materials such as jihadi nashids or flash videos is, broadly, likely to be someone who supports the Al-Qassam brigades whereas the ‘hard core’ jihadi who

takes the time to read jihadi books will be inclined to support Al Qaida, there is something enigmatic about it. After all, non Al-Qaida jihadi groups practicing what Gerges calls ‘irredentist’ or ‘internal’ jihad⁴¹² are not merely dabblers in jihadism, but distinct entities which attract serious commitments of their own. It must apparently be possible to be a ‘hard core’ aficionado of the Al-Qassam brigades or the Islamic Army of Iraq. But how is this commitment represented?

4.7 Partisan Difference in Three Jihadi Videos

The key to this puzzle can be found in the extent to which groups of the latter type add to their symbolically ‘Islamic’ commitment other themes - notably nationalism. To this extent, production of a feeling of the ‘jihadi’ for such groups is a more plainly modular endeavour. It is an aggregation of ‘the Islamic’ (Qur’ans, mosques, the Muslim *shahada*), ‘the militant’ - (guns, rocket launchers) ‘the national’ (flags, maps, symbolic clothing items) and ‘the group’ (logos), in which each element could conceivably be separated out and reincorporated somewhere else. By contrast, Al Qaida related material tends to draw on a body of images which are, in themselves complex - embodying in a single instant the multiple themes of armed struggle, cosmic justice and shared heritage. The stereotyped figure of the cavalryman stands at once for militancy, Islam and community. Likewise, the black banner of the *shahada* (a device which is, of course, used by other groups - but with less simplicity) stands for *a specific group* (the Islamic State of Iraq), but also, and irreducibly, for Islam in general.

Indeed, the difference here can usefully be illustrated through comparison of official videos of an Al Qaida affiliate as opposed to non Al Qaida affiliate groups. As representative texts, let us take - as relatively prominent and well-made examples the Islamic State of Iraq’s series *Knights of Martyrdom*,⁴¹³ the Islamic Army of Iraq’s *Baghdad Sniper 2*,⁴¹⁴ and the Al-Qassam Brigades’ *The Voice of the Angry Hero Came Across*.⁴¹⁵

The latter video - essentially a compilation and retrospective celebration of acts by the group it represents - offers a rapid montage of images. It opens with the image of a rifleman, coloured with a green filter, before the image of an explosion bursts through the scene, to reveal the logo of the Qassam Brigades: itself a compilation of images - the Dome of the Rock, a kalashnikov, and a green flag with the *shahada*, before cutting rapidly to footage of Qassamis on parade. Shot from below, the approaching group presents the impression of over-running the viewer. Over the imagery are sung the words:

The voice of the angry hero came across
To the world I write 'Qassami'
To serve the throne at the gates of glory
And honour the Ummah with feverish blood

As with the Palestinian nashids discussed above, writ large in the video is a set of imaginative relations in which the transcendent and the ineffable have important, but only walk-on parts. A Qassami is shown contemplatively reading a Qur'an - just before another is shown waving the flag and others are presented setting up a rocket launcher. Framed photographs of martyrs are fast-forwarded against a backdrop of blue sky and fluffy clouds. And yet the true power of the video lies in its portrayal of military actions and shows of solidarity that - *mutatis mutandis* - could be inserted into a video for, say, the PKK or the Real IRA without any obvious incongruity. Even the song - Islamic themes in the lyrics notwithstanding - breaks with fundamentalist nashid convention by incorporating synthesiser accompaniment and a bouncy beat. The role of religion (meaning 'the transcendent'), one gets the impression, is to vindicate the emotive effects, not to create them.

Juba, the sniper of Baghdad represents perhaps the most sophisticated transmedia project ever attempted by a militant group. Using montaged footage of individual sniper operations, the Islamic

Army of Iraq apparently succeeded in producing an artificially constructed viral Internet hero with his own website, anashid and numerous self declared ‘fans’ (as can be seen in the use of ‘Juba’ as a nickname element).⁴¹⁶ In keeping with this, *Juba 2* is a sophisticated piece of work, which cleverly integrates the core ‘jihadi’ themes. After an initial sequence, portraying a man in a balaclava cocking a sniper rifle, over which the production is credited to the central media foundation of the Islamic Army in Iraq, and offering it as an ‘Eid present to the people of monotheism’, the video opens with the sounding of the *adhān* (the Muslim call for prayer). A door opens and the same man in a balaclava enters into a sparsely furnished white room, still carrying his rifle. He sets this carefully down on a table, together with a side arm, a mobile phone, a radio and some bullets. He turns to a wall chart, on which are written the prophetic words ‘do not associate with an unbeliever, and fight him into the everlasting fire’. He scores off another mark on a growing tally, and sits down to write a communique to the Muslim Ummah, referencing the blood of ‘our Muslim grandfathers’ and the shame of its desecration by the same Jews and Crusaders. ‘What will we say’ he asks, ‘on Judgement Day?’

The use of direct religious-military associations here is considerably subtler and stronger than in the Al-Qassam video. While the Al-Qassam video embodies themes which can be described as political rather than religious without losing much in translation, in *Juba 2*, politics (i.e, power relations between different actors) is mainly subsumed into theological language. It is the desecration of mosques and the Qur’an, the shame of the Ummah, and the failure to implement shari‘a that are the main grievances voiced by the sniper. And yet, even here, the images do not so much achieve their merging of transcendent and everyday concerns by *integration* but by *juxtaposition*. From the context, we *assume* that Juba has just finished praying. Or, if he hasn’t, that he ought to be. So when he lays down his weapons and carefully checks off his latest kill, the care with which he does it brings to mind the same ritual care that would be brought to Islamic ablutions - the *wuḍū’*.

Moreover, the overtly ‘Islamic’ sequence at the beginning of the piece is followed by scenes which

are wholly temporal in content. An interview with the 'commander of the sniper brigade in Baghdad' provides a wholly rationalistic and operational-sounding justification for the use of sniping which seems almost to deny the absolutist and deontological admonitions which have just preceded.

Thus it is the consistent challenging of this compartmentalisation of sacred and profane categories that gives such force to a production such as *Knights of Martyrdom*. Here, the film begins with a computer generated rendering of a green and well-tended garden, chirruping with birdsong - a typically Islamic vision of Paradise which seems all the more effective for its 'virtuality'. The (imaginary) camera pans over the scene to show us something shocking and incongruous. In the middle of Paradise is the hulking shape of a large lorry. The door of the lorry opens. Using the cinematic language of the 'first person' computer game, the camera zooms in, and we find ourselves looking at the dashboard, as if we are seated in the cab. The door closes, as if the viewer has closed it. The lorry drives off. Suddenly, it is not on grass anymore, but a dusty desert road. At the end of the road is a stylized military compound, dominated by a large, red cross. The truck drives into the compound. There is a cry of 'Allahu Akbar'. Suddenly, the computer animation switches to live footage of an explosion at the end of a desert road, just like the one represented in CG. There are two things which are clearly distinctive about this. First, the attempted breakdown of the barrier between viewer and event: taking advantage of the visual language of first person computer games, it is visually implied that *you, the viewer* are the one driving the truck. Second, it is not only the boundary between 'religion' and 'politics' that is challenged, but that between religion and violence. The visual language of the suicide bombing makes it - to use Devji's terminology - unmistakeably an 'ethical act'.⁴¹⁷ The target, the attacker, the method of attack and its place in the cosmic order are all inseparably intertwined. Even the figure of the truck - scarcely evocative of the heroic period of Islamic history - is very carefully linked to the eternal. Unlike the

Palestinian martyr, or the Iraqi assassin, the truck bomber in this case is unmistakably shown to practice not just violence *as a Muslim*, but *Islamic violence*.

4.8 'Entering the Jihadi' Webpace and Jihadi Content

There is, then, something of a puzzle concerning the nature of Arabic 'jihadi' content or 'the jihadi' as it appears on the Web. On the one hand, it seems that there is a largely universalistic vocabulary out of which different jihadi idioms are constructed. And yet, at the same time, there seem to be definite 'levels' of 'jihadiness' which, furthermore, are to some extent inherent in the images themselves. The image of the medieval cavalryman, for instance, which would almost never be used by Qassami or by Islamic Army of Iraq material, is in a sense irreducibly 'more jihadi' than the image of a gunman with a Palestinian *kuffiya*, because it contains ideas of 'Islam as militancy' that cannot be easily separated into distinct iconic components. And yet images of this kind are routinely to be found alongside one another, as if they were differentiated not as symbols of incompatible, discrete ideologies, but as matters of personal taste.

One way of explaining this ambiguity can be found in the way in which information is organised topically by the Arabic Web. In describing the fundamental morphological properties of the Web, Manovich invokes the idea of the 'massive branching structure' as proposed from a technological point of view by Vannevar Bush as invoking or paralleling the philosophical and literary notion of the labyrinth in Borges' story *The Garden of Forking Paths*. In a similar sense, the organisation of 'the jihadi' can be perceived as - to use Borges' phrase 'a labyrinth which [is] strictly infinite'.

It is of the nature of the Web - as a network - that its organisation of information appears hierarchical from any given starting point, branching out in sequential categories and subcategories. A relevant hierarchy of this kind can be observed, for instance, with regard to a large general

interest Arabic forum such as ‘*Al-Sāḥāt al-‘Arabiyya*’ or ‘the Arabic realms’.⁴¹⁸ The name of this forum derives from its subdivision into several ‘realms’ or *saḥāt* - the open forum, the Islamic forum, the political forum, the management and economics forum, the arts forum, the technical forum, the medical forum, the sport forum, the cars forum, the travel and trips forum and the forum for affairs relating to *The Arabic Realms* itself.

As such - and indeed, as can be deduced partially from its name - *The Arabic Realms* presents itself as a comprehensive lifestyle site for Arabic readers - a notional public sphere of public spheres reflecting the overall interests of online Arabic speakers as a whole. Within this sphere, notably, ‘the Islamic’ is simply one topical space among others.

Within this space, it is notable that the topic of ‘jihad’ and the ‘mujahidin’ is consistently a topic for the ‘political,’ rather than the ‘Islamic’ realm - reflecting the topical nature of reported jihadi *activity* already mentioned above.

On the other hand we have already established that ‘the jihadi’ as a content genre in the form of ostensibly ‘self produced’ items (ie, not items such as operations videos or communiques which are clearly the ‘official’ creation of particular fighting groups) belongs not to the online ‘realm’ of the political so much as to the ‘realm’ of the Islamic in the form of ‘Islamic’ sites such as luqman, enshady or dawa.ws.

Thus it is possible to establish a putative hierarchy of topics in Arabic Web content which begins with the sphere of general interest (such as, for instance, the Arabic Realms as a whole), down through ‘the Islamic’ before finally arriving at the sub-sub category of ‘the jihadi’ as a media area of optional interest within Islamic Web content as a whole.

And yet, the linear hierarchy of data on the Web is, of course, only apparent. In fact, the nature of content on the Web is such that an apparent hierarchy can in principle be extrapolated from *any* starting point. Thus, just as ‘general’ Web space, such as that occupied by *The Arabic Realms* has its Islamic category, so too does a specifically ‘Islamic’ site such as, say Muslm.net subdivide into topical categories, some of which - such as Muslm.net’s own ‘news forum’ overlap with categories which would be a realm to themselves on alsaha.com. In other words, just as one may ‘enter’ the topic of ‘the Islamic’ through the portal of what is notionally the online Arabic public sphere, so too one may enter ‘the news’ through the portal of ‘the Islamic’.

In the same way, ‘jihadi webspace’ offers a means to access a variety of different - notionally subsidiary - topic areas: something which can be demonstrated with reference to the many different ‘directories’ of jihadi websites which are to be found posted on Arabic Web forums serving, in effect, as self-created conceptual maps of ‘the jihadi’. These lists of jihadi websites often seem to overlap for significant sections, and appear to be the product of accumulating cutting and pasting of weblinks. They therefore cannot be taken as fully independent corroboration of one another. At the same time, the broad similarity of lists of ‘jihadi websites’ posted to forums,⁴¹⁹ particularly between 2007 and 2008 provides a useful insight into how an emerging category of ‘jihadi’ webspace has come to be understood. Typically,⁴²⁰ such lists span a conceptual space stretching from ostensibly ‘Islamic’ sites (www.freemenbar.com; www.islam-syria.com), militant Iraqi nationalist sites ‘www.iraqiasaeb.net’⁴²¹ and sites of specific shaykhs said to have ‘jihadi’ inclinations (eg Shaykh Hamid al-Ali at <http://69.72.226.92/npag>, and even a Hamas sympathetic site such as <http://www.3awda.com/vb/>). They also contain links to sites (virtually all now defunct) specialising primarily in jihadi ‘preparation’ including information on military tactics and weapons training. The bulk of the sites listed in these ‘directories’ can, however, best be described as fitting into the ‘universalist’ jihadi category. These are notably pro-Al Qaida sites such as ‘al-Ikhlās’, ‘Al Boraq’,

and ‘Al Firdaws’, sites specifically dedicated to particular ‘Al Qaida’ leaders and other leading figures such as Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri and the like.

In other words, within ‘jihadi’ content on the Web, ‘salafi jihadism’ as ideology can be located iconographically simply as an outgrowth of ‘the jihadi’ as a genre of content. The possibility of a ‘jihadi’ category of content invites the possibility of a ‘jihadi’ Web space, which in turn assumes the subsumption of other forms of content (weapons training, theology, national resistance) as subfields with a greater or lesser centrality to a notional acme of ‘jihadiness’. Indeed, it is worth observing that, morphologically at least, Arabic makes no distinction between *jihādiyya* as an abstract noun meaning ‘jihadism’ and the same word as an inanimate plural referring to an ‘agglomeration of “jihadi” items’.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter the aim has certainly not been to produce a single, definitive reading of jihadi content on the Internet. Indeed, as was argued in the second chapter, the idea that texts should be expected to exhibit unified, stable meanings is in any case suspect. Rather, the purpose of the exercise above has been to show that it is, at least *possible* to treat self-described Arabic ‘jihadi’ content on the Web as a meaningfully interconnected whole. That is, that the ‘jihadi’ content which we can associate with Al Qaida, with the Islamic Army of Iraq, with Hamas and with no particular group or political ideology⁴²² all shares important common elements and, moreover, that content tending towards different jihadist movements can often be found side by side in the same collection. This does not, of course, imply a single coherent system of thought. Rather, it might be useful to think in terms of what Lawrence Grossberg calls the ‘mattering map’ – a system of interlocking and overlapping cultural ‘investments’ which help individuals to negotiate the triangular relationship between self, social groupings and media consumption.⁴²³ Indeed, notwithstanding the centrality

(which shall be considered in the following chapter) of official group propaganda to ‘jihadi’ consumption behaviour, it is important to point out that jihadi content is clearly not the monopoly of violent groups. On the contrary, popular forms such as the jihadi nashid which may, but by no means must be related to particular organisations would seem to be among the most common types of jihadi item on the Web. As such, the jihadi would seem to be popular or folk culture as much as it is formalized theology or ideology.

A key implication to this is that it would seem that taking consumption practices rather than ideological belief as a starting point is not only possible, but may even be necessary. If we take, for example, the case of a hypothetical person browsing the productions of a munshid such as ‘Abu ‘Ali’, how might we go about explaining the decision to download a ‘jihadi’ nashid, as opposed to one on some other Islamic subject? It seems doubtful that we could reliably relate this decision to different individuals holding different opinions about the legitimacy of violent jihad since, after all, they are consuming material by the same singer and from the same site. If so, then we would seemingly have to suppose that the matter is more one of ‘taste’. Presumably some people simply ‘like’ Islamic materials which deal with matters of, say, the virtues of the prophet or one’s gratitude to one’s mother more than those which deal with oppression, injustice, heroism, blood and martyrdom.

Consumption as a behaviour invites us to think of different types of jihadism not as tightly bounded ideological fiefdoms ruled unswervingly by particular points of theological or political orthodoxy, but rather – to use Kozinets’ definition of the ‘culture of consumption’, as ‘a particular interconnected system of ... images, texts and objects that particular groups use - through the construction of overlapping and even conflicting practices, identities and meanings - to collectively make sense of their environments and orient their members’ experiences and lives’.⁴²⁴ Indeed, by seeing ‘the jihadi’ as an interlocking set of texts and cultural artifacts which can be engaged with to

varying levels of depth, for different reasons and in different ways, we can also resolve the apparently unidimensional nature of ‘jihadiness’ in content. In the same way that not everyone who sometimes wears black lipstick or nail varnish aspires to a deeper engagement in ‘goth’ style, so one might assert that the trappings of ‘the jihadi’ are something which can quite meaningfully be adopted by groups or individuals in half measures.

This, in turn, suggests an alternative way of considering what it means to be ‘a jihadi’. If one defines ‘a jihadi’ as someone who engages in certain ways with ‘the jihadi’, this suggests a distinctive set of ways of operating with this body of material (perhaps relating to the possession of differing levels of jihadi cultural capital) which may possess a logic of their own. As a cultural system, the rules governing the pleasures, incentives and even, perhaps, means of advancement in Internet ‘jihadism’ may well relate to, but need not be identical to the ideological principles which are supposed to lie behind the global jihad as a whole.

5.

Forums as Jihadi Webpace

5.0 Internet Jihadism as a Collective Enterprise

The object is the complete transmission of experience to the Internet. It is true that one of our brothers is missing, and by God he has left a profound influence in the heart. But it is necessary that jihad not rely on any single person. And if we have experienced a loss, then I say as a media mujahid that we have not joined except so that we can experience imprisonment. We ask God for mercy and forgiveness. I ask God to accept us for recruitment to the lands of jihad and martyrdom. Right now, your duty is to have conveyed all your experience and all your information to others, whether in a manual, or forum threads, and you will have a reward, God willing, which will reach you after death and martyrdom. A brother who is inventive in the field of **graphic design** of videos or banners, if he presented a study, and tried to summarise the essence of what he knows will, God willing, complete the preparation of ten others beside himself. It is true that every brother has skills and creativity. But the transmission of information remains necessary, and it influences many. Another example: a brother who is a ***munshid***, if he mentioned to us the programmes he uses and the useful programmes, and ways to record (but with the **condition that this does not implicate him, or constitute a security risk**), and this **munshid** brother has a voice and an outstanding way of singing nashids, but by this means there become known, and we see, twenty munshids who did not know how to get started. And always the words of the **one who works** in a certain field will have a place in people's hearts.⁴²⁵

As this extract from a forum post usefully shows, Internet jihadism is very much a collective enterprise. There are jihadi poets like the 'Poet of Al Qaida' we encountered in the previous chapter. There are jihadi designers, there are jihadi hackers and computer experts, there are jihadi administrators, and (at the lowest rung of involvement) there are prolific jihadi web trawlers and reposters. Like other types of collaborative project, such as the wiki, these activities can perhaps be read as exemplifying Levy's notion of collective intelligence. 'No one knows everything, everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity'.⁴²⁶ One person can design, another can hack, a third knows about theology, a fourth is a poet, a fifth is prepared to trawl the Internet all day looking for choice titbits. Put it all together, and it makes a forum.

But when jihadis collectively produce on the Internet, what is it that they are collectively producing? And, in the process of doing so, what do they actually do? Is there, in fact an overall purpose being served? The post above makes very clear, of course, that the ultimate end is supposed to be jihad and martyrdom. But looked at more closely there is an ambiguity. The actual concrete practices which the writer talks about seem to have little direct relation to the goal that he seeks. ‘Emigration’ and ‘martyrdom’ come across as much as rewards which the Lord will provide to those who commit themselves faithfully enough to the cause of sharing experience online. Is then the amassing, production, and mutual consumption of *jihādiyyāt* simply what it claims to be: a way of helping the mujahidin, or could it be, for some, a reason for staying online by itself?

5.1 Basic Characteristics of Jihadi Forums

As we saw in the previous chapter, in immediate, practical terms, the centrepiece - the primary ‘location’ of Internet jihadism is the ‘jihadi forum’ (*al-muntada al-jihādī*). A jihadi forum is, at its heart, a web forum - the modern equivalent, in fact, of the electronic bulletin boards which provided the platform for some of the earliest manifestations of ‘virtual community’, including Howard Rheingold’s original ‘virtual community’, The Well.⁴²⁷ In other words, it is a many to many, dominantly text based, asynchronous communication platform.⁴²⁸ In practice, jihadi forums are nearly always the centrepiece of a wider, eponymous (even seemingly synonymous) ‘Islamic network’. But while the forum itself is frequently described by users as the ‘network’ (*shibka*), in reality the term accurately reflects the fact that these are indeed networks which extend over a variety of media. Embedded in the jihadi bulletin board is a private messaging system internal to the forum, which may be used to carry more sensitive communications not visible to other members.⁴²⁹ The forum’s management also communicates with members by means of a mailing list, which is used to provide information on new releases of various kinds. These may include, in turn, writings located on blogs or websites external to the forum itself, which may be named obscurely - presumably to avoid detection by casual browsers. Indeed, any material requiring significant amounts of bandwidth (video and audio in particular, and also pdf files) is hosted externally -

usually by a commercial ‘one click download’ site. At least since 2008 it has been normal practice to encrypt such material where it is hosted, providing the password along with the forum post which advertises and links to it. In addition to this, the ‘network’ centred on the forum may initiate particular branded ventures into other media. The network *Ansar al-Mujahidin* possesses its own (somewhat nomadic) group on the chat service PalTalk,⁴³⁰ and continues to operate an ostensibly affiliated YouTube channel.⁴³¹ Awan and Al-Lami note *Al Fallujah* forum’s interest in establishing a presence on the social networking site Facebook.⁴³² *Madad al-Suyuf*, seemingly in imitation of another type of networked jihadi entity - the ‘Islamic media foundation’ has set up its own content brand - mainly, it seems, for the provision of videos of Islamic *ḥalaqāt*.

The Islamic network, both by virtue of being a network, and also by deliberate design, is a robust entity. The forum is continually backed up by the administrator, and will usually exist as a number of differently named mirror sites. Should all versions of the forum go down (as happens from time to time) the mailing list enables members to locate it easily at its new URL when it returns. All materials disseminated through the site are hosted on multiple locations, to which many dozens of separate links are provided. A major activity on jihadi forums - indeed, one of the most relaxed forms of social interaction to take place on the forum itself - is the provision of mutual assistance in finding downloadable versions of older jihadi materials.⁴³³

As will be explored below, jihadi forums have, over their history, displayed variable degrees of openness to public viewers.⁴³⁴ Typically, however, a forum’s pages can be viewed openly without any need to log in. Moreover, joining a jihadi forum is often relatively easy - one fills out a form similar to any other network - providing one’s email address, nickname, time zone and (optionally) some personal information and is sent a link which enables one to log on. Occasionally, jihadi forums (like other forums) close registration to new members. But even when membership remains open, internal barriers exist in the forum itself. Access to the private messaging system is conditional on a member having made a certain number of posts (100 on *Madad al-Suyuf*, for example). And within the forum there is a section reserved for the management (*idāra*) which is

inaccessible to an ordinary member. To reach this, it is necessary to send a request directly to the management by email, explaining why one believes that one should be allowed access. Thus jihadi forums (like web forums and bulletin boards generally) embody a certain procedural hierarchy: there are ordinary members, who may merely lurk, ‘active members’, ‘senior members’, moderators and administrators.

While jihadi forums incorporate the same basic structure built in to the format of a web forum, they are also self-consciously Islamic online spaces, and try to maintain themselves as such. Indeed, the ‘terms and conditions’ for membership embody a mixture of ‘cyber’ and Islamic ethics which can perhaps be understood best through the notion of ‘cultured technology’⁴³⁵. To take a typical example, many of the conditions for membership in the forum *Al Fallujah* are purely practical – users are asked not to repeat posts, to post subjects in the appropriate part of the forums and so on. Moreover, users are warned against widely used but frowned upon online community tricks such as ‘sock puppeting’ (registering as more than one user). On the other hand, pictures of women are forbidden ‘even if there is justification’. Posters are asked to respect ‘Islamic manners, and manners in general’, and not to post anything which could cause *fitna* (dissent) among Muslims, and to make sure that any *aḥādīth* are cited correctly. In keeping with strict wahhabi and salafī views, music is forbidden on the grounds that it is banned by Islamic *sharī‘a* law. Members are also warned against ‘speculation into the unseen – especially Sufism’.

Perhaps most interesting, however, are the exhortations against activities which one might imagine would be an important part of online jihadism. Users are asked not to hack other websites, nor to use the forum to distribute materials on how to make bombs. They are also asked not to ‘preach’ on other websites, except with the express permission of the management of the forum.⁴³⁶ The first two of these conditions do not seem to be taken very seriously in practice. Instructions on how to make a bomb or hack a website can still be found from time to time on Al-Fallujah forum, and it may be that such exhortations are merely disclaimers (such as the one the forums often make about the content they host not necessarily expressing the views of the management). And yet it does seem to

be the case that jihadi forums today emphasise physical military preparation less than some sites in the past which devoted whole sections to the topic.

Indeed, the basic organisation of content in jihadi forums is worth briefly setting out.⁴³⁷ Present in virtually all jihadi forums⁴³⁸ are (1) a ‘general’ forum, primarily for articles posted by members; (2) a section for ‘communiques and releases’ (*bayānāt* and *iṣḍārāt*) which posts links to new propaganda items from mujahidin groups; (3) at least one primarily religious section - called, for example the ‘forum for shari‘a discussion’ in *Al Fallujah* and the ‘forum for tawhid and jihad’ in *Ansar al-Mujahidin*; (4), a news and current affairs section, often called, or subtitled *forum for discussion of the condition of the Islamic Ummah*, (5) a forum for ‘Islamic video and audio’ materials and (6) a ‘technical section’ dealing with topics such as computer programmes, graphic design and on occasion ‘the Islamic mobile phone’. Sometimes, these forums (also called *shāshāt* - i.e. boards) are grouped into higher level categories. *Shumukh al-Islam* for instance, has a ‘jihadi channel’, a ‘communiques section’, a ‘general section’, a ‘technical section’ and a ‘management section’. *Mujahidin Electronic Network* has a ‘media and political section’, ‘jihadi sections’, ‘Islamic sections’, ‘general sections’, ‘computer equipment and technical matters’ and, again, ‘management’.

The self-organisation of topics in jihadi forums represents, in outline, a number of the tensions of jihadism which we have already encountered: the uncomfortable, often messy organisational divisions between technology and technique on the one hand (audio, video, mobile phone, graphic design, ‘channel’) and content on the other (again the tripartite scheme of militancy, Islamic law, current affairs); and between the primacy of the forum management, the forum members and the mujahidin themselves.

This relationship is further compounded by the complex and indeterminate relationship between the ‘Islamic Network’ as a jihadi entity unto itself, and as a platform for material produced by mujahidin groups. As is often the case where matters of global jihadism are concerned, determining

whether such entities are best understood in terms of strategic calculations by political entities (whether conceived as movements, networks or something more formally constituted), or through more organic processes of interaction is as much a matter of which perspective one chooses to adopt as it is of different empirical realities.

5.2 Emergence of Jihadi Forums

Thus, the history of jihadi forums can be written either from the perspective of the ‘strategic’ propaganda needs of mujahidin groups, or of the gradual development of a grassroots jihadi movement on the Internet - even prior to September 11th. It is on the former perspective that most Western discussions have been premised to date. Brachman⁴³⁹ has chronicled the various propaganda materials produced by militant Islamic groups even prior to the availability of the Internet - a practice which, for the case of the GIA’s magazine *Al Ansar* has been illustrated in the memoirs of Nasiri.⁴⁴⁰ Kohlmann has observed, further, how producing videos of operations was a practice which developed in the Caucasus prior to the dissemination of such material online.⁴⁴¹ After September 11th, interest grew in sites which seemed to be in some sense affiliated to Al Qaida, such as al-Neda⁴⁴² and Azzam.com⁴⁴³. Following the closure of these sites, and a burst of new jihadi activity resulting from the invasion of Iraq, jihadi groups began to turn to sympathetic web forums as a means of disseminating their operation videos and other materials.⁴⁴⁴ Among these was a forum called Al-Ansar, which had the honour of being logged onto by Abu Maysara Al-Iraqi, press secretary to leader of Al Qaida in Iraq, Abu Mus‘ab Al-Zarqawi – an event which elevated Al-Ansar forum, and in particular its principal administrators – two electronic jihadis who went by the online handles of Irhabi [‘terrorist’] 007 and Muhibb al-Shaykhayn al-Tunisi to legendary status in the online jihadi community.⁴⁴⁵ After the closure of Al Ansar (for reasons to be discussed shortly), a number of new forums were created in its stead.

A useful alternative to this ‘top down’ account is the one presented by *Madad al-Suyuf* administrator Abu Harith al-Mihdar in a lengthy post to this forum entitled ‘Jihadi Forums: What

They Have, What They Need'.⁴⁴⁶ This figure is, it is worth pointing out, very controversial in jihadi circles. Notable for his scathing and often *ad hominem* attacks on other jihadi ideologues – most particularly Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi and another 'jihadi' shaykh, Hani Siba'i of the Al Maqreze Centre in London, who, stepping in to lend support to Maqdisi found himself accused of working undercover for British intelligence.⁴⁴⁷ Al Mihdar himself is no stranger to such accusations. A post on the salafi forum 'I Am a Muslim' claimed that he had been thrown out of countless forums in the past for his disagreeable behaviour and, on one occasion, for logging in with an Israeli IP address.⁴⁴⁸ Taking this further, a post in the forum Al Buraq presents an elaborate biography, claiming that the whole identity of Al-Mihdar is a front for a Jewish imposter by the name of Nadhim al-Maghribi.⁴⁴⁹ A ostensibly more likely account is offered by the journalist Sayyid Zaid who, writing in Islam Online, claims that Abu Harith al-Mihdar is actually an Egyptian Islamic scholar by the name of Hani al-Shadhili, who founded Medad al-Suyuf after unsuccessful attempts to establish himself as an Islamic authority in London.⁴⁵⁰

Notwithstanding such controversies, and the question of what bearing they may have on the accuracy and level of bias in Al Mihdar's account, his post nonetheless represents a useful window into the subjective impressions of someone who is, unquestionably, a highly experienced Internet jihadi. According to Al Mihdar, the history of jihadi forums can be traced from the activities of proponents of violent jihad on the earliest Arabic web forums of the mid-to late 1990s. These included what are still some of the major Arabic forums today, including *al-Sahat al-'Arabiyya*⁴⁵¹ and *Shibkat Ana al-Muslim* (I Am the Muslim Network).⁴⁵² Al Mihdar describes the scene at the time in the following terms:

Arabic forums started to appear approximately ten years ago, and the first one to appear was al-Sahat, as I recall. In 1999, 'Ana 'Arabi' [I am an Arab] appeared, which the Saudi intelligence bought, and renamed 'Ana al-Muslim'. [I am the Muslim]. At the same time Al-Sahab website appeared, which was Islamic in the beginning. In 2000-2001, the website Islam Online appeared. The writers on the Internet at that time went in different directions. I moved on to the website 'Jawab'. There was a chatroom mainly for Egyptians. And the groups that were taking part in dialogue on the Net were generally limited. There was 'Ali al-Qurani, who

debated against the Rafidi Shiites in al-Sahat, and against him there was a man called Al-Malak al-Tair [the flying angel], and with him speedbird, and a group of people who were supposed to be Sunnis. On the other hand there was audio chat in PalTalk. Most of this was Muslims against Christians. And the strange thing was that all these forums, except Islamway, remain online up till now. Others came and went and didn't leave much effect other than on a few people.

Al Mihdar's account goes on to corroborate the view already expressed by Western commentators as to the significance of the Al Ansar forum in the development of jihadism online. What is significant, however, is the way in which he offers a perspective not from the strategic propaganda needs of Al Qaida or its affiliates, but rather from the online actions of individual enthusiasts. For Al-Mihdar, the emergence of jihadi forums is the product of a gradual process of engagement whereby people with jihadi tendencies moved from general interest forums such as the *Arabic Realms*, through Islamic forums such as *Al Qala'a*⁴⁵³ or *Islah*,⁴⁵⁴ before finally producing the first properly 'jihadi' entities on the Web.

This account does not so much contradict the one set out above it, as provide the other half of the picture - offering an online world with its own characters and heroes. In practice, of course, setting up an online jihadi enterprise necessarily arises from the coming together of both offline and online jihadi experiences. This can be seen in the following post, concerning the establishment of a new website which appeared in 2009 on the forum www.swalif.net/soft - an Arabic forum specialising in technical computer matters. Here an 'active member' calling himself 'Castle of Palestine' informs members:

Peace be upon you, dear brothers, I have vowed to disseminate these materials on the Internet, wherever I have membership, and especially on sawalif-soft. The brothers of the mujahidin in Palestine want to establish a website for themselves, and they need the following:

1. News scripts for jihadi news
2. Scripts for articles with photos, where biographies of the souls of martyrs can be disseminated
3. Unique anashid scripts which could include albums and videoclips
4. Hosting on a Russian server, so that the Jews can't hit it.

5. Support for an email server
6. A flexible mail menu script – so that we can send the members the latest news

Frustrated at a slow response, ‘Castle of Palestine’ later complains:

For shame! 23 viewers and not one reply?

At last, however, constructive responses begin to appear. A member, who claims, in his electronic signature, to run an Arabic computer magazine responds saying ‘I am able to give you the scripts – the rest is for the other brothers’. Another responds that he is ‘happy to do the whole website – the design, hosting and the programming’. ‘Castle of Palestine’ arranges to continue the discussion with these two via email and messenger.

Others are more sceptical; ‘I hope that this website doesn’t serve the takfiri ideology of the followers of Bin Laden’ opined one. ‘Castle of Palestine’ responds in the affirmative.

Dear brother chat UAE – I said that the website is ‘jihadi’ so ‘the letter can be known by its title’. Whoever would like to help, they are welcome. If you don’t like it, just say a word of goodness and pray for your brothers in Palestine.⁴⁵⁵

Apart from the interesting insight which this discussion provides into the conceptualisation of what is meant by ‘jihadi’ to different people, it is possible to read from the exchange here both a sense of how the foundation of a jihadi forum fits into a wider understanding of the meaning and purpose of online activity, and some of the practical actions which such a development involves. For ‘Castle of Palestine’ the foundation of a jihadi forum is an extension of his existing activities in ‘disseminating these materials’. It is, so it would seem, a way of deepening his ‘vowed’ commitment to do so.

5.3 Security Concerns

Another point highlighted by this post is the extent to which jihadi sites are perceived (not unreasonably) as under constant threat from their enemies. The validity of this level of suspicion

was confirmed when it turned out that an important jihadi forum - suspected to have been Al Hisbah, the most important of the four ‘major’ jihadi forums that existed up to the end of 2008⁴⁵⁶ - was revealed by the *Washington Post*⁴⁵⁷ to have been run all along as a Saudi/American intelligence front. One of the most interesting things about this revelation, however, was the fact that it appears to have caused more consternation among Western analysts than it did among jihadis - who had already long appreciated the level of intelligence infiltration into forums. Posts on the jihadi forums where the story seems to have been appeared *Madad al-Suyuf*⁴⁵⁸ and *Hanayn*⁴⁵⁹ and the Salafi forums such as *Muslm.net*,⁴⁶⁰ *Alfetr.net*⁴⁶¹ simply referred back to the original story, with relatively little discussion. On *Muslm.net*, where the news generated most interest, one poster observed simply that all jihadi forums are penetrated. Another insisted, to the contrary, that the very fact that security services had had to create their own forum and then resorted to hacking others indicated that they had been unable to penetrate the ‘Al Fajr Media Centre’ at its highest level.⁴⁶²

Both comments, in their different ways, indicate to the default assumption of Internet jihadis that all sites, however useful, must be assumed suspect. Indeed, so fundamental and so perennial is the issue of security on jihadi forums that it can be argued that discussion of the topic has moved beyond mere practical considerations about how best to stay safe online, and become an implicit statement on the very nature and purpose of being online as a jihadi at all. This can be illustrated through consideration the example of following ‘guide for participants in forums on the Internet’ provided by qmagreb - the official website of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb.

It is no longer unknown to anyone how important are chat rooms on the Internet, and the effect achieved in international communications, so that it has come to pass that by means of them major newspapers and satellite channels seek out and publish the jihadi news (they contain). And the mujahidin have benefited from the Internet, and in particular from this application, a benefit praised in particular for the ending of the ... and the breaking of the Zionist/Crusader stranglehold over the media which has constrained the mujahidin for long years.

Intelligence apparatuses in all their varieties have become sensible of this danger [i.e, the propagation of jihadi news via Internet forums], as if they saw in these chatrooms an irreplaceable chance to trap whomever they

may of the ‘terrorists’, or whoever is opposed to this or that institution. And they have made great efforts to break into the chatrooms, inserting their members to trip up whomever they can thereby, or by putting pressure on the owners of those chatrooms to cooperate with them in such things, and indeed the CIA announced lately on the channel CNN that it was planning to set up Arabic language chatrooms to trap ‘jihadis’.

The document goes on to give ten rules for would be participants in jihadi forums to keep themselves secure that are, summarizing somewhat:

1. Remember that people you meet on the Internet may not be who they say they are
2. Use a proxy whenever using a forum
3. If logging on from an Internet café, use several, a good distance from where you live
4. Always delete ‘history’ after finishing, and disable cookies.
5. Be careful about files offered for download on a forum
6. If asked to download software in order to browse a forum, never do so
7. Never have email contact with anyone outside the forum; never give away your email address
8. Use different passwords for different forums
9. Never reveal anything about personal identity
10. ‘If you just want to chat and make friends, jihadi forums aren’t for you!’⁴⁶³

And yet, if jihadi forums are not secure platforms for operational planning, and they are not to ‘chat and make friends’, then the question arises as to what they are ‘for’. Al Mihdar states this point more bluntly when he comments:

People ask: ‘are these forums intelligence fronts?’ The answer is, no – whether al-Hisbah or al-Ikhlās or even -----, which fell lately. The brothers who work on it are not intelligence.⁴⁶⁴ Another question proceeds from this. Are these forums safe? The answer is no. And I include in that Madad al-Suyuf and every other forum in the world. The reason is that the forum might be penetrated or not. And the penetrations mean that the forum

will be harmed – just like what happened to Muhajiroun, Hisbah and others. Some ask: does Al Qaida know this? The answer is yes – just like you or I do.

In other words - notwithstanding the idea of jihadi forums as social media - as, 'Al Qaida's *MySpace*'⁴⁶⁵, the reality seems to be that jihadi forums are not - or are no longer - understood to be safe places for unfettered socialisation.

5.4 Purpose of Jihadi Forums

If Jihadi forums are not the thriving hubs of terrorist activity they have sometimes been suggested to be, then what explains their continued attraction?⁴⁶⁶ One possibility is that jihadi forums - even if they are not ideal for 'operational planning' are nonetheless vibrant communities in which jihadis can talk to one another and form social bonds. It is certainly the case that forums are spoken about by jihadis in profoundly affectionate terms. Al Hisbah, for instance, was nicknamed 'our green castle',⁴⁶⁷ and we shall see later how the experience of a forum being closed produces a shocking sense of loss and exile in its members. And yet, it is not clear that a great deal of obvious conversation actually takes place on forums - at any rate, not on the forums themselves. Posts on jihadi forums are very rarely followed by serious comments. Rather, they are responded to visually and performatively: jihadis offer 'prayers' to those who post well, through the formula 'God give you good' (*jazak allah khayr*), which is sometimes reproduced in animated and elaborately decorated characters. It seems, thus, as if it is not so much conversation which is important on the forums, as the feeling of virtual presence. Indeed, the lack of meaningful discussion on jihadi forums is something Al Mihdar finds particularly vexatious. As he writes:

I prepared a study of the forum Al Hisbah with the help of a team from Al-Madad. They gave me the number of members registered online daily. Then we calculated the number of members who genuinely contributed posts to the forum. Then we calculated the number of members who participated by making a comment. Then we calculated the number of members who say nothing but 'God give you good.' So we saw that the members who have their own posts were not more than 1.34% of the total number of members. And the ones who placed comments after these, were approximately 21% of total members. And of those 21%, not more than 0.6% said

something useful. I wished to give a message to those brothers suggesting that they put all of their ‘God give you goods’ together in a single post – i.e, this brother and that brother and the other brother all say ‘God give you good’ instead of having ten pages of these posts so that whoever is searching can’t find anything useful. After this we made another search for those who have placed their own posts (of the 1.34%). We found that 75% post subjects from Hamid al-Ali, Abu Basir or Dr Hani Siba’i. Of the other 25%, 24% posted subjects originally posted by others. This left us with 1%. Half of this consisted of insults. The other 0.5% was Abi Abd al-Razaq and his like. In Al Hisbah, they noticed this, and they made a forum specially for Abi Abd al-Razaq. This means that [overall] the forum is nothing more than a place where news of mujahidin is disseminated.

As hard quantitative data, it is questionable as to whether we can take this seriously. In October 2008, towards the end of its life (and at the height of its popularity) al-Hisbah claimed a total membership of 11,474.⁴⁶⁸ Based on the figures claimed above, this would suggest that the total number of people on the forum offering original and constructive contributions was less than one. As a general reflection on the lack of meaningful interaction within the bulletin board space, however, its broad accuracy can be confirmed simply by visiting any similar forum. Perhaps as a response to this, the jihadi forum *Ansar al-Mujahidin*, for instance, has begun to distinguish the ritual use of ‘*jazak allah khayr*’ with a category of its own. Next to a new topic on the forum it is now possible to see not just the number of responses, but also the number of ‘prayers’ which have been offered to the poster.

All this helps to corroborate Al Mihdar’s basic claim, which is that the fundamental purpose of jihadi forums is not so much to form close-knit communities for the further practical development of jihad, as to provide platforms for the dissemination of jihadi material.

Forums are either about disseminating ideology, like al-Madad (and this is what it was meant to be from the beginning), or forums for dialogue, in which there are replies and proofs and questions, and there are only a few of these. Examples of forums which spread ideology include the forum of Sheikh Nasir al-Fahd, God have mercy on him. He used to put theological research on it, and didn’t discuss anything. And now there is al-Athari, which aims to expose the disgrace of Madkhalism. There is also the forum of the Egyptian Jama’a al-Islamiyya. These do their work successfully and achieve their aims, though we have our differences with them. The dialogue forums are very few and rare. They include, for example, al-Sahat al-Hurra, and to establish a

forum like this requires experienced moderators, who delete whatever is unnecessary from the point of view of whoever is behind the forum. So if somebody adds to a forum a post which consists of nothing but swearing it is deleted, and if somebody makes a post which presents a good argument they leave it, even if it is against the opinions of the moderators.

Accordingly, he advances a particular argument relating to the question of whether forums should be openly accessible to the public, or closed. Al Mihdar sees closing forums and having only ‘membership by referral’ as a recipe for disaster, not just because it defeats the object of making jihadi material widely available, but also because it produces a clique which, inevitably succumbs to bitter factional infighting - leading ultimately to the end of the forum.

Nor - he insists - do such measures even work in the interests of security.

As far as I know they [al Ikhlas] never fell into the trap of registration by referral. What does this mean? It means selective registration. This is a dubious strategy, which I have no doubt was originally suggested by intelligence. Besides which, it has a problem. Why? Here’s why. Why do you close a forum? If you think that it is to prevent intelligence from entering, I say: how do you know that there aren’t intelligence already among the members? If you say that you know them all individually, I say: then why do some of them subsequently get ejected? Anyway, Al Hisbah used to use this method, with open membership for the media agency. In the end, all these secrets are available to any foreigner in a foreign country, as long as he has an email address with a foreign or Arabic newspaper or television channel he will be able to get into the forum.

We can see some of this disillusionment reflected in the experience of ‘Talib 21’, who complains thus on the ‘Politics, Jihad and Current Affairs’ section of the intermittently English language Islamic forum *Islamic Awakening*.

AlSalamu Alaikum

Sorry brothers, but these websites are very fanatic I have ever seen, I was a member of al-Eklass, one day I posted a thread asking about innocent people killing in Iraq and Afghanistan because of suicide bombing, they didn’t answer me but they kick me out. That means you can not benefit from this kind of web sites because you can not see different point of views, only the administrator point of view and his friends.

This post was met with little sympathy, with others replying that it served Talib 21 right. ‘Don’t blame them for banning you’ Abumuwahid, another forum member replied, ‘they must be sick and tired of those type of questions’. Perhaps more tellingly, ‘Traveler’ a senior member ended the discussion with the opinion that:

I didn’t ever believe those websites were running for the purpose of debate. Their task is clear for them.

Debates happen on other sites. Their job is to propagate and disseminate information from the Mujahidin.⁴⁶⁹

The idea that jihadi forums are simply dissemination platforms now seems to be taken for granted. As much can be illustrated by the fact that a post by ‘Song of Terror’ - an active member of *Al Fallujah* forum - is entirely premised on using statistics available from Alexa.com to demonstrate ‘why Al Fallujah is number one’.⁴⁷⁰ The implicit assumption behind this claim is that the size of a forum’s readership is the only consideration which matters in assessing its success. And yet, plainly, this view is not - or at least has not always been universal. For those who have been members of forums offering only ‘membership by referral’, there was, presumably, a different rationale. Of course, since the most prominent such forum was Al Hisbah, this rationale may well ultimately have been to entrap jihadis into revealing information or fomenting online plots. And yet, even so, the actual members of this forum must have had rationales of their own.

A useful way to examine this issue is to consider an emergency discussion that took place on Al-Hisbah in September 2008. Just previous to this, the other three ‘first tier’ jihadi forums (*Al Ikhlas*, *Al Buraq* and *Al Firdaws*) had mysteriously closed down, for reasons which were, it seemed unknown to the jihadis themselves, given the various people who were blamed - including Shiite hackers, Israel and the CIA. Jihadi forums come under attack quite frequently, and periodically become inaccessible. However, given the scale of the loss, and the uncertainty (so it seems) about when and indeed if the forums would ever reappear, the event caused great consternation.

Thousands of the members of the now defunct forums attempted to ‘emigrate’ - to the last forum standing - Al Hisbah. Indeed, such individuals were described as having ‘emigrated’, or become ‘exiled’ - using the same word used to describe the prophet Muhammad’s *hijra* from persecution in

Mecca to set up a new community in Medina. However, al Hisbah was at the time a referral only forum, which meant that it was inaccessible to these new arrivals. For this reason, a public thread was opened on 22nd September in which members of the forum discussed the important question of whether or not to open registration. The contentiousness of the question suggests that the view expressed by Al-Mihdar and Song of Terror was far from universally held at this time, and in this online place. The thread opened with a member called Abdullah al-Harbi commenting:

It is impossible that we should be unaware of the stopping of our forums, and their delay in returning. And because of that, it behoves us to work with this situation as we find it. Before a time, a long time ago, there was Al-Buraq forum, from among the most active of our forums. And after it was stopped for a long period, many of its active members fled to al-Ekhlās forum, and we said to ourselves: ‘maybe it is for the best’. For Al-Ekhlās was one of our most beloved networks. And it was a trusted site. But now three chief forums have been taken down, and these are Al Ikhlas, the blue Al Boraq [as opposed, presumably, to the red one, which serves the Islamic Army in Iraq] and Al-Firdaws. We ask God to reply to them with something good. And at the same time, the time is imminent for the concession of Al-Hisbah to the opening of its pages to visitors. What is the solution? Where will members of our networks congregate? And this is no small number. Indeed, the membership of Al Ikhlas was more than 57,000 members, including the members of Al Buraq and Al Firdaws after Ramadan. And the word is that they will be slow in returning. The word is their members despair of their return. And this drives them to search for other forums, possessing of the upstanding spirit of our forums. But perhaps they will flee to forums not known from the lists where it is not known who stands behind them – but perhaps cracked forums – and the list continues – penetrated by national intelligence with a view to placing our brothers, the Ansar, among their company.

What is the solution, in your opinion?⁴⁷¹

In the lively discussion that followed some members calling for a temporary opening of the forum to registration by new members, others for membership to remain closed, and yet others for some kind of compromise. Ironically, in the light of recent revelations, members expressed fears of penetration by ‘spies’ and ‘intelligence’, but also by ‘malicious individuals’ who would cause ‘headaches’ or ‘dissension’ – (i.e., *fitna*) in the community. A particular issue here seemed to be regarding the actions of the Islamic State (Al Qaida) in Iraq.

In other words, the protectionist view of the forum taken by Al-Hisbah members was essentially the obverse of Al-Mihdar's. For them (or at least for some of them), membership by referral was not about inviting factionalism and contention, but rather about walling out contention, in the service of a tighter community. Indeed, apropos of this, it is worth mentioning the personal slogan of Abdullah Harbi's account, which read - in diametric opposition to 'Song of Terror's' fixation on marketing statistics - that 'the forum is not [made] by the number of its members, but by their closeness [*rābiṭa*]'.

5.5 Al Sayf: 'Reading' a Forum

Thus far, we have been concerned with the 'big picture' with regard to jihadi forums: their overall structure, history, ways of organising material and (according to jihadis who help to run them) their ultimate purpose and the criteria for judging their success in achieving it. And yet we have still not really discussed the basic stuff of jihadi existence online - what we might call 'the jihadi quotidian'. In part, this is because it is a difficult, insubstantial thing to grasp. Being an ordinary jihadi on a jihadi forum is a practice which, on the whole, acquires form and meaning only in aggregate. While there are notable jihadi writers publishing primarily online who are capable of producing pieces worthy of admiration in themselves (Lewis Atiyatallah might be an obvious example here, see al-Rashid,⁴⁷² Stout,⁴⁷³ Brachman⁴⁷⁴; Bunt,⁴⁷⁵), and perhaps also a figure such as Ahmad Bawadi, for most jihadis, contributing to a forum involves primarily the act of compilation: sharing with members interesting pieces of news, jihadi items, theological opinions and, perhaps with growing confidence, occasional self-written pieces on political, moral or strategic topics. It is not so much the individual post which matters as the larger text produced by the combined effect of such little gestures.

Perhaps the easiest way to move beyond such generalities without simply turning the discussion into yet another analysis of jihadi content is to consider a jihadi forum in its totality. The example which will be used here is that of *Al Sayf Jihadi Forums*. *Al Sayf* was a relatively small forum of

what might be called the ‘second tier’ which lasted from July 2006 to July 2007. Informal comparison with sections of other forums (*Ansar al-Mujahidin*, *Al Fallujah*, *Al Mujahidin Electronic Network*, *Madad al-Suyuf*) suggests that its basic content and structure was broadly similar to other ‘jihadi’ forums. Its relatively small size however (786 original threads in total) means that reviewing it in its entirety is a viable project for a single researcher.⁴⁷⁶

Al Sayf’s posts were dominated by a handful of main members. ‘Wajih al Qamar’ was the pre-eminent the forum in terms of sheer volume of posting, contributing 597 posts and 478 original subjects over the active life of the forum. While Wajih al-Qamar’s posts ranged across every subsection of the forum, from bomb making instructions on the ‘Encyclopedia of Preparation’ to hacking tutorials on the ‘jihadi hacker’ forum to heartwarming or harrowing tales of sin and redemption in the ‘forum for Da‘wa to God’ to Ramadan greetings on the ‘general’ forum. Compared to others, however, Wajih al-Qamar showed a disproportionate interest in moral issues. Next in volume was ‘Al-Muhannad’. In contrast to Wajih al-Qamar, the dominant interests reflected in this member’s posting record were ‘military strategy’ and ‘preparation’. Farid Lutfi, another relatively prolific poster, was notable as the forum’s in-house designer. A fourth member, Abu Khattab al-Dalimi was the only member of the forum who apparently claimed active affiliation with a fighting group, being a member (so he said) of the Islamic Army in Iraq.

Overwhelmingly, the main activity on Al-Sayf consisted of reposting. By far the most common category of post, accounting for fully 40% of all posts on the forum, were copies of the ‘communications and reports’ released by mujahidin groups – particularly in Iraq. Posting official materials of these groups, then, represented the ‘core consumption activity’ of the forum – the one around which all other content was ultimately oriented.

Around this backbone of content relating to the regular achievements of the mujahidin against a variety of opponents of varying degrees of externality and internality (Crusaders, Jews, Shiites, apostates, spies) the wider ‘text’ offered by the aggregate of the forum’s posts becomes readable.

The community of the mujahidin stands between two other levels of community, between which it can be seen, in a sense, to mediate. Above and beyond the mujahidin is the Muslim Ummah as a whole – on whose behalf the mujahidin fight, and fighting for whom is the highest aspiration of the individual Muslim. On the other hand, at a more intimate level than the external battles of the mujahidin is the ‘jihadi’ community of support for the mujahidin – and most specifically the community of the forum itself. Each of these communities must face its enemies, and each depends in its way on the other. The mujahidin face the external enemies of the Ummah: Crusaders, Shiites, Jews and apostates. There is no defeat for the mujahidin. There is only progress in the form of the slaying of enemies or progress in the form of martyrdom. But there can be betrayal. And this arises from the lack of solidarity in the wider Muslim community: from those who are idle (*qa‘idun*), or ‘defeatist’ with regard to the jihad. There is also betrayal for the online community, through its penetration by spies or ‘researchers’, or through strife between members. A notable example of each of these occurred in the lifetime of *Al Sayf* forum. In the first case, a member called ‘mujahid 12’ whose somewhat critical response to a post entitled ‘how we can destroy the house of Saud’ led him, apparently, to being identified by the forum administrator as ‘a spy from among the general researchers’ and ‘not a real Muslim’. In the second, a member called ‘Muhammad’ ended up leaving the forum after criticizing a poem posted by Abu Khattab al-Dalimi in praise of ‘Saddam the hero’ – a comment which saw Abu Khattab engage in vitriolic backbiting with Wajih al-Qamar. These three community identifications at the same time stood as the central point in what might be termed ‘individual’, ‘community’ and ‘cosmic’ levels of discourse. Thus posts ranging from a lesson in how to prepare poisons and deliver them to Americans living in Saudi Arabia to discussions about the health benefits of walking to Mosque to a consideration of how one could use electronic da‘wa as a shortcut to gaining religious ‘benefits’ (*hasanat*) have in common their focus on a personal sphere of action. On the other hand, discussions ranging from the existence of knowledge on planetary orbits in Islam through to the principles of modern asymmetric war share a concern with the overall purpose and meaning of individual and collective action. Within this

context it is notable how individual – and especially ‘da‘wi’ posts seem to relate to quite recognisable personal difficulties and fears (fear of ill health, fear of death, fear of wasting one’s life in trivial and meaningless preoccupations, fear of dissolution of community solidarity) and how the discourse of preparation for jihad seems, in a sense, to offer what Hebdige might call a ‘magical’ solution to these problems through its emphasis on physical training, embracing martyrdom, and eschewing earthly pleasures.

Of course, ‘reading’ a forum in such a way cannot be used to rule out the possibility that material on the obligatory nature of violent jihad, or on the means of preparing explosives from household materials might play a significant role in leading to genuine examples of violence. But such a reading of the forum as text does appear to suggest that, within the forum community itself, the meaning of such contributions may have a purpose other than that which is explicit. Al-Sayf’s posts to the forum subsection entitled ‘Encyclopedia of Preparation’ conformed to the observations made by Stenersen regarding the generally unsystematic nature of such material.⁴⁷⁷ Material on ‘how to construct a secret camp’, ‘fighting and attacking in Taekwondo’ or ‘easy to make poison gas to torment the enemy of religion’ seemed to be posted altogether haphazardly, without any particular understanding of pedagogical scheme on the part of the poster. On the other hand, the potential merit that might accrue to the poster by virtue of contributing to the forum in these sorts of ways was clearly a significant motivation. Wajih al-Qamar observed as much in an admonition he wrote for forum members as follows:

First, I would like you to pose some of the questions to yourselves

Why do you write in the forum?

Why do you participate with your reply?

And do you read what is written in the forum?

Secondly:

I bring to some of these questions what is seen in reality. Many people participate in the forum for the sake of participating alone. Or they post however many times simply to increase the number of times they have posted. Or there are people who post in order to hear the replies which delight their ears or which please them. And there are among them those who enter forums and do not even read the thread that has been written and reply to his friend in order to wait for a reply from him. There are places where people want to enter and reply without even looking at the subject. And many of the threads are not read in any case. Or he will know who wrote the post and he will enter flattery for him with a nice reply.

5.6 Splits and Dissolutions

The broader case of *Al Sayf* forum is also interesting for the insight it offers into the apparent paradox on jihadi forums of sociality without obvious meaningful interpersonal interaction. In view of this the episode resulting in the exit of forum member ‘Muhammad’ is illustrative in two senses. First, it helps to demonstrate the pitfalls of being a jihadi on the Internet - the extreme narrowness of tolerated opinion, and the ever-present threat of violating these bounds. Second, however, it shows how the sociality of forums, to a significant degree, *actually occurs* through such ostensibly disagreeable instances of strife.

Thus, in jihadi forums, there is a tendency for what might be called the basic ethics of Internet culture to become inextricably bound up with religious and ideological issues, to the extent that regulation of the one necessarily becomes discussion of the other, and vice versa. As a further illustration, we might take the following complaint, posted on *Al Buraq* forum by a member called ‘Abu Muhjin al-Thaqafi:

Peace be upon you and the blessing of God

Very important

My brothers who are members in Al-Ikhlās forum

There is a member in Al-Ikhlās who is called ‘Hello Muqawama’, and just to clarify, I am not the owner of that name. I have stuck to a membership in Al-Ikhlās for almost a year, and I was carrying the identity ‘*mokawama*’ [this name is written in Roman characters in the original]. And on account of this, I ask the members present in Al-Ikhlās network to inform the management that I am not the owner of this name ‘Hello Muqawama’, even if it causes me problems, and possibly fitna among the members. Thanks.⁴⁷⁸

‘Abu Muhjin’s’ complaint quickly turned - in the discussion that followed - into a discussion about the merits of *Al-Ikhlās* and other jihadi forums. For the first respondent - who called himself ‘*Lover of the Group*’ (*Muhibb al-Jama’a*), Abu Muhjin was simply making himself difficult. ‘God be praised’, he remarked ‘either you can’t stand the brothers or they can’t stand you. For God’s sake, they are witnesses of this world and the next. Be agreeable to all, and they will be your neighbours in heaven’. The respondent urged Abu Muhjin to reconsider the merits of the jihadi community across its various forums, mentioning particular well known online jihadi figures known to the subject author as positive examples. Others, however, took the post as an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the forum in question. Laughing at the apparent triviality of the problem in question, one nonetheless observed that he disliked the members and the management of ‘these forums’, saying that ‘the ideas I hold have caused me many problems’. Another was more blunt. ‘Al-Ikhlās forum - witnesses of the next world? Ha ha ha. Those God-damned people have no scruples [*la yistahqūn*]. They are excellent only in *takfir* and cursing and insulting.’

What is interesting here is the way in which the values of online community and Islamic redemption seem to become conflated. An argument over nicknames is interpreted as risking *fitna* - discord in the Islamic community. And the question of the adequacy of the management in dealing with the situation seems inextricable from their policy with regard to *takfir*. The online community is, it seems, no longer just a conditional vehicle for spreading the propaganda of the righteous community. Rather, it has become the righteous community itself.

This helps to explain why the bounding of jihadi communities through restricted entry to forums has the potential to become so contentious - as illustrated in the following exchange from *Al Fallujah* forum, in which a member named ‘Algerian Companion’ wrote:

Brothers, for years I have tried to register in Al Hisbah forum, and when I am in it, It is of great benefit. But I have not been able to [register]. So I’m asking of the brothers of the place that they accept my request and carry it out, and the benefit is from God. Or if anyone knows a way that will allow me to register – and God bless you, especially in the network which presents juristic rulings on legal affairs which are beneficial, with God’s permission, and God bless you all.

He was responded to by an ‘Abu Mu‘izz al-Hamdani’ as follows:

Hahahahahahahahaha! By God, brother, God almighty, just before a bit, I was talking to someone I didn’t know by messenger, and in that conversation he informed me that he got a login to al-Hisbah, and he was able to come by it by buying it off one of the companions on the forum. And he showed me the idea, and what my profile would look like if I were to buy a membership, so that he could inform his friend. And the price was three cards for the contact! Hahahahaha! God, I sat down and laughed at that affair. I told him no way – I’ll stay with the free forums, thank you very much. With thirty dollars, I’ll buy myself a supply of machine gun bullets. By God, it’s a strange, funny story.⁴⁷⁹

It is typical, then, that these issues are not only discussed, but also performed in a post on *Madad al-Suyuf* forum entitled ‘Jihadi Forums in the Balance’ written by the ‘mujahid shaykh’ Abu Qudama al-Hami. The opening is worth quoting at length:

We do not deny the truth and the value of the Islamic media in general and the jihadi media in particular, and what its value is to the Ummah in terms of service by means of Internet networks. And it is an appreciated effort [*juhd*], and those who carry it out will be rewarded for it, and many of those heroes have sacrificed for the service of Islam and Shari‘a and Jihad and it is a blessed effort. We pray their hands may be strengthened and we praise the good deed of publicising the shari‘a and the jihad in the various countries of Islam. And this is the face of the sunrise of the Islamic media and the jihadi media, and no one denies it except an ignoramus [*jāhil*] or an ingrate.

However, in the development of the Islamic media and the jihadi media, some of the forums have experienced crises emerging as a result of narrowness of perspective and a superficial image of their work. And this malaise does not differ much from the development of other forums, except that it has an Islamic or jihadi colouring, and those forums did not adopt Islamic or jihadi colouring with respect to the principles of openness and freedom without fetters. But rather, in many of the secular forums and others the freedom of thought and imagination which is enjoined in the principles of shari‘a is greater than the freedom of thought and imagination in some of the forums which consider themselves to be Islamic or those that support the jihad and enhance its benefit.

The truth of the matter is that there are some forums which are nothing more than sounding boards for the transmission of the communiques of the mujahidin and the intermingling of communities for the purpose of building themselves by means of specific pictures - not to give the completeness of understanding and imagination and work to the shari‘a and the agreement of the requirements of religion and the foundation of Islam. That is to say that some of the managements have not reached the stage of maturity and awareness, and they lack understanding of the nature of shari‘a and jihad, and they have not paid attention to the wishes of their companions towards the understanding of Islam as a complete vision [*taṣawwur*] leading to work with data and contradictions grounded in reality and far from fanaticism and the partiality of people, and desires, and money and dissipation. And there have returned to us the ills of the old schools of thought in which factionalisation prevailed, and there is manufacture of opinion and decisions preceding the shari‘a texts and the *manāḥij* of Islam. And there is a reduction of the purity of Islam and the obligation of moving by it and working by its appropriate *manāḥij*, and the titles which are the adornments of going by these appropriate procedures, and the titles for addressing people and the breakdown of the *manāḥij* of the order of the heavens which order God almighty wanted there to be to him “His is the creation and the command. Blessed is Allah, lord of the worlds”. (Al-A’raf) and the Almighty said: “and who arranges every matter” (Yunis). The words became - those by which God Almighty commanded his prophet Ibrahim, the master of the righteous nation, and by which he ordained the apostle, prayer upon him, and peace on the most perfect face, these words became reduced to individual personalities, and they became the *manhaj*, and they became the *‘aqīda*, and they became the *tawḥīd* and the *jihād*, so that the purity of the shari‘a and tawḥīd and jihad and da‘wa went away to whims and the learning of the shari‘a was misrepresented and the *manāḥij* of jihad were distorted.⁴⁸⁰

Al-Hami's discussion here is a perceptive analysis of many of the issues we have just discussed: the narrow, restrictive ideological boundaries of jihadi forums, the tendency for them to become ends in themselves, their tendency to conflate these ends with those of the perceived interests Islam and jihad as a whole. At the same time, however, it is important to note that this piece, just as it is a diagnosis of the problems of cyber *fitna* in the online jihadi community, is also in itself a not inconsiderable contribution to the very problems it identifies. For, as the piece continues, it becomes clear that it is not just a general discussion of the problem of certain 'personalities' taking over and distorting online Islamic communities for their own ends, but actually a direct attack on the jihadi shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi - a figure whom, as we have already observed, is a particular enemy of *Madad al-Suyuf's* management. The irony, then, is a profound one. On the one hand, it relates directly to the nature of online social experience as textually constructed reality. Since reality is text, all text is performative. And thus even attempts to diagnose the problem of factionalism are unable to escape the process of the production of factionalism. But this is complicated yet further by the dimension of religion. Since religious righteousness can be manifested only in the harmony of the community, disharmony can only be understood as a *religious* failing.⁴⁸¹ And yet the very practice of talking about religion (which is, perhaps, the only religious action which can *genuinely* be performed online) is intrinsically productive of the disharmony which denies the validity of one's path, revealing it to be merely man-made vanity, rather than God-ordained truth.

For a jihadi online community, ultimate failure is elimination. This may come at the hands of outsiders - Zionists, Shiites, Crusaders are always massing to assault the virtual citadels of monotheism and jihad. A site may be hacked, or it may be penetrated, it may simply be suspended by its host. Aaron Weisburd, a freelance investigator of jihadi sites on the Internet claimed, at one time, to have been responsible for the removal of over a thousand sites simply by making their hosts aware of what they were hosting.⁴⁸² Certainly it is a routine part of jihadi existence for one's favourite sites to disappear, perhaps temporarily, before returning under a different URL. At other

times, forums disappear due to the arrest of prominent members - something which Awan and Al-Lami suggest was the real reason behind the closure of *Al-Ikhlās*, *Al-Buraq* and *Al-Firdaws*.⁴⁸³

Alternatively, forums may close for reasons which, on the surface at least, seem remarkably trivial.

An informed police source - who was responsible for investigating the case of Younis Tsouli claims that the much loved *Al-Ansar* forum went down simply because Tsouli did not have enough money to pay for its continued hosting, and became distracted by other matters.⁴⁸⁴

In the light of such possibilities, it is interesting to consider Al-Mihdar's diagnosis of the failure of *Al-Ansar* which, in contrast (or perhaps, as a complement) to the explanation just offered, attempts to equate the failure of the forum as a whole to the failure of its community. For him, this is the ultimate indictment of his hated practice of 'membership by referral'. As he asserts:

When they closed the membership in *Al-Ansar* there was a total disaster, as I mentioned before, because membership was limited to a certain type of people. And thus they opened the door to factionalism and splitting inside the forum. Not only that, but people were even afraid of writing frankly. And the situation continued like this for a period. Then the website was closed and removed forever. But in the last days of *Al-Ansar*, some were able to open another forum – *Al-Ikhlās*.

Presumably, there is at least some subjective truth to Al-Mihdar's claim about factionalism and splitting - even if it was not the efficient cause of the forum's end. Whatever the ultimate reality, however, it is perception here that matters. For Al-Mihdar's view ties, it seems, closely to the same view set out as a poetic lament in the following chapter by the 'Poet of *Al-Ansar*': the intensely affective cycle of creation, collapse, flight and rebirth in which is found the meaning and power of the jihadi forum.

This returns us, then, to the question of why jihadi forums exist. If the purpose of forums is discussion and debate then, as we have seen, this is better accomplished outside the narrow bounds of specifically 'jihadi' forums. If the purpose is to act as a platform for operational planning, it now seems to be widely agreed that this is a dangerous, naive and ill advised activity. But even if, indeed, as it is said to be by the jihadis themselves, the purpose of jihadi forums is simply to

disseminate jihadi material, this end seems already to be served at least as well by those places where content is often, ultimately, hosted in any case: Archive.org, YouTube and similar sites. These leads to one last possible strategic explanation: the role of the forums in authenticating releases.⁴⁸⁵ Al-Mihdar, however, is sceptical even about this need.

A release gets out of Afghanistan somehow with someone from Al-Sahab foundation. It is then uploaded in a country which is not under American control, such as Iran or the tribal region of Pakistan. He then gives a link to where it is hosted, through the email of a certain known person. This person uploads the record with a number of active brothers in several websites. He then gives a file out containing links to a person called the 'Al Fajr media centre'. If you don't know, Fajr is the old name for Al-Hisbah, so it goes from Fajr to Hisbah to the rest of the forums. They may hire agents in some forums, depending on the people who are behind Al-Hisbah. And I laughed a lot when I was told that there are authorised centres for spreading films – as if the Americans are able to get an impersonator of Shaykh Usama and to spread a film of him! Or as if somebody would risk his reputation by spreading news of jihad that would subsequently turn out to be fraudulent. Authorised centres are just options for certain people, and are not there to stop anyone else from spreading material. The materials which we have have the Al-Hisbah logo, whether they come from Al-Hisbah or another forum. In the end it's the same material.

This attitude may help to explain why, as we saw earlier, the discovery that Al-Hisbah was inauthentic all along has done little, so it seems, to alter Internet jihadis' commitment to their own forums.

5.7 Analysis: Geeking the Jihad?

How then, to explain jihadi forums? At one level, jihadi forums need little explanation. They are, if anything, striking for their resemblance to Web forums and bulletin boards on other subjects. The question, rather, is how to explain the gap between the idea of jihadi forums as representing a real and important contribution to the efforts of the mujahidin and the seeming reality. For in fact, as we have seen, jihadi forums offer neither logistical bases, nor vibrant spaces for debate and conversion, nor even necessarily the only or best option for disseminating mujahidin propaganda onto the Web. This suggests that the underlying reasons for the formation and persistence of jihadi forums may

actually have rather little to do with the functions which they are supposed to perform. And yet jihadi forums, whatever else they do, persist. As a postscript to this chapter, many of the forums it refers to (*Al-Fallujah*, *Ansar al-Mujahidin*, *Madad al-Suyuf*) disappeared following the dissemination of the English language magazine of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, *Inspire*. *Al-Fallujah* had, for a long time before been only intermittently available and this may have been the final straw for this forum. By December, however, *Ansar al-Mujahidin* had bounced back, with a triumphal message posted on the 1st of *Muharram* – the Islamic New Year.⁴⁸⁶ Regardless of their actual strategic value, jihadi forums seem to fulfil some important need for the jihadis who inhabit them. But what exactly is this need?

One model which jihadi forums seem to fit well is that which Robert Kozinets, in relation to other types of Web forum, calls the ‘geeking community’.⁴⁸⁷ These, he describes as ‘online gatherings where the sharing of information, news, stories and techniques about a particular activity is the community’s *raison d’être*’. Geeking, Kozinets argues, is not predominantly about social relationships, but rather about ‘informational’ relationships and (following Tapscott and Williams) about ‘prosumption’.⁴⁸⁸ As such, this model would explain the seeming paradox that jihadi forums appear to offer their members a powerful, affecting experience even though there is little activity which is obviously ‘social’, and in fact most activity seems to consist of little more than the amassing of data by cut and paste. Indeed, such an observation might help to fill out the interesting notion of ‘infospiritualism’ which Knowles identifies as a core part of ‘Islamist neorealism’.

Thinking in such terms invites us to consider jihadi Web forums as having an emotive effect for members which is greater than the sum of their parts. While individual posts may seem to exhibit relatively little creative investment on the part of members, their aggregation – and the very fact of there existing thereby a ‘jihadi space’ on the Internet seems to produce an emergent sense of – to use the words of the jihadi writer Abu ‘Amru al-Qa‘idi – ‘jihadi ambience’ (*ajwa’ jihādī*).⁴⁸⁹ Indeed Al-Qa‘idi’s opinion on forums serves to summarise a good deal of what this chapter has said.

And ultimately the jihadi forums - and this is what distinguishes them - convey news of the mujahidin, and their releases, and their literature, and this is their breathing space and their place. This is the jihadi forum. You find the agencies of the jihadi organisations and the brothers in the media, who are effectively members (*i‘dā’ fi‘lan*) of the organisations, and brothers from the Islamic State of Iraq. And you find in them that of someone who used to post with you, they then announce the glad tidings (*yazafūna khabr*) of his martyrdom. And you find in them brothers who have been in the jihad for real previously and then returned, and you see in them workshops, ideas and suggestions for assisting jihad and the mujahidin...

The only inconvenience of those forums is that they are - sorry to say it - the target of all the world’s intelligence services, and the source for all the planet’s researchers... And therefore we urge the brother that he never say anything concerning an operation or not indicate towards that in those forums, or to try to contact someone by private messenger. All of this is dangerous for them. [ie, the two communicating with each other - ‘them’ is given in the dual form]... and we urge that the moderators and the members not allow in them the entry of *murji’a*, and the *murjifīn*, and the troublemakers (*muthabaṭīn*), and they must purify their subject threads. They must understand that it is all about da‘wa, and perhaps a word or a communication from a brother will motivate a new brother onto the path.

The seriousness of the commitment to jihadi da‘wa - and indeed Al Qa‘idi’s wider views as to the role of the Internet in recruitment - will be examined in a later chapter. At present, however, it is important to consider the implication of Al Qa‘idi’s words. He wishes for persuasion, but will not admit the possibility of dialogue. He emphasises the power of forums in bringing sympathisers in contact with authentic representatives of the jihad, but recognises that they are full of spies, and will not hear of them being used as platforms for ‘real’ operational activity. In other words, he subscribes to a view of the forums which is about performance more than about speech, and about speech more than about authenticity. In other words, about speech as performance. As he says, about *ambience*.

6.

Being a Jihadi on the Internet

6.0 'Jihadis' on the Internet

The idea that there exists a tension between the overt purpose of jihadi online communities – supporting the mujahidin – and the actual set of pleasures which motivate people to engage in online jihadism would seem to demand that we delve deeper into the question of what it means to be 'a jihadi'. In the fourth chapter, it was observed that there do exist 'jihadis' on the Internet who refer to themselves as such. While in practice those who may be described as 'jihadis' may more commonly refer to themselves with terms such as *ansar al-mujahidin* (a term which, as we shall see, carries its own ambiguities), or, equally problematically, *mujāhidīn i 'lāmiyīn*,⁴⁹⁰ the fact that the term 'jihadi' is used self descriptively by some 'jihadis' represents a potentially interesting problem. Why, after all, would one refer to one's self as a 'jihadi' rather than as a *mujahid*?⁴⁹¹

Linguistically, the notion of 'a jihadi' implies not someone who is an actual practitioner of jihad, but rather, someone who has an ideational relationship with jihad: a person who is 'jihadi' in the same way that a website or a video may be 'jihadi'. Thus there would seem to be, built into the very idea, a sense of virtuality – to employ the word as Levy does when he defines it as 'a kind of problematic complex, the knot of tendencies or forces that accompanies a situation, event, object or entity, and which invokes a process of resolution: actualisation'.⁴⁹² A jihadi is, by the very admission of being a jihadi, someone who declares her or himself to be in a process of becoming: not someone who is actually doing violent jihad, but rather a seeker towards it.

A peculiar consequence of this, however, is that there would seem to be something significantly more natural to the idea of 'being a jihadi' on the Internet than there is to that of, say, 'being a

Muslim'. To be a jihadi is to manifest one's self in terms which a mediated environment clearly affords - through images and words. By contrast, 'being a Muslim' on the Internet entails the creation of ways of *practicing* which, in turn, appear to require some notion of embodiment.⁴⁹³ Of the five practices which form the basic 'pillars' of Islam, only one can unambiguously be performed online: the practice of *zakāt*, or alms giving. Another - *shahāda* - the declaration that there is no God but God and Muhammad is the prophet of God is a matter for scholarly debate - particularly given that it is the enunciation of this phrase before competent male witnesses that makes one a Muslim. Some scholars hold that this act of conversion can take place by a person declaring the shahada (whether orally or textually) via the Internet. The remainder can take place only metaphorically, if at all. As Derrickson reports, electronic rituals of prayer (*ṣalāt*) and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) have been constructed in virtual environments such as *Second Life*. But the experience here - though compelling - is clearly ersatz. As she observes in her discussion of her experience in a representation of the *Haram al-Sharif* in Mecca, prayer 'in' an electronic Mosque does not appear to be equivalent to the obligatory prayer mandated by Islam, since it is impossible to adequately embody thereby certain specific physical steps, such as ritual ablution. Moreover, given that the creators of *Second Life*'s *Haram al-Sharif* have openly welcomed non-Muslims to take part in the enactment of the Muslim *Hajj* it affords, this, too argues against any notion of real life equivalence.⁴⁹⁴

And yet, the very fact that it is possible to be a 'real' jihadi via the Internet in contradistinction to the impossibility of living out a complete Muslim life in virtual space carries with it paradoxes of its own. For behind 'the jihadi' there still lies (or at any rate, is imagined to lie) the reality of *jihad*. Authenticity, even if it makes little difference to the quality of jihadi experience online, must be *seen* to matter. Thus the question arises: are 'jihadis' simply engaged in *representing jihad* (in both senses of the word 'represent'), or are they in some sense actually engaged in performing what is (to one who is ideologically 'jihadi') a real Islamic obligation?⁴⁹⁵

In asking what it means to be a jihadi on the Internet, one is thus asking two potentially quite different questions. On the one hand, there is the explicit question - what functions does the Internet have for a 'jihadi'. This question turns on the larger one of what it means to be a jihadi at all. The second question is 'what online *processes* are involved in the action of manifesting one's self as a jihadi. Let us take these two questions one at a time.

6.1 The Jihadi Manhaj

For 'jihadis', jihad is to be understood primarily as violent struggle. As the 'jihadi' scholar, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi defines it, it is 'fighting the unbelievers for the exaltation of the word of God, and assistance to that' (*qitāl al-kuffār, li-i 'la' kalimāt Allah, wa-l-mu 'āwana 'ala dhalik*).⁴⁹⁶ Indeed (as we shall find in the following chapter), mention of the 'greater jihad' or the 'spiritual jihad' among Internet jihadis is a good way to be laughed (or insulted) out of court. Moreover, jihad is in the present age an individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*). Which means, in principle, that every real Muslim is committed to practicing violence as a religious duty - on pain of risking his (and, to a lesser degree, her) status as a Muslim at all.⁴⁹⁷ And yet, as al-Maqdisi himself observes, not all can fight directly. Some must also provide 'assistance'. Conceived as a military campaign - particularly in the modern sense of 'full spectrum' warfare, it is plainly not necessarily the case that every 'soldier' must see front line duty. War can be 'fought' with words and with money as well as with weapons. Moreover, soldiers cannot spend all their time in actual fighting. They must spend some of their time training, organising and preparing.⁴⁹⁸ And since all these activities are ultimately component parts of the overall violent struggle, they are, in a sense all ways of fulfilling the obligation of *jihad*. The analogy is, to some degree an apt one. After all, real armies are vast agglomerations of practices, many of which have little directly to do with the actual business of fighting. The American army - through its provision of universal health care and opportunities for

college education - is of course in some ways the image of the expansive welfare state to which conservative Americans are so opposed in general. But the problem is that jihad - unlike service in an actual military institution – is not presented by jihadi thought as a collective activity, but precisely as an *individual obligation* which one does not only for the good of the community, but ultimately for the good of one's own soul. There is, therefore, and in principle, no overall organisational mechanism to determine whether a particular activity is a genuine contribution to the collective objective of violent struggle. In the absence of this, determining whether non-violent 'assistance' or 'preparation' activities are real jihad or not becomes a troublesome question.

This potential paradox can be seen strongly in evidence in a very popular jihadi text, *39 wasīla li-khidmati al-jihād wa-l-mujāhidīn fī sabīl Allah*. This is normally translated into English as '39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad',⁴⁹⁹ but the original Arabic title is rather less certain about whether the actions it describes actually constitute *participation* in jihad, meaning literally '39 means to the service of jihad and the mujahidin in the path of God'. Nonetheless, the text makes clear that the danger of falsifying one's Islam through relinquishing the obligation of jihad can be obviated through nothing more than the sincere, internal intention of taking part in a 'raid': that is, to translate the words used as closely as possible: 'the *innermost decision* (*ḥadīth*) of the *self* (*nafs*) towards *raiding* (*ghazu*) *cancels out* (*yanfi* 'an) from a person every *aspect* (*ṣifa*) of hypocrisy'.⁵⁰⁰

What is remarkable about the doctrine of intentionality as set out by Al-Salim is the way in which it seems to mirror, even to recreate, the very notions about faith and apostacy traditionally seen as one of the keystones of the Islamic community of belief. Just as, conventionally, a Muslim might hold that: 'As to the question of a person being in fact a believer or not, it is not the task of any human being to decide it. This matter is directly to do with God, and it is He Who shall decide it on the day of Judgment,⁵⁰¹'; so, similarly, Al-Salim seems to be arguing that provided one has made the internal decision to participate in jihad, one is on that account a legitimate Muslim.

This is despite the fact that being prepared to judge the condition of Muslims on the basis of behaviour is precisely what is normally held to form the basis for the jihadi position.⁵⁰² Jihadis are, after all, supposed to be the ones who presume to be able to pronounce *takfir* on Muslim rulers because they impose laws other than the shari‘a . And yet, by placing the emphasis he does on the decision to take part in jihad, Al-Salim seems to be subtly altering the criterion for falling within the charmed circle of Islamic legitimacy from correct practice (upholding the laws and central obligations of Islam), to correct doctrine (espousing a belief in the necessity of jihad).

In doing this, Al-Salim seems to reveal a paradox in the jihadi system which invites it to be inverted entirely. Instead of producing a situation in which the entire body of *Muslims* are urged to participate in violent struggle, he appears to imply a situation in which a narrower body of ‘jihadis’ (those who have, internally, ‘made the decision’ to participate in jihad) participate in a set of activities which are aimed not directly towards advancing Islam, but rather, towards the advancement of Islam’s jihad. Thus, even while insisting that jihad is *farḍ ‘ayn*, the actual practice of, specifically, violence becomes, in effect, *farḍ kifāya*.⁵⁰³ Or, alternatively, even while insisting that jihad is fighting, the proliferation of ways of supporting fighters becomes in effect a kind of ‘greater jihad’, in which one’s struggle with one’s heart, one’s tongue and one’s prayers is vicariously offered as a kind of violence by proxy.⁵⁰⁴

In fact, *39 Ways* offers a comprehensive path of jihadi practice, short of actual participation in physical violence. The one who ‘serves jihad and the mujahidin’ is to pray for the mujahidin, to yearn for martyrdom (which, if yearned for honestly enough, will reward the yearner with the status of the martyr ‘even if he dies in his bed’).⁵⁰⁵ She is to give her money to the mujahidin, to help outfit them, to support his family, to collect donations for them - even to give the *zakat* for them. He is to praise the mujahidin, to commemorate their exploits, to urge others to follow in their footsteps,

to encourage them, to verbally defend them and attack their detractors (the hypocrites), to offer them advice, to distribute news of the mujahidin, to publish fatwas for them, to inform scholars and preachers about them, to acquire various physical skills: marksmanship, first aid, physical fitness, to raise children to love jihad and, (at number thirty-four) to practice ‘electronic jihad’.

Thus, while never abandoning the ideal of participation in real, physical violence, the possibility seems open in the jihadi literature for jihadism as a self contained community - for a movement from the path of *jihad* to what the Muslim Public Affairs Committee described - apropos of the publication of the English language jihadi magazine ‘Jihad Recollections’ as the ‘jihadi lifestyle’.⁵⁰⁶ In keeping with the general themes of *39 Ways*, the first edition contained a typical mixture of geo-political analysis, fitness training, military technology (a speculative article on the potential battlefield value of pulse weapons), battlefield memoirs of former mujahidin and a dose of relevant theology.

As flippant as the notion of a ‘jihadi lifestyle magazine’ may be intended to be, the concept of ‘lifestyle’ in English arguably finds a serious Islamic equivalent in the notion of *manhaj*. Commonly translated as ‘method’, or (especially in modern fundamentalist types of Islam) as ‘methodology’, the word derives from the verb to ‘approach’. The word *minhāj* appears once in the Qur’an, (5:48) ‘we have made for you a law and a *clear way*’.⁵⁰⁷ For Sayyid Qutb, the manhaj is understood as operating at the systemic level as the ‘method’ or ‘procedure’ for establishing the Islamic society.⁵⁰⁸ Commonly, however, the word is applied to the details of everyday living, as in the claim that ‘Islam is even a method [manhaj] for living ordinary life’.⁵⁰⁹ For salafis, salafism means living by the *manhaj* of the *salaf* - the pious predecessors of the first generation of Islam. This is seen as an all-encompassing way of living *individual* life. For instance, Salman al ‘Awda observes that: ‘The question of the manhaj is an important question relating to the stabilisation of the career of a person, whether it was a career of knowledge, or of work; and whether it was the

person individually, or in a group'.⁵¹⁰ Likewise, Farid al-Ansari insists that the concept of *manhaj* applies to the individual Muslim's practice of remaining on the 'straight path' enjoined by God.⁵¹¹ In practice, salafis believe that the question of *manhaj* relates to almost every detail of life, from travelling to eating, to marital relations and personal hygiene.

The notion of a specifically jihadi *manhaj* is, then, an intriguing one. A mention of such a concept can perhaps be found in the work of Abdullah Azzam, in which he describes the mujahidin's establishment of primary schools in Afghanistan, and the curriculum selected for them, as an 'Islamic and jihadi *manhaj*'.⁵¹² And even here, this reference seems to carry with it some of the potential ambiguity of the term. For if, generally, a *manhaj* amounts to the ritualisation of ordinary life, then a *jihadi* *manhaj* would seem to imply such a thing at second remove; something like a 'ritual militarisation of ordinary life'. If the conventional requirements of Islamic piety are to be subordinated to the greater need of a 'jihad' which necessarily is made up of what might be otherwise seen as secular activities; and if this set of activities then serves, itself, as the justification for another set of essentially secular activities, then it would seem that what has been effected is a double secularisation. Instead of, for instance, blogging (an everyday activity), 'for Islam' (a transcendent goal), one is now blogging 'for the jihad' which in turn is fighting 'for Islam'.

In fact, an apparent confirmation of this inference can be found in a post to the forum 'Muslm.net' entitled 'The Salafi Jihadi *Manhaj* with Regard to Changes in Egypt' (*manhaj al-salafiyya al-jihadiyya li-taghayyur fi miṣr*).⁵¹³ Here, the author argues that 'jihad is now an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*) upon each of us.' However, since - as he posits - Muslims, particularly in Egypt are in a state of weakness (that is, they are *mustaḍa 'fīn*), the time is not right for actual violent action. Instead, he argues '*fī ḥālat 'ajiz al-ḍu'f 'an al-qiyām bi-l-jihād, yuṣbiḥ al-i'dād fard 'ayn*', that is 'in a condition of incapacitating weakness with regard to the establishment of jihad, *preparation* becomes an individual obligation'. And preparation, in the view of the author, is to be understood as

self-education (*tarbiya*), and improving one's mind (*tazkiyat*). This latter word is important, since it seems to imply not just acquisition of traditional Islamic knowledge (*'ilm al-sharīf* as the author calls this), but also knowledge which will stimulate the mind generally.

This could be read as a prescription for a de facto return to quietist salafi activity (which, after all, is itself only tactically quietist - seeking to purify the Ummah as preparation for the reconstitution of the Islamic state and the righteous jihad).⁵¹⁴ But the author refuses such a reading. For, in his view, so fundamental is the importance of jihad, that it actually trumps all the normal practices of Islamic piety. As he writes 'the sin of abandoning jihad is greater than any sin. And the damage of abandoning jihad returns to the whole Ummah.' From this, it follows that 'even if all the people were adulterers who drank alcohol, but who practiced the jihad in the path of God, it is still better than that they were adulterers who drank alcohol but did not practice jihad - which is as obligatory to them as prayer or alms giving'. The statement here is, in fact, simply a logical corollary of the belief that jihad is a *fard 'ayn*. After all, drinking alcohol and committing adultery - though sinful - are not, from a salafi point of view, foundations of religion such as to render the one who practices them an infidel. Whereas jihad - if it really is 'as obligatory as prayer or alms giving' - is. But the shocking openness with which the conclusion is drawn is remarkable.

This brings to mind the now quite well established notion of jihad as a way of reconciling Muslims to the cultural conflicts resulting from emigration or the arrival of globalisation and technological modernity - as may have been the case with regard to the much discussed fact that members of the 'Hamburg Cell', after accepting their mission, resumed the 'Western' lifestyles they had previously rejected. Here, while undoubtedly there was a 'strategic' purpose to doing so, in helping to avoid making the project conspicuous, the actual facts of what happened suggest that to some extent the terrorists' return to this way of life was not merely a front - evidenced, for example by the fact that one of the hijackers, Ziad Jarrah, maintained a serious long term relationship while in the United

States with his German girlfriend Aysel Senguen, travelling to see her, ‘making hundreds of phone calls, and communicating frequently by email’.⁵¹⁵

The point here is not - it should be stressed - to reiterate the often crudely advanced notion that jihadis are necessarily religious ignoramuses who are hypocritically lax in their observance of traditional Islamic practices. The rather lurid idea that jihadism is a creed for justified sinners who exploit the clean slate offered by martyrdom to indulge in every sort of worldly activity has been put forward succinctly by Oliveti, for example.⁵¹⁶ And indeed, for different contexts, Sageman⁵¹⁷ and Hegghammer⁵¹⁸ have shown that those involved in violent, ‘salafi’ jihad often do not have a high level of formal religious education.

There are, however, two obvious problems with extrapolating a simplistic argument from these facts about the relationship between jihadism and religion. First, such arguments seem directed against a straw man. No one but the crudest kind of Islamophobe would think that as a Muslim becomes more religious, so he or she would *necessarily* become more likely to get involved in violence. If jihadis are compared, generally, to Muslims with a high level of religious learning, then they will naturally tend to be seen as unlearned. Seen in its own terms, however, jihadism is better understood as one of a number of options for Muslims at all levels of religiosity. For instance, according to ‘Abu ‘Amru al-Qa’idi’, the author of *A Course in the Art of Recruiting*, jihadism must vie for recruits with ‘salafism’, and with political Islamic ‘movements’ such as (presumably) the Muslim brothers.⁵¹⁹ In this environment, it is better to go after unreligious Muslims, as Muslims who are already committed to a movement are less likely to be persuaded into another one. Given such a state of affairs, one would expect to see a hierarchy of religious knowledge within jihadism, with highly knowledgeable jihadi shaykhs at the top, and only marginally knowledgeable ordinary jihadis at the bottom. But this in itself says nothing about the Islamic credentials of jihadism as compared with any other grouping.

Secondly, the argument that jihadis lack formal religious credentials may be a circular one. Jihadis understandably lament what 'Isa al-'Awshan calls the 'Desertion of the Scholars'.⁵²⁰ And if the traditional - heavily state monitored - centres of Islamic learning will not permit jihadi thinking, then it is scarcely more fair to accuse jihadis of lacking formal qualifications than it would be to say that a Lutheran pastor is unqualified because he has not attended a Catholic seminary.

More useful than to try to measure jihadism by Western or traditional Islamic notions of what constitutes authentic religiosity, is to examine what jihadi thought actually achieves by means of its emphasis on the concept of jihad. Firstly, without overtly downplaying the importance of conventional piety, the jihadi position does elevate practical 'activism' as a religious activity relative to the liturgical and ritual requirements of Islam. This point is made by 'Al Qa'idi', when he suggests that one source of potential recruits for jihadism are former members of Islamic 'movements' who have since embraced salafism, but may remain frustrated by the lack of activity this seems to involve.⁵²¹ In this sense, it is consistent with the Islamist project initiated by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani which aimed to find a way of fusing Islam with contemporary technology and scientific knowledge. Al-Afghani noted the irony that one could (in his day) study the thought of Aristotle at a traditional Islamic *madrasa*, while one had to attend a European model military college in order to study the work of Galileo.⁵²² Under the rubric of activities such as *i'dād* (preparation), advising, and electronic jihad, a jihadi can, it seems, acquire *'ilm* (knowledge) and *tarbiya* (education) in both secular and traditionally religious senses of the word.

At the same time, however, and in contrast to the collective approach implied by the Islamism of al-Banna, Rida or even Qutb, jihadism - through the very fact of its being premised on support for violent and forbidden activity - precludes itself from turning into a conventional political movement. In this sense, it resembles Roy's notion of Islamic 'neofundamentalism' or the salafi

movement as described by Wiktorowicz⁵²³ which, turning its back on attempts to gain power through formal political process, instead seeks to change things at the level of culture and society.⁵²⁴ Indeed, jihadism is in principle even more radically individualistic, for while neofundamentalists try to create Islamised zones at the community level through means such as *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*.⁵²⁵ The actions which constitute the practice of jihadism take place not in the parliament, on the street or even in the school, but rather within the activities of everyday life. An illustration of this may be provided by a post which appeared on website 'jihad1.com' on January 2009.

'I desire jihad, but the government has stopped the way to jihad.' Are you constantly coming across this thinking? I believe that every respectable, decent person who won't stand for justice and shame thinks about jihad. And in any case: "who did not do jihad or decide in his heart to do jihad died with a portion of hypocrisy". The main point in the subject: do you want to be sure that you really desire jihad? And what stands in the path of your jihad? The government systems, not the desires of the soul. Put it another way: welcome to this field of jihad:

1. Stop smoking: mainly American cigarettes
2. Boycott products which support Zionism: "Starbucks" and so on
3. Boycott products which support American Zionism: Pepsi, Kentucky, McDonald's and so on...
4. Give a little time when you go shopping to read the sources of products and if they are American, discard them, and even if they are manufactured in an Arabic country under an American franchise, because the benefit will return to America and then to Israel to kill your brothers.
5. Did you disapprove of Israel's attacks on mosques? The least reply we can make is to develop our own safe, empty mosques, especially at the dawn prayer. (How can you make war on the enemy, and you can't even make war on sleep and the blanket at dawn???)
6. Du'a, du'a, du'a (and ask yourself before you sleep, did you do du'a for your people in Gaza today?)⁵²⁶

The point here is precisely not that jihadism encourages laxness in the normal ritual practices of Islam in favour of radical violence, but rather that it draws on these as elements of normal everyday

behaviour, rather than demanding the progressive Islamisation of different aspects of daily life and, secondly, it directs these towards the end of jihad. Rather than forcing an undending and burdensome Islamisation of daily life, jihadism offers, so it seems, the jihadisation of ordinary practice.

Indeed, by focusing on the object of jihad, there is an apparent tendency in jihadism towards substituting the theoretically transcendent virtues of Islam for the concrete virtues of the mujahidin. Apropos of this, it may be worth noting in passing the extent to which the ways of assisting in jihad offered by al-Salim are reminiscent of the fundamental practices of Islam itself. The supporter of the mujahidin is asked to donate money (indeed, to actually make the mujahidin the object of *zakāt*), to pray for the mujahidin (the word here is, of course *du‘a* - a supplementary Islamic practice with no precise Christian equivalent - rather than the obligatory Islamic *ṣalāt*), to engage in a certain degree of self-denial (the author lists ‘abandoning luxury’ as a way of contributing) and - via various types of possible verbal practice - to declare support for the mujahidin. Indeed, the theme of the physical self-denial of the mujahidin is (as we shall see later) an important theme in jihadi writing, and its vicarious appropriation is an important device for the assertion of online jihadis’ own worthiness.

Thus, far from offering nothing to the adherent beyond a sterile and endless struggle towards a final utopian state which is never properly described or defined,⁵²⁷ and in which the interests of the individual are continually sacrificed to the good of the group⁵²⁸ jihadism offers the individual something extremely worthwhile and practical in the here and now: a solution to the question of how a Muslim (or indeed a non-Muslim) is to live within the quotidian practices of the modern world. The problem with jihadism lies not at the individual level, but at the strategic level, which must, somehow, escape the jihadi paradox by finding a way to translate the everyday practices of jihadism into real life ‘victories’ for the mujahidin. In order to do this, a difficult balancing act must

be achieved. On the one hand, jihadis' contribution must be appreciated. But on the other, it cannot be over-appreciated, lest the non-violent practices of support become an end in themselves, and a new form of bloodless jihad by the back door.

6.2 Electronic Jihad?

Such a balancing act seems to be apparent in al-Salim's account of 'Electronic Jihad'. Despite using the precise term 'electronic jihad' (*al-jihād al-iliktrūnī*), the author is ambivalent here about whether use of the Internet can constitute actual jihad, as opposed to support of jihad. Indeed, after using the form as a heading, he immediately qualifies it by saying 'and this term has spread among the people for those who support the jihad on the Internet'. Nonetheless, the author appears to offer a possible exception to this. He divides 'electronic jihad' into two categories. The first - which he gives most of his attention to - is the 'forums project' (*mashrū' al-muntadiyyāt*). With regard to the second, however - 'the hackers' (for which he uses the English word) he says 'this is the true electronic jihad, and in it is the language of power' (*lughat al-quwa*). This latter formula is rather curious, and may reflect the author's struggle to determine whether hacking constitutes real or figurative violence. The word he uses for strength - *quwa* - might recall its usage in the Quranic verse (Al Anfal: 60) often quoted in jihadi materials, which runs: 'and prepare against them whatever you are able of power and steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of God and your enemy'. In general, the formula '*lughat al-quwa*' carries the same idiomatic meaning as the English 'the language of power' as in the sentence (in this case a quote from Syrian president Bashar al-Asad from the newspaper *Al Quds*) 'Israel understands only the language of power'.⁵²⁹

This argument is taken a great deal further by 'Abd al-Rahman Salum Al-Rawashdi - the author of a book entitled *Media Jihad: Foundations and Practice (Readings in The Jihadi Media in Iraq)*. Here

- in contrast to al-Salim's position, the case is made for thinking of use of the media - including use of the Internet - not just as a way of supporting jihad, but as a way of *carrying out* jihad.

Rawashdi's argument for this position is eclectic, drawing on a number of different lines of Islamic reasoning which do not always sit very comfortably together. For a direct Islamic justification for use of the media as a form of jihad, he draws on a hadith of the prophet (related by Abu Dawud) in which he urges 'fight the polytheists with your possessions and yourself and your tongue'. He also draws on the Quranic verse in the Surat al-Tawba (122), which says 'it is not for the believers to go forth all at once [*kāffatan*]. For there should separate from every division of them a group to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people'.

However, Rawashdi's main argument does not draw heavily on either of these approaches - indeed, if anything, it contradicts the latter entirely. The concept of 'jihad of the tongue' - dependent, as it is, on a single hadith would seem rather uncomfortably weakly attested, in comparison to other forms of jihad - that is, jihad in person (*jihad bi-al-nafs*) and jihad with one's possessions (*jihad bi-al-māl*), both of which are directly called for in the Quran itself. And indeed Rawashdi is no less adamant than other jihadi writers that specifically violent jihad is a *fard 'ayn* - at least, for him, within the specific field of American occupied Iraq. Therefore, rather than attempt to make a detailed case for non-violent forms of jihad, he instead attempts to explain why use of the media can be understood as way of participating in violent conflict.

As Rawashdi points out, modern war is fought by modern armies in a full spectrum of different ways - one of which is through use of the media. In this, he seems to be drawing implicitly on US military doctrines about information operations. Indeed, ironically, given the common lament among NATO generals that 'they' are better at information operations than 'we' are, Rawashdi complains that years of media domination by oppressive governments have left Muslims ill-equipped to compete in this new field. He is thus able to draw on the Quranic verse (Al-Tawba: 36)

that declares ‘fight the unbelievers entirely [or ‘collectively’ - *kāffatan*] as they fight you entirely’.⁵³⁰ For Rawashdi, this is an injunction for Muslims to fight in every way possible - including (since it is one of the ways the enemy claims to fight) through use of the media.

Thus, in Rawashdi’s argument, the Muslim ‘*i lāmī*’ (user of the media) can be understood not just as a person with a role in supporting the mujahidin, but as a person actually partaking in jihad itself. Indeed, this notion that online activity can be understood as genuine participation in violent jihad seems to be a widespread theme of online jihadi writing. As another example, we might consider the justification used on a website described by Hamid bin ‘Ali as dedicated to ‘*fiqh of jihad*’ - *Jihāduka Maṭlūb* (ie, ‘Your Jihad is Demanded’).⁵³¹ Here - after quoting the familiar verse mentioned above calling for the believers to ‘prepare against them whatever you are able of power and steeds of war’, the site urges:

...dear brothers, we are not asking from you jihad with your selves or your possessions (which is obligatory to us all). We are asking for something far less than that: a jihad which will not cost you anything, and which you can carry out from your homes.’ Nonetheless, this is a ‘jihad which is sure to lose Israel more than it lost in the wars. It is an easy jihad, without any need to go anywhere, but with great strength and efficacy. It is electronic jihad, which terrifies the enemy of God whenever he looks at the huge losses he could sustain.

In this case, the electronic jihad in question is to consist of hacking Israeli websites. But the motif of electronic jihad as violence extends very much to those carrying out propaganda activities - as, for instance, in the ‘media jihad battalion’, an entity responsible primarily for disseminating videos of the Islamic State in Iraq on sites such as YouTube and Archive.org.⁵³²

The adoption of media jihad as a form of jihad in its own right does, however, create the problem of distinguishing between the supposedly distinct categories of jihad and *da‘wa*. As we saw in the previous chapter, ‘Islamic’ materials - such as nashids - apparently envisage the ‘jihadi’ and the ‘da‘wi’ content genres as overlapping but distinct entities. A jihadi perspective, however

necessarily rejects the notion (put forward by, for instance, Jama‘at al-Tabligh⁵³³ or, implicitly at least, Yusuf al-Qaradawi in his *Fiqh al-Jihād*, where he calls for an ‘army of preachers’ to take the place of violent militarism in promoting Islam),⁵³⁴ that da‘wa (preaching) *is* jihad. How then, is it possible to argue that use of the media - or words, rather than direct violence - can be jihad after all?

Rawashdi attempts to solve this problem by acknowledging da‘wa via the Islamic media, and media jihad via the jihadi media, as distinct obligations. Islamic media work is itself a collective obligation of the Ummah (*farḍ kifāya*), and indeed for certain Muslims (for instance, those with special qualifications in the media profession) Islamic media activity may even be a *farḍ ‘ayn*. Indeed, the need for Islamic da‘wa provides the ultimate justification for violent jihad itself, whose purpose (Rawashdi here reiterates a familiar argument) is to remove obstacles which prevent people from being able to honestly and impartially appraise the merits of Islam. Indeed, just as jihad is subordinate ultimately to da‘wa (which nonetheless relies upon it), so too is the jihadi media to be understood as a subcategory of the Islamic media in general. Jihadi media does, however, have a very specific and clearly defined function: namely (retaining Rawashdi’s own emphasis):

We may know the jihadi media, because it supplies the masses with the truths of jihad and its goals and its heritage, and it conveys the news and the reality and the information pertaining to it with a true and disciplined picture inside the Islamic Ummah and outside of it, and thus replies to the distortions and fabrications and rumours which arise around it to slander it and its people, and to stimulate the Muslims to become involved in it and to support it

And yet, in spite of Rawashdi’s definitional efforts, the problem remains unresolved (indeed it may be unresolvable, for it would seem to be a problem of infinite regress). For the existence of a ‘jihadi’ media must still be predicated on the existence of a ‘jihad’, which may, in turn, include media use as one of its constitutive practices. Indeed, for all Rawashdi’s insistence on da‘wa and jihad as complementary practices, their online coexistence, at any rate, is not always so happy - a theme illustrated in the following ‘dialogue’ posted by the blogger ‘joadalfajr’.⁵³⁵

‘Mujahid’ said to ‘Defeatist’: we are calling for Jihad until victory or martyrdom

The Defeatist said: Your way is rugged and in our path there is delight and happiness

The Jihadi: Fie on the life of injustice and prostration under the pillow.

The Defeatist: This is just poetry and fanatical speech

The Jihadi: With fanaticism and the refusal of injustice unbelief will be banished and polytheism will be left overturned.

The Defeatist: We shall explain by dialogue and reach the truth by politics

The Jihadi: Dialogue with the aggressor is stupidity and a stroke of idiocy

The Defeatist: Perhaps a portion of the infidels are towards us and returning [to their religion], and they have waited passively for the good.

The Jihadi: To trust in the infidels is like leaving your chicken in care of the son of a jackal.

The Defeatist: Politics is the most expedient way, and our path will lead to liberation and the assertion of sovereignty.

The Jihadi: You disobey God and request his victory. By my life, this is a fatuous project. And to work by official channels under the rule of the Jews is unbelief and more.

KNOW THAT JIHAD AND PREPARATION IS AN INDIVIDUAL OBLIGATION ON ALL MUSLIMS AND A SERVANT [of God] WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT ON THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION. AND GOD WILL SEE WHICH OF YOUR SOULS IS GOOD WITH PREPARATION AND JIHAD IN THE PATH OF GOD ALMIGHTY. SO CARRY OUT WHAT IS REQUIRED BY GOD. IT IS INCUMBENT UPON YOU NOT TO BE FOOLED BY THE MULTITUDE OF THE **DOOMED SO BE HAPPY WITH ADMONITION, AND ITS LIKE.**

The irony here of course is that what is actually represented (and the uncertainty as to whether the first of the speakers is to be considered a ‘mujahid’ or a ‘jihadi’ may be significant to this), is not a debate between a fighter and a preacher, but rather between two types of preacher - an adherent of *da‘wa* and an adherent of *da‘wa for jihad*.

These difficulties provide a useful starting point for considering what is perhaps the single most important work relevant to the question of what it means to be a jihadi: Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri’s *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*. In fact, the highly distinctive approach taken by al-Suri in this work can be understood to a great extent as a response to precisely the paradoxes just discussed. In contrast to other ‘jihadi’ writers, Al Suri does in fact make specific and deliberate use of the term ‘jihadis’ (*jihādiyīn*). Indeed, Al Suri is particularly careful about explaining his use of ‘terminology’ (*iṣṭilāḥ*) in the book.

Perhaps the single, fundamental distinction which Al Suri makes - indeed the one which underpins all of his subsequent language - is between religion as a generality, and specific historical and political trends within it. This is represented in language through his distinction between *Islam*, and what he calls *the Islamic Awakening* (*al-ṣaḥwa al-islāmiyya*),⁵³⁶ which he views as an originally twentieth century phenomenon. An ‘emergent phenomenon’ within this Awakening is *the jihadi current* (*al-tayār al-jihādī* - a concept with a fairly broad acceptance among jihadi writers including, for instance, Abu Bakr Naji).⁵³⁷ The ‘jihadi current’, for Al-Suri is at once a very ‘broad’ term which includes all occurrences of armed jihad. But at the same time, it is a historically specific one. Within the ‘jihadi current’, Al Suri makes further distinctions - distinctions which, he is at pains to point out, are themselves ‘academic’ (*durūsī*) rather than ‘theological’ (*‘aqdī*).⁵³⁸ These are between the ‘jihadis’ (whom, somewhat confusingly, he also says are directly equivalent to members of the ‘jihadi current’), and the *mujahid groups* (*jama‘āt mujāhida*). The former are to all intents and purposes ‘jihadists’ as they are known in English. They subscribe to the practice of *al-wala wa-l-bara* (dissociation from non-Muslims) and combat the governments of Muslim countries whom they see as apostates. The latter, by contrast, fight the ‘original’ enemies of God - the Jews, Christians and Pagans.⁵³⁹

What is remarkable about Al Suri's use of language is his original approach to the basic paradox of 'being a jihadi'. Rather than attempting to ignore the existence of a distinct category of 'jihadis', in favour of universalist Islamic categories such as mujahidin, Al Suri instead posits a bounded and explicitly 'academic' and non religious concept of jihadi groups as a way of avoiding having to make universalist (and therefore potentially divisive) claims to a monopoly of Islamic piety. Indeed, this approach can be read in the very title of his book, which, unusually for a 'jihadi' employs not the word jihad, but the more secular and nationalistic sounding term of 'resistance' (*muqāwwama*).

Al Suri's use of 'resistance' as a way of gaining an intellectual space which, distinct from that commanded by *jihād* is accessible to his own political reasoning means that he does not have to wrestle directly with the same questions as Al-Salim and Rawashdi in his analysis of the role of the media, which can now be seen as a mobilisation device, without having to have a deeper, salvific meaning. This lightens the burden for his use of Islamic evidence in justifying his 'Media Theory of the Global Islamic Resistance Call', which he opens with a quotation from the Quran (*Al Anfal*: 65), in which it says: 'O prophet, incite (*harriḍ*) the believers to fight; if there are twenty patient men, they shall become two hundred. If there are a hundred, they shall become a thousand'. For Al-Suri, the question whether 'incitement' to jihad *is* jihad can be read as secondary to the fact that it is absolutely an integral part of the 'global Islamic resistance call'. And yet - as in the rest of his work, Al-Suri does not quite sidestep the issue of the Islamic status of media activity. Rather, he asserts:

The task of fighting is an individual obligation for every, every Muslim. He demarcates his sphere of activity and makes his effort to his ability. God does not place a soul except in its sphere, and it is incumbent upon him to raise up this sphere by preparing his self, and cooperating with trusted Muslim brothers. And as for the task of incitement it is a task for everyone on its account, and it is an obligation on every person, even if he is excused from jihad.⁵⁴⁰

Is, then, incitement to jihad, jihad? Like Al-Salim, and to a lesser degree Rawashdi, Al-Suri, it seems, leaves the matter ambiguous. For to resolve it either way would be to place the author on one horn of an insoluble dilemma.

6.3 Inhabiting Jihadi Ideology - Online Jihadi Identity

There is, then, a gap at the heart of jihadi thought - a fundamental, paradoxical and therefore irresolvable contradiction which would seem to offer within it a possible space for a practice of jihadism ultimately distinct from the ideals upon which it is premised - a jihadism concerned, in reality, not with advancing the strategic interests of the 'global jihad' but rather with, as de Certeau has put it, 'how to create *oneself*'?⁵⁴¹

Having determined the possibility of such a space, however, the immediate problem raised is how to go about looking for it. Since, naturally, no jihadi can openly express that his ultimate object is other than the 'victory' - though this is a word we must come back to - of the jihad, the existence of such a phenomenon can only be inferred indirectly.

One place to look may be in the way Internet jihadis relate to potentially competing agendas within the 'global jihad' itself. For instance, there is on the one hand Al Suri's 'global Islamic resistance' model, whereby Muslims everywhere are encouraged to participate in 'terrorist' violence (*irhāb*). On the other hand, for regional 'mujahidin' insurgencies there may be - it can be suggested - a strategic interest in regulating and limiting the types of violent practice undertaken by supporters. Notwithstanding the strategy advocated by al-Suri, there are some indications that acts of 'amateur' terrorism are not always considered by more 'professional' mujahidin to be an unalloyed good. This seems, for instance, to be the message of a 2009 document produced by the Chechen *Kavkaz Centre*, which declares:

In Internet forums you can quite often read posts like “I want to go to Jihad, who will help me? Where can we meet?” They are either posted by agents provocateurs from security services, or by sincere, but naive Muslims. And we want to address this work to such [naive] brothers. Jihad is a personal duty but, as prayer, it demands the fulfilling of certain conditions. What would we say about a man who stands for prayer in his swimming trunks, in a filthy place, without performing ablution, justifying it by the fact that prayer is obligatory and the time has come? But some brothers, who have realised the obligation of Jihad, allow themselves to spend much time in front of a computer display, while they do not prepare themselves at all morally, physically and intellectually for war in God’s path.

At the same time, today’s jihad is a surveillance and sabotage activity, which, in all armies of the world, is carried out only by specially selected, elite fighters. Do you imagine a special forces soldier who does not know even his multiplication tables, can hardly pull himself up five times, doesn’t know how to shoot, is not even familiar with his weapon, is not able to perform first aid to a wounded person, and does not fulfil the requirement of security?⁵⁴²

As ambivalent as this work is about those who confine themselves purely to Internet jihad (who, one might suggest, seem more to be scorned for their lack of physical prowess than for failing to actually fight), it is more ambivalent about the kids trying things at home. What is particularly interesting, though, is the analogy upon which it attempts to build its argument (which incidentally, if viewed as actual theological analogy, or *qiyās*, is poor theological practice, from a salafi point of view).⁵⁴³ Reading between the lines, the ‘certain conditions’ which need to be fulfilled for acceptable jihad are military strategic conditions. A person who is weak and ill trained will not be a good candidate for advancing the jihad - particularly given that it is presently a ‘surveillance and sabotage’ activity. This implies that an important criterion for taking part in violent jihad is that there be a reasonable chance of success.⁵⁴⁴ And yet this is not at all how jihad is necessarily talked about by jihadis, for whom jihad is an obligation even though the unbelievers will in reality never be comprehensively defeated, but against whom true Muslims must nonetheless struggle until the

end of time.⁵⁴⁵ It is hard to see how such reasons of expediency can be understood seriously as an obstacle to the fulfilment of religious obligations.

The question is, then, not just why statements of this sort would be issued, so to speak, from above, but also why (and if) ordinary jihadis would find them convincing. And yet, this particular statement (which was located as a re-posting on the jihadi forum *Ansar al-Mujahidin*) was clearly seen as relevant by the Internet jihadis who disseminated it, and praised the disseminator for posting it. Indeed, seemingly ‘ordinary’ jihadis sometimes say similar things themselves. An example of this can be seen in the response of jihadi members of the forum Muslm.net (a group which will be discussed in detail in a later chapter) to the martyrdom of the Jordanian double agent ‘Abu Dujana al-Khurasani’. As in other online jihadi circles, this news of an Internet jihadi who had progressed on to martyrdom was greeted with a frenzy of posting by members eager to claim some online relationship, or to reveal some new angle to the story. It might be imagined, then, that the event would prompt a measure of reflection by such Internet jihadis on the need for Internet jihadis to move on to more direct involvement. At least on this forum, however, it was not clear that this was the case. Indicative of the mood is the following, much praised post by ‘the leader, Usama’.

...The hero-brother, the martyr, we reckon him, and God is his reckoner to have been from among the most intelligent men, and his level in the standardised test was 97%. And this indicates something. It indicates that his intelligence was outstanding.

Before I get into this subject, my warning to the brothers is that I would like to pose some questions far from the outcome.

1. Were the Jordanian Intelligence and the CIA involved in planting the brother Abu Dujana, may God accept him, among the mujahidin?
2. Were the mujahidin involved in planting the brother, may God accept him, in the American and Jordanian intelligence apparatuses?

3. Was the brother from the beginning trying to be in control of himself and who then was in charge of coordinating with the mujahidin and who then set up the operation?

If it was the first of these, then the brother rendered unsuccessful these intelligence services in changing the opinion of a person and this also compels us to pay attention.

We have warned those who participate in forums in general, and in jihadi forums in particular, because it is the goal of these intelligence services thus.

We advise the brothers not to trust anyone of the participants on the forums and at the same time not to doubt them, because it is easy to get involved.

As for if it was the second, this indicates towards the extension of the information which arrives to the mujahidin to the domain of the security and intelligence services, and this is would mean to them that the war has begun to take on a trend of a security dimension with the penetration of the strongest intelligence apparatus in the region and the world, and we ask God to bring them victory in this war of intelligence.

If it was the third, and this is the most likely in my opinion, and God knows the truth, this is the aim of my post, and I would like to warn the brothers about it.

Concerning the operation of penetration, it is imperative that the brother who wishes to penetrate a security apparatus not try to penetrate it on his own.

The brother Abu Dujana, of whom we do not know the details of his penetration into the security apparatus, possessed a stock of information which we cannot estimate and intelligence which he was able to employ in order to arrive in the position he arrived in, in addition to logistical and information support from the Taliban of Pakistan, and the coming together of these two facilities helped bring about success in the cracking of great security which was gained by an unparalleled media blackout. Therefore we advise the brothers not to improvise work like this unless it was coordinated with specialists from the mujahidin and their organisations.⁵⁴⁶

This post appears to use the theme of the overwhelming virtues attributed to Dr Humam Khalil al-Balawi (aka Abu Dujana) in an interestingly double-edged way. On the one hand, it displays the poster's affiliation to the jihad, his reverence for this *shahid* and his possession of expert knowledge on the subject. At the same time, however, these very virtues are used not as an admonition to others, but rather as a barrier to participation by those less fortunate. It comes across, in other words, as a tactical play which at once advances the poster's online jihadi credibility, while continuing to maintain a barrier between this and the need to move on to physical engagement.

Another useful place to examine the apparent tension between the 'strategic' interests of the global jihad, and the interests of individual jihadis is in the much heralded 'Open Meeting' of January 2008, in which Ayman al-Zawahiri received questions from the four main jihadi forums. Quite a number of these related to the subject of participation in the jihadi media. And many seemed to be angling for the Shaykh's approval of the activity - or even simply celebrations of it. Interestingly, the specificities of the questions posed and the generalities of the answers received revealed an interesting gap between how the activity was perceived by the Internet jihadis themselves, and the Al Qaida leadership.⁵⁴⁷ To take a notable example, one poster asked:

... what is your advice to the youth who continue to excel in the role of the recipient and don't want to become effective in the electronic jihad on the Net? And which is more appropriate: that he suffice with his activities on the ground in terms of distributing materials specific to jihad or that he take part in electronic jihad on the Net? Or do you see the two things both to be necessary at once?⁵⁴⁸

The question here is quite exact in what it means. Nonetheless, Zawahiri apparently interpreted it as a query about the validity of Internet jihad in general:

I advise the youth and the rest of the Ummah's classes and groups to join the individual obligation of Jihad first. But if they are unable to do that and the Mujahideen haven't assigned them to other duties, then they must do all they can to aid Islam in all spheres, including what you referred to.⁵⁴⁹

Such tensions betray the subtle but important distinctions which seem to exist between the cultural attitudes of 'mujahidin' such as Zawahiri, and 'jihadis' such as the questioner here. As such, it is possible to read 'online jihadism' as possessing a set of styles and practices with a certain, albeit only implicit, independence premised not so much on the practice of jihad, but on the practice of admiring the mujahidin. One way of looking for this is to consider the quite specific ways in which jihadis seek, through the textual means available, to actualise themselves online. This implies turning towards the second question posed at the outset: what is done on the Internet in order to manifest jihadi status?

6.4 Presenting as Jihadi

In practice, as with other online social contexts, online 'jihadi' identities are carefully constructed, and abuse of the possibilities the Internet affords with regard to manifestation - for example, by 'sock puppeting' with multiple aliases - is carefully guarded against (something which shall be considered more in the following chapter). On the Web forums that account for much of the most visible online 'jihadi' activity, jihadis make extensive use of every marker of individuality that this medium (and the rules of individual forums) afford. The basic format of the web forum offers – outside of the content of posts themselves – essentially four opportunities for presenting one's self as 'jihadi' - through one's name, one's personal information, one's 'avatar' (a small image next to the name) and, lastly, through the visual 'signature'. To this may be added decorative features which are frequently added to forum posts in addition to their actual (often limited) semantic content.

- Nicknames

Nicknames are, of course, the most basic element of online identity (as indeed Al-Salim observes in *39 Ways*). But even with something as apparently basic as the one or two words that go into naming someone in an Internet community, there is considerable room for self-expression. As Bechar-Israeli noted, on the basis of her study of an IRC chatroom, people are both possessive and playful with their online names which, far from being blank masks which conceal identity, almost invariably communicate something about the people who choose them.⁵⁵⁰

Given its clandestine nature, nicknames of course play a particularly important role in jihadi culture in a broad sense. ‘Nasiri’,⁵⁵¹ describes how, on entering a mujahidin training camp in Afghanistan in the 1990s, he was asked to adopt a new name. For the entire year he spent there (so he claims), he never discovered the true name of any of his comrades.

The naming traditions of mujahidin who passed through the training camps of Afghanistan and Pakistan draw heavily on the traditional Arabic naming tradition of the *kunya*, (by which a parent is named after his, or her - potentially fictional - oldest son), and the *nisba*, which is frequently a toponymic.⁵⁵² Thus one finds, among prominent recent figures in contemporary global violent jihad Abu Mus‘ab Al-Zarqawi (the father of Mus‘ab from Zarqa), Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri, Abu Hafs al-Masri, Abu Hafs al-Mauritani, Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, Abu Yahya al-Libi, and so on. It is worth noting that these kunyas frequently refer to distinctively archaic sounding names from early Islamic and Arabic history (Hafs, Hamza, Hudheifa, Mus‘ab and so on) - analogous, perhaps, to the tendency among some religious Protestants to employ relatively obscure biblical first names. Jihadi names thus have both a practical and a symbolic significance, since they serve simultaneously to protect the real identity of the bearer, but also to confer on the community a sense of the virtues of the earliest generations of Muslims.

How far do such conventions replicate themselves on the Internet? In the previous chapter we saw how rights to names are jealously guarded on jihadi forums (just as on the IRC chatrooms described by Bechar Israeli), and how perceived violations to their uniqueness and integrity can form the basis for more lasting disputes and dissatisfactions. So much so, in fact, that a jihadi forum may now include within its terms and conditions specific limitations with regard to name choice. On the forum *al-Layūth*, for example, these are as follows:

Generally, for members, there is freedom of choice of the nickname that seems suitable. Preferably it should be in the Arabic language, and that it should not consist of more than two parts, and that it should not exceed fifteen letters. It is utterly forbidden to name with the following:

- The names of people of immorality or freethinking
- Facetious or mocking names
- Names with a sinful meaning
- Names of sinful personages except to those who actually have that name
- Names which resemble names of the viewers and active participants in the network
- Names which resemble names previously registered in the network, for example by adding a space or a dash or two dots on the *ta marbuta* etc.
- Vague names (like letters or numbers or punctuation marks)
- The names of the companions (may God be pleased with them) and the names of the Ulama of the Ummah
- The name of a website or an publicity company, with an advertisement for it, except with permission of the management of the network⁵⁵³

Some of these injunctions are placed in context if we consider what names are actually adopted on jihadi forums. Broadly, these fall into three categories.⁵⁵⁴ First, there are names which are simply ordinary Arabic/Muslim names – ‘Safyah’ or ‘Ahmed29’ for example. Second, there are names which, though they adopt the form of normal Arabic names, appear to be in some way evocative. At its mildest, this can simply mean adoption of the traditional *kunya-laqab* form as just discussed, particularly with an archaic name. A stronger statement may seem to be made when a name seems

to constitute a tribute to a particular heroic figure, whether medieval or contemporary. This is, of course, ambiguous. Almost any common Arabic name could be a reference to *someone*, and in the case of names such as *Abu Khattab*, *Abu Mus‘ab*, *Abu Hafis* it is unclear whether the reference is to specific mujahid, or just invoking a generically ‘salafi’ aesthetic. The same goes for toponyms. If a forum member uses ‘Al-Maqdisi’, is this a reference to the theologian Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (which is itself an alias)?⁵⁵⁵ Or is it (which would also be evocative in a different way), to the *Bayt al-Maqdis* – Jerusalem? Thirdly, there are names which are more directly self-descriptive. Here too there is a degree of ambiguity. For example, it is fairly common to use the names of animals considered fierce or noble (lion, lion cub, falcon). But these too (Layth, Saqr) can sometimes occur as Arabic given names in ‘real life’. In most such cases, however, the descriptive intent is unmistakable, as, for example, with names such as ‘Great Commander’, ‘Lover of the Islamic State’. ‘Seeker of Truth’, or ‘Killer of Jews’. This in turn illustrates the two key themes to be found within such self-descriptive names: allegiance to Islam, and its positive qualities; and violence against its enemies.

There is, however, a deeper distinction which can be made among jihadi name choices. This is between those names which we might consider (and the rules stipulated by Layuth forum would support us here) to be ‘respectable’, and those names which have a more playful, even somewhat frivolous import. The former include, of course, the properly ‘salafi’ names – ‘Abu Tamim al-Libi’, Abu-Dharr al-Baghdadi’ and so on. The latter include those names which violate the bounds of propriety by directly adulating revered forefathers (‘Ibn Taymiyya,’ ‘daughter of Umar’), draw on English or popular culture ‘Song of Terror’, ‘Irhabi001’ (yet more complex, of course, as a reference to the media mujahid Irhabi007), or simply brag (‘player of bullets’, ‘top drawer terrorist’). What is striking of course is that the latter (which would seem to include some of the most active and best known Internet jihadis) are conspicuously *fan* names. They operate at a remove from the conspicuous piety of the more ‘salafi’ names, elevating the mujahidin themselves,

the violence of jihad and the media poses it strikes above the immediate representation of Islamic propriety.⁵⁵⁶

- Personal Information

Personal information on jihadi forums echoes the conventions of any Web forum. But its fields are often used subversively or rhetorically. Fields such as ‘occupation’ or ‘country’ are given as ‘seeker of knowledge,’ or ‘mujahid’ on the one hand, and as ‘the land of jihad’, or as a particular ‘Islamic’ versions of specific countries (always, seemingly, equivalent to their contemporary boundaries) such as the land of Kanana (Egypt), or the land of *ribāʿ* (Palestine). The tension expressed thereby is somewhat complex. Jihadism, after all, might implicitly be expected to support a view of the world in which contemporary states have been replaced by a single Islamic Caliphate. So the standard question implied by asking one’s *dawla* is necessarily ripe for subversion. More odd, then, is that the forum should ask this question in the first place as if either inviting a response defying contemporary geography, or somehow representing contemporary political geography as (in spite of the contrary presumptions of the forum’s content) a built in necessity of the medium.

- Decorative Text

Posts on jihadi forums are – as observed in the previous chapter – seldom responded to with extensive comments. Rather, members generally offer a limited range of ritual formulas of well wishing such as the ubiquitous ‘jazak Allah khayr’. These repetitive comments are, however, often subject to a high level of visual embellishment. The simplest form this can take is the use of different colours to make emphatic points. A post on al-Sayf forum specifically demanded the introduction of this feature in order to ‘make the forum more attractive’. At a more sophisticated level, words are represented both calligraphically and sometimes also as flash animations. The

author recalls seeing examples on more technologically limited media of Roman characters being used in elaborate combinations to form calligraphic representations of Islamic formulae. The Islamic tradition of calligraphy as an alternative to representational art (a classical Islamic prohibition which online jihadis and other Internet Muslims – incidentally – seem to have few qualms about flouting) is, of course, famous. But in terms of contemporary function this tradition of creative individual expression through text seems strongly reminiscent of Danet’s notion of ‘cyberplay’.⁵⁵⁷ This would imply a sense in which jihadis use the possibilities of the medium to go beyond its primarily textual presumptions, producing aesthetics of membership and solidarity which are not expressible in ordinary words.

- Visual Customisation: Avatars and Signatures

Graphic designs have two main places on a forum profile. The ‘avatar’ in a Web forum is a passport photograph style image, which therefore invites the viewer to interpret it as a picture of the person who is posting. This convention has, however, been played with so extensively that it might be suggested that it has largely broken down. Where jihadi profiles include such images, these generally consist of pictures (sometimes composite) of favoured mujahidin such as al-Zarqawi, of group logos, or of more complex composed images. In these cases, these can be discussed together with the category of the ‘signature’ (*tawqīʿ*) which sometimes follows a jihadi forum post.

Visual customization both through avatar and signature may, of course, combine with nickname and personal information to form a unified sense of a forum member’s identity. For instance, a forum member with the name ‘Muḥibb Abū Tamīm al-Azdī’ (a deceased leader of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula) might provide as his avatar the image of this mujahid, and as his signature a larger expression of his admiration for this figure as below.



In considering the significance of jihadi forum ‘signatures’, it is important, however, to recognise not just the design of such composite images, but also the process by which they are ordered and made, and the role this plays in the sociality of the forum as a whole. As an illustration of this, let us turn to a thread on the forum *Ansar al-Mujahidin*, dating from 28th July 2009 in which a member advertised his services as a graphic designer and creator of signatures.⁵⁵⁸ At the time of writing, the thread runs to forty-six pages, making it remarkably long by the standards of the forum. Essentially, the thread consists of members’ - often highly specific - requests for signatures to be designed for them by a character who, it appears, has taken on the de facto role of the forum’s resident designer.

The thread opens with the following post:

Peace upon you and the mercy and blessing of God

Thanks to God and prayer and peace on the messenger of God and on his family and his companions all.

Gracious brothers and sisters of Al Ansar

Order your signature and your brother will give it to you God willing.

To order a signature:

You have to answer these questions so your brother in design knows what to do.

Do you want the addition of the name of a specific forum?

Do you want the addition of a specific sentence?

The name that you want to be written in the signature

Do you want a picture of a leader from among the leaders of the mujahidin - and who?

Do you have anything else, an idea, for example, a thing which you would like in the signature?

I promise to assist you with God's permission.

One point of interest here is the way in which the need to derive visual content from verbal description has here helped to impel the conceptualisation of a standardised anatomy of the visual form in question. Just as an external content analyst might perform a preliminary breakdown of the signature, so too jihadis, in their signature requests, understand the signature form as fundamentally a composite of interchangeable elements: the name of the jihadi himself (or herself), the background image(s), and the slogan.

Individually, these elements are highly stereotypical - a point which can be illustrated with reference to the extensive gallery of the designer's previous work as displayed below this post. As we saw above with jihadi naming conventions, the visual images, and even the slogans which accompany them show little room for individual creative expression. They are chosen from a narrow range of symbolic images - indeed, a surprisingly narrow range. For example, even the visual code of 'leaders of the mujahidin', is conventionally restricted to a very narrow range of

actual individuals. Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi and Khattab crop up again and again. Other mujahidin leaders occasionally requested as the post continues (such as, to provide an example from a post which shall be considered immediately below, Abu Mus‘ab ‘Abdul-Wudud - the leader of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb), appear so rarely as to imply, perhaps, that their inclusion is intended not to reflect glory on the jihadi who thus advertises them, as to promote a personal hero through association with the publicly acknowledged greats.

The question of how jihadis themselves understand the significance of signature images is further illuminated with reference to the responses to this offer. First, it is quite clear that jihadis are particular about their online image, and equally clear that this image is constructed from a vocabulary of images which is well mutually understood. Thus, terms such as ‘the banner of the Islamic state’, are unmistakably references to a particular image. Secondly, however, there is an interesting question of taste. Jihadi posts (which are generally exceptionally polite),⁵⁵⁹ after specifying what is wanted, frequently add the (presumably disingenuous) qualification that the requested details are only suggestions, and that the designer must ultimately fall back on his own taste and artistic judgement. And indeed, artistic judgement is clearly not just an empty formula for the designer himself, who, in this case, offers a member a second, alternative signature on the grounds that he is not happy with his work in the first.

What criteria govern signature choice at the individual level? Although there is little in-depth discussion of such matters, a post on this thread does provide an intriguing indication of how one kind of distinction may be understood. In this case, the poster asks for three signatures: two to be ‘*naṣrī*’ and the third ‘*da‘wī*’. These two words are highly significant. The word *naṣr* means ‘victory’. However, its cognate ‘*anṣār*’, is the word used of the companions of the prophet Muhammad. It therefore has implications both of being a ‘supporter’ of something in the moral

sense, and also of actively helping to *bring victory* to a cause. Both meanings are used extensively in the jihadi context. Indeed, the name of the forum on which this thread is to be found is itself ‘Ansar al-Mujahidin’ - that is, supporters of the Mujahidin. At the same time, jihadi contexts constantly use the word *naṣr* or *nusra* in formulaic sentences or the form ‘may God give victory (*yunāṣir*) to the mujahidin’. In this post, the two ‘nasri’ signatures ordered are described as follows:

With respect to the banner - the State of Islam, may God bring glory to it. You could use a horseman who carries the banner of the state, rather than the banner on its own. Likewise, the logo of the organisation of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, may God bring them victory if you could find a clearer picture of it.

The second: The name, Abu ‘Ali al-Sadiq.

And behind, the picture - my Shaykh the lion of Islam, Usama. And the governor of the Ummah, Zawahiri, and the mark of Abu Yahya al-Libi. And our commander, the leader Abu Musab Abdul Wudud, with the writing: preferably, if these words were to the commander Abu Musab Abdul Wudud [whatever happens in our darkest hours, as long as the lions are running... however tyranny and corruption domineer... whatever the dwarves and the slaves do, if they pine for killing and they threaten, will they stand in the way of the victory of Islam??? No!!! We shall remain always singing hymns to its dawn, and without doubt, tomorrow will come’].

The third: And this one is *da‘wi*

The name: Abu ‘Ali the Somali Salafi Jihadi

Embellish this signature with the best appearance which you can see.

The two *naṣrī* signatures here are clearly militant in their imagery, and display affiliation to specific groups and specific (albeit in three cases generic) mujahidin. The last, however, is markedly different. It lacks specific mandated image content, but declares far more with the name it uses. In doing so, it seems to underline the distinction between jihadism as an online activity, and jihadism as a virtual state of being. Indeed, by searching for ‘Abu ‘Ali al-Sadiq’ and for ‘Abu ‘Ali the Somali Salafi Jihadi’, it is possible to discern that there is, apparently, a distinction between the way in which these two identities are used. Abu ‘Ali al-Sadiq appears on a spectrum of jihadi forums,

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including Al-Fallujah, Shumukh al-Islam, Ma'arik al-Salafiyya, the Palestinian salafi-jihadi site Al-Amana and the Somali jihadi forum Al-Qimmah.⁵⁶⁰ But the signature 'Abu 'Ali the Somali Salafi Jihadi' seems to apply specifically to those occasions in which he posts particular content, as opposed to simply congratulating another poster's thread.

6.5 Internet Jihadi Perspectives on the Internet Jihadi - Irhabi007 and Muhibb al-Shaykhayn al-Tunisi

While examinations of jihadi self presentation on the Internet can provide a general sense of how 'ordinary' Internet jihadis understand the significance of their own activity (or want others to understand it), a little more ingenuity is needed to gain access to the question of how jihadis understand the value of their online activity in comparison to the physical practice of jihad. Naturally, jihadis cannot explicitly promote Internet jihad as a serious alternative to physical activity in general. To do so would be to deny their very jihadi identity. Nonetheless, it is possible to look for hints of tension between physical and virtual alternatives by examining the way in which Internet jihadis celebrate other Internet jihadis' contributions.

We have already noted, for instance, a tendency of Internet jihadis to choose names making reference to 'Irhabi007', in homage to a famous Internet jihadi who, by virtue of being in prison, can be argued to have some 'martyr' credentials in his own right. It is, of course, well known that Younes Tsouli (irhabi007's real life name) confronted the paradox of being a supporter of violent jihad in distant lands who did not, himself, move far from his own computer screen when he lamented to an online associate, Wassim Mughal: 'It sucks that we are here and not there. But I suppose someone has to be here.' Mughal replied:

This media work is very, very important... A lot of the funding that the brothers are getting is coming because of the videos. Imagine how many have gone after seeing the videos. Imagine how many have become shahid.⁵⁶¹

Later on, Tsouli lamented that his mother's prayers for his safety were to blame for his failure to achieve martyrdom, condemning him instead to a lengthy imprisonment. And indeed, it is a normal part of the formal language of jihadi forums for members to wish martyrdom upon each other.

Given that (while he may well have aspired to) Tsouli never succeeded in participating in physical violence, it is instructive to consider how he, and other well-known Internet jihadis are remembered by their successors. For in doing so, it might reasonably be expected that we could gain access to the ways in which such Internet jihadis think about themselves and their own activities. Thus it is interesting to note that irhabi007 and a contemporary of his, far less well known in Western media but very nearly as notable in the online jihadi context, Muhibb al-Shaykhayn al-Tunisi⁵⁶² are to a significant degree the object of tributes and memorabilia. For instance, 'Song of Terror' - a highly active member of the jihadi forum *Al Fallujah* posted on one occasion 'completely complete file on the brother Irhabi007'.⁵⁶³ This is essentially just a large collection of (predominantly) mainstream media articles and photographs put together by an active member on Fallujah forum, and subsequently copied onto a number of other Arabic forums. As a gesture however, it appears significant. In putting in the work required for this 'completely complete' compilation, it is hard to escape the inference that 'Song of Terror' is making a statement both about his own status as an Internet jihadi (implicitly a successor to Irhabi007?); and, by implication a statement about the status of Internet jihadism in general.

Another example would be the creation by an apparent Saudi hacking enthusiast⁵⁶⁴ of a tribute video to irhabi007 - the 'greatest Muslim hacker known in history, who cracked American governmental sites'.⁵⁶⁵ The video combines (in the idiom particularly of one of the jihadi flash

videos encountered in the previous chapter), a dark, shadowy sequence of pictures, in which a ghostly picture of Younis Tsouli (in his most visually Islamic aspect), is superimposed over the backdrop of a dark prison cell - following the convention of the prisoner support video encountered in the previous chapter. Behind him is a prison guard in an American uniform (Tsouli is actually imprisoned in the UK). As the video continues, light floods in through a barred window, very likely symbolising the presence of God's salvation in the darkness of the earth's injustice. The word 'hacked' then appears over the whole screen (quite possibly lifted from one of Tsouli's own attempts), with cross hairs over the letter 'c' before, finally, Tsouli's face appears surrounded entirely by light. The video ends with the nickname of its maker and the words 'we will not forget you, beloved brother Irhabi 007' (the 007 is, unusually, written in Arabic characters), 'we follow in your path'), below the formulaic call 'God break your imprisonment'. In the mournful nashid which accompanies the montage video a chorus sings 'which shall remember you in our prayers... we shall remember our faithful brother'. The languishing of the subject in prison is lamented 'my prison, my bonds are till death' (an exaggeration in this case), and the singer anticipates the possible future imprisonment of himself and his listeners, and the resolve they shall show in this event.

A similar tribute can be found in the work of a character whose name translates as 'poet of Al-Ansar', the author of a poetical tribute to irhabi007's colleague, Muhibb al-Shaykhayn al-Tunisi, entitled *Tears of the Two Eyes for the Lover of the Two Shaykhs* (the meaning of *Muhibb al-Shaykhayn*).⁵⁶⁶ The poem expresses a powerful sense of both the fellowship the author found in his fellow members of Al Ansar forum - the forum which Muhibb al-Shaykhayn and Irhabi 007 helped establish, and the relevance and meaningfulness of this form of jihadi activity to the military activity of mujahid heroes of both distant and recent past. Thus it looks both inwards, as, for example in its nostalgic account of how:

Al Ansar fell

But *the* Ansar did not fall

And moved, flying like a hurricane
I remember the day we met
In Al Ikhlas
In the second outlet of the media
I remember the day we made a date
with the esteemed,⁵⁶⁷ the leopard, the terrorist 007
With the esteemed Abu ‘Umar ‘Ali
May God release you from imprisonment
We were four people
I remember the day I tired
Both of us with Shaykh Abu Mus‘ab
If only he and you and Abu Mus‘ab
Returned to me so I could be happy
And I wrote your name in the search bar
And when I pulled my eye away from the piece
I found the *shahada*⁵⁶⁸ on the pages
The pages of glory and pride

And forwards to future military redemption, both of the subject of the tribute from his imprisonment, and the whole Muslim world (by allegorical association, perhaps, from its imprisonment).

From behind the darkness and the walls
Even though you are chained
The manacles make love to your wrists
And the prison loves your sides
They don’t know. They don’t know
Monotheism is your company
And the book of God is your companion
They have humiliated and humiliated
But if the falcon of Quraysh⁵⁶⁹ were to return to us

To raid the Levant to free you
He would desire you as one of his soldiers
To build with you another Andalus
And if the glorious Qutuz⁵⁷⁰ were to return to us
To raid the Levant⁵⁷¹ and release you
He would want you for one of his soldiers
So that the Arabs might stop the Tatars
And should Salah al-Din⁵⁷² return to us
To raid the Levant and free you
He would want you for one of his soldiers
To free Al-Aqsa and the path of Muhammad to the heavens⁵⁷³
If Abu Mus‘ab returned to us
To raid the Levant and free you
You would indeed be of his soldiers

The geography here is, of course, entirely meaningless in a physical sense. Muhibb al-Shaykhayn (real name Mohamed Ben al-Hadi Messahel) was sentenced to imprisonment in Morocco - nowhere near the evocative *Shām* mentioned in the poem – although it is possible that there is an allusion to this when the poem later says.⁵⁷⁴

We have quivered up our arrows...
with these we shoot, by the name of God we strike
from the *Mashriq* to the *Maghreb*.

But factual precision seems hardly to be the essential point here – any more than are the precise circumstances of Tsouli’s imprisonment in the video previously referred to. Both Tsouli and Muhibb al-Shaykhayn have become icons – in Tsouli’s case, almost to the level of a Khattab or an al-Zarqawi. Jihadis have invested in them, so it seems, the very idea of Internet jihad as a

worthwhile activity – as one which partakes of some measure of the glory that accrues to the mujahidin themselves.

And yet, in an odd sense, the relationship between the idealized forms of Muhibb al-Shaykhayn and Tsouli does not run purely in one direction. As we can see in the comparison between these two sections, the nature of Internet jihadism is such that – curiously – the notion of the concrete reality of the mujahidin as opposed to the virtuality of Internet jihadism is actually reversed. For Internet jihadis, the jihad itself is an abstract – but the experience of engaging in jihadism on the Internet is very real. Indeed, as a striking illustration of this we are offered, in the course of the thread which follows this poem what is, in a sense, a ‘physical’ relic of Muhibb al-Tunisi ‘himself’, in the form of an original fragment from the now defunct Al-Ansar forum in which he discusses meeting up with a number of people, including Irhabi007 for a ‘chat’ at a certain hour going by French time. Remarkably, this piece of purely electronic data - both by virtue of its reference to another, synchronous Internet medium which therefore moves in real time, and its physical testimony to the mythologised individual being described, seems to carry with it a striking sense of weight and authenticity. Indeed, it is as if the virtual - for Internet jihadis - has a concreteness, a sense of realisation and detail far greater than the ‘reality’ of the violence they celebrate; as if, on the Internet, it is the companionship of Internet jihad that is real, and the reality of violence that is merely rhetorical and virtual.

Indeed, a tribute to irhabi007 by another jihadi poet whom we encountered in the previous chapter - the self styled ‘poet of al-Qaida’, provides a similarly vivid portrayal of the powerful emotional reality of jihadi relationships.

The letters scattered for missing you

And the sadness started to move in my clothes

As if I hadn’t talked to you for nights

And I hadn't read the sahab posts
 As if you were like a candle playing with the wind
 And the sun doing a magical disappearing act
 Ah Younis! I did not feel upset or miserable with the colours of problems, with being away from home, and I
 couldn't be away from terrorism
 But your disappearance from among us is the reason for my torment
 If you went to *Ikhlaṣ* one day, your steps were crying 'O best of youth!'
 For you is the increase of longing
 And *Ikhlaṣ* is for you - in the best of places
 And every day is a memorial to you
 Remind us of colours and shades of torment
 You made terrorism a path for us
 And you terrorised the pagan dogs⁵⁷⁵

By identifying figures such as these as, so to speak 'jihadis' jihadis', it might be argued that Internet jihadis are exercising the 'distinction' which is a central feature of all subcultural media engagement. By becoming exemplars for a particular set of excellences, Internet jihadis may comfort themselves that they, too, may realize such excellences through diligent Internet jihad. The following quotation perhaps makes this point with particular clarity:

Supporters of the jihad - those who do not mobilize to the lands of jihad and who have not associated with an organization, and our words are about them, those who have mobilized or served the jihadi media and not asked for flight, and especially our words are about the best, and most famous among them. We must know that it is, thanks to God our jihadi media today, and after this stage of formation its expression cannot be carried out by individuals, but rather is the responsibility of groups with our information the presence or absence of which is of great Younis Tsouli Irhabi 007. And after the affairs of his life, and what we have read about him, I think that the whole lot of us know with what skill he advanced our jihadi media at the early stages of its development, and after a long period of the victory which he brought to our jihadi media, and we shall see why the brother became famous and advanced what he advanced, and we esteem him, and may God esteem him.

6.6 Conclusion

The previous chapter concluded by positing a powerful aesthetic relationship between the jihadi and the jihadi text, without having much to say about this relationship itself. In this chapter, I hope, this gap has to some extent been filled. Accordingly, it now becomes possible to engage with the question not just of how jihadi communities on the Internet may work *as communities*, but, more specifically, how *jihadism* as a set of ideas and themes may work for people who practice it online.

Readers of this chapter (in particular) will have had cause to sicken of the word ‘paradox’. But I have had cause to use it so often because Internet jihadism, closely examined, really does seem to seethe with paradoxes.

1. That it insists on the obligatory nature of jihad, while insisting (implicitly) that its practitioners are not, themselves, mujahidin.
2. OR, that it insists that jihad is violence, while legitimating a wide range of non-violent activities as participation in jihad.
3. That, precisely because it is a virtual activity, it is more real to its participants than the authentic external reality which forms its participants’ claim to legitimacy.
4. That, in order to function, it must expressly deny any connection to the authentic reality which forms its participants’ claim to legitimacy.
5. That (a point that will be expanded on in the next chapter) the more enthusiastically its participants express their allegiance to the mujahidin, the less true they become to the cause of the jihad.

It may be posited, however, that jihadism on the Internet works not in spite of these contradictions, but actually because of them. The day that an Internet jihadi says that he (women - a subject too

large to go into here, have more room for manoeuvre) is uninterested in the prospect of joining the mujahidin and becoming a shahid is the day that he ceases to be an Internet jihadi. But without such an impenetrable boundary, the non-violent online practices which Internet jihadis take part in would cease to work. Jihadism derives its meaning as an online practice precisely from the fact that it can never quite be reduced to a merely virtual activity, to the fact that it can never quite be absorbed and accommodated.

And yet at the same time, it would seem that many Internet jihadis are, so to speak ‘of the devil’s party without knowing it’, for they write, so to speak, ‘in fetters’ when they discuss the actual practices of the mujahidin in the field, which are treated in remote, stereotypical terms; and in achingly immediate, specific terms when they speak of their experiences online. Of course, it is the virtual world that they know best. And yet this cannot fully explain the aesthetic. After all, there is no need, even for those who have never taken part in hostilities to write about them in such a stylised manner. Nor is there a necessary reason why online experiences must be related in such - to use the Maffesolian term - ‘paroxysmal’ terms.

Indeed, the very fact that mujahidin heroes are so unassailable would seem, perhaps, to make them all the more useful as vessels and for the kinds of emotional crescendo collectively produced by the *online* experience. For example, it might be noted how the posting record of Al-Sayf forum member Wajih al-Qamar (as encountered in the previous chapter) contains numerous entries labelled as, for example, ‘a story that made many people cry’, ‘a story that made Usama bin Ladin cry until he fainted’, ‘eight matters that made me cry’, ‘situations that made (the second Muslim Caliph) ‘Umar bin al-Khattab cry and then become silent and then become angry’.⁵⁷⁶ In such cases it would seem that even the act of cutting and pasting a story serves as an invitation to a moment of imagined, but intense solidarity. In this sense engagement with the mujahidin can be understood as a personal

investment – equivalent to other types of ‘fannish engagement’ which helps to give meaning and purpose to otherwise very ordinary practices of life.

To sum up: other than borderline illegality, Internet jihadism, as an experience, does not obviously have very much in common with the vibe at a rave. It is hard to imagine a less loved up and inclusive image than the snarling, gun-toting visage of Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi. And yet the idea of the ‘clubculture’ which was used to discuss the postmodern, fragmentary situation in the late 1990s, in which people from all sorts of backgrounds could melt into the spontaneous, almost ritual experience of house music and ecstasy is in a sense equally applicable to that of Internet jihadism. Ironically, in their quest for authenticity, Internet jihadis are forced - so it seems - to substitute a world of surfaces for a world of ‘real’ encounters. Since Internet jihadism is, practically speaking, defined solely by the visual index of engagement with jihadi texts, and since offline jihadism is necessarily a secretive activity, there is no reason why the jihadi may not simply enter and leave as she or he pleases. In this sense, like the conventions of behaviour at a rave which made it possible for a stockbroker, a rock star, a supermarket worker, a new-age hippy and a punk to spontaneously sink their differences into a single social experience, so the strict rules which govern how one goes about ‘being a jihadi’ can be seen to conspire to produce the powerful collective experience of jihadism on the Internet.

Jihadism and its Discontents

7.0 Jihadi Da‘wa

There remains some unfinished business. In chapter five, we left Abu ‘Amru al-Qa‘idi explaining that the main purpose of the jihadi forum is da‘wa. Indeed, da‘wa remains clearly the best argument left for there being a rational purpose to jihadi activity on the Internet. After all, it has been said many times that we are confronted with a ‘war of ideas’, and that ‘they’ are better at information operations than ‘we’ are.⁵⁷⁷ In the open meeting with Ayman al-Zawahiri, jihadis expressed great concern about whether Al Qaida was managing to get its message across, and about distortions of its image by the mainstream Arabic and Western media.

But do jihadis actually do much ‘da‘wa’ on the Internet? How do they understand the concept of da‘wa as a jihadi activity, and does such a conception reflect what jihadis actually do online? We have already encountered the tension between da‘wa and jihad on the one hand, and, on the other, between *nuṣra*, and jihadi da‘wa. As we saw with the previous chapter’s example of the ‘Salafi-Jihadi from Somalia’, it is possible that *naṣrī* and *da‘wī* identities - or, perhaps better, roles, may represent two distinct spheres of identity for an Internet jihadi. Indeed, such a situation seems almost inevitable given the apparently tiered structure of jihadi propaganda distribution, with the jihadi forums serving as the initial gateway for new releases, which then make their way onto other forums and types of social media.

In fact, this is more or less the view put forward by Abu ‘Amru al-Qa‘idi. For him, there are basically two kinds of Internet activity which one might use to strengthen the resolve of a prospective ‘recruit’ for forming a jihadi unit. The first of these has already been discussed, and

entails enrolling one's protege in a jihadi forum. It is important to note that this is only after (in Al-Qa'idi's vision) an extensive period of face to face socialisation between the recruiter and his mark.

Alternatively, Al Qa'idi offers this tactic:

Make the suggestion of practicing as a *mad 'ū* [a practitioner of *da'wa*] in his own way [*tayār*]: that is, that he become an electronic mujahid, and that he participate in *da'wa* on the Internet. And this is so that, when he knows that jihad is a *farḍ 'ayn*, and that the governments are apostates, then it cannot be otherwise than that he will take a practical step - and it is not possible to compel him with the idea of forming a unit now - never. But say to him that the least thing by which we can advance the jihad and the mujahidin is that we publicise their releases and their operations, and we defend them and clarify to people the goodness of the truth about them and the purity of their actions. And thus you do not let him turn a corner towards cooling down his involvement after having learned the truth. But rather, you move towards the goal step by step, even if it is only a small step. And this through the dissemination of releases and posts of the greatest influence, and the defence of his brothers through knowledge, and this, naturally, helps you [ie, the recruiter].⁵⁷⁸

'Al Qaidi's' careful use of language here well displays the underlying tension behind the notion of 'jihadi da'wa'. On the one hand, it must be allowed that it represents a way of doing jihad. On the other, it cannot be allowed too great a role. Jihadi da'wa is an activity which provides a way of keeping someone involved in the process of being a jihadi, but cannot be considered a worthwhile and satisfactory course of action in itself. For if da'wa itself were too effective, this would potentially undercut jihad entirely, while if jihadi da'wa were accorded too high a status, it would potentially undercut Al Qaidi's primary explicit aim, which is to mobilise (*tajnīd*) people into violent action.

Like other jihadi primers, Abu 'Amru's course stops short of giving instruction on actual involvement in violence. Its final end point is with the formation of a 'unit' or *saraya*, at which the author leaves off and hands the reader over to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's *Global Islamic Resistance*

Call, the contents page of which is provided for the reader at the end of the book. And yet, for Al-Suri, as we saw in the previous chapter, media activity, carried out in an organised fashion, is in itself one of the forms of action to which a jihadi *saraya* may devote itself. Presumably, Abu ‘Amru al-Qa’idi does not envisage the final stage of the candidate for radicalisation being yet more media work. And this may, in fact, account for his hesitancy in bestowing the term *sarāya* on such activity. Other followers of al-Suri are less scrupulous, however. As one post on ‘media jihad - how to be a *saraya* by yourself’ puts it:

We are in need of an army of preachers so that we can enlighten the people and repair the path of the disputes of the refuseniks. And as the mujahid, (Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri) said - may God watch over his family - (a condition of crisis and difficulty is necessary for every brother who acts as a unit and raids in the name of God).⁵⁷⁹

Quite clearly, the glory of being a unit which practices raiding (*ghazu*’) in the name of God is here assumed to accrue to the Internet jihadi just as to the mujahid in the field.

What is jihadi da‘wa supposed to entail? In *39 Ways to Serve Jihad and the Mujahidin*, Al-Salim provides precise instructions for how his 'forums project' is to be conducted. The participants in electronic jihad are to form groups of three people - one of whom is designated project administrator. These people are then to 'post on threads which discuss jihad and seek to advance it', while at the same time responding to the assaults of those who insult the mujahidin. This, necessarily, seems to envisage the jihad as an outreach activity.⁵⁸⁰ And in fact the point seems to be proved by the fact that Salim lists which exact forums he recommends as the venues for the project: *Al-Islah*, *Al-Fawa'id*, *Ana al-Muslim*, *Sahat al-Arabiya*, *Al-Hisbah* (which, judging by the others on the list means not the (in)famous and now defunct jihadi network, but rather a religious forum by the same name).⁵⁸¹ All of these are (or were) large and notable Arabic language bulletin boards, and

all (except for saha.com, which as we saw in chapter 4 is a venerable multi-topic forum), have in common that they are religious, salafi leaning communities, without being jihadi forums per se.

A still clearer manifesto for what Internet jihad is supposed to be is offered by ‘Abi Khaythma al-Libi’ - a member of Ansar al-Mujahidin forum. Al-Libi asserts:

It is known that the jihad of the tongue is considered to be one of the types of jihad, and it is defence of the Muslims and their lands from those that let them down and those that blemish them from among the unbelievers and the hypocrites, who have come in a great flood... ‘the faithful one practices jihad against the unbelievers with his sword, and with his tongue against the unbelievers and others of the apostates and the aimless party through the use of argumentation and the deployment of proofs and so on’.⁵⁸²

From this, it seems quite clear that jihad of the tongue is to be understood not just as the dissemination of media among communities of fellow-travellers, but as the use of persuasive argumentation as a way of bringing new people over to support for the jihad.

The problem, of course, with such an approach is that it necessarily requires engagement with an other - something which potentially threatens the very closeness, or *nuṣra* which jihadis so treasure.

This, indeed, may be the reason why one of Zawahiri’s questioners complained:

Perhaps the Shaykh has noticed the gaffes of many of the jihadis in dealing with those who differ in some matters, or in *manhaj* generally. And we find the one who displays another tendency, and we find that he excuses everyone who differs, even if he was blatantly attacking the Sunnah. So what is the advice of the Shaykh to the jihadi youth and the mujahidin themselves concerning the way to deal with those who differ in opinion?⁵⁸³

7.1 Jihadis Confront the Other

Thus, at the heart of the problem of the status of jihadi *da'wa* lies another, deeper problem in jihadism. Namely, the conceptualisation of the relationship between jihadis and others. Given jihadi commitment to violent jihad as a religious obligation, and furthermore to the notion of seclusion of the righteous community from outside contacts advanced in Al Maqdisi's understanding of *al-wala wa al-bara*⁵⁸⁴, jihadis there might, theoretically, be a sense in which attempts to engage with those who are not already jihadis might be seen as futile, since firstly such people are already, *ipso facto* at the very least hypocrites, (*munāfiqīn*) and possibly apostates (*murtaddīn*) to boot. Further, if talking to such people made a difference (as more quietist strains of salafism assert), this might obviate the need for a jihad in the first place.

In order to escape from this radical *takfiri* trap, jihadis have had to develop a conceptual vocabulary for talking about people who fall between jihad and apostacy. Thus, jihadis speak of the 'inactive' as *qa'idūn* (a rather confusing term, since it could also mean 'partisans of al-Qaida), 'defeatists' (*inhizāmīūn*)⁵⁸⁵ - a term we encountered in the previous chapter in the 'dialogue between a jihadi and a defeatist', or - as in the post above, 'the aimless party' (*al-fariq al-za'igha*). Such people are assumed - so it seems - to remain Muslims in spite of their failure to join the jihad - accounted for either by worldly distractions, ignorance or a pessimistic (perhaps cowardly) fear of failure. Indeed, since jihadi thought (notwithstanding its language of removal from society, and the 'alienation' of true believers), requires the notion of there still remaining latent Muslim masses capable of being wakened to action, jihadism (perhaps like any ideology) is better able to deal with the idea of apolitical innocence than with considered and principled non-involvement. If taken to its logical conclusion, however, such an attitude still limits the possibilities jihadis have for real engagement in debate with other points of view. Is, then, a true jihadi *da'wa* really possible?

To examine this question, we shall now consider how the subject of jihad (and indeed of jihadism) is actually discussed in Muslm.net: one of the forums which Al Salim recommends as a venue for the ‘forums project’ of his conception of ‘electronic jihad’.

7.2 ‘I Am the Muslim Network’

Muslm.net - or, to give it its full name, the ‘I Am the Muslim Network for Islamic conversation’ (*shibkat ana al-muslim li -l-ḥiwār al-islāmī*) is a large Islamic forum⁵⁸⁶ - generally described as ‘salafi’ in orientation, but with a substantial jihadi tendency. There was, for instance, some interest on the forum itself when, in 2007, ‘Internet Haganah’, a private consultancy which specialises in monitoring Islamist forums, listed Muslm.net, in spite of being ‘generally regarded as a salafi forum’ within its top ten jihadi sites on the Internet - ‘with good reason’.⁵⁸⁷ Members of the forum did not altogether reject the claim. Indeed, the ambiguous character of the forum is well represented by its appearance. In contrast to the vivid and sometimes fiery colours of a typical jihadi forum, Muslm.net’s main page is a contemplative blue, shading at the top of the page into clouds, and the delicate pink of sunrise: symbolic of spiritual, metaphysical aspirations. And yet, riding through these clouds, to the top right of the page is a silhouetted horseman. His cloak streams out behind him, and he bears a banner. There is nothing blatantly militant about the image; but it is suggestive of the more obviously martial horseman motifs of militant jihad.

Abu Harith Al-Mihdar, in the history of jihadi forums quoted in chapter five asserts that Muslm.net was early on taken over by Saudi intelligence: a case, some (including some on Muslm.net would no doubt argue) of the pot calling the kettle black.⁵⁸⁸ But it is certainly of interest that such a potentially controversial forum is to this day hosted in Mecca itself⁵⁸⁹ - suggesting, at the very least, a significant amount of government oversight of a forum which has - at the very least some militant connections.

This has meant that it has occasionally faced accusations of inappropriate closeness to violent groups. For instance, when the Al Qaida ‘triple agent’ Humam Khalil al-Balawi carried out a suicide attack on a CIA station in Afghanistan, the site was accused by the Jordanian government of posting information about him which was not, at the time, publicly available.⁵⁹⁰ Whether this accusation is true or not, it is certainly the case that the forum has at least one connection to Al-Balawi. His widow, Dafna Bayrak, is openly a member.⁵⁹¹

All of this adds weight to the notion that Muslm.net has some kind of intelligence gathering function for the Saudi government. But it would be much too simple to suggest that the forum is merely a front operation. Rather, the fact that a prominent salafi forum can continue to openly host such clearly jihadi content may point towards the continuing complexity of Saudi internal politics. Some of these apparent contradictions can be seen the forum’s ‘general administrator’ (*al-musharrif al- ‘ām*) - a character called ‘Al Sarem al-Maslool’, rumoured, at least, to be ‘A’id al-Dawsari’, - a lecturer in Islamic studies at the college of education of King Sa’ud University in Riyadh.⁵⁹²

An examination of the posting record of ‘Al Sarem al-Maslool’ reveals that he is quite prepared to contribute his support to threads relating to violent jihad. For instance, when ‘Abu ‘Ayna’, a long time member of the forum was reported to have died in service of the Islamic State of Iraq,⁵⁹³ members on the forum were upset to note that the newspaper ‘Al Haya’ described his action as a ‘suicide operation’ (*‘amiliyya intiḥārīyya*), rather than a martyrdom operation. Al Sarem al-Maslool had this to say:

If a dancing girl praised and congratulated one of you, would he celebrate and be pleased? On the contrary, there would be vilification and criticism of him as a person celebrated by prostitutes and salacious people. This is the condition of the newspaper *Al Haya*. If it had praised and congratulated Abu ‘Ayna, its praise would have been vilification. But it tried to criticise him, so its vilification is praise.⁵⁹⁴

Thus, the forum's chief administrator is not shy of (albeit somewhat obliquely) voicing his support for a suicide attacker with an Al Qaida affiliate group. And yet, at the same time - at least as of 2002 - he was still clearly expressing his support for the Saudi monarchy.

Indeed, this can be illustrated usefully with reference to a particular episode concerning this site which occurred in 2002. Mohamed Al Hassan, a chemistry professor at King Abdul Aziz University in Saudi Arabia, became disenchanted with the anti-Shiite views which his son reported being taught at his school in Riyadh, in particular by a certain teacher. Unsatisfied with her response when he challenged her on this, he posted an account of the episode on his website.⁵⁹⁵

This prompted a response from 'Al Sarem al-Maslool', who posted the following 'fatwa on spilling the blood of the atheist reprobate Mohamed Ja'far'

Dr Mohamed Ja'far al-Hassan, whereas he displayed, concerning some of those in positions of responsibility in the country, criticism and assaults on their reputation, and among them some friends of his Royal Highness, impugning their ability, may God curse him, and also attempt to plant fitna in this fragrant country and the influence of the primitive grunting among those with whom he associates, daring even [to impugn] the mujahid sister Nura Qahtani may God agree with her. And he didn't even stop at entering the best website on the Internet – the 'I am a Muslim network for Islamic conversation' and got up the noses of the sons of Islam and the blessed pioneers of the forum with his malodorous stink. So we issued a fatwa to spill the blood of this apostate lout, may God curse him. So whoever finds him, let him slaughter him with a Shari'a slaughtering. And if one of you met him on a journey and did not manage to slaughter him, let him spit in his face may God curse him and damn him. May God preserve the guardian of the two holy shrines and his brothers and sons and ministers and those in his care and all those who love him. And we don't forget to thank the guardian of the two shrines and the crown prince and his extension of the shrines. He said, and he wrote it: mercy upon the Shaykh of the Ulama, may God lengthen his span⁵⁹⁶

The key point to be noted here is the combination of violent and intimidating language with appeals of loyalty to the royal family - an apparent paradox that is, in fact, readily resolved in view of Hegghammer's work on the generally global rather than internal concerns of Saudi jihadi-salafism.⁵⁹⁷

Certainly, it is hard to imagine that Al-Sarem al-Masloul - whatever roles he may play - would be able to sustain so large and successful a forum if members (who, after all, are at least as capable of drawing the same deductions as we are), believed him to be entirely fraudulent in his jihadi commitments. On the other hand, nor is it the case that Muslm.net is simply a jihadi forum with a slightly different appearance. Nor, for that matter, is Al-Sarem al-Masloul necessarily best described as a 'jihadi' per se, within the context of this forum. Rather, the difference between the administrator and other, more plainly 'jihadi' members (and between the forum and other more plainly 'jihadi' forums) has less to do with stated beliefs, and more to do with the range of issues it covers. While Al-Sarem al-Masloul is prepared to offer his praise to mujahid martyrs in Iraq (which, after all, is not an uncommon position in the Middle East), his online identity does not appear to be *primarily* oriented around support for the mujahidin.

This can be contrasted with an example of a more explicitly 'jihadi' member. To consider one such (chosen as an instance of an ostensibly typical, rather than outstanding case), let us take 'al-hatf2' (that is, 'Doom 2'). Al Hatf2 apparently displays his affiliation, like many seemingly 'jihadi' members of the forum by using as his 'avatar' the banner of the Islamic State in Iraq - a strikingly simple design consisting of white, rather primitive looking Arabic letters derived from the design of what is believed to be the seal used by the prophet.

Al-Hatf2's presence on the forum, as a sound but relatively inconspicuous jihadi is, in fact, instructive not only for the window it gives into the typical concerns (and, therefore, distinguishing

features) of a 'jihadi' on Muslm.net, but also for the insight it offers into the gradual process of engagement which a jihadi may go through in order to become an accepted member of the community. Thus, Al Hatf2 apparently begins to contribute to posts in early 2009.⁵⁹⁸ For a long time, however, his contributions are minimal - without being quite so minimal as never to go beyond the standard formula of 'may God give you good'. After a few months, Al-Hatf starts his own thread: an uncontroversial repost of a propaganda release from the Islamic State of Iraq.⁵⁹⁹ Presumably on account of his little-known junior status and the uncontroversial nature of the item (though better known members posting similar material are better acknowledged), he receives only two responses. Remaining careful to stay tactfully on the right side of a number of unpleasant factional disputes, Al-Hatf 2's opportunity finally comes up to make a more serious contribution with the flurry of interest surrounding the martyrdom of Abu Dujana al-Khurasani. Avoiding the fate of a previous poster who is castigated for a lack of references to the material he uses, Al Hatf produces a careful piece in which he uses the work of Mossad whistleblower Victor Ostrovsky to strategically analyse Abu Dujana's success.⁶⁰⁰

Muslm.net is not, however, an environment which is unanimously supportive to violent jihad. Nor are its supporters of jihad homogeneous. Indeed, there have been and still are intense disputes among partisans of Al Qaida, the national jihadi groups in Iraq and Hamas on the one hand; and between pro-Al Qaida critics of excessive violence in Iraq on the one hand, and apologists for it on the other. Moreover, there is what appears to be an increasingly active set of members who are highly critical of Al Qaida.

In spite of this, the major orientation of jihadi activity on the forum seems to be more towards those conventional for a more straightforwardly jihadi forum. 'Jihadi' members post propaganda material from mujahidin groups and news stories from mainstream media selected so as to reveal the successes and worthiness of their cause and the excesses, losses and unworthiness of its crusader and

apostate opponents, and for the most part are responded to with simple affirmations of approval by others. Engagement with those who do not share the same enthusiasm are the exception rather than the norm. Nonetheless, such encounters are revealing when they do occur, as we shall now see, through an examination of four contentious discussions within the forum.

7.3 Example 1: Criticism of an Al Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb Hostage Ransoming⁶⁰¹

On New Year's Day, 2009, a member of the forum called 'Ibn Badiya' posted a story from the newspaper *El Mundo* about Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb demanding a 'seven million dollar' ransom for the release of a number of Spanish citizens.⁶⁰² The title of his thread queried whether this was 'terrorism or business'? 'I am not by way of being an *'alim* or a shaykh', he pointed out, 'but this deal seems to depart from the learning of Islamic shari'a for the following reasons:

- Those captured were civilians and not combatants
- These civilians were abducted after they had entered a Muslim country and taken a security contract (*'ahd al-aman*) from the Muslims
- The reason for abducting them was to obtain money.'

Jihadi members of Muslm.net responded rapidly to this attack on the integrity of an Al Qaeda affiliate. Indeed, the second reply to the post provided what was, to a significant extent, a summary of the jihadi arguments that followed.

- a. do you know them personally? What of the famous Lawrence of Arabia (he was a combatant, but seemed to be a student of archaeology).
- b. They entered whether you liked it or not, Mr Security. In Morocco, there are occupied cities up to now (Spanish settlements) Ceuta and Melilla.

- c. If it was like that [ie, if the primary goal of the kidnapping was indeed to obtain money], there isn't a problem. Why did the companions of the prophet raid caravans of the Quraysh? And they released infidels from captivity and received a ransom.

In other words, the jihadi response was premised on (1) a rejection of the 'civilian' status of those kidnapped, either because they were nationals of a country at war with Islam (through its part in the 'war on terror' and – as here – its occupation of parts of Morocco),⁶⁰³ (2) a rejection of the right of the legitimacy of the Moroccan government with regard to its ability to issue 'contracts of security', and (3) the alleged Islamic precedent for raiding and ransoming hostages for money.

A key point about the argument that followed over fourteen pages and 125 posts was the lack of a meeting point for argument between the two sides. For those opposed to the action, the terms 'combatant' (*muḥārib*) and 'civilian' (*madanī*) came up again and again. For those in favour, these distinctions were spurious in this case or even meaningless in general. This basic distinction – which seemed insurmountable by any amount of argument – informed everything else. So, for supporters of the ransoming, the hostage ransomings of the prophet's companions after the battle of Badr, or the raids of Qurayshi caravans that preceded it provided a precedent. For those opposed, a decisive objection was that these were combatants, and therefore subject to the laws of war. The point is that, notwithstanding fleeting attempts by members either side to move beyond this deadlock, the dispute ran, for the most part, at cross purposes. So again, for supporters of Al Qaida, Al Qaida's actions were legitimate because of the legitimacy of its jihad against the unbelievers, not the other way around. For opponents of Al Qaida, the very fact that this entity consisted of 'gangs' (*'aṣā'ib*) rather than a properly constituted state meant that its action in ransoming prisoners could only be interpreted in a commercial (and therefore criminal) light.

In consequence, much of the debate actually amounted to *ad hominem* arguments. For the jihadis, attacks on the mujahidin were immediately seized on as evidence of treachery by people presumed

to be in the pay of RAND corporation or, at the very least, friends of the crusaders and the Jews. Taunts along these lines were, therefore, constant and inevitable for anyone who questioned the legitimacy of the action. Indeed, the ultimate fallback argument (advanced, in fact, by Al-Hatf2) was that even were it the case that the mujahidin could be found to have slipped in some way in regard to the correct Islamic procedures, this was nothing in comparison to the entirely unscrupulous methods of the infidels they were fighting.

Another occurrence common to such debates which was exhibited in this case was for jihadis to attack errors in Arabic spelling and grammar made by their opponents. For example, after correcting a mistake in the gender of a possessive pronoun, Al-Hatf 2 posted: ‘Learn Arabic, then snipe at those who sell themselves and their possessions for God’.

For their part, opponents of the hostage ransoming occasionally attempted to widen the argument by pointing to Al Qaida’s record of killing Muslim civilians, and its lack of any viable plan for a real Muslim state. Towards the end of the dispute, this culminated in a challenge laid down to the jihadi member ‘Faylaq ‘Umar’,⁶⁰⁴ to whom the poster of the thread posed a challenging question: ‘Do you know how many of the Islamic caliphs – in the understanding of Al Qaida – ascended after the righteous caliphs?’

After initially evading this question, Faylaq ‘Umar, however, was able to twist the situation back onto his terms by quoting a speech of Bin Ladin’s in which he praised the Ottoman Empire for its resistance of Western Imperialism, and denigrated the ‘complicity’ of Arab leaders such as Sharif Husayn and Abdul Aziz al-Sa‘ud with Britain in bringing about the regime’s demise. ‘Where is even a superficial resemblance’, Faylaq ‘Umar demanded, ‘between the Ummayyad and ‘Abbasid and Ottoman states and the Islamic states of today’.

What is worthy of comment regarding this discussion is not that actual points made (which, of course, are the familiar differences between ‘jihadi’ and ‘mainstream’ Islamic positions). Rather, the interest lies in the emotional investments which seemed to underpin the dispute, and to sustain it through fourteen pages of – essentially – the same intellectual content. For those opposed to the ransoming, the starting point seemed to be the abstract notion that *Islam* (as an undefined generality) is ‘merciful’ or ‘noble’ and therefore that actions interpreted *a priori* as thuggish, mercenary, or criminal must violate its sanctity. For those, on the other hand, who supported it, the investment in the *mujahidin* was paramount. Those who opposed the mujahidin were guilty of the moral failing of ‘sitting down with women’, rather than travelling out to fight the jihad.

7.4 Example 2: A Dispute over Targeting in Iraq⁶⁰⁵

On the thirteenth of April, 2009, ‘Sayf Sa’ad’ - a member who frequently reports on events in Iraq - was delighted to post a story about a bombing - claimed by the commander of the faithful - which had recently taken place against a cafe in Baghdad owned by Yazidis. The Yazidis, for information’s sake, are followers of an imperilled minority religion found primarily in Iraq. Adhering to a form of manichean theology whereby the world is understood to be governed on behalf of a sublime and distant creator God by an angelic figure called Malak Taus or, sometimes Shaytan, they are widely thought to be Satan-worshippers by Muslims, and have historically been persecuted on that account. In 2007, this persecution was re-ignited by an incident in which a 17 year old Yazidi girl, Du’a Khalil Aswad was stoned to death for having, it was believed, an affair with a Sunni Muslim boy.

While the post was generally well received, one ostensibly ‘jihadi’ member called ‘Abu Harun’ (who displayed as his avatar the logo of the Islamic State) expressed dismay.

Have they not stopped killing them? Does the State intend a massacre of the Yazidi sect?⁶⁰⁶

This prompted a response ranging from bemusement to outrage. As the original author of the thread put it:

We are concerned with servants of Satan. You say ‘does the State intend to massacre them!!!’ Is worshipping Satan a form of unbelief? What, Abu Harun - are they breaking your heart?

Others on the forum were rather less polite.

You fawning dog. (*kalb al-ibtah*). Are Yazidis of innocent blood!!! Are Yazidis innocent of killing Du‘a, or were they complicit? Did you see the video you dog, and how many participated in the killing of Du‘a?

Fawning dog, I ask God that he kill you like the Yazidis before, dogs, dogs dogs. You are dogs and in the state of a dog, O dogs, Islam will come back. Your councils and your fronts are nothing but dogs and fawners, the banner will not be raised for you. People of the world (*dunya*), may God kill you.

Undeterred, Abu Harun began to defend his position, observing that Zoroastrians, and even pagans were – in the view of some scholars – eligible for *dhimmi* status. This perhaps surprisingly liberal argument, for a self-styled jihadi member of the forum prompted further recriminations.

It was at this point that ‘Unidentified’ entered the discussion with a revealing observation.

This is the condition of many of those who call for jihad on the Internet. They use support for the mujahidin as an attempt to claim manliness and false strength. Abu Harun is trying to discuss the matter and its religious basis and there is no reply to him.

While it might not be entirely true that there was no attempt by those who supported the bombings to justify their position on religious grounds, the notion of Internet jihadis as looking to ‘claim

manliness an false strength' appears to reflect on both sides in the debate. For both the angry bravado of the one, and the disappointed idealism of the other point in the same direction: towards a personal identification with the embodied values of the mujahidin going well beyond the ideological case advanced for their actions.

7.5 Example 3: An attack on detractors of the jihadis⁶⁰⁷

On 17th March 2010, a jihadi member of the forum called 'Abu al-Husayn' posted a poem, under the title of 'the forum will curse you, and you will be consigned to the dustbin of history'. Posted under a fluttering representation of the banner of the Islamic State, The poem was dedicated:

To all who are of our work, and the work of the Ummah, with regard to its greatest concern,
with subjects which do not end... disputes and misrepresentation and exchanges of accusations and
recrimination without equal...

The poem was a bitter attack on those who would seek to disrupt the work of the 'lions of the jihadi media' on the forum, of whom it was accused:

Because of the shortness of your vision we missed seeing our dream.
You have made us an Ummah groping about in the sea of forgetfulness
You have made us live in a world of false promises.
You have killed our celebration
You have spitefully impugned our innocence
O you who slander our bodies
It's time for you to leave

The piece was remarkable not just for its invective, but for the in-built vision of jihadi community it offered. The lions of jihadi media - 'the respectable people' were called on to 'reject them... their

dealings, their mendacity, their clamour'. The writings of such people were deemed to be 'empty'. As the writer insisted 'even if you write thousands of lines, you write without benefit' - a comment which echoed the more generally salafi dichotomy between *ḥaqq* (truth) and *bāṭil* - a word which literally means 'the void'; or again, a term sometimes used by jihadis to describe those who disagree with them - 'followers of air' (*aṣḥāb al-hawa*). Indeed, as one user of this term made in a discussion on the same forum in 2007, 'even if their intentions corrected, (and what intention is there to correct from air?) their work would be bad and corrupt.' Nothing that is built without foundation can stand. Or again - more pragmatically, as one of the commentators on the post put it:

I become paralysed with pain every time I see my brother from the companions of the jihadi media entering polemics and replies fomented by that dirty clique. O brothers, believe me the lack of reply to their posts and leaving them to the removal of pages sends our a stronger message and is more destructive than the reply which you will write, if it is a reply which will make you think that you have put it in its place, but rather the opposite - these people are practicing a good exercise and they have sold life for a number of dirhams.

The fundamental emptiness - the loathsome vacuity of the words produced by the jihadis' opponents was, of course to be contrasted with the profound meaningfulness and solidity of the jihadi project - a project indeed, which was said to be premised on the making real of words, their interlinking with meanings (the emphasis below is mine).

We seek a return *to the book of history*
so that an Ummah of Islam *should appear on the list of names*
Every part of the land of Islam *forms a part*
Of our souls, and we are not prepared
to die as cowards die
Come, soldiers of God in the land
Leave them, their mules die
They are not worthy of your consideration
Or that you waste your time on their like

Even though the ‘lions’ that are addressed are lions not of the battlefield, but ‘of the jihadi media’, they acquire physical characteristics in this discourse. They have ‘bodies’ to be slandered. They inhabit a ‘land’ in which they are ‘soldiers’. Ultimately, in fact, their lives are at stake. And while, of course, the life of a jihadi may very well be at stake in a perfectly real sense (as we have seen, there appear to be real martyrs who have inhabited the jihadi community of Muslm.net), the sense here is that the ‘lives’ are to be understood in a poetically.

The online jihadis are made real here, paradoxically, by their supposed non-commitment to the petty trivialities of life on the forum (a claim which, of course, the very existence and the very invective of the poem refutes).

Leave us and go far away from us, for there is no benefit from you except polemics. As for us, we turn our gaze far away, there where our gaze rejoices in the sight of the Al Aqsa mosque. There in Baghdad where we raise our banner - ‘there is no God but God... Muhammad is the prophet of God’... there in the mountains of Khurasan... in the Caucasus and Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, there, rather than towards the Kremlin and the White House.

Indeed, the notion that it is supposedly the worldly project of jihad, rather than the *textual* foundation sought by conventional salafism which provides jihadism with its sense of solidity is reinforced by the refrain of the poem which, interestingly, is a quotation not from the Qur’an or the hadith, or even from classical Islamic history, but from the modern secular Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish’s 1988 work: ‘O those who pass between fleeting words’ (*ayuha al-mārūn bayna kalimāt al-‘ābira*).

The post was warmly received; not just through the playful, graphical means of elaborate, flashing ‘God give you good’s, but also through more colloquially enthusiastic sounding responses: ‘what a

great post!’ And the usual vilification of those from ‘RAND’ and the *fitna* they were determined to stir up on the forum. It also prompted a remarkable outburst from a member who called himself ‘Abu Dhirr al-Shami’. Accusing Abu al-Husayn of being a liar, he went on to relate a summary of the acrimonious “dissent” (*khilaf*) as a result of which, he said ‘I shall now cease my activities on the net’.

Abu Dhirr’s disillusioning experience of the forum related in part to differences of opinion. He admitted to having argued that ‘a limit had come to the explosions’. But far more significant in his account was the duplicity of members of the community. For his part, he defended himself against implicit allegations of having acted inappropriately through the use of multiple identities (indeed, ‘sock puppeting’ and identity theft are both important wider concerns on the forum and - as we have seen, among Internet jihadis in general). While admitting that he had adopted particularly online aliases in order to criticise particular jihadi figures (including Al Maqdisi), he insisted:

And I in truth do not like to write except under a single identity. But the pressure of brother Abu Buthayna made me use the identity of Ibn Hazim and Ahmad Bawadi is the one who put the pressure on me by writing as himself or as ‘Ibn al-Lahham’ for the limitation of my posts with respect to Al Maqdisi. And I have not criticised his person, but I have shown how I differ from him.

He also claimed to have had a face to face meeting with the author of the thread, the details of which encounter had been misrepresented:

And on one occasion you came to my house and we had a discussion about this subject and I said to you, had you read what I wrote? And you said to me no, however, I passed over it and you did not realise the tenor of the words, and I said to you, show me where I was in error, and God willing I will stop writing and excuse me that I was in error and it was a post of Hamid al-Ali - he his subject was what was separating us - and from then there came a question of Malik al-Ansari and from then a session and an argument, and from then you quoted the dissent in the forum, but you did not mention to the brothers the details of the session, and with

regard to praising you, I am one of those who say: good things have happened, bad things have happened, and I challenge you to find a post in which I praise you and where I subsequently stabbed you in the back as you claim.

Finally, the author revealed his 'true' identity:

And now I have let you know who I am. I am 'The Leader Usama', and by God I have not registered in this network except under the identity of 'The Leader Usama', but one of the brothers gave me this identity, as I have explained the truth of the affair, may God bring good to him.

Indeed, 'The Leader Usama' is (or, at any rate, was) a major jihadi figure on Muslm.net. The issue of duplicity, of multiple identities, and of the sense of violation produced by the theft of another person's online identity is, of course, hardly unique to the jihadi context. But what is more important here is the story that can be read about how dissent happens in jihadi contexts. That is to say, the individual in question here - rather than using his distinctively jihadi persona of 'The Leader Usama' to voice his misgivings about the legitimacy of some of the actions of Al Qaida, had instead created his own, distinct, online characters. The management of this had however - so he claimed - been subject to ethical regulation. As the poster claimed: '... some of the brothers informed me that you said to them that you required that I swear by God that I use the identity of Ibn Hazem for good things, and I swore to that.' He also claimed in his defence that 'your shaykh read everything I wrote and he knows that you are a liar now because I did not write the dissent which occurred'.

Thus, what can be observed here - arguably - is the negotiation of two different rule sets: on the one hand, a specifically 'jihadi' way of acting; on the other, an 'Islamic' or 'salafi' set of behaviours which is presumed to ultimately encompass the 'jihadi' one, but which, in fact, relates to it in a somewhat uneasy fashion. The 'jihadi' lives as an online identity. Indeed, the preposition employed

in the Arabic to describe the use of a particular online nickname is *fī* - 'in', implying that the nickname or identity is actually *inhabited* by the offline person. This notion of an identity being something lived can be shown to be a more generally applicable idea in contemporary Islamic jurisprudence by the remarkable argument made for the acceptability of using representative images of humans (normally forbidden in Islam) for participation in virtual environments such as Second Life. This is that a virtual world persona is not an image as such, but rather can be likened to a set of clothes which the Muslim user puts on in order to explore the virtual environment. The logic of the user here seems to be that there are certain things which a jihadi - by virtue of being a jihadi cannot say, but which the Muslim who inhabits him must.

7.6 Example 4: A Jihadi Response to a Critical Challenge⁶⁰⁸

Thus far, we have looked at examples which represent three out of four positions in what we might think of as a grid: we have seen a jihadi response to criticism of the mujahidin by non-jihadi Muslims on a substantive issue (Example 1). We have seen what can reasonably be described as a dispute among jihadis on a substantive issue (Example 2). We have seen the response to a jihadi attack on the detractors of the online jihad (Example 3). One space remains to be filled. We have yet to see the response to a direct attack on the Internet jihadis themselves. Such a thing occurred on Muslm.net on 18th March, 2010, when a member of the forum called 'Hamil al-Risala' (Bearer of the Message), posted a thread entitled: 'why are the supporters of Al Qaida afraid to debate us on the forums?' This was, in fact, a repost of the same comment made two days earlier on another forum - Al Jazeera Talk, which - as a forum representing a much broader spread of Arabic opinion - represents a useful comparative example for this case.⁶⁰⁹

Going on, predictably enough, to answer its own question, the post listed eight reasons:

1. Because they are unable to debate in a focused way so you see them employing insults and slurs
2. Because Al Qaida has been able to brainwash them to such an extent that its members do not believe anyone but themselves
3. Because they live in a vacant reality which is difficult to understand
4. Because they try to paint the situation in religious colours rather than terrorist colours
5. Because they are unable to justify the killing of innocents
6. Because they are unable to obtain consensus from the Muslim ulama specialising in Shari'a judgements to build a manhaj for themselves
7. Because they don't understand their religion, and their extremism (*ghulu*) renders them blind
8. Because God is with us and the Ummah is behind us

Uniquely on Muslm.net (perhaps due to the Islamic nature of the forum), the poster added:

I am a Muslim, like you, zealously proud of my religion. But the difference between me and you is that I don't believe in the killing of civilians and terrorism and efforts to cheat my brothers, and I refuse to believe that our wise religion permits this sort of action. I am a Muslim believer.

...And threw down the gauntlet - declaring: 'now that you know about us and our creed, maybe you will be willing to reply to our questions?'

We have already seen that the game of debating jihadis online is about rhetorical manoeuvre rather than the actual advancement of different arguments and positions. And here it is, of course, quite clear that this statement is not intended to offer a serious critique to the jihadi position. Like the jihadis' statements, it speaks not to the jihadis themselves, but to an imagined audience of fence-sitters (literally 'sitters', or *qa'idīn* in the jihadi terminology). All of the points are simply verbal attacks, some of which are so vague as to make it hard to conceive of how they could be answered even by someone honestly trying to do so. The intent of the statement is, therefore, not to produce a debate at all, but rather to force a certain kind of speech action. On the one hand, it seeks to wrest control over certain areas of intellectual terrain: the claim to conventional Islamic piety, for

instance. On the other, it seeks to attain supremacy in certain moral areas: particularly, courage and openness. The question in the title of the post is, of course, the classic rhetorical gambit of the ‘when did you stop beating your wife?’ variety, building in the unexamined assumption that the jihadis’ opponents have offered a debate, and that the jihadis are afraid of taking it up.

The ingenuity of the gambit is, of course, that it is premised on the very tendency of the jihadis - as we have already observed - not to engage with their detractors. By refusing to do so on this occasion, so it would seem, the jihadis risk appearing to validate the various insults levelled at them in the post. Indeed, the trickiness of the challenge could be seen in the diversity of the responses that were offered. On the one hand, many of those who replied took the familiar line of challenging the worthiness of the poster and his words. For some, this involved invoking the superior moral qualities of the mujahidin.

Brother, we in Palestine do not see glory and surety except from God, and those men ask of God that he preserve them with his preservation which you talk about.

Sit down and ask yourself:

Have you denied yourself like them?

Have you brought victory to this religion like them?

Have you left your family and your children like them?

Have you left your house and your possessions and your self like them?

Have you given yourself every day to God like them?

Do you have dust on your feet from the path of God like them?

Have you been wounded a wound in the path of God like them?

Have you, some days, slept in fear like them?

What is greater than the decadence of the present time!!!

This theme of decadence was even more strongly expressed later on.

‘Companion of the Message’, they are the organisation of Al Qaida, and you are the organisation of the table (*Al Maida*). They are sitting and building the firm base and the first blocks to establishing the righteous caliphate on the path of the prophets, whereas as you are filling your bellies with the leftovers of the idolators. You are thus building big, fat bellies. Maybe you sat down during the dawn prayer. It is enough for the mujahidin to be proud that you are in one trench with the zoroastrian heretics and the Jews and Christians and the Hindus and all those outcase apostates, and these are the enemies of the Al Qaida organisation.

Perhaps recognising that the primary focus of the attack was not on the mujahidin themselves, but rather on their online supporters, others sought to impugn not the supposed physical qualities of the poster, but rather his online qualities. One offered members of the thread ‘one of the posts of this filthy person’. Another familiar line of response (particularly, in this instance, to the post of ‘Firas_H’, another opponent of Al Qaida) was to criticise the quality of the poster’s Arabic - thereby reinforcing the notion of foreignness, ignorance and weak Islamic credibility. Oddly (in view of the critique offered), posting in Egyptian colloquial Arabic, ‘Khattab 76’ offered the following:

How are we to reply to a donkey? (He makes the subject into a genitive and also uses a *nun* with an *idafa*). And not just this. This was in the title of his post. And he says that he wants to debate concerning the blood of the Muslims. Go and learn to write first, you donkey and afterwards come and debate. You’ve got failure coming to you! What you say does not deserve the dignity of a reply.

Or, as another said simply: ‘we do not debate with the ignorant’. For several others, indeed, the post was to be considered so unworthy as not even to deserve a verbal reply.

And who are you to debate with people, hahahahaha, do you want to place the beloved members of the forum with Al Qaida? I am not from Al Qaida, I am from reality, (*al-waqi’a*), but I will reply to you with this picture.

The picture is a cartoon much favoured by jihadis on the Internet, in which a politician is shown speaking into a microphone fixed to a podium. The wires which trail out of the microphone are transformed at their other end into sewage pipes pouring directly into the gutter.

Disdainful attempt to brush off the challenge were also prevalent in the Al-Jazeera Talk posting of the same subject. Jihadi members of this forum (who - apparently due to greater freedom in this environment for visual expression, displayed themselves with typically lavish use of signature images and avatars of the sort discussed in the fourth chapter). One member (who tactfully, in the light of previous splits, called himself Abu Mu'sab al-Maqdisi) simply insisted that the poster read some jihadi books before making such claims. Another simply said that such charges were 'impertinent' (*safiyya*), and that silence was the best response to them.

For others, however, the familiar ad hominem tactics were apparently insufficient. The challenge to a debate could not go entirely unanswered.

Most straightforwardly, some simply attempted to take on the substantive elements of the critique of the mujahidin directly. 'Khattab al-Najdi' for instance, produced an argument - buttressed by the fatwa of Shaykh Shu'aybi on the legitimacy of suicide bombings killing civilians in Iraq. But most were not prepared to engage so directly. Rather, they sought assurances that the challenge was serious.

Do you want to debate in order to explain the truth, or is what you have the truth and you won't believe in anything else? Or are you really serious with the subject - that you want the truth, and you follow it, and if you were convinced you would believe in it?? We want a reply. Seriously, are you in earnest or not?

Others saw a more sinister purpose behind the post:

1. This thread of yours is a trap, and all who enter to defend Al Qaida will thereby reveal that they are of it, and this as global combat has taught and whoever is revealed on account of it is fated to spend time in prison.
2. You don't debate, you entrap.
3. Your mission is really dirty and whoever tries to trip up muslims is tripped by God thereby.
4. It was enough for you to say a debate with the companions of the contemporary jihad and that would have been broad enough for you to find many who would debate you.
5. What are they going to debate? A subject to any benefit other than to clear out the liquid sewage?
6. They are cleverer than you, and whoever wants to elevate the importance of his posts will show and say to people about how he is a writer and attacks the mujahidin.
6. I repeated number 6 because donkeys learn by repetition.

Yet others were prepared to take up the challenge - but with conditions. Indeed, it was objected that to the contrary, it was the jihadis who were willing to debate, while their opponents sought to evade or cheat. 'How many times,' one asked, 'have jihadis come onto non-jihadi forums to debate only to find their posts deleted the next day.' For his part, he was perfectly prepared to debate - but only on condition that the facts used in the discussion came 'not from the media, but from the words of Al Qaida itself.' For his part, 'Carrier of the Message' responded to this with the remark that he had been surprised to find such courtesy in a jihadi, and would happily take on the debate - but on condition that murderers and takfiris were not brought into it. In other words, an impasse.

On the Al Jazeera forum (an example, perhaps of the sort of non jihadi forum meant by this poster), there were similar responses. 'If you want a debate,' said one, 'we're waiting'. Only one member (who, perhaps tellingly, did not display conspicuous jihadi iconography) was actually prepared to engage in debate on the forum itself. This was in response to a post from another member in which it was asserted:

The sun does not need evidence that there are Muslim people and others who have been killed in the World Trade Centre towers. Who killed the Algerians, and still does in the blowing up of a hotel, and the graveyard in

Morocco. Who killed the people in Riyadh and the Land of the Two Shrines. Who destroyed the hotel in Amman over the heads of those who were in it. Who brought down the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan? ... There is no Muslim country safe from Al Qaida, just as there is no country safe from crusader occupation

The reponse - the single example of such in both forum threads - was a serious, point by point attempt to answer this challenge. And yet even here, it often seemed that what were at issue were fundamental assumptions as much as debatable interpretations. There were, the responder asserted, few or no Muslims in the World Trade Centre. Most of those killed in Riyadh were American soldiers. Those who weren't were working for them. The bombers in Amman didn't mean to target a wedding party - it was just that the roof collapsed on them from an upper floor. It wasn't the terrorism of Al Qaida that brought down the Taliban - it was the terrorism of America. Beheadings are not 'horrible', (as the previous poster has later said), they are Islamic.

7.7 Conclusion

The common denominator to all of these examples is of course the general inability of the jihadis and those who disagree with them to meaningfully engage online. Notwithstanding the jihadis' own claims that they are online in order to defend and bring victory to the mujahidin, jihadis, with only a few exceptions, seem ultimately more interested in creating homogeneously 'jihadi' online spaces than they are in actually arguing the case for the mujahidin - even in forums which are not overtly 'jihadi' in makeup. Because jihadis are validated in their existence as jihadis with reference to the necessity of jihad and the moral excellence of the mujahidin, critics can be understood only as traitors - sell outs to the Jews and the Crusaders; hired dogs of RAND corporation, and never, or only exceptionally, as debating partners. Moreover, devoid of the guarantee offered by vicarious association with the physical prowess and 'real world' worthiness of the mujahidin, the words of the jihadis' opponents are so devoid of meaning and substance as to be almost impossible to engage with. They are, literally 'void'. This in turn means that, if jihadis have difficulty engaging with their

critics, their critics are little better at engaging with jihadis. Disputes over points of Islamic history or theology are meaningful on their own terms. But when they are translated to present day situations, the vocabulary becomes so contested as to be almost unusable. Notions of ‘terrorism’, ‘mujahidin’, ‘kidnapping’, ‘raid’, ‘trade’, ‘caliph’ are applied so rhetorically as to leave little room for discussion by either side.

It is easy enough to dismiss the self-contained reason of jihadi discourse as, in a sense, cult-like. Caught up in a circle of self-reinforcing belief, jihadism can only interpret failures (whether of the mujahidin themselves or of the online jihadi community) as the product of sinister external forces. Of course, such beliefs are not necessarily without foundation. It is not paranoia, as the familiar saying goes, if they really are out to get you. But at the same time, it seems that even were there not efforts by Western and Arab governments to disrupt the online jihad, it would be necessary for the jihadis to invent them. Indeed, it is possible to read a perfectly lucid jihadi discussion of an endogenous split in the community followed immediately by a reference to the nefarious and omnipresent activities of RAND Corporation in sowing dissent. Such can be seen, for instance, in a 2007 discussion about (apparently) the divisions between the Al Qaida affiliate Islamic State of Iraq and the non-Al Qaida affiliate Islamic Army of Iraq.

...the one true jihad is almost the jihad of Al Qaida, not other than it, and the fighting of the rest is for the benefit of their nations and peoples and we do not know what. If it is hurt, the source of the hurting is the Jews and the Christians for the separation of Al Qaida - or the Islamic state - from the rest (the rest of the factions in particular and rest of the Muslims in general)!

Within a single sentence, the poster here offers a perfectly valid explanation for why there may be division between Al Qaida and others. (That is, Al Qaida is not nationalist, but others are). At the same time, however, it is seemingly *impossible* that Al Qaida could ever be separated from the Muslim people at large by anything other than the influence of Jews and Christians.

A little later on, the point becomes even clearer. The poster is calling for unity. And yet he is seemingly incapable of recognising that the ‘unity’ he is calling for is actually another type of partisanship in disguise.

Al Qaida is the hope of the Muslims - no other - and the state is the foundation for the coming Caliphate. The words of monotheism come before unification. (It is as if the rest are polytheists of people of innovation).

Or, as he continues in a later post:

I ask God almighty that he unite the mujahidin under the banner of tawhid, innocent of any disreputable factionalism.

The rhetorical equivalence he offers between *tawhīd* (that is, monotheism) and *tawahhūd* (that is, unification - but linguistically carrying a near identical meaning of ‘making one - *waḥad* - of) is particularly striking here. The poster claims to be calling for ‘unification’ between on the one hand, the pan-Islamist jihad of Al Qaida and on the other the nationalistically inflected jihad of the Islamic Army. But the only ‘common’ ground he has to offer is the ‘oneness’ of Islam and, therefore, the complete abandonment by the latter of its nationalist accretions. And indeed as much is made plain by the latter comment in which he urges unity under the ‘banner of tawhid’. For this is not just a general Islamic call, but iconically speaking a call for the Islamic Army and similar factions to abandon their flag in favour of the flag of Al Qaida - the black and white *shahada* banner of jihadis on the forum, and of the Islamic State of Iraq.

But to lampoon Internet jihadism for its seemingly closed reasoning (which, if one is being fair, is not necessarily more or less closed than that of its detractors) is to miss the point about how such reasoning contributes to its virtual subsistence. This is because what is ultimately at stake is not

simply being right or wrong, but rather the possibility of continuing to exist within a jihadi persona. The issue matters, because in the absence of possession of a jihadi profile, words always risk losing their power and solidity - ‘thorns in the throat of the unbelievers’ and becoming mere words again. It is possible to eschew being a jihadi as such in Muslm.net. One can simply present as a Muslim who sometimes supports and sometimes critiques the mujahidin on their Islamic merits. But to do so requires the painstaking acquisition of the kind of book learning – ‘talk’ as opposed to ‘action’, as the jihad media battalions put it – escape from which is precisely the point of joining the jihad, whether electronically or otherwise. Indeed, it is probably not accidental that relatively major figures who, in practice, do support the mujahidin with some claim to ‘shaykhdom’, such as, say, Ahmad Bawadi, do not seem to need the same visual paraphernalia of the jihadi (the banner of tawhid, for instance). By *being* a jihadi, by *practicing* online support for the mujahidin, one invests culturally in the mujahidin’s ability to transcend the emptiness of language. By ceasing to be a jihadi - or worse, by failing to be a jihadi - by being unable to negotiate the complex and shifting requirements of being a jihadi, one’s hard work in collecting, distributing, reading, relating crumbles to nothing.

8.

Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

Fans form communities by inserting themselves into texts, by ‘making of’ those texts something which was not necessarily intended by their authors. Fan communities and fans in general therefore have an ambiguous relationship with those who produce the texts on which they rely. Texts become metaphors for fan communities and fan communities become metaphors for texts. When the texts are found wanting, fans re-assert control over them, remaking them in the image of their own collective and personal experience.

As Matt Hills points out, the concept of fandom is not fixed. It is not to be rigidly defined as a single, bounded set of practices in relation to particular categories of text. Rather, it is a concept which ‘does, culturally’ – something which the researcher can ‘do things with’.⁶¹⁰ In this sense, perhaps, the notion of fandom is just a little like the notion of terrorism. By thinking of a violent phenomenon as ‘terrorism’ (as opposed to ‘insurgency,’ for example, or ‘risky activism’) one performs a certain conceptual operation upon it. One foregrounds certain aspects of practice, and plays down others. Fandom does likewise.

In this dissertation I have been concerned with how jihadism works on the Internet, and - in so far as it is possible to discern - what ‘ordinary’ Internet jihadis seem to get out of what they do. I have tried to argue that jihadism on the Internet is most readily identified as a consumption activity, rather than as being defined by a particular set of theological or political beliefs, although certain beliefs are an implicit requirement of engagement in jihadi texts at a social level. We know who ‘jihadis’ are, first and foremost, because they engage in the consumption of ‘jihadi’ texts on the

Internet - most prestigious of which are the official productions of fighting groups of mujahidin. In consuming these texts, they also engage in jihadism by collating, collecting and authoring texts of their own. In doing so, they bring together a wide range of different forms of knowledge, genre and technical and artistic expertise. Reading nomadically, they make use of everything from Noam Chomsky⁶¹¹ to Bin Baz, and from management texts to chemistry texts.

Equally important, however, is what I have intentionally *not* looked at, in looking at Internet Jihadism as fandom. Culture, especially popular culture, as John Fiske frequently points out, is constantly regarded as being trivial. It matters only to those who engage in it. And those who engage in it too deeply risk ridicule for doing so. By contrast, other things such as politics and (more problematically), religion are deemed to matter profoundly. They are things of public importance. Those who take an interest in them rarely have to justify doing so.

For this reason, cultural theorists are continually struggling to show how their work is, in fact, political. As one important scholar of popular culture, Lawrence Grossberg, is supposed to have said: 'if studying popular culture isn't political, then what good is it?'⁶¹²

In this dissertation, I have tried to make the opposite move. As I said I was going to in the first chapter, I have tried as far as possible to deal with jihadism on the Internet as one finds it: in other words, as the production and consumption of media. In doing so, I have taken a subject which is deemed by many to be of the utmost significance, and tried to treat it as if it were not necessarily any more (nor any less) important than, say, watching *Star Trek* or moshing at a rock concert. For doing this, I risk being accused of a profound and grotesque frivolity. But I would like to stress that I have not been trying to argue that jihadism is *not* appropriately a matter of great political significance. I have not tried to claim that engagement in jihadism on the Internet have not sometimes played a part in those same people going on to commit acts of terrible violence against

civilians (or sometimes - it ought to be said - uniformed soldiers carrying out operations of questionable legality). Rather, as I argued at the end of the opening chapter, what I have tried to sketch out is what Internet jihadism might look like if we removed our focus from those parts which seem so very important to us, and instead considered the visible, non-violent and often humdrum practices which make up much of the actual practice of jihadism. At the same time, it may be worth raising the possibility that – if we subtract the often paramilitary or guerilla activity going on in the ‘lands of jihad’ and focus on that wrong violence in the wrong place which is more readily labeled as terrorism – that what ultimately requires explanation is indeed not why there is so much of this violence, but why there is so little. US government sources, we are told, estimate that in the single year of 1970, when the anti-war movement was at its height, the US experienced – according to FBI estimates – more than 3,000 incidents of domestic bombing, and 50,000 bomb threats.⁶¹³ While of course there are important differences between the two movements and the types of violence that arose from them, it is hard to see how such an observation can fail to put the recent record of jihadist violence not only in ‘the West’, but in most Muslim countries as well into perspective.

8.1 Internet Jihadism and Radicalisation into Violence

The idea that there exists a significant number of people who spend their time engaging in one way or another with jihadism, without necessarily ever becoming violence is by no means an original one. As Brachman has observed, what he calls a ‘jihobbyist’

... may be an enthusiast of the global Jihadist movement, someone who enjoys thinking about and watching the activities of the groups from the first and second tiers, but generally they have no connection to al-Qaida or any other formal Jihadist groups. And it is unlikely they will ever actually do anything that directly supports the movement.

So Jihobbyists may do it from the comfort of their home computer or their local coffee shop, but they are still actively seeking to move forward the Jihadist agenda. By hosting Jihadist websites, designing propaganda posters, editing al-Qaida videos, recording soundtracks (nashids) for those videos, compiling speeches from famous Jihadist shaikhs and packaging them into easily downloadable files or writing training manuals, these individuals help to form the base that keeps the movement afloat. Some become obsessed with the brutal beheading, sniper or explosives videos. Others would rather spend their time reading thousand-page books about the history of the movement.⁶¹⁴

The problem with this perspective is that, at the same time that it recognises the existence, and the (probably large) numerical preponderance of these 'jihobbyists', it simultaneously restores the focus to the (violent) 'movement', which the jihobbyists' activities are deemed to 'keep afloat'. In doing so, it would seem to do something analogous to what Hebdige and other subcultural researchers are accused of doing by Muggleton.⁶¹⁵ It takes a few of the most conspicuous examples, and assumes that these are really what the wider phenomenon is about. It fails to draw the obvious conclusion that it is not *normal* for jihadis to behave in violent ways and, therefore, that becoming violent is (behaviourally speaking) an *aberration* in the general trajectory of being jihadi.

One outcome of this is to prevent questions being asked about the significance of jihadism as a phenomenon *beyond* issues of 'violent radicalisation'. And yet, even if our concern is purely with knowing how it is that people become involved in jihadist forms of violence, a failure to think about jihadism in its wider context would seem to represent a lacuna in our approach. By always and only posing the question 'what made this person become violent?', we turn jihadism into a backdrop to a different set of questions about 'pathways' into violence⁶¹⁶ and 'radicalisation processes'.⁶¹⁷ While recognising that this is a process which most will never complete, we nevertheless get into the habit of seeing the place of engagement with jihadism in the same literal terms presented by the jihadis themselves as a single 'path' with only one logical end point. We fail to ask the question: 'how do most jihadis manage not to be violent?' By what cultural manoeuvres do they continue to resolve

the contradictions of insisting on, but not practicing, violence? And what follows from this: why do some people ‘fail’ in this negotiation?

Indeed, even in so far as the Internet has played a seemingly important role in some people becoming involved in jihadist violence, one point that I have tried to make is that types of online *behaviour* may be as important a factor to look out for as the beliefs which those engaging with Internet jihadism express and consume. Stephen Ulph has provided a detailed model for how a putative ‘moderate’ Muslim would be comprehensively indoctrinated by the jihadist content on the Internet.⁶¹⁸ But apart from the question as to whether those who engage in jihadi content necessarily start out with the ‘moderate’ views which Ulph presumes, it might be suggested that it is still necessary to show how the actual *practices* of Internet jihadism may or may not provide a pathway towards engagement in violent *behaviour*. The notion of an Internet jihadi being able to go through an extensive sequence of acts of engagement such as collection of new or obscure jihadi materials, use of such knowledge to establish a reputation either as a forum re-poster, or as a helpful figure in the ‘problems and solutions’ section or a forum; graduation to production of content and at some point gaining access to restricted, managerial sections of a forum but only actually engaging as a result of a fortuitous opportunity appears to be a plausible trajectory. This, for instance, seems to have been the path of Humam Khalil al-Balawi/Abu Dujana al-Khurasani.⁶¹⁹

This would suggest a need for deeper exploration of the presence of absence of behavioural bridges to engagement built into the set of online activities available to the Internet jihadi. One potentially useful concept here in relation to the Internet may be that of ‘affordance’ – as originally formulated by Gibson.⁶²⁰ Hutchby has argued in a sociological context that, rather than being wholly open to cultural shaping, the morphological characteristics of Internet applications may inherently promote or constrain certain types of behaviour.⁶²¹ Taylor in turn has proposed that there are respects in which the Internet may be a ‘criminogenic’ environment with respect to certain particular sorts of

offence.⁶²² For instance, the way in which its intuitively explorable, clickable environment may encourage the download of certain sorts of material access to which would otherwise be constrained. But such an argument may work the other way as well. For if use of the Internet does not bring the user any physically closer to a situation in which violence becomes a practical possibility, then the behaviours it affords may perhaps lead away from this particular type of crime as easily as toward it.

Another issue is that, by conflating engagement in jihadism with ‘radicalisation’ towards engagement in violence, there is a tendency to unnecessarily present people’s arrival at the point of being interested at involvement in jihadist violence as a puzzle in need of solution. In a recent review article on radicalisation, Anje Dalgaard-Nielsen has usefully identified two broad trends in research into this area.⁶²³ On the one hand, sociologists of contemporary Islamic societies such as Roy, Kepel and Khosrokhavar identify violence as being embedded in a complex cultural response to loss of identity. Those who prefer what is, broadly, a ‘resource mobilisation’ model, such as Nesser or Sageman, instead stress the importance of factors such as social entrepreneurs and small group dynamics.

What seems to be missing from both perspectives is that they do not have much to say about the *positive* aspects of engagement in the cultural forms of jihadism, the very considerable pleasures it appears to generate. Neither perspective offers room for jihadis as other than, in a sense, victims - either as people unable to adjust to the modern world, or as cultural dupes who get taken in by manipulative authority figures. This is potentially a real problem for counterterrorism. For instance, in a letter to *Nature*, Scott Atran and Jessica Stern have suggested:

Given the increasing role played by the Internet, efforts should foster alternative peer groups in cities and cyberspace, showing the same commitment and compassion towards their own members as terror groups seem to offer, but in life-enhancing ways and also towards others.⁶²⁴

Engagement in jihadism does not on its own make one a terrorist, nor do Atran and Stern say it does. But in speaking of ‘alternative peer groups’ offering ‘commitment and compassion’ they appear to be subscribing implicitly to a view which would seem to hold that one subculture is really as good as any other, that engagement with jihadism as opposed to, say, boxing or Sufism or hip hop or quietist Salafism is, in a sense, accidental. Jihadi culture in this analysis becomes a sort of black box, a ghost within the machine of small group dynamics. And yet such a view would seem to imply that there is no need (echoing the simplistic charge sometimes thrown at researchers into popular culture), to investigate the unique properties of jihadi content – to consider what particular things this complex of cultural meanings may have to offer.

Additionally, and in passing, it may also be worth observing that there are some ways in which jihadism or even the ‘global jihad’ would seem to represent a problematic candidate for analysis as a social movement in its own right. Tilly has observed that violence is usually found not as a stand-alone phenomenon, but rather as part of a repertoire of tactics used by a wider political movement.⁶²⁵ As such, analysis of a ‘global jihad movement’ as a standalone entity, divorced from other forms of Islamic activism, would seem problematic. Indeed, such a perspective would seem to contradict even the world view propounded by jihadi strategists such as Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri who - as we have seen - thinks in terms of a ‘jihadi current’ located within a wider ‘Islamic awakening’.

This in turn might bring to mind Michel Wieviorka’s notion of the ‘social antimovement’, which he considers to be the outcome of an ‘inversion’ in a social movement, whereby a group turns in on itself and abandons commitment to the political practices of the movement as a whole.⁶²⁶ It is out of this - Wieviorka believes - that the phenomenon of terrorism arises. As such, one might perhaps think of jihadism on the Internet as a ‘social antimovement’ which has outgrown the narrow,

constrained context in which Wieviorka locates it and, in the process, perhaps set off on the path of becoming something else.

8.2 Jihadism as Fandom

In turning to theorise Internet jihadism through the lens of fandom, however, there are a number of knotty conceptual issues which must be confronted, and which cannot simply be waved away with the helpful slogan that fandom is as fandom does.

1. If jihadis are ‘fans’, what are they fans *of*?
2. How can one incorporate jihadis’ presumed and explicit religious and political beliefs into the perspective without falling back into the same ‘pathological’ stereotypes of fans that fan research has sought to move away from?
3. How can one pursue the fan studies project of closing critical distance with subjects and taking native accounts seriously when no jihadi would (presumably) accept an account of her activities as a type of fandom.

It will be observed that all of these are questions which have already been partially answered in the preceding chapters. However, it is important that we make the thinking explicit.

Firstly, it is a misunderstanding of fandom to assume that fans are necessarily fans of just one thing. As Jenkins points out, ‘I can’t be a Muslim and a Jew at the same time... But I can be a *Blake’s 7* fan and a *Babylon 5* fan and a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fan and a *Survivor* fan all at the same moment. I’m not being disloyal to one in order to express a commitment to the others’.⁶²⁷ As a ‘nomadic’ activity, fans proactively plunder from particular texts, genres or even media of particular national or cultural origin in search of the fulfillment of particular needs. As such, there is an interplay between underlying world view (a broad belief in the possibility of ‘progress’ for

example, or a self perception as possessing a particular social status), and the consumption of particular texts as a way of negotiating and living this.

But does not this solution undermine the entire thesis by returning me to a conception of jihadism as grounded in ideological belief, rather than in textual and aesthetic practice? First, fandom is not simply about imposing on texts a single, totalitarian ideology, but rather about a process of negotiation between the meaning imbued in the fan's consumption of the text, and the meaning which the fan wishes to construct through the text. Secondly, there is an oblique relationship between the broader values that seem to be expressed via certain sorts of fannish engagement with a text, and the values relevant to the fan community that engagement expresses. In engaging 'fannishly' with *Star Trek* a person may be expressing a belief in the possibility of reason and technology to perfect humanity, rather than destroy it. But through such utopian sentiment, she is also expressing solidarity and shared purpose with the fan club or the online community. In the same way, through the idolisation of, for instance, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a jihadi can - as we saw in the sixth and seventh chapters - express solidarity not just with the global jihad, but with a particular online community, to which is attributed equivalent virtues to that of the object of admiration. In this way, both mujahidin and objects of more conventional fandom act as ways of objectifying and exemplifying values which might otherwise seem distant, abstract or impossible to live up to. At the same time, the 'weekend world' of fan community or jihadi forum may represent a possibility of purifying escape from the compromises and routines of everyday life.

In approaching the first problem set out above, it will be seen that I have already made some headway with the second. Expressing admiration for, for example, Usama bin Ladin or Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi naturally seems to carry with it certain assumptions about one's theological and political beliefs. And indeed once one enters into 'salafi-jihadi' online circles, the specifics of belief clearly become an important matter. But holding certain views and engaging in jihadi texts in certain ways

is by no means the same thing. In abstract theory, being a jihadi-salafi rules out being an *‘ikhwānī’*. But in real life a person who believes that the jihad of the Islamic State of Iraq is legitimate may participate with other aspects of Islamic life online than those indicative of jihadi *nusra*, while, for that matter, a prominent Internet jihadi may attend meetings of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶²⁸

Thus, to say that jihadis are like fans is not to say that *Star Trek* fans literally believe in the existence of Klingons, or think that, by re-enacting Klingon tea ceremonies they can bring about the utopian human society of the *Star Trek* world. Rather, it is to say that just as fans of the real, but highly mediated figure of Madonna or Elvis make use of their engagement with the object of their fandom in order to accomplish some practical life purpose, so too do Internet jihadis seem to accomplish similar ends through their engagement with mediated representations of the mujahidin.

The third problem - (ie, that of whether it is legitimate to treat jihadis as fans in spite of the fact that they would presumably reject this usage) - is perhaps a little more weighty. And yet - as I have previously observed - fandom research has itself increasingly moved to engage with types of cultural consumer who would not normally wish to describe themselves as fans.

Perhaps more significant, however, is the fact that the concept of the ‘jihadi’ fan is actually one that exists within ‘jihadi’ online discourse itself. Consider, for instance, the following (2007) post on muslim.net, in response to a discussion about ‘those who attack Al Qa’ida at the instigation of RAND Corporation’.

We must look at things from another angle...

The majority of the good people calling for *nusra* of the mujahidin - on the forums - are taking up their roles in a very full on way - to the benefit of RAND corporation, of course. For all their cursing and insult and treachery is directed towards the Islamic army [of Iraq] - especially - and others in general...

So this “work” is dear to them - whether they mean to or they don’t mean to - and [so] they are penetrated by the enemy’s schemes through the Agency - and if they were calling for support of the mujahidin (and there is no place for credulity) and God knows the hands that are behind this affair.

In reality, the net is 90% ignorant people, and this facilitates the activity of conniving Jews or of spiteful heretics with the dissemination of words overflowing with da‘wi enthusiasm for the support of these - and what is broadcast by means of this except poison of a type: Al Qaida is the hope of the Muslims - no other - and the state is the foundation for the coming Caliphate. The words of *tawhid* before unification. (It is as if the rest [of the armed groups] are polytheists of the people of innovation). The nature of the path and so on goes over to the ringing statements which guide thereby the minds of the “fans” of whom more than 90% have no knowledge of fiqh, to capture them with marketing slogans like teenagers. Indeed, the majority of them were yesterday were fans of a football team, and think that this business is the same thing under a different name’. (And if looked towards the differences, we would have seen them merely as differences in affairs of ijtihad! (these which build upon each one his *wala* and his *bara*!) And it is no wonder that there should be those who attack the Islamic army like those who go by the information on the Al-Hurra channel or Al-Arabiya) and all of the calls and fabrications and aspersions cast upon it by the believers and followers of air. (the support for air and not for knowledge and fiqh of religion).

So when will these brothers come to their senses from this dirty role which they have been placed in, with all skill - and I am sorry to say it - he is not an idiot who penetrates the plans of his enemy and knows what they are! And with apologies, some of the forums are thus set up behind this affair.

The Americans receive the worst of their work. And even if their intentions corrected, (and what intention is there to correct from air?) their work would be bad and corrupt.

And this cannot be denied concerning some of the decisions leading to this isolation favouring its sidelining, but this is not the place to talk about it) and some of these tabla players aren’t fooling themselves. And the matter is not about fanship in a football game, as is the condition of some!⁶²⁹

What is interesting about this statement in relation to these ‘fans’⁶³⁰ is the way in which it reproduces the very same stereotypes about media consumers that fandom researchers set out to dispel - the fans are basically well meaning, but ignorant. They are therefore easily ‘captured’ by marketing slogans - ‘Like teenagers’ (who in point of fact are often among the most savvy and discerning consumers). In search of an explanation for why people who profess to support the jihad would act in such a seemingly counterproductive manner, the poster is forced - like Adorno and Horkheimer - to appeal to their helplessness in the face of the enemy.

Indeed, from their different perspectives, both Jarret Brachman and ‘Al-Suwa’iq al-Mursila’ express familiar clichés about ‘fans’. For Brachman, jihobbyists are ‘obsessed with the brutal beheading, sniper or explosives videos’. For ‘Al-Suwa’iq al-Mursila’ (poster of the above comment), they are naive and ignorant, readily duped into pursuing the Machiavellian agenda of the Crusaders and the Jews, cheering for their side just like a football team, and introducing splits and dissent by intemperately attacking the other one.

As such, it might be argued that jihadi ‘fans’ have been stigmatized both by jihadis and by Western analysts in much the same way as more straightforward types of fan have been.

In the second chapter, we saw how Jenkins, in setting out to rethink the meaning of fandom, identified a number of negative stereotypes by which fans are characterised:

- Brainless consumers who will buy anything associated with the show and its cast
- [People] who devote their lives to the cultivation of worthless knowledge
- Are feminised and/or desexualised
- Are infantile, emotionally and intellectually immature
- Are unable to separate fantasy from reality

Almost every one of these stereotypes has also been levelled at people who participate in jihadism via the Internet. Internet jihadis are supposed to be:

From the non-Jihadi Point of View	From the Jihadi Point of View
Ignorant, lost victims of a pernicious ideology	Unquestioning followers
Suffering from ‘obsessive repulsive disorder’ ⁶³¹	More concerned with displaying their loyalty to the mujahidin than addressing the underlying requirements of the jihad.
Losers whom we can only thank for not getting physically involved	Lacking in physical prowess.
‘Utter dolts in their Mommy’s basement’ ⁶³²	Ignorant of Islamic shari‘a
Mistakenly believing that they are part of a heroic struggle against evil.	Mistakenly believing that they are being mujahidin just by sitting at their computers.

These views of the jihadi ‘fan’ are seemingly premised on the assumption that the only explanation for jihadis ‘failing’ to act in a manner appropriate from the standpoint of wishing to make a real contribution to the effectiveness of violent global jihad is naivety, laziness and ineptitude. They fail, therefore, to consider the possibility that the real reason why jihadis might act as ‘fans’ is that they are skilled cultural operators who simply happen to be pursuing a set of benefits which are not the same as those which self appointed strategists of the global jihad might wish them to pursue.

8.3 What Might Jihadism Do?

In this dissertation, I have tried not to speculate too much about the ‘real lives’ of Internet jihadis, and I have done my utmost (not always, I admit, successfully) to avoid entering big debates about the contemporary development of Islam. I have also tried to avoid speaking in any clearly politicised sense about ‘resistance’, mainly because I wish to avoid being unduly speculative about what it is that people who go online to engage in jihadism are resisting.

At the same time, I do wish to invoke the work of Michel de Certeau with relation to what can be seen as online jihadi ‘ways of using’ and ‘making do’.⁶³³ Indeed, there are two clear senses in which jihadism ‘inserts itself into’ a larger ‘strategy’. On the one hand, jihadis clearly appropriate non-‘jihadi’ and indeed non-Islamic texts in order to produce new jihadi content. We have seen how ‘AlHatf2’ drew on Israeli ex-spy Victor Ostrovsky for his analysis of intelligence work, and ‘Wajih al-Qamar’ on management texts (perhaps following the advice of Abu Bakr Naji). Elsewhere, one may find Islamic State of Iraq supporters name checking Western anti-war figures such as Noam Chomsky or Michael Moore or, alternatively, far eastern martial arts.⁶³⁴

Indeed, in some of its textual appropriations, jihadism actually moves into the territory of science fiction fandom. A member of the general forum ‘bramjnet’ seems to post with equal enthusiasm books such as Zawahiri’s *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet* or Al-Suri’s *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, and classic science fiction, such as HG Wells’ *The Time Machine*.⁶³⁵ In some English language material, the investment in such literature is even clearer. Indeed, with regard to English language material, Brachman has observed the reception of a blog posting of his, in which he referred to jihobbyists as ‘orcs’.⁶³⁶ It transpired that some (English language) jihadis were actually fond of *The Lord of the Rings*, which they saw as encapsulating their own epic, binary struggle against the powers of evil. Hurt by Brachman’s remarks, they produced their own satirical video in which a scene (indeed DVD only outtake, no less) from the film version of *The Lord of the Rings* was overdubbed, presenting members of Tolkien’s fellowship of the ring as mujahidin and

Brachman himself as the ‘mouth of Sauron’.⁶³⁷ To take another English language example, one of the songs by the Muslim rap group ‘The Arab League’ is entitled *Death Star*.⁶³⁸ Rapped over music sampled from John Williams’ original soundtrack, the video features a tribute to *Star Wars* complete with carefully created CG space ship backdrops and a lightsabre duel between figures representing George W. Bush and the eponymous ‘Arab League’.

What is interesting about such material is that the subversion does not seem to be directed at the science fiction and fantasy texts themselves (even though, for instance, *The Lord of the Rings* can be read as flagrantly hostile to Middle Eastern culture). The rhetorical move is not to spoof and mock the texts in the manner of the ‘anti-fan’, but rather, in the manner of the true fan to appropriate and inhabit them - using their moral oppositions for one’s own purposes. This in turn suggests the possibility that other aspects of jihadi discourse may be read as, in a broad sense, a kind of science fiction - for instance, as mentioned in chapter five, posts relating to futuristic weapons and methods of combat. If so, then one role of jihadism may be equivalent to that identified by Jenkins for ‘utopian’ Science Fiction: the creation of a space in the future for the consumer and his values.⁶³⁹ In support of such a reading, it is worth at this point quoting Devji’s observation that:

The great battles of the jihad in Afghanistan also took on the appearance of media narratives about epic wars between rival principles. The vast technological and numerical superiority of the airborne US-led troops deployed against Al-Qaida and the Taliban then, quite inadvertently replays media set pieces about the war between robots and humans, airborne and earth-based power, that are familiar from films such as *Dune*, *Terminator* and *The Matrix*. In such epic confrontations, naturally, it is the very peculiarity and even savagery of the holy warrior that renders him more human than the American soldier who looks and behaves like a robot.⁶⁴⁰

The second sense in which jihadis ‘poach’ upon texts is the more problematic one with which this dissertation has been primarily concerned: the appropriation by a distinct, but unspoken ‘Internet

jihadi' culture of the discourses and propaganda materials of the global jihad. Unlike the powers ranged against it, the global jihad is not obviously a 'strategy' in de Certeau's sense.⁶⁴¹ Indeed, in so far as de Certeau's talk of 'tactics' and 'strategies' is itself a trope drawn from guerrilla warfare, it would seem that the global jihad is itself an instance of the cunning underdog who triumphs by seizing the moment, perceiving the single weak spot by which the giant may be slain.

But the 'global jihad' rules itself out of de Certeau's conception of the tactic by the very fact that it possesses a discourse; indeed, ironically enough, it possesses *this* discourse. By virtue of the very fact that it sets itself up as a collective project with a particular purpose, so - theoretically at least - it admits the possibility of its subversion by the silent practice of individuals. It is important, at this point, to remember de Certeau's emphatic rejection of what he sees as Bourdieu's conception of people and culture as 'coherent and unconscious'. This would appear, at first, to rule out the idea of jihadi activity as subversive with respect to the 'global jihad' - since presumably (that is, assuming that the jihadis one encounters on the Internet are sincere), any such subversion cannot be undertaken consciously. And yet, in rejecting this stance, it does not seem that de Certeau thought of people's tactical practices as knowingly amounting to an overthrow of the system within which they occurred. For if this were so, they would no longer be silent, but would, instead, amount to the very discourse that de Certeau insists practice cannot be. At the same time, it can be argued that at the microlevel, Internet jihadis seem very much self aware of their own practice - as, for example, when they take great trouble over the details of a new forum signature.

The logic of Internet jihadism as something distinct is, of course, one of paradox - a point explored to exhaustion in chapter six. It works only through the space created by the contradictions of the two main overt discourses of global jihad - that is, to use al-Suri's terminology, the 'jihadi' or 'terrorist' discourse which demands universal violent action, and the 'mujahidin' discourse, which insists on violence only in specific theatres of jihad. As such, Internet jihadism can make space for

itself only by insinuation and double entendre. For example, such a space might be found in so called 'neo-Zarqawist' tendency as represented by scholars such as Abu Harith al-Mihdar and the *Madad al-Suyuf* forum. This is presented by, for example Mohammed Ali Musawi, as representing a particularly insidious and dangerous permutation of jihadi ideology, in so far as it argues that the fighting mujahidin are better able to make religiously appropriate decisions than are 'armchair' scholars. And yet the implications of such a stance ⁶⁴², when they are thought through, would seem - certainly now that Zarqawi himself is long dead - to work to the detriment rather than to the advantage of mujahidin in the field, who presumably need fatwas which say that specifically *what they did* was right, not simply rubber stamps on their actions simply because they are mujahidin. On the other hand, the neo-Zarqawist stance makes perfect sense in terms of the cultural disputes of Internet jihadism, as a means of increasing the cultural capital of those who base their *online* superiority on their unswerving loyalty to the cause of those who fight, rather than talk.

8.4 Whither Internet Jihadism?

Devji insists, interestingly, that the extremity of the violence of the global jihad may perhaps be accounted for in the deeply ethical nature of its underlying vision - the instability which seems to place it always on the edge of *non-violence*.⁶⁴³ The paradox of Internet jihadism, on the other hand, would appear to mean that, even while most Internet jihadis may manage to avoid being ensnared in their own calls for violent jihad, Internet jihadism will not be able altogether to sever its dependence on some measure of continued violence. While a complex system of commutation and virtualisation may exist, jihadi cultural capital is not completely free floating. It is at least supposedly backed up by the currency of the valour of the mujahidin, upon whose blood the jihadi online community must feed and so renew itself. This is why the appearance of a new martyr - particularly someone like Abu Dujana al-Khurasani with prior Internet jihadi credentials - provokes a frenzy of interest in which jihadis attempt to assert their association to this gold standard of authenticity in whatever way they can.

At the same time, the directness of this link need not be overstated. Hamsawi ‘jihadi’ content retains its currency even though this organisation has engaged in relatively little direct violent activity since 2006. And even bloodless operations, such as the ‘Abdullah Azzam Battalions’ recent attack on a Japanese oil tanker can generate significant interest. In this case, an attack which apparently achieved very little real damage to its target nonetheless provided an opportunity for an elaborate justification in terms of economic globalisation which received a warm reception on the forums.⁶⁴⁴ A similar, still more recent example of how the ‘economic jihad’ argument can serve as a pretext for commuting the supposedly insatiable bloodlust⁶⁴⁵ of jihadist violence might be read from the third issue of the AQAP magazine *Inspire*, in which one factor apparently offered as informing the decision to place explosive packages on freight aircraft as that the only casualties would be the pilot and co-pilot of the aircraft. This did not, of course, amount to a rejection of earlier acts of mass casualty violence. Nor does it mean that this was even the true intention of the operation, which was suggested by US sources to be aimed at a Jewish community centre in Chicago. But the very fact that limiting casualties in favour of economic damage figured as a potentially effective justification – even post hoc – seems potentially telling.

A yet more extreme example in this vein is offered by the Gazan group Jund Ansar Allah’s attempted horseborne suicide attack on the border crossing between Gaza and Israel, on June 8th 2009.⁶⁴⁶ According to the Israeli Intelligence and Information Centre, this was an attempt ‘to perpetrate a combined showcase attack, not seen since the end of Operation Cast Lead, which would consist of blowing up IEDs, shootings, and possibly infiltration into Israeli territory and abduction.’⁶⁴⁷ It cannot, of course, be known to what extent the organisation really believed that they would succeed in carrying out such objectives (assuming that this reading of their intentions is accurate). And it certainly seems unlikely that the group intended its footage of the ‘implementation of the operation’ to be as anticlimactic as it actually is (notwithstanding the explanation on the

screen that footage was ‘held back for reasons of security’). Certainly, however, the group must have been aware of the high probability that, in a daylight raid on a fortified Israeli position, their attack would not only result in their deaths, but would also fail to achieve any significant damage against the enemy.⁶⁴⁸ As such, it may be considered to give a new sense to the term ‘suicide operation’, in that it was not only an operation the success of which depended on the deaths of its perpetrators, but actually an operation in which these perpetrators might reasonably have surmised that their deaths would in fact be the *only* achievement of the operation.

Indeed, it is an irony of the reportage of the event that while Israeli sources have played up the extent to which the incident represented a militarily serious and dangerous attack, this angle is notably toned down in Jund Ansar Allah’s lengthy operation video, entitled *The Raid of the Crossing (ghazwat al-balāgh)*.⁶⁴⁹ In this film, virtually no mention is made of the purpose of the attack which the bulk of the footage sees members of the group preparing for. Indeed, sections of the video could be viewed almost more as a visual enactment of an Islamic sermon on the virtues of the horse than a piece of political communication. Large parts of the film are devoted to horsemen galloping around the Gaza landscape, either singly (usually in green areas), or in formation (in the desert). At one point, the camera is angled up to present a view of gently swaying branches and rolling clouds, as a voice over narrates a prophetic hadith about the virtues of the horse. The camera then angles down to show us a horse grazing at the foot of the same tree. As well as the Qur’anic aya often quoted in jihadi materials from Surat al-Anfal (8) in which Muslims are enjoined to ‘prepare for them whatever you are able to of force and of cavalry to terrify therewith the enemy of God and your enemy’, a more unusual passage, the *Sūrat al-‘Adiyāt* is quoted three times, nearly in full.

By the racers, panting

And the producers of sparks striking

And the chargers at dawn

Stirring up thereby dust
Arriving thereby in the centre collectively
Indeed mankind to his Lord is ungrateful
And indeed he is to that a witness

But this is not to suggest that the video is purely about literalistic religious anachronism. If it were so, we might imagine, then the group members might as well have equipped themselves with swords and charged into battle after the precise model of the companions of the prophet. In fact, the video is deeply concerned with showing the care that went into the operation's preparation. A section is devoted to 'reconnaissance of the enemy'. Several sections relate to the training of horses for the demands of the attack. This includes scenes in which explosive panniers are strapped onto the animals and numerous scenes which (so the voice over explains) relate to preparing them to tolerate gunfire and explosions. In these groups of riders charge down a low hill in the desert directly towards an explosion. Other scenes describe how the group 'initiated a course of training in the arts of war and fighting, by means of an intensive training programme.' These show members of the group engaging in impressive-looking exercises with small arms. At the same time, elements of medieval (or even perhaps Eastern martial arts film) anachronism continue to intrude. A scene of troops advancing at night in single file shows a group in which one bears a large and conspicuous oblong banner. The language is confusing: are we supposed to read the modern war-film language of stealth, or the medieval language of heroic display?

Indeed, these sorts of ambiguities abound. The disquisition on the virtues of the horse - its 'constancy and courage and self-sacrifice', its capacity to be trained to face the trials of war, its steadfastness even unto the Day of Judgement is surely to be seen as an animal fable made flesh, a sign from nature of which man is supposed to take note. Finally, even in the real-life chaos of the battle scene, which - for the most part - the cameraman fails to capture, the background talking of the fighters is in classical Arabic. Since Arabs, however religious, *never* use classical Arabic in

ordinary conversation, it would seem that even the moment of battle itself (at least, as produced by the editor of the video) was intended to be understood as a performance, rather than as a ‘real life’ event.

Thus, in *The Raid of the Crossing* it would seem that we can witness the actualisation of the ‘jihadi manhaj’ as discussed previously. In the video, the acts of preparation are portrayed as goods in themselves, rather than as relating to any meaningful strategic goal. For, unlike in a production such as *Baghdad Sniper*, in which the group is at pains to explain why the sniper’s actions relate to a larger strategic purpose, here, for all the careful explanation about how and why, for example, the horses were trained in a particular way, nothing is said about what the group is actually trying to accomplish. Indeed, it may be worth mentioning that the very words ‘Zionist’, ‘Jew’, ‘Occupier’ or ‘Israeli’ are not used at any point. The people against whom the raid is directed are simply the ‘kuffar’ or the ‘enemies of God’. It is not that military activities such as small arms training or squadron level infantry operations are subsumed by religious imperatives, or that religion serves as a justification for military imperatives. Both are simultaneously drawn together as a single sacral practice, as a way of life.

As such, we can perhaps after all see the coming to pass of Devji’s prophecy of ‘a suicide bombing in which the only life taken is the militant’s own’.⁶⁵⁰ And indeed, in the very fact of the reverse flow implied by *Ghazwat al-Balāgh* - the actualisation of the mythical figure of the Islamic knight – there seems to be a suggestion that the imaginative potency of jihadism may after all have the resources to become self-sustaining.

8.5 Further Questions

In trying to treat of Internet jihadism as a cultural system in its own right, independent of the violence which it celebrates and to which it may sometimes lead, I have necessarily only dented the surface of an immense and still almost untouched world. Naturally, I have produced only very partial answers, and left many questions entirely open.

The research in this dissertation was more born of difficult necessities than ideal conditions. The fact that I did not have access to the ‘real world’ identities of those who engage in jihadism on the Internet profoundly informed the approach I took. And possibly the thesis is a more coherent work because of it. At the same time, it is of crucial importance that this gap in our knowledge be overcome. More and more people with experience of Internet jihadism who are willing and able to talk about it will no doubt appear as time goes by. A true history and ethnography of Internet jihadism is possible, and is yet to be written.

At the same time, there is a vast amount of work that can still fruitfully be completed through Internet research. Forum profiles and posting records of Internet jihadis remain available for anyone who is prepared to trawl through the data. A deeper attempt to typologise different types of Internet jihadi and different forms of jihadi engagement on the Internet would add a great deal of substance to understanding about how Internet jihadism works.

One possible product of such endeavours which would be of policy as well as academic interest would be any further light that could be thrown on the ‘lifecycle’ of an Internet jihadi. On the assumption that Internet jihadis will mostly end their engagement without becoming violent, it would be interesting to know how Internet jihadis end up ‘disengaging’,⁶⁵¹ and which online and offline factors influence this process.

One particular issue which - because of its enormous depth and complexity - I avoided almost completely in this dissertation is that of gender. It is certainly the case that women (or people presenting as women) make up a very significant presence in Internet jihad, both in my own experience, and as widely documented elsewhere. Since it is not expected of women that they engage actively in violence, it might be argued that women are better able than men to negotiate the contradictions of Internet jihadism, and perhaps better placed as well to reap its rewards.

8.6 Some final remarks

The object of ethnography, customarily, has been not simply to say things about strange people in distant lands, but rather, through comparison with foreigners, to shed some light on the customs of one's own people. Accordingly - perhaps presumptuously - it may be worth considering whether, having compared Internet jihadism to popular culture fandom, there is anything that we may perhaps learn about popular culture fandom from Internet jihadism.

In discussing how we may think of engagements with jihadi texts (or with jihadi engagements with other texts) as fandom, I drew on the point that fans do not worship or literally believe in their texts, but rather use them as a means of living out and imaginatively engaging with things that they do seriously believe in.

Indeed, for Jenkins (as for other fandom researchers), it is a matter of great importance that fans are not deluded, not unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality, but rather are able to use fantasy as a way of dealing with reality.

Very tentatively, I have suggested that Internet jihadis may do something similar.

For Jenkins, however, the manner in which fans engage with texts would seem to be one which is essentially allegorical. The ‘real’ problems are in the real world. And the fantasy world provides illustrations of fictional people in similar situations, or of scenarios in which such problems may be seen to disappear. The teenager watches *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, for example, and notices that the story is really talking about his own problems in arriving at adulthood, and at adults’ problems in dealing with teenagers.⁶⁵²

Jenkins is forthright in rejecting the arguments of Jewett and Lawrence in relation to *The American Monomyth*. And yet, in a rather subtler way, his argument still seems to be that of the ‘monomyth’ in Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.⁶⁵³ In encountering myths, we are really encountering ourselves.

In discussing how jihadism may work for people, I have suggested something a little different. Rather than the story offering an allegory for life, I tendered the thought that the ordinary experiences of life might, with the addition of a sense of jihadi purpose – of progressing through the steps of the jihadi *manhaj* – become an allegory *for the jihad*.

This vision of fantasy need not imply that those who apply it thus to their lives are deluded, or are unable to separate fantasy from reality. The decision to overlay reality with the colour of myth may very well be a discriminating choice, made in order to survive modern life. But it is inevitably a darker vision than the enlightened one which scholars of fandom wish to offer, since, by proposing a sort of ‘enhanced reality’ of the kind now being experimented with by some computer games designers, it blurs the boundaries of the real and the imaginary. Returning to the work of Vladimir Propp, it takes, instead of the endless repetitions of morphology, the ‘multiformity, picturesqueness and colour’⁶⁵⁴ implied by the endless variations of mythical *content*.

We live in a terrifying world; sustained by machines we don't understand, and faced with the creeping die-back of things which for millennia we took for granted. And this is as true in Baghdad, or Gaza or Jeddah or Cairo as it is in London, or Paris, or Copenhagen. Is it more realistic to believe that I, at this moment, at the reigns of my mare, ride for the field of Yarmuk, or that, to the humming synth bass from of my neighbour's sound system, under the glow of a neon lightbulb, tap these final words into a perfect oblong of pure white light?

References and Notes

Chapter 1

- ¹ Indeed, wherever discretion is mine to exercise (including in translations of the Qur'an, which are otherwise based on the text available from www.quran.com) I prefer 'God' to 'Allah'. Some contemporary Muslim *da'wi* literature insists that it is confusing to call Allah God. I feel, however, that it is important to convey in translations - as far as possible, the naturalness that the original would have for a reader. This is, I think, particularly important where the texts in question are 'radical' ones.
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- ³ As I shall argue in chapter four, the form 'jihadi' seems to be used in Arabic almost exclusively with the idea of military jihad in mind. This is not, or course, to enter into an argument about the theological and cultural meanings of 'jihad' in general.
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- ⁵ P. Sutton and S. Vertigans, 'Islamic "New Social Movements"? Radical Islam, Al-Qaida and Social Movement Theory', *Mobilization: An International Journal* Vol 11, No 1, pp101-115
- ⁶ R. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1981, 126-166
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- ⁸ See eg J. Gallagher & E. Patterson (eds) *Debating the War of Ideas*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009
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- ¹⁵ D. Denning, 'Information Operations and Terrorism', 2005, available online from www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRD?Location=U2&.doc=GetTRDoc
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- ¹⁹ See, eg, M. Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York, Free Press, 1991
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- ²¹ J. Arquilla and D. Ronfeldt, 'Cyberwar is Coming', in J. Arquilla and D. Ronfeldt (eds), *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, Santa Monica, RAND, 2001. Arquilla and Ronfeldt use the term 'cyberwar' broadly to refer to a strategy based on decentralisation, movement and superior command and control which would seem to map onto the term 'information war' as used by others.
- ²² M. Zanini and S.J.A Edwards, 'The Networking of Terror in the Information Age' in, *Networks and Netwars*, p32
- ²³ *ibid*, p29
- ²⁴ A. Toffler, *The Third Wave*, London, Pan/Collins, 1981
- ²⁵ A. Toffler and H. Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1993
- ²⁶ *War and Anti-War*, p238

- ²⁷ The Tofflers point out that this representation was largely illusory. Behind the slick 'third wave' campaign of smart bombs and computer guided missiles was an industrial scale 'stupid bomb' campaign which flattened large areas of the country and killed untold numbers of civilians. *War and Anti-War*, p66
- ²⁸ J. Baudrillard, (trans. P. Patton), *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995. Baudrillard's argument is that what actually happened was a wholly one sided confrontation between the international coalition and an Iraqi regime more concerned with preserving itself from its own people than actually fighting in any normal sense. This perception of this event as an actual 'war' in any meaningful or recognisable sense was therefore an artefact of media coverage of the event.
- ²⁹ For a fairly predictable reaction from a right of centre thinker on Middle Eastern affairs, see Daniel Pipes' review of the book in *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1996. In a two paragraph write-off, Pipes does, nonetheless, make two apparently worthwhile points. First, the almost bloodless (on the coalition side) confrontation was not seen as a foregone conclusion from the outset. Second, however one sided, the political issues which the war as about were of real significance.
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- ³¹ A. Schmid & A. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*, New York, New Brunswick, 1988
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Chapter 2

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- ¹⁹⁶ J. Gray, 'New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol 6, No 1, 2003, pp64-81
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- ²⁰⁰ H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York, New York University Press, 2006, ch6
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- ²¹⁸ P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, pp162-163
- ²¹⁹ P. Thompson, 'Field' in Michael Grenfall (ed) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, Stocksfield, Acumen, 2008, p79
- ²²⁰ This idea of unconscious game playing within a particular field is usefully explored by Roger Cook in 'The Mediated Manufacture of the Avant Garde' in B. Fowler (ed.) *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pp. 164-187
- ²²¹ P. Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in J. Richardson, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Westport, Greenwood, pp. 241-258
- ²²² 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom'
- ²²³ J. Ahearn, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and Its Other*, Cambridge, Polity, 1995, p.9
- ²²⁴ I. Buchanan, *Michel de Certeau: Cultural Theorist*, London, SAGE, 2000, p. 3
- ²²⁵ M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, p. xi
- ²²⁶ *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. xix
- ²²⁷ *ibid*, p. 30
- ²²⁸ *idem*
- ²²⁹ *ibid*, p. 25
- ²³⁰ *ibid* p. xiii
- ²³¹ *ibid* p. xix
- ²³² *ibid* p. xx
- ²³³ *ibid*. p 136
- ²³⁴ *ibid* p. 165
- ²³⁵ *ibid* p. 173
- ²³⁶ *ibid* p. 54
- ²³⁷ *ibid*. p. 56
- ²³⁸ See, eg. S. Redhead, *Subculture to Clubcultures: An Introduction to Popular Cultural Studies*, A. Bennett, 'Subcultures of Neo-Tribes, Rethinking the Relationship Between Youth, Style and Musical Taste', *Sociology*, Vol. 33, No.3, pp599-617, T.. Polhemus, 'Style Surfing: What to Wear in the 3rd Millennium', London, Thames and Hudson, B. Kova, R. Kozinets and S. Shankar (eds) *Consumer Tribes*
- ²³⁹ Like de Certeau, Maffesoli's work has suffered from late and partial translation into English, meaning that *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, originally published as *Le Temps des Tribus: Le Declin de l'Individuisme dans les Sociétés de Masse*, Paris, Meridien Klincksiek, 1988 was not available to English readers until 1996 (London, Sage), in which form it became rapidly used to provide theoretical insight into the specific cultural developments of the late 1990s.
- ²⁴⁰ Anthony Giddens addresses himself (notably in *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984) to the great 'structure-agent' question, with the theory of 'structuration', which is basically built on the idea that there is a recursive relationship between people's individual level perception of a large scale social structure, which structures their actual behaviour, and the actual (immanent) existence of such a structure, which goes on to actually structure how they behave.
- ²⁴¹ Confusingly, Maffesoli (*The Time of the Tribes*, p.3, 18, 27, 79, 100, 104, 117, 133) seems to use the terms 'organic' and 'mechanical' in the opposite way to that originally employed by Durkheim, who thought that pre-modern societies could be described as 'mechanical' because of the similarity of individuals within them, while modern societies were 'organic' because of their high degree of individual differentiation. See E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*; translated by W.D Halls, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1984
- ²⁴² Maffesoli says (p3 of *The Time of the Tribes*) that 'organicity refers to Henri Bergson's *élan vital* or, "life principle"'. Bergson (according to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available online from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/>) was unsatisfied with reductionist mechanical explanations for life,

on the grounds that this would preclude the possibility of real development, as the future potential of life would then be contained in its present state. Instead, he had recourse to the idea of an irreducible vital principle essential to all life.

²⁴³ For Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes* pp56 ff, 'sociality' is to be placed in opposition to the mass structure of 'the social'.

²⁴⁴ Maffesoli's use of the concept of the aesthetic is usefully discussed in the preface to the English edition of *The Time of the Tribes* by Rob Shields, p.10.

²⁴⁵ *The Time of the Tribes*, pp 90-95

²⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 163

²⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 20

²⁴⁸ See critique in D. Evans, 'Michel Maffesoli's Sociology of Postmodernity: An Introduction and Critical Assessment', Vol. 45, No. 2, 1997, pp220-243

²⁴⁹ *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, p. 12

²⁵⁰ O. Roy, 'Al Qaida: Brand Name Ready for Franchise', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, (1/09/2004)

²⁵¹ O. Roy, 'Al Qaida as a Youth Movement - The Power of a Narrative', MICROcon report

²⁵² H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York, New York University Press, 2006

²⁵³ P. Levy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Evolving World in Cyberspace*, New York, and London, Plenum Press, 1997, p. 180

²⁵⁴ *ibid*, pp. 17, 40, 61

²⁵⁵ J. Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, London, Routledge, 1989, p. 177

²⁵⁶ H. Jenkins, 'The War Between Effects and Meanings: Rethinking the Video Game Violence Debate', in *Fans Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*, New York, New York University Press, p. 213

²⁵⁷ J. Gray, 'The News - You Gotta Love It'

²⁵⁸ J. Tulloch, 'Positioning the SF Audience', in J. Tulloch and H. Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audiences*, pp. 36-37

²⁵⁹ 'London Babes of the BNP', *Vice Magazine* http://vice.typepad.com/vice_magazine/2009/07/london-babes-of-the-bnp.html, accessed 22/08/2010

²⁶⁰ The reference here is to a comment on the message board of the forum *White Honor*, <http://whitehonor.com> (accessed 12/4/2009)

²⁶¹ An observation of this kind has been made by, for example, Naomi Klein in relation to the anti-capitalist practice of 'culture jamming', which has readily become incorporated into the very systems of marketing it sets out to lampoon and critique, see *No Logo* (10th anniversary edition) New York, Picador, 2010, p. 297

²⁶² Metcalfe's law states that the value of a social network is proportional to the square of the number of users, rather than linearly proportional to the size of the network. See J. Hendler & J. Golbeck, 'Metcalfe's Law, Web 2.0 and the Semantic Web', available online from citeseer.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.96.6725

Chapter 3

²⁶³ H. Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000, p30, originally published by Addison Wesley, 1993.

²⁶⁴ See J. J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston, Massachusetts, London, Houghton Mifflin, 1979

²⁶⁵ M. Jindra, 'Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon', *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 1994, pp27-51. It is important to note at this point that Henry Jenkins has been firmly opposed to equating fandom to religion - an objection which would appear problematic for this thesis. This matter shall be discussed in the final chapter.

²⁶⁶ J. Savage, 'Ethnography and Health Care', *British Medical Journal*, 321, pp. 1400-2, quoted K. O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2005, p2

²⁶⁷ B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, Routledge, 1922, p.xvi

²⁶⁸ *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p2

²⁶⁹ S. Wilson and L. Peterson, 'The Anthropology of Online Communities', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 31, 449-467, 2002

²⁷⁰ C. Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988, pp. 1-16

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- ²⁷¹ M. Minsky, 'Telepresence', *OMNI Magazine*, June 1980, available online from <http://web.media.mit.edu/~minsky.papers/Telepresence.html>
- ²⁷² D. Varisco, 'Virtual Dasein: Ethnography in Cyberspace', *CyberOrient*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2007
- ²⁷³ In *Being and Time*, p27 (translated J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson), London, SCM Press, 1962, Heidegger stipulates: 'This entity which each of us is, and which includes inquiry as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term *Dasein*'.
- ²⁷⁴ See. G. Geertz, 'Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight', in *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, pp412-455
- ²⁷⁵ *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p15
- ²⁷⁶ See P. Atkinson, *The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual Constructions of Reality*, London, Routledge, 1990
- ²⁷⁷ I. Schapera, 'Kinship Terminology in Jane Austen's Novels', *Occasional Papers of the Royal Anthropological Society*, Vol. 33, 1977
- ²⁷⁸ B. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001
- ²⁷⁹ D. Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991
- ²⁸⁰ See, eg R. Pearson Flaherty, 'Review: TM Luhrmann and the Anthropologist's Craft: Differential Identity and the Ethnography of Britain's Magical Sub-Culture', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 1991, pp152-155
- ²⁸¹ Consider also Baudrillard's wry observation that: 'as ethnology collapses in its classical institution, it survives in an antiethnography whose task it is to reinject the difference'. *Simulacra and Simulation*, University of Michigan Press, 1994
- ²⁸² Geertz is referring to G. Ryle, 'The Thinking of Thoughts: What is "Le Penseur" Doing?', Reprinted from University Lectures, no.18, 1968, available online from http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/CSACIA/Vol14/Papers/ryle_1.html. In this paper, Ryle considers the problem of providing accounts of actions, where these actions are, by virtue of their context and the intentions of the actor, far more in reality than their immediate physical manifestation as when a schoolboy communicates surreptitiously by closing one eye, or a politician ends a way by writing his name on a piece of paper. For Ryle, the thinnest description of what has happened is the one that merely describes the immediate phenomenal manifestation of the action, while the thickest is the one that fully accounts for what has actually been done thereby. For Geertz, the interpretative authority of the ethnographer lies in the ability to produce 'thick descriptions' of practices in a culture.
- ²⁸³ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London, Hutchinson, 1973, p7
- ²⁸⁴ G. Marcus, 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24, 1995, pp95-117. In place of the bounded field of conventional ethnography, Marcus advocates a number of alternative possibilities:
1. Follow the people (eg, Mexican immigrants)
 2. Follow the thing (eg, a commodity like sugar)
 3. Follow the metaphor (eg, immunity)
 4. Follow the plot, story or allegory (eg, comparative myth, like Levi Strauss)
 5. Follow the life (eg, of one person)
 6. Follow the conflict
- ²⁸⁵ *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, p122
- ²⁸⁶ As discussed by, for instance, L. Abu Lughod, 'Writing Against Culture' in R. G Fox, (ed), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, Santa Fe, School of American Research Press, 1991, pp173-154. Quoting Marilyn Strathern, she points out the anthropologists see their purpose as being to 'make sense of differences'. Abu Lughod offers in counterpoint to this the observation that 'self is always a construction, never a natural or found entity'.
- ²⁸⁷ T. Boellstorff, *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2008
- ²⁸⁸ i.e. M. Meade, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977 (original edition New York, Morrow, 1928).
- ²⁸⁹ *Coming of Age in Second Life*, p60
- ²⁹⁰ *ibid*, p. 63
- ²⁹¹ D. Miller and D. Slater, *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*, New York, Berg, 2000

- ²⁹² R. Kozinets, 'The Field Behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities', *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 39, 2002, pp.61-72
- ²⁹³ R. Kozinets, 'I Want to Believe: a Netnography of the X-Philes Subculture of Consumption', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 1999, pp470-475. Kozinets attributes the actual word 'netnography' to an anonymous reviewer of the article.
- ²⁹⁴ *Netnography*, pp31-32
- ²⁹⁵ *ibid.* pp63-64
- ²⁹⁶ Certain clothing choices (black skullcaps, military jackets and the Afghan *shalwar qamis*) are said to mark out 'jihadis' in Jordan and Palestine, according to Murad Batal al-Shishani, 'Political Indicators in the Costume: The "Jihadis" and "Hamās" and the "Brothers" and before them the Salafis', (*fi al-dalālāt al-siyāsiyya lil-zay: al "jihādiyyūn" wa "hamās, wal "ikhwān" wa qabilhum al-salafīyyūn*) www.daralhayat.com, reported in turn by Scott Sanford at www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/08-31-2009-jihadi-clothes.pdf
- ²⁹⁷ For instance, apparently the Ibn Taymiyya mosque in the Gaza Strip is a favoured local meeting place for salafi-jihadis.
- ²⁹⁸ *Netnography*, p36
- ²⁹⁹ A. Campbell, 'The Search for Authenticity: An Exploration of an Online Skinhead Newsgroup', *New Media and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2006, pp269-294
- ³⁰⁰ *Netnography*. p. 74
- ³⁰¹ R. Langer and S.C. Beckman, 'Sensitive Research Topics: Netnography Revisited', *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2005, pp189-203
- ³⁰² The question of what, exactly, 'the jihadi' is shall be the concern of the following chapter
- ³⁰³ B. Glaser and A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, New Brunswick, Transaction, 1967
- ³⁰⁴ A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1999
- ³⁰⁵ K. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2006
- ³⁰⁶ Kozinets deploys the term in 'The Field Behind the Screen', and subsequently *Netnography*, p116. The concept of a point at which an emerging set of categories become 'theoretically saturated' first appears in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, p111
- ³⁰⁷ The term 'axial coding' is introduced by Strauss and Corbin in *Basics of Qualitative Research*, p123
- ³⁰⁸ B. Glaser, 'Constructivist Grounded Theory?' in *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* Vol. 3, No. 3, Art. 12, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:de:0114-fqs0203125>. See also response by A. Bryant, 'A Constructivist Response to Glaser', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Art. 15
- ³⁰⁹ *Constructing Grounded Theory*, pp 21-22. Charmaz differentiates grounded theory ethnography with reference to its emphasis on a process or a phenomenon, rather than a setting. It is
- ³¹⁰ While the initial data gathering steps for what was to become this dissertation were not (at the time) consciously planned as such, the broad approach taken in terms of continuous data gathering and analysis progressively informed by emergent theorising is roughly consistent with Glaser and Strauss's 'constant comparative' method, in which data coding proceeds alongside emerging conceptualisation, according to *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, p101
- ³¹¹ Further information and sample coding sheets for this exercise are provided in appendix 1
- ³¹² A spreadsheet of these results is provided in appendix 2
- ³¹³ An example of a coded list of forum posts is available in appendix 3, with an explanation of terms developed for coding.
- ³¹⁴ A. Strauss & J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1998, pp. 101 - 162
- ³¹⁵ See C. Robson, *Real World Research*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2002, p457
- ³¹⁶ A translation sample is offered in appendix 4
- ³¹⁷ For an overview, see E. Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, London, Routledge, 1993
- ³¹⁸ See J. Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp80-81
- ³¹⁹ A. Chesterman, 'Questions in the Sociology of Translation', in F. Ferreira Duarte, A. Assis Rosa and T. Seruya (eds) *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2006, p19
- ³²⁰ C Nord, (translated, J. Groos), *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation Oriented Text Analysis*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1991
- ³²¹ E. Shaw, 'Decoding Content: Emergent Code Identification in Content Analysis'

- ³²² R. Jakobson, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', in L. Venuti (ed), 2000 pp113-118
- ³²³ See M.B Miles and A.M Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1994, p54 ff. Miles and Huberman essentially identify the coding process with the conceptualisation process itself.
- ³²⁴ 'Decoding Content: Emergent Code Identification in Content Analysis'
- ³²⁵ R. E Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1998, p.xiv
- ³²⁶ *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, pp46-47
- ³²⁷ For a critique of this in a subcultural context, see
- M. Muggleton, *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style*, especially pp. 9-32
- ³²⁸ See, R. Benedict, 'The Chrysanthemum and the Sword', London, Secker and Warburg, 1947
- ³²⁹ See eg, B.A Babcock, "'Not in the Absolute SIngular": Re-Reading Ruth Benedict', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* Vol. 12, No.3, 1992, pp39-77. In 1953, two of Ruth Benedict's colleagues at the University of Columbia, Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux, edited a methodology textbook dedicated to Benedict and unapologetically titled *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, originally published Chicago, University of Chicago Press. The collection was reprinted, (Oxford, Bergahn Books) in 2000.
- ³³⁰ M. Mead & R. Métraux (eds), *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, New York, Bergahn Books, 1999
- ³³¹ P. Porter, 'Good Anthropology, Bad History: The Cultural Turn in Studying War', *Parameters*, Summer 2007 pp45-58
- ³³² D. Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Middle of a Big One*, Oxford, Oxford University Press
- ³³³ See eg M. McFate, 'Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship', *Military Review*, March-April 2005; 'Building Bridges or Burning Heretics', *Anthropology Today*, Vol 23, No. 3, 2007, p21
- ³³⁴ D. M. Goldstein, 'Security and the Culture Challenge: Dilemmas of an Engaged Anthropology', *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1 pp126-142
- ³³⁵ See, eg, R. Rosaldo, 'From the Door of His Tent: The Fieldworker and the Inquisitor', in J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986, pp. 87 ff.
- ³³⁶ As implicit in a phrase such as, Major Ben Connable's, 'Marines are from Mars, Iraqis are from Venus', *Small Wars Journal*
- ³³⁷ available online from http://opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060011_en_1
- ³³⁸ *ibid*
- ³³⁹ H. Jenkins and J. Tulloch, *Science Fiction Audeinces: Watching Dr Who and Star Trek*, London, Routledge, 1995, p19
- ³⁴⁰ *ibid*, p19
- ³⁴¹ A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge, Polity, 1984, p337
- ³⁴² *Coming of Age in Second Life*, p. 80
- ³⁴³ A. Salem, E. Reid & H.Chen, 'Content Analysis of Jihadi Extremist Groups' Videos', *Terrorism Informatics*, Integrated Series in Information Systems, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp 267-284, 2008
- ³⁴⁴ G. Bateson, 'An Analysis of the Nazi Film *Hitlerjunge Quex*', in M. Mead & R. Metraux (eds), *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, pp331-350

Chapter 4

- ³⁴⁵ R. Kozinets, 'Inno Tribes: Star Trek as Wikimedia', in *Consumer Tribes*, p. 204
- ³⁴⁶ see *iMuslims* p. 184
- ³⁴⁷ See eg R. Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*, New York, Mouton, 1979. More recently D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005; M. Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2006; R. Bonney, *Jihad: From Qur'an to Bin Laden*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007
- ³⁴⁸ See G. Marranci, *Jihad Beyond Islam*, Oxford, Berg, 2006
- ³⁴⁹ A. Armbrorst, 'A Profile of Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorist Activism', *Defence Against Terrorism Review*, Vol 2. No. 1, 2009, pp51-71

- ³⁵⁰ Q. Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2006, pp207-239
- ³⁵¹ T. Hegghammer and S. Lacroix, 'Rejectionist Salafism in Saudi Arabia: The Story of Juhayman al-'Utaybi Revisited', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol 39, No. 1, pp122a-122a, 2007
- ³⁵² Armbrorst, op. cit. previous page
- ³⁵³ M. Kramer, 'Coming to Terms: Fundamentalists or Islamists?', *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2003, pp65-77
- ³⁵⁴ M. Sedgwick, 'Jihad, Modernity and Sectarianism', *Nova Religio*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2007, pp6-27
- ³⁵⁵ See Brachman and McCants, 2006
- ³⁵⁶ Albani was highly critical of what he saw as Qutb's religious innovations and political expediency. Followers of Qutb were, in turn, appalled by Albani's apparent attacks on him even after his execution.
- ³⁵⁷ J. Brachman and W. McCants, 'Stealing Al Qaida's Playbook', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2006, pp309-321
- ³⁵⁸ Prototype theory is a theory of concepts originated by, notably, Eleanor Rosch. Briefly, it argues that concepts are not bounded by rigid 'checklists' of requirements for a word to fall into a particular class, but rather consist of 'fuzzy sets' in which some members are more 'prototypical' than others. For an introduction, see RK Johnson, 'Prototype Theory, Cognitive Linguistics and Pedagogical Grammar', *Working Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 1985, pp. 12-24
- ³⁵⁹ E. Badawi, M.G Carter and A. Gully, *Modern Written Arabic: A Comprehensive Grammar* London, Routledge, 2004, pp85-86
- ³⁶⁰ www.al-arabiya.net/views/2007/02/01/31253.html
- ³⁶¹ <http://www.amman-dj.com/vb/a-t89>
- ³⁶² www.al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/ar/features/.../feature-01
- ³⁶³ http://www.al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/en_GB/document/meii/footer/about/about
- ³⁶⁴ <http://m3-forum/forumdisplay.php?f=9>
- ³⁶⁵ <http://www.al-hora.net/printthread.php?t=14834> (accessed 5/3/2009)
- ³⁶⁶ For the sake of completeness, the feminine plural form 'jihadiyyat' was also searched for. It returned 472 results, most relating to collections of 'jihadi' items rather than people.
- ³⁶⁷ <http://saraya.newgoo.net/category.c2> (accessed 4/3/2009)
- ³⁶⁸ See www.eurasiareview.com/201006183459/al-quds-brigades-claim-launch-of-5-mortars-at-israeli-target.html (accessed 18/8/2010)
- ³⁶⁹ <http://www.fateh-voice.com/vb/showthread.php?p=285015> (accessed 5/3/2009)
- ³⁷⁰ <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=10062&article=368577&feature> (accessed 4/3/2009)
- ³⁷¹ <http://www.hodaiah.com/hod/showthread.php?t=22762> (accessed 4/3/2009)
- ³⁷² http://irhabeat.blogspot.com/2008/12/blog-post_10.html (accessed 4/3/2009)
- ³⁷³ *The Islamic Imagery Project: Visual Motifs in Jihadi Propaganda*, CTC Westpoint, 2006
- ³⁷⁴ This is defined by Corbin and Strauss as 'the process of linking categories to their subcategories', *Basics of Qualitative Research*, p. 123
- ³⁷⁵ These are essentially the themes identified for jihadist content in J. Ryan's 'The Four P-Words of Militant Islamist Radicalisation and Recruitment: Persecution, Precedent, Piety and Perseverance' *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 30, No. 11, 985-1011
- ³⁷⁶ For an introduction to the position of various forms of music in Islamic law, see L. I Al-Faruqi, 'Music, Musicians and Muslim Law,' *Asian Music*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1985, pp3-36
- ³⁷⁷ See, eg, A. Shiloah, *Islamic Music*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1995, p156
- ³⁷⁸ This seems implicit, for instance, in Z. bin Abdul Ghani's paper for the Malaysian department of Islamic development, 'Entertainment in the Muslim Media: Unsettled Problem?', *Jurnal Hadhari Bil.* Vol. 2, 2009, pp53-63
- ³⁷⁹ See M.J Kister 'Labbayka Allahumma Labbayka: On A Monotheistic Aspect of a Jahiliyya Practice', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 2 (1980)
- ³⁸⁰ eg <http://majdah.maktoob.com/vb/majdah23602> (accessed 10/8/2010)
- ³⁸¹ www.ibtesama.com اسلامية صوتيات و اناشيد
- ³⁸² <http://majdah.maktoob.com>
- ³⁸³ www.paldf.net
- ³⁸⁴ <http://110.4.44.55/~alfaloja/vb>
- ³⁸⁵ www.shamikh1.net/vb

³⁸⁶ www.abo-ali.com (accessed 9/09/2010)
³⁸⁷ <http://majdah.maktoob.com/vb/majdah65187/> (accessed 5/1/2010). The majority of the nashid lyrics analysed here were located on one of two collections. The first was originally located at this url (although the same collection appears elsewhere as well). The second was located on <http://wainuk2007.jeeran.com/anashed/> (accessed 6/6/2010)
³⁸⁸ <http://www.aw4h.net/showthread.php?t=33624> (accessed 25/6/2010)
³⁸⁹ <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=LXhmCnpr6sw> (accessed 12/01/2009)
³⁹⁰ <http://www.m-ro7e.com/vb/t4251.html> (accessed 12/01/2009)
³⁹¹ The words to this nashid - *fajrī al-mal ūn ya bint al-jihād* - can be found at <http://alhotah.net/vb/showthread.php?t=12606> (accessed 18/8/2010)
³⁹² J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998 (originally published 1922) preface, p1.
³⁹³ For a more general discussion of martyrdom in contemporary Palestinian culture see, eg, L.M Pitcher, 'The Divine Impatience: Ritual, Narrative and Symbolization in the Practice of Martyrdom in Palestine', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1998, pp8-30
³⁹⁴ E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, New York, Free Press, 1995, p. 226
³⁹⁵ The flash videos specifically discussed here derive mainly from the following collection: <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=248922> (Accessed 22/12/09)
³⁹⁶ See eg, www.anashed.net or www.dawa.ws
³⁹⁷ L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, p32
³⁹⁸ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=248922>
³⁹⁹ *ibid*
⁴⁰⁰ See F. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: How Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.2
⁴⁰¹ See, for instance, the collection of jihadi e-cards for download at the Islamic site Luqman al-Hakim (www.lokmaine.com/~a453764) (Accessed 18/8/2009)
⁴⁰² Faisal Devji, in *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity*, comments thus on the use of the image of the globe by jihadi groups:
⁴⁰³ See appendix 4
⁴⁰⁴ Search conducted 2/6/2010
⁴⁰⁵ www.mujaahdenar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=24170 (accessed 2/6/2010)
⁴⁰⁶ 202.71.102.68/ālfalaj/vb/showthread.php?t=57967&page=2
⁴⁰⁷ www.i7ur.com/vb/t9736.html
⁴⁰⁸ 124.217.252.247/~shamikh.vb.showthread.php?t=16753 (accessed 2/6/2010)
⁴⁰⁹ See main page of www.as-ansar.com 22/4/2009
⁴¹⁰ Searches for 'Hamasi nashids'?
⁴¹¹ See appendix 5
⁴¹² *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*
⁴¹³ www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7-f0_YhxJQ (accessed 18/8/2010)
⁴¹⁴ www.archive.org/details/TheBaghdadSniper (accessed 18/8/2010)
⁴¹⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=co_RnlbBfkW&feature=related (accessed 18/8/2010)
⁴¹⁶ See chapter 6 for a discussion of Jihadi nickname conventions
⁴¹⁷ F. Devji, *Landscapes of Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005
⁴¹⁸ www.alsaha.com
⁴¹⁹ The same is not quite so consistently true of lists of 'jihadi websites' offered by static websites with particular apparent agendas, for instance
⁴²⁰ See, eg. closely comparable lists on <http://www.joond.maktboob.com>; <http://www.lahdah.com/vb/showthread.php%3Ft=27912>; <http://www.muslm.net/vb:archive:index.php:t=201608>; <http://vb.njom.net:archive:index.php:t=24774>
⁴²¹ With growing distance between the Islamic State of Iraq and non-affiliate Iraqi militant groups, inclusion of such sites in lists of 'jihadi' sites may have become less common. But sites remain which still list as 'jihadi' sites of both types. See eg http://asoodaltaohed.jeeran.com/Page_2.html (accessed 27/8/2010)
⁴²² It should be stressed that, here and elsewhere, the word 'ideology' is used in the limited sense of 'a system of political ideas' (C. Synnowich, 'Law and Ideology' in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published 2001, revised 2010, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/law-ideology/>), rather than the more expansive conception of Marxist theory.

⁴²³ L. Grossberg, 'Is There a Fan in the House? The Affective Sensibility of Fandom', in *The Adoring Audience*, pp. 50-68

⁴²⁴ R. Kozinets, 'Inno Tribes: Star Trek as Wikimedia' in *Consumer Tribes*, p. 204

⁴²⁵ <http://www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=7194>, accessed 30/07/2009

Chapter 5

⁴²⁶ P. Levy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Perseus, 1997

⁴²⁷ H. Rheingold, *The Virtual Community*

⁴²⁸ B. Long, 'A Taxonomy of Internet Communication Tools'

⁴²⁹ References to internal messenger abound on jihadi forums, but for a discussion of some actual posts, see Kohlmann, 'A Beacon for Extremists: The Ansar al-Mujahidin Web Forum'

⁴³⁰ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/forumdisplay.php?f=33> (accessed 6/7/2010)

⁴³¹ www.youtube.com/user.ANSARNEWS (accessed 10/8/2010)

⁴³² A. Awan and M. al-Lami, 'Al Qa'ida's Virtual Crisis', *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 154, No. 1, 2009, pp 56-64

⁴³³ See, for example, the 'problems and solutions' pages of *Ansar al-Mujahidin*

⁴³⁴ Claims are sometimes made for secret sites to which one may be directed from the visible forums

⁴³⁵ K. Barzilai-Nahon and G. Barzilai, : 2004, 'Cultured Technology: Internet and Religious Fundamentalism', *The Information Society*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2004

⁴³⁶ For Al-Fallujah's membership conditions, see <http://al-faloja.info/vb/announcement.php?f=4&styleid=7> (accessed 1/12/2008).

⁴³⁷ A somewhat more limited discussion of the subdivisions of jihadi forums is provided by Abdul Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al-Qaida*, p135

⁴³⁸ The observations were true for the forums Ansar al-Mujahidin, Electronic Mujahidin Network, Shumukh al-Islam, Al-Fallujah and Madad al-Suyuf at the time of writing.

⁴³⁹ J. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, pp 107-137

⁴⁴⁰ 'Omar Nasiri', *Inside the Jihad: My Life With Al Qaida*

⁴⁴¹ E. Kohlmann, 'Expert Report on the AQCORPO Website', 2006, available from <http://nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous.FeatureDocs.ekirhaby0108.pdf>

⁴⁴² See J. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, pp 107 -137

⁴⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁴ E. Kohlmann, 'Expert Report on the AQCORPO Website'

⁴⁴⁵ See following chapter

⁴⁴⁶ 'Abu Harith al-Mihdar', 'The jihadi forums: what has happened to them, and what is necessary for them,' complete historical explanation', (*al-muntadiyyāt al-jihādiyya, mā liha wa mā 'alayha... tahlīl ta'arīkhī kāmīl*) <http://www.almedad.com/vb/showthread.php?t=9915> (accessed 11/8/2010)

⁴⁴⁷ This dispute is reported by Brynjar Lia, 'More Fitna in Cyberspace: Mihdar vs al-Maqdisi', 7/2/2009, <http://www.jihadica.com/more-fitna-in-cyberspace-mihdar-vs-al-maqdisi/> (accessed 11/8/2010). Al-Midhar's side of the story can be found on, eg, 'Al-Gharib al-Muhajir', 'The truth of the dispute between Shaykh al-Maqdisi and the heirs of Al-Zarqawi is jihad in the path of God and revelation of truths' (*ḥaqīqat al-khilāf bayna al-shaykh al-maqdisī wa warathat al-zarqāwī huwa al-jihād fī sabīl illah wa bayān ḥaqa'iq*), <http://www.almedad.com/vb/external.php?type=RSS2>

⁴⁴⁸ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=176920&goto=nextnewest> (accessed 11/8/2010)

⁴⁴⁹ <http://www.alboraqforum.info/showthread.php?s=f181462ad503f0379100ef5020ac24&t=1677> (accessed 25/6/2009)

⁴⁵⁰ located on <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=2522> (accessed 26/6/2009)

⁴⁵¹ www.saha.com

⁴⁵² www.muslm.net

⁴⁵³ www.gl3a.com

⁴⁵⁴ www.islah.info

⁴⁵⁵ <http://www.swalif.net/softs/swalif68/softs169433> (accessed 3/8/2009)

⁴⁵⁶ <http://www.jihadica.com/spy-forums/> (accessed 11/8/2010)

⁴⁵⁷ E. Nakashima, 'Dismantling of Saudi-CIA Web site illustrates need for clearer cyberwar policies', *The Washington Post*, 10/3/2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/18/AR2010031805464_pf.html

⁴⁵⁸ www.almedad.com/vb

⁴⁵⁹ <http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=162928> (Accessed 3/22/2010)

⁴⁶⁰ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=381805> (Accessed 3/22/2010)

⁴⁶¹ <http://alftn.com/vb3/showthread.php?s=c100a91f7ab980589542ff3185fed37b&t=28712> (Accessed 3/22/2010)

⁴⁶² <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=381805&page=1> (Accessed 20/03/2010)

⁴⁶³ <http://www.qmagreb.org/pages/forums.html> (Accessed 17/09/2007)

⁴⁶⁴ Al Mihdar would later correct this by posting the Washington Post article just mentioned above

⁴⁶⁵ E.F Kohlmann, 'Al-Qa'ida's "MySpace" - Terrorist Recruitment on the Internet', *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 1, No. 2, 2008, pp8-10

⁴⁶⁶ A recent 'census' of the main jihadi forums (Shumukh al-Islam, Ma'arik al-Salafiyya, Ansar al-Mujahidin, Al-Tahadi, Al-Mujahidin Electronic Network and Madad al-suyuf carried out by the author for a forthcoming European Union report revealed an average forum membership of 6,900 and a combined membership of 48,303. Excluding the outlier of the Al-Mujahidin network (apparently a much smaller forum), average membership rose to 7,996. Figures for the largest forum - Al Fallujah, were based on data a few months older than that for the others, owing to the fact that this forum was offline at the time the comparison was made. This figure certainly has no real bearing on the actual number of 'real life' jihadis engaging with these forums. Apart from the fact that clearly a proportion of members will be intelligence or researchers, the fact that the same aliases appear on multiple forums (consider, for example, the case in the pervious chapter of 'Abu 'Ali al-Sadiq') means that the actual number of people seriously engaging with these forums is likely to be significantly less than this figure. However, the same objections would apply to jihadi forums of the past. If the aggregate population of Al-Ikhlās, when it was the last forum standing of the three that were taken down in September 2008 was 56,000, and that of al-Hisbah was just over 11,000 (in line with Al-Shumukh today) then it can be hazarded that the level of (virtual) engagement in online jihadi activity is only slightly less than it was then.

⁴⁶⁷ <http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=162928> (Accessed 3/22/2010)

⁴⁶⁸ <http://al-hesbah.info/v/showthread.php?s=2c15369f2c489a89cbe010a218cc12f2&t=193033> (Accessed 22/9/08)

⁴⁶⁹ <http://www.forums.islamicawakening.com/fl8/al-faloja-forum-16065/> (Accessed 20/02/09)

⁴⁷⁰ obtained from www.jihadica.com

⁴⁷¹ <http://al-hesbah.info/v/showthread.php?s=2c15369f2c489a89cbe010a218cc12f2&t=193033> (Accessed 22/9/08)

⁴⁷² M. al-Rashid, 'Lewis Atiyatallah: The Wahhabite Who Exposed the Ulema of Hypocrisy', *Al Quds Al-Arabi*, 19/02/2004

⁴⁷³ M. Stout, 'In Search of Saalafi Jihadist Strategy: Mining the Words of the Terrorists',

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th ANNUAL CONVENTION, BRIDGING MULTIPLE DIVIDES, Hilton San Francisco, SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA, Mar 26, 2008

2008

⁴⁷⁴ *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*

⁴⁷⁵ *iMuslims*

⁴⁷⁶ For a complete listing of thread subjects on Al-Sayf, see appendix 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Stenersen, 'The Internet: A Terrorist Training Camp?'

⁴⁷⁸ <https://www.alboraq.info/showthread.php?t=36851> (Accessed 12/8/2009)

⁴⁷⁹ <http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=29669> (Accessed 12/8/2009)

⁴⁸⁰ www.almedad.com/vb/aaeeii-caoicoe-caonuie/12228/ (Accessed 30/07/09)

⁴⁸¹ This is essentially a new twist on the problem observed by Roy in *The Failure of Political Islam*, in which he proposes: '...this argument [of Western hypocrisy], which is often well founded, nonetheless carries with it an intellectual danger: that is of blaming the foreigner for all one's problems.... for to say that every failure is the devil's work is the same as asking God - or the devil himself (which is to say, these days, the Americans) to solve one's problems'.

⁴⁸² Personal correspondence

⁴⁸³ A. Awan and M. al-Lami 'Al Qai'ida's Virtual Crisis'
⁴⁸⁴ Personal conversation
⁴⁸⁵ Aaron Weisburd makes this argument here, <http://internethaganah.com/harchives/006659.html>
⁴⁸⁶ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=31461&page=1> (accessed 12/12/2010)
⁴⁸⁷ *Netnography*, p36
⁴⁸⁸ *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, p32
⁴⁸⁹ 'Abu 'Amru al-Qa'idi', *dawrat fī fann al-tajnīd: barnāmiḡ 'amlī mutasalsil li-tajnīd ashkhāṣ bi-istakhdām al-da'wa al-fardiyya* (A Course in the Art of Recruiting: A Graded Work Programme for Recruiting People by the Use of Individual Da'wa), p43

Chapter 6

⁴⁹⁰ It is interesting to note that the forum 'media mujahid' is the favoured term deployed by the 'jihad media battalions' (whose motto, no less, is 'enough with talk – let us begin with the action') in introducing their edit of irhabi007's *Manual on Hacking Zionist and Crusader Websites*.
⁴⁹¹ As an example of 'jihadi' and 'mujahid' being used as opposed terms, consider the question put to Ayman al-Zawahiri on al-Hisbah forum in January 2008: '... what is the Shaykh's advice on how to deal with the jihadi youth (*al-shabāb al-jihādīn*), and the *mujahidin* [emphasis mine] in themselves regarding the way to deal with opponents.' Al-Sahab Media, *The Open Meeting with Shaykh Ayman Al-Zawahiri*
⁴⁹² P. Levy, *Becoming Virtual* (trans. R. Bononno), New York, Plenum, 1998, p24
⁴⁹³ Some of the thorny issues of embodiment and authenticity in online religious experience are dealt with usefully by Stephen O'Leary, 'Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks', in L. Dawson and D. Cowan (eds) *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, London, Routledge, 2004, pp37-56
⁴⁹⁴ C. Derickson, 'Second Life and the Sacred: Islamic Space in a Virtual World', in V. Sisler (ed), *Digital Islam*, 2008 www.digitalislam.eu/article.do?articleId=1877 Intriguingly, Derickson notes that some Muslim users of Second Life justify their apparent violation of the traditional Islamic prohibition against figurative representation of humans by appealing to the idea that an avatar is not merely an image, but akin to a set of clothing, which takes on human shape because of the one who inhabits it.
⁴⁹⁵ The idea of jihad as an obligation is frequently expressed in 'jihadi' posts. A notable modern proponent of jihad as an 'obligation' (*farīda*) was, of course, 'Abdul-Salam Faraj in his book *The Neglected Duty*, (*al-farīda al-gha'iba*), 1980, available online from: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/30994798/الغائبة-الفریضة>
⁴⁹⁶ See, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, 'The Definition of Jihad in Islam' (*ta'rīf al-jihād fī islām*), available from www.tawhed.ws/dl?i=8zkfg6zh
⁴⁹⁷ See, eg (out of many possible examples), 'ḥukm al-jihād' ('Ruling Concerning Jihad') at http://jehadakmatloob.jeeran.com/fekeh.al-jehad/fekeh_al-jehad_hokmh.html
⁴⁹⁸ This line of thought is drawn primarily from the work of Abdul-Salum al-Rawashdi, see below.
⁴⁹⁹ See *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, p66. Anwar al-'Awlaqi, incidentally, has authored a near-identical document offering '44 Ways to Support Jihad'.
⁵⁰⁰ *39 Ways to Serve Jihad and the Mujahidin*, section 1. (owing to formatting problems with the pdf version downloaded, which necessitated reading the text in 'textedit', it has not been possible to use Al-Salim's original page numbers.
⁵⁰¹ M. Maudoodi, 'The Mischief of Takfir', available online (in English) from <http://www.muslim.org/movement/maudoodi/art-takfir.htm>
⁵⁰² J. Wagemakers, 'A Purist Salafi-Jihadi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol 36, No. 2, 2009
⁵⁰³ The *farḍ kifaya*, in Islamic jurisprudence is an obligation at the level of the community. It is something which must be done by someone, but which no individual Muslim has to do. If no one does it however, then everyone in the community sins. An example is the Muslim funeral prayer. The *farḍ 'ayn* is an individual obligation. Each and every Muslim must perform it. An example is the five daily prayers. See G.D Newby, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2002, p60
⁵⁰⁴ Indeed, the commutation of obligation to actually fight to an obligation to prepare one's self morally (with the original ultimate goal of being ready to fight) may actually be the basis for medieval thinking about the 'greater jihad' – see D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad*
⁵⁰⁵ *39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad*, section 5

- ⁵⁰⁶ http://www.mpacuk.org/os/component/option,com_frontpage/limit,9/limitstart,882/ (accessed 9/8/2010)
- ⁵⁰⁷ See <http://corpus.quran.com/wordbyword.jsp?chapter=5&verse=48>
- ⁵⁰⁸ W.E Shepard, 'Islam as a "System" in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1989, pp 31-50.
- ⁵⁰⁹ 'Bini Sharif', 'This is Islam', (*hādha huwa al-islām*) <http://www.saaaid.net/arabic/168.htm>
- ⁵¹⁰ S. al 'Awda, *Discussion Concerning the Manhaj of the Salaf*, (*ḥadīth ḥawil manhaj al-salaf*) introduction (page numbers not available), obtained from
- ⁵¹¹ F. al-Ansari, *Alphabet of Research into the Science of Shari'a*, (*Abjadiyyat al-Ba'th fī-l- 'ulūm al-Shari'yya*) Casablanca, Al Furqan Publishers, 1997, p40
- ⁵¹² A. Azzam *Interpretation and Insights Into Jihad in the Present Age* ('abr wa-baṣa'ir li-l-jihad fī 'aṣr al-ḥādir), (nd) p16
- ⁵¹³ <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=341272> (accessed 5/6/2010)
- ⁵¹⁴ See B. Haykel, 'On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action', in R. Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, London, Hurst, 2009, pp33-57
- ⁵¹⁵ 9/11 Commission Report, 2004, p241, available online from <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>
- ⁵¹⁶ V. Oliveti, *Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences*, Birmingham, Amadeus Books, 2001
- ⁵¹⁷ M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the 21st Century*
- ⁵¹⁸ T. Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp130 ff.
- ⁵¹⁹ 'Abu 'Amru al-Qa'idi', *A Course in the Art of Recruiting: A Step by Step Work Programme for Recruiting People by Using Methods of Individual Da'wa* (*dawrat fī fann al-tajnīd: barnāmiḡ 'amlī mutasalsil li tajnīd ashkhāṣ bi-istakhdām aslūb al-da'wa al-fardiyya*), p. 11
- ⁵²⁰ The title of a book by this jihadi shaykh 1425: 9
- ⁵²¹ *A Course in the Art of Recruiting* p.13
- ⁵²² N. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, p162
- ⁵²³ Q. Wiktorowicz, 'The Salafi Movement in Jordan,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2000, pp219-240
- ⁵²⁴ O. Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*
- ⁵²⁵ R. Meijer, 'Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a Principle of Social Action: The Case of the Egyptian al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya' in R. Meijer, (ed) *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, London, Berg, 2009, pp189-220
- ⁵²⁶ <http://www.jihad1.com/vb/showthread.php?s=455c9fd9498294ca49cc41b946d13590&t=386> (Accessed 16/7/2010)
- ⁵²⁷ A number of authors, notably Faisal Devji (eg, in *Landscapes of Jihad*) have observed Al Qaida's reticence to discuss details of the future Caliphate they propose - in contrast to groups such as Hizb al-Tahrir.
- ⁵²⁸ A. Moghadam, 'The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology'. Moghadam is drawing, here, on the distinction made by Bruce Lawrence, who (as Moghadam quotes) argues that 'religion focuses on maximizing individual benefit through group participation, while ideology is intent on maximizing group benefit through individual participation'. The quotation comes from B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1989 (2nd edition used by Moghadam, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p77
- ⁵²⁹ See: 'Al Assad: Prepared for War, and Israel Does not Understand other than the Language of Strength and the American Project Has Failed and the Arabs Have Abandoned Iraq', *Al Quds*, available online from <http://www.alquds.com/node/245535> (accessed 10/8/2010)
- ⁵³⁰ This verse seems on the surface to be in direct contradiction to the one quoted above.
- ⁵³¹ www.jihadakmatloob.com (accessed 10/8/2010)
- ⁵³² Although this entity did claim responsibility for some website defacement activity as well, as evidenced by 'irhabi007's' *Manual on Hacking Crusader and Zionist Websites*, issued by the Media Jihad Battalions (nd).
- ⁵³³ See, eg E. Racius, *The Multiple Nature of Islamic Da'wa*, Dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2004, pp49-70 and 101
- ⁵³⁴ S. Jackson, 'Yusuf al-Qaradawi's *Fiqh al-Jihad*', conference paper presented at *Rethinking Jihad*, Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arabic World, Edinburgh, 7-9 September, 2009

- ⁵³⁵ The name of this blogger is a play on the Roman keyboard characters used to spell the word ‘jihad’ in ‘qwerty’ Arabic fonts. Interpreted thus, the name means ‘jihad of the dawn’. (Or of the dawn prayer). As a verb, ‘fajr’ can also mean to blow something up.
- ⁵³⁶ The term ‘The Islamic Awakening’ is by no means exclusive to ‘jihadi’ writers. See, eg S. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2005, p3
- ⁵³⁷ ‘Abu Bakr Naji’, *The Management of Savagery*, (*idārat al-tawwāḥuṣh*) p12
- ⁵³⁸ M. S. Nasar (Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri), *The Global Islamic Resistance Call* (*Da‘wat al-Muqāwwama al-Islāmiyya al-‘alimiyya*)
- ⁵³⁹ *ibid*
- ⁵⁴⁰ *ibid*
- ⁵⁴¹ M. de Certeau, ‘For a New Culture’, in M. de Certeau (trans. T Conley), *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997
- ⁵⁴² www.kavkazcenter.com (accessed 2/2/2010)
- ⁵⁴³ B. Haykel, ‘On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action’
- ⁵⁴⁴ It must be stressed here that the intention is not at all to talk about how this consequentialist/deontological issues are resolved in Islamic theology in general. This is, of course, a matter to which Islamic scholars have devoted a great deal of attention as, for example, through the concept of the *maqasid al-shari‘a* – See eg M. H. Kamali, ‘Maqasid al-Shari‘a : Objectives of Islamic Law’, *The Muslim Lawyer*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1998, available online from http://www.aml.org.uk/?page_id=116. Jihadist groups as well as individual jihadis have, in practice, invoked contingent and – within the given frame of reference – consequentialist justifications for renouncing violence, arguing that Islam requires that a group assess its chances of success before deciding to engage in violence. The tension remains for this does not, however, remove the sense of other jihadi writing that jihad must be waged without regard to material measures of success. See e.g. reference below.
- ⁵⁴⁵ See, eg, ‘The Jihad will Continue Until the Day of Judgement’, available online from <http://theunjustmedia.com/Islamic%20Perspectives/March%202008/Jihad%20Will%20Remain%20Until%20The%20Day%20Of%20Judgment.htm> (accessed 30/0/2010)
- ⁵⁴⁶ <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=373832> (Accessed 27/10/2010)
- ⁵⁴⁷ While previous analysis of the question and answer session has dwelt on the mismatch between questions and answers, it has generally concerned itself with issues such as the legitimacy of killing Muslims in Iraq or the overall strategy of Al Qaida, rather than with what it says about the culture of Internet jihadism. See eg J. Brachman and B. Fishman, ‘The Power of Truth: Questions for Ayman al-Zawahiri’, available online from <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA484575&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>
- ⁵⁴⁸ ‘Hesbah_Questions_All_Original.pdf’, available from www.ctc.usma.edu,
- ⁵⁴⁹ *The Open Meeting with Shaykh Ayman Al-Zawahiri* (English version) downloaded from <http://theunjustmedia.com/Islamic%20Perspectives/Homepage%20Islam%20Perspectives%20.htm> (Accessed 20/8/2010)
- ⁵⁵⁰ H. Bechar Israeli, ‘From [Bonehead] to [cLoNehEAd]: Nicknames, Play and Identity on Internet Relay Chat’, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1995
- ⁵⁵¹ ‘Omar Nasiri’, *Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al-Qaida: A Spy’s Story*, New York, Perseus Books, 2006
- ⁵⁵² See B. Notzon and G. Nesom, ‘The Arabic Naming System’, *Science Editor*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2005, pp20-21
- ⁵⁵³ <http://216.95.249.110/~leyothin/vb/register.php?do=register> (accessed 19/01/2011)
- ⁵⁵⁴ This analysis is made on the basis of 120 names drawn from the general forums of *Al-Fallujah*, *Ansar al-Mujahidin* and *Al Mujahidin Electronic Network*. The names and the coding categories they were allocated are available in the appendices.
- ⁵⁵⁵ Al-Maqdisi’s real name is ‘Issam Muhammad Taher al-Barqawi’ – see J.C Brisard & D. Martinez, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al Qaeda*, Cambridge, Polity, 2005, p. 18
- ⁵⁵⁶ Conceivably, something similar to this distinction between ‘salafi’ and ‘jihadi’ naming online might be observed in the naming conventions of ‘jihadi’ forums. The four major forums which until the end of 2008, were supposed to enjoy some direct connection to ‘Al Qaida central’ all had distinctively ‘Islamic’ names: *Al-hisba*, (moral reckoning), *Al-Ikhlās* (sincerity), *Al-Burāq* (the angelic steed which, according to the narration of Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qimmi bore the archangels Gabriel, Michael and Israfil (Raphael) to Muhammad on the occasion of his night journey to Jerusalem and thereafter, the seven heavens and *Al-Firdaws* (paradise). The apparently less ‘official’ forums which stood in after the loss of these four bear

names which are more conspicuously contemporary, militaristic and confrontational: *Al-Fallujah*, *Shumukh al-Islam* (pride of Islam), *Ansar al-Mujahidin*, *Al-Ma'arik al-Salafiyya* (the salafi battles), *Al-Mujahidin Electronic Network*, *Madad Al-Suyuf* (the stretching out of swords) and so on.

⁵⁵⁷ B. Danet, *Cyberpl@y: Communicating Online*, Oxford, Berg, 1999

⁵⁵⁸ <http://as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=7306> (accessed 25/01/2010)

⁵⁵⁹ For a reiteration of this point, see 'Cheering for Osama: How Jihadists Use Internet Discussion Forums'

⁵⁶⁰ Search conducted 23/1/2010

⁵⁶¹ 'Trio fuelled al-Qaida propaganda' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6264150.stm> (accessed 10/8/2010)

⁵⁶² The significance of 'The Tunisian Admirer of the Two Shaykhs' is noted by Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, p139

⁵⁶³ 'Song of Terror', 'The complete file about the brother Irhabi007'. Originally posted on *Al Fallujah* forum. Currently available from <http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=109603&page=1> (last accessed 24/01/2011)

⁵⁶⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/user/sami2232>

⁵⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDjz7mPziUA>

⁵⁶⁶ Downloaded from *Al Fallujah* forum 1/02/2010, <http://www.alflojaweb.com>, exact URL lost. Document obtainable as a pdf from the author.

⁵⁶⁷ The Arabic is '*ani*'. Its meaning is unclear but seems to be honorific.

⁵⁶⁸ The Muslim declaration of faith: *ashhadu anna la illaha illa-llah, wa anna muhammadan rasul-Allah* (I testify that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is the prophet of God).

⁵⁶⁹ Quraysh is the tribe of the prophet Muhammad. The 'Falcon' may be Muhammad himself.

⁵⁷⁰ Sayf al-Din Qutuz, Mamluk leader against the Mongols under Hulegu Khan in the battle of 'Ayn Jalut

⁵⁷¹ The word used in the Arabic is *Shām* - literally, the land of the Semites. It can mean the city of Damascus, Syria, or the whole of the Levant (the *bilād al-shām*)

⁵⁷² i.e. Saladin, Ayyubid ruler and liberator of Jerusalem.

⁵⁷³ i.e., the path followed by the prophet in his night journey to Jerusalem and up to the Seventh Heaven - all this is one word - *Al-Masra* in the Arabic.

⁵⁷⁴ R. Paz, 'Reading Their Lips: The Credibility of Jihadi Web Sites as "Soft Power" in the War of the Minds', Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Occasional Papers, Vol. 5, No. 5, 2007

⁵⁷⁵ <http://alflojaweb.com/vb/showthread.php?t=85273> (accessed 1/02/2010)

⁵⁷⁶ www.alsayf.com/vb

Chapter 7

⁵⁷⁷ A neat example of this common admission was recently revealed in one of the diplomatic documents release by Wikileaks. See eg D. Walsh, 'Wikileaks cables – Bin Laden's PR is better than ours, Americans complained, *Guardian*, 28/11/2010

⁵⁷⁸ *ibid*, p43

⁵⁷⁹ www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=157321 (Accessed 21/5/2010)

⁵⁸⁰ *39 Ways to Serve Jihad and the Mujahidin*

⁵⁸¹ www.hisbah.net (now defunct)

⁵⁸² <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=19686>

⁵⁸³ al-hesbah-all-original, question 39

⁵⁸⁴ See eg J. Wagemakers, 'The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *al wala' wa-l-bara'* in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi', in R. Meijer (ed) *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, London, Berg, 2009, pp81-107

⁵⁸⁵ To provide another instructive example, in *Millat Ibrāhīm*, p24, Al-Maqdisi distinguishes between the 'jihadi' Shabab al-Mujahidin in Somalia, and the 'defeatist' Somali Hizb al-Tahrir.

⁵⁸⁶ Alexa.com ranks it as receiving roughly 0.02% of al Web traffic, meaning that it receives in the region of 30 million visits a day - primarily from Arabic countries, and most commonly from Saudi Arabia. This makes it one of the most popular Islamic websites available in Arabic, comparing favourably with sites such as Islam Online and Islameyat, and drawing between half and a third of the traffic of its most popular competitors, Islamway and Islamweb.

⁵⁸⁷ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=311073> (Accessed 28/5/2010)

⁵⁸⁸ See the accusations al-Mihdar posted on the forum in the previous chapter.

⁵⁸⁹ The WHOIS registration details of the forum can be found at <http://whois.domaintools.com/muslm.net> (Accessed 12/8/2010)

⁵⁹⁰ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=373750> (Accessed 28/5/2010)

⁵⁹¹ 'Brothers in faith, welcome among us the wife of the great hero Abu Dujana al-Khurasani, may God make her steadfast' (post introducing Dafna Bayrak to the forum), www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=379844

⁵⁹² <http://alwatan.netfirms.com/alharran/sarem.htm>

⁵⁹³ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=270528> (Accessed 21/5/2010)

⁵⁹⁴ ibid

⁵⁹⁵ an account of this can be found on <http://alwatan.netfirms.com/alhassan/mystory.htm>

⁵⁹⁶ Copies of the threats received by Dr Mohamed al-Hassan are available from <http://alwatan.netfirms.com/alhassan/threat-1.htm>

⁵⁹⁷ T. Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979*, New York, Cambridge University Press, pp103 ff.

⁵⁹⁸ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=358950> (Accessed 20/5/2010)

⁵⁹⁹ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=358950> (Accessed 21/5/2010)

⁶⁰⁰ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=373797> (Accessed 26/5/2010)

⁶⁰¹ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=372613>

⁶⁰² The apparent reference is to the article 'El Rescate de los cooperantes: entre 5 y 10 millones de dolares "negociables"' *El Mundo* 19/12/2009

⁶⁰³ Interestingly, it was asserted on several occasions that Spain was involved in occupying Iraq without this point being corrected - this may suggest that the much-publicised way in which Spain withdrew its involvement after the 3/11 bombings in Madrid and the election of a new government did not register nearly so prominently with Arabic speaking jihadis.

⁶⁰⁴ The name, which means 'legion of Umar' would appear to refer to an insurgent group in Iraq.

⁶⁰⁵ www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=356855 (Accessed 10/5/2010)

⁶⁰⁶ Interestingly, Abu Harun's post – and a response to it – appeared on the forum just before the post did itself. This would seem to indicate that Abu Harun made his objection by some other means (private messenger, for example), before being, so to speak, publicly 'outed' as opposing the mujahidin on this occasion.

⁶⁰⁷ <http://www.muslm.org/vb/showthread.php?t=381499> (Accessed 23/5/2010)

⁶⁰⁸ <http://www.muslm.org/vb/showthread.php?t=381555> (Accessed 12/5/2010)

⁶⁰⁹ <http://www.aljazeeraatalk.net/forum/showthread.php?t=234399>.

⁶¹⁰ Op. cit. p.

⁶¹¹ www.muslm.net

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⁶¹² Quoted by Henry Jenkins, 'Excerpts from Matt Hills Interviews Henry Jenkins', H. Jenkins *Fans Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*, London, New York University Press, 2006, p11

⁶¹³ 'War and Protest: the USA in Vietnam' <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A715042>

⁶¹⁴ *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, p19

⁶¹⁵ *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* p. 20

⁶¹⁶ See J. Horgan, 'From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalisation into Terrorism', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, 618, 2008, 80-94

⁶¹⁷ For a discussion of the problems with radicalisation in contemporary media and political usage, see M. Sedgwick, 'The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 479-494

⁶¹⁸ S. Ulph, 'A Virtual Border Conflict' in S.J Hansen, A. Mesoy & T. Kardas (eds) *The Borders of Islam: Exploring Samuel Huntington's Faultlines from Al-Andalus to the Virtual Ummah*, London, Berg, 2009

⁶¹⁹ Although highly active on the Internet, Al Balawi did not become involved until he was arrested by Jordan's General Intelligence Department (GID) after signing his name to a list of doctors prepared to offer humanitarian assistance in the Gaza strip. It is thought that at this point he offered his services in infiltrating Al Qaida.

⁶²⁰ J. J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, London, Houghton Mifflin, 1979

⁶²¹ I. Hutchby, 'Technologies, Texts and Affordances', Vol. 35, No. 2, 2001, pp. 441-456

- ⁶²² M. Taylor and E. Quayle, 'Criminogenic qualities of the Internet in the collection and distribution of abuse images of children', in J. McCarthy, E. Quayle, S. Aylwin and F. Lyddy, *Applying Psychology: A feitschrift for Dr Elizabeth A. Dunne. Irish Journal of Psychology*, 2008, 29, 119-13
- ⁶²³ A. Nielsen, 'Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 33, No. 9, 2010, pp. 797-814
- ⁶²⁴ S. Atran & J. Stern, *Nature*, Vol 437, No 29, September 2005
- ⁶²⁵ C. Tilly, 'Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists', *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 22, No. 1, March 2004
- ⁶²⁶ M. Wieviorka, (trans. D. White) *The Making of Terrorism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993
- ⁶²⁷ 'Matt Hills Interviews Henry Jenkins', *Fans Bloggers and Gamers*, pp. 18-19
- ⁶²⁸ As did Humam Khalil al-Balawi, see footnote above.
- ⁶²⁹ www.muslm.net
- ⁶³⁰ The Arabic word is *mushājjī*, which which literally means 'encourager, supporter, promoter, advocate, proponent' according to the *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Ithaca, NY, Spoken Language Services, 1993), but which is used in contemporary contexts - as in this instance - directly to translate the English word 'fan'.
- ⁶³¹ C. Blatchford, 'He was utterly consumed by the explosions in his head' *Globe and Mail*, 9/10/2009
- ⁶³² J. Brachman, 'The Pros and Cons of Jihobbyism', <http://jarretbrachman.net/?p=200>, 6/12/2009
- ⁶³³ As set out in *The Practice of Everyday Life*
- ⁶³⁴ See e.g. references to Taekwondo and the ninja in appendices 1 and 5
- ⁶³⁵ An example of this could be 'Wocho' a member of the forum bramjnet, whose posts range from 'the best science fiction novels (*The Time Machine and Others*) <http://www.bramjnet.com/vb3/showthread.php?t=74900&page=1> to books such as Zawahiri's *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet*. <http://www.bramjnet.com/vb3/showthread.php?t=42270&page=1>
- ⁶³⁶ J. Brachman, 'Ansarnet's Jihobby Orcs are at it again', <http://www.jarretbrachman.net/?p=170>, 22/11/2009
- ⁶³⁷ For this, and numerous other examples of jihadi Lord of the Rings fan art, see <http://occident.blogspot/2009/12/cyber-jihadis-lord-of-rings-obsession.html>
- ⁶³⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOLDWLkwfIA>
- ⁶³⁹ See *Science Fiction Audiences*, p. 45
- ⁶⁴⁰ *Landscapes of Jihad, Militancy, Morality, Modernity*
- ⁶⁴¹ *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. xix
- ⁶⁴² See particularly 'Al Gharib al-Muhajir' 'The truth about the differences between shaykh al Maqdisi and the heirs of al-Zarqawi - it is jihad in the path of God and the revelation of truths' ('*aqīqat al-khilāf bayna al-shaykh al-maqdisī wa warthat al-zarqāwī huwa al-jihād fī sabīl Allah wa bayān ḥaqa'iq*). Originally posted on Madad al-Suyuf, text available from www.jihadica.com. Al Gharib al Muhajir repeats the argument (encountered in chapter 5) that dissent and fitna in forums is itself evidence of their un-Godliness and penetration by the enemy. He extends this argument to dissent between 'ilm (scholarship) and jihad in the field, and criticises the followers of Al-Maqdisi for 'talk, not action'. He does not, of course, say in so many words that the mujahidin are always right. 'Al Gharib al Muhajir may perhaps be none other than Abu Qudama himself, given that a similar (though not identical) post to this one exists under Abu Qudama's name in muslm.net
- ⁶⁴³ *Landscapes of Jihad*, p. 161
- ⁶⁴⁴ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?p=104507>
- ⁶⁴⁵ See eg X. Raufer, 'Al Qaida: A Different Diagnosis', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 6, No. 6, 2003, pp. 391-398
- ⁶⁴⁶ See 'Profile: Jund Ansar Allah', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>, 15/08/2009
- ⁶⁴⁷ http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/gj_e004.htm
- ⁶⁴⁸ In reality, it is claimed that two Israeli solidiers were killed in the course of the raid.
- ⁶⁴⁹ Indeed, it may be worth noting at this point that even the title of the video may be revealingly ambiguous. For *balāgh* is not the normal Arabic word for a crossing (*ma'bar*), but rather in normal usage refers to 'getting across' in the sense of an act of communication).
- ⁶⁵⁰ *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity*, p. 49
- ⁶⁵¹ It seems impossible at this point not to refer to J. Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2009
- ⁶⁵² H. Jenkins (with H. Jenkins jr), 'The Monsters Next Door: A Father-Son Dialogue about *Buffy*, Moral Panic and Generational Differences', *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers*, pp226-247

⁶⁵³ J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, London Fontana Press, 1993

⁶⁵⁴ The terminology here is drawn from V. Propp, *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1968

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Outline coding sheet of Al-Sayf forum posts, with explanation of codes.

Appendix 2: Coding sheet of results for 'jihadi' web content

Appendix 3: Full results of retrospective searches for various 'jihadi' items

Appendix 4: Jihadi 'cards' from 'Luqman'

Appendix 5: List of 'jihadi' book titles from 'Hadhramut'

Appendix 6: Diagrammatic conceptualization of jihadi name categories

Appendices 7-1 and 7-2: Coding of jihadi names

Appendices 8-1 and 8-2: Translation sample, English and Arabic texts

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Wajih al-Qamar	30 Jul 2006	How to make a secret camp	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		secrecy/age ncy		
	30 Jul 2006	Very, very simple way to make a bomb (copied from Abu al-Bukhari chat room).	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency/ever yday life	Jihadi	
	30 Jul 2006	Fighting and attacking in Taekwando	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		uprightness/ agency		
	22 Jun 2006	War with poisons - how to make lethal poisons	Encyclopedi a of Preparation	Discusses ways of delivering poison to Americans in the supermarket	agency/ever yday life	vs Americans	goal
	19 Aug 2006	The experienced shaykh - unique minded - behind the organisation of small group warfare	Encyclopedi a of Preparation	Extract from Abu Mus'ab al-Suri	agency	jihadi	direction
	20 Aug 2006	Words from the heart to he who has a heart	Da'wa	Meditation on the vanity and emptiness of everyday life	aimlessness/ fear of death/ emptiness of everyday life		
	22 Aug 2006	Lessons from the war in Iraq.	General	Comparison s from Islamic history		Ummah	precedent
	22 Aug 2006	Half an hour in the grave	General		fear of death		
	22 Aug 2006	Communiq ues by mujahidin shura council Saturday	Media			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
22 Aug 2006	Just half an hour ago, the electronic battle started against the website muhammad ani	Jihadi hacker forum	Trying to organise attack on anti-Muslim website by asking people to download an 'attack programme' from a given website	agency	jihadi	technology
23 Aug 2006	Al Ekhlas network presents Al Battar archive/centre for researches and studies.	Media		agency	jihadi	
24 Aug 2006	Website of Sheikh Hamid al-Ali – download your copy.	Media			jihadi	
24 Aug 2006	Jihadi poem	General		responsibility/sensitivity	Ummah/vs America	
24 Aug 2006	Apologies to Baghdad by Dr Hakim al-Matiri	General		responsibility/sensitivity	Ummah & Iraq/vs	natural environment
24 Aug 2006	A hundred pieces of advice for youth	General		uprightness	Ummah/youth	
24 Aug 2006	A Saudi woman mourning for Abu Mus'ab	General		sensitivity	Ummah/Arab	
24 Aug 2006	A statement from al-kata'ib al-muqaddis about the kidnapped journalist	Communications and Reports			Mujahidin/vs progress	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
24 Aug 2006	Religious preparation for Sha'aban for the opportunity of the first day of Sha'aban	Da'wa		ritual		
25 Aug 2006	the library of Sheikh Suleiman Bugheith, God release him.	Media			jihadi/vs authority	
25 Aug 2006	Communiq ues by the shura council of the mujahedin	Communiq ues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
25 Aug 2006	Exclusive on Abu al Bukhari network a newly released video 'the lovers of houris'.	Media			mujahidin	progress
26 Aug 2006	A unique subject and a good idea.	General	A campaign to get a million people to make du'a against Israel	ritual/agency	Ummah/vs Israel	direction
26 Aug 2006	The media division of Jund al-Sham, in cooperation with Al-Nusra network present:	Media			mujahidin	progress
31 Aug 2006	Film of Abu Omar al-Sayf, God have mercy on him	Media			mujahidin	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
31 Aug 2006	Don't miss this lesson, for all reported	Da'wa	A fable about a fisherman who catches a precious pearl and is offered six hours in the prince's treasury as payment, but sleeps and eats there and so misses the chance to gather the reward.	corruption		
1 Sep 2006	Lessons to learn for people who like music – please circulate	Da'wa	Stories about people who died listening to music	fear of death		
1 Sep 2006	Treatments for cataracts from the Quran	General		health		
1 Sep 2006	God is great! Soon, good news from Al-Sahab corporation	Media			mujahidin	progress
1 Sep 2006	Statement by the mujahidin shura council for Thursday	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
1 Sep 2006	Various useful subjects	General	Q&A on how to handle various life challenges - eg relationship	uprightness		
2 Sep 2006	Lessons for Mujahidin	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency		direction

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
2 Sep 2006	The Islamic Media network of al zakreen and al zakirat	Media			jihadi	
2 Sep 2006	The treasury of good deeds	General		ritual		
2 Sep 2006	Hizballat play 10.39 pm: I hope that the brothers will enter	General		agency	jihadi/vs Hizbullah	
2 Sep 2006	How to become a military leader	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		uprightness/ agency		
2 Sep 2007	Arrest – and how to face it. Important for all mujahedin in the face of the pagans.	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		uprightness/ agency	jihadi/vs authority	
2 Sep 2007	Now, download quickly the jihadi military collection/i mportant	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
2 Sep 2007	Urgent – the complete address of the internal ministry's dogs			agency	vs authority	
3 Sep 2006	to all members	General	request for everyone to go to the preparation forum	agency	forum	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	4 Sep 2006	Communications by Ansar al-Sunna group	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	4 Sep 2006	Very important: The mujahedin military deception is important. And the military arms and films.	Encyclopedia of Preparation		secrecy	mujahidin	
	4 Sep 2006	Easy-to-make poison gas to torment the enemy of religion	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	vs kuffar	
	4 Sep 2006	Intelligence and security subjects important for mujahedin.	Encyclopedia of Preparation		secrecy	agency	
	4 Sep 2006	Psychological war – important subject	Encyclopedia of Preparation				direction
	4 Sep 2006	God is great! Download now plans for making hand grenades.	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency		
	4 Sep 2006	Military base and the art of war	Military Strategy				direction

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
4 Sep 2006	The biography of Sayyid Qutb, God have mercy on him, the Shahid of Islam in audiotape format.	General		uprightness	Ummah	
4 Sep 2006	A tape that shows the confession of three apostates who work for Franda company and judge over...	Jihadi cell			vs apostates	
4 Sep 2006	God is the greatest – download now instructions for making hand bombs	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency		
4 Sep 2006	Encouraging Jihadism – very important for Mujahedin and qaed in	Encyclopedi a of Preparation	a list of encouraging Qur'anic verses		jihadi	direction
	Points about fighting techniques for destroying buildings and blowing up embassies	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency	vs authority	direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
		The basics on kidnapping Jews and Americans – copied.	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	vs Jews and Americans	direction
	4 Sep 2006	A guide to attaining competence as a professional thief	Encyclopedia of Preparation	WQ seemingly implies that he created this himself, and then climbs down, admitting that he only copied it.	secrecy/agency	Ummah	
	5 Sep 2006	Interview with Sheikh ‘atiullah by al-Hesbah network chatroom.	General			jihadi	
	5 Sep 2006	Communicues of the mujahedin shura council for Monday	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	5 Sep 2006	Information that concerns you	General	Trivia - general knowledge fun facts	?	?	?
	5 Sep 2006	Poem about a prisoner	General			mujahidin/vs authority	
	5 Sep 2006	Seven things you shouldn't do immediately after eating	General		health		
	5 Sep 2006	Several important things - send this to the one you love	General				
	5 Sep 2006	To my dear sister - read this, then answer	Da'wa	Fable about a pearl and a rose	uprightness		

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
5 Sep 2006	A gift to Abu Khattab al-Dalimi	General	An anti-Iranian file on Tawhed.ws		forum/ vs Iran	
5 Sep 2006	Praying for the prophet, peace be upon him, its meaning	General		ritual		
5 Sep 2006	For the health of the forum members	General		health		
5 Sep 2006	Abu Qatada's Website	Media			jihadi	
5 Sep 2006	Why don't you use your sleeping time to worship?	General	a passage to ritual read before one sleeps which gives one benefits while sleeping - rather like self hypnosis programming			
5 Sep 2006	Hell, 300km -a very effective story	Da'wa	Creepy ghost story type tale about a group of boys on a road trip	fear of death		
5 Sep 2006	The fisherman and the fish - Ahmad ibn Hanbal	General	a folk tale reminiscent of one in the Arabian Nights	uprightness		
5 Sep 2006	Taq-Taq-Taqiyya - God damn whoever knows its meaning and still recites it	Da'wa		ritual (-)		
6 Sep 2006	Sudden new release from the Islamic Army of Iraq	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
6 Sep 2006	Ramadan is an opportunity for young people	General		ritual	youth	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
6 Sep 2006	Do you feel down after your enthusiasm after tauba?	General		ritual		
6 Sep 2006	A way to turn off the computer of someone who annoys you with messenger – without programming	Jihadi hacker		agency		technology
6 Sep 2006	Dawa websites reporting in more than 40 languages internationally	Da'wa		agency	Ummah	
6 Sep 2006	Suggestions and thoughts about Dawa through the Internet	Da'wa		agency	Ummah	
6 Sep 2006	Words that make a person who doesn't pray pray	Da'wa	God abandons the one who doesn't pray. 'between the man and the unbeliever is the abandoning of prayer' various similar maxims	ritual (-)		
6 Sep 2006	God is great! The battle of Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdulrahman al Utaybi	Media	Communications		mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
6 Sep 2006	Establishment of Al-Boraq media foundation.	Media	Communications		mujahidin	progress
6 Sep 2006	Confessions of two members of the national guard – achieving God's rule over them	Forum for the jihadi cell	General		mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress
7 Sep 2006	Communications of Ansar al-Sunna group for Wednesday	Communications and Reports	Communications		mujahidin	
7 Sep 2006	Why don't you wear the hijab?		Girls say that they are religiously convinced but that they will wait until they are older.	corruption		
7 Sep 2006	My concern is for the patient who doesn't know that the cure is in his hands		A post about corruption the hypocrisy behind common religious formulas			
7 Sep 2006	How to learn to be forgiven for good		A lesson in how to repent properly	ritual		
7 Sep 2006	Health benefits of walking to Mosque	General	Based on a study saying that walking half an hour every day reduces blood pressure	health		
7 Sep 2006	Ashura the mujahedin council for Thursday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	7 Sep 2006	An audio by Abu Hamza al Muhajer	Media	Communiq es		jihadi	
	8 Sep 2006	Interview with Dr Ibrahim al-Shambari – official spokesman of the Islamic Army in Iraq	Media	Communiq es		mujahidin	
	8 Sep 2006	God is great, God is great, good news for Muslims	Communiq es and Reports	A martyrdom operation by the majlis al-shura in Baghdad to avenge Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi		mujahidin/u mmah	progress
	8 Sep 2006	Communiq ues by Ansar al-Sunna group for Thursday 14 th of Sha'aban.	Communiq es and Reports	Communiq es		mujahidin	progress
	8 Sep 2006	What's beautiful in the Universe	General	To worship God, not kings, rocks or trees; to be a good Muslim, not a kaafir; to give your heart to God, etc			

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	8 Sep 2006	Those banned from beholding God		Those who have broken God's covenant and have little faith, a governor who was negligent in his charge and didn't take account of people's poverty, the adulterous shaikh, the false king		Ummah/ vs authority/bet rayal	goal
	8 Sep 2006	Some of the reasons why [people] stay on the straight way, God willing	Da'wa	A list of ways of remaining religious: frequent du'a, finding an upright friend, keeping one's distance from anyone who isn't like that, even if a relative, reading the book of God, keeping to obligations, requesting shari'ah knowledge, fear of sins, reading improving books, looking ahead, remembering the enmity of Satan.	uprightness		
	8 Sep 2006	Mujahedin Shura council communiques	Communiqués and Reports	Communiqués		mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
9 Sep 2006	Thirty prayers for thirty days of Ramadan.	General		ritual	everyday life	
10 Sep 2006	The latest news of Mujahedin	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
10 Sep 2006	Sada al-Rafidayn, the 5 th issue	Media			mujahidin	progress
10 Sep 2006	Wine and dates: a beautiful story that has the effect of bringing tears to the eye		Story about a shaikh in Britain whose Arabic student jokingly gives him an alcoholic drink at Ramadan breakfast and a British student who converts after seeing the shaykh's response	uprightness/ corruption/ responsibility/ sensitivity	Ummah	
10 Sep 2006	For Ramadan 153 doors of goodness	General		ritual	everyday life	
11 Sep 2010	The knight of Islam – Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, God have mercy on him	Media			mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
11 Sep 2010	The excuses people make for not going to jihad	General	A discussion of various attachments (children, possessions , etc) and why they are invalid reasons			
11 Sep 2006	The battalion of Abi Dajjana al-Ansari	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	
11 Sep 2006	Ramadan flash	Da'wa		ritual	Ummah	
11 Sep 2006	Communications of Ansar al-Sunna group for 11 th September 2006	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
11 Sep 2010	Communications of the jaysh al mujahedin	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
11 Sep 2006	New video of jaysh al mujahedin called 'the storms'	Media			mujahidin	progress
11 Sep 2006	An interview with Ayman al Zawahiri	Media			mujahidin	
12 Sep 2006	Al Mujahedin Shura Council 9/11 operation	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
13 Sep 2006	Mujahidin Shura council statement 12 th September	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
13 Sep 2006	A story that made many people cry	Da'wa	on the last days of the prophet	sensitivity	Ummah	precedent
13 Sep 2006	Warning: the more you participate in this chat, the more sins you get			ritual		technology
13 Sep 2006	From the pearls of the righteous - dedicated to my brother in God Sayf al-Islam				forum	
14 Sep 2006	New videoed operations	Media			mujahidin	progress
14 Sep 2006	Letters to the mujahidin of Iraq	Media			mujahidin	
14 Sep 2006	Communications and good news – God is great!	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	
14 Sep 2006	The complete file of Ramadan - hundreds of audio recordings	Da'wa		ritual		technology
15 Sep 2006	mujahidin shura communications	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
16 Sep 2006	Videoed operations of Mujahidin Shura council	Media			mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
16 Sep 2006	The word is the word of the sword - an answer from the Mujahidin to the Vatican	Media			mujahidin/u mmah/ vs pope	
16 Sep 2006	Good news – the Sheikh Abu Yahia al-Libi in jihadist poems	Media			mujahidin	progress
16 Sep 2006	A story that made Osama bin Laden cry till he fainted	General		sensitivity	mujahidin/u mmah	oppression
16 Sep 2006	The whole collected poems of Abu Yahia al-Libi	Media			mujahidin	
16 Sep 2006	The drunkenness of death	General		fear of death		
17 Sep 2006	All the parts of the Russian Hell in Chechnya	Media			mujahidin	progress
17 Sep 2006	The battalion of the 20 th revolution – two video operations	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
17 Sep 2006	Communications of Ansar al-Sunna group for Saturday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
17 Sep 2006	Finding the body of a Palestinian in Abu Dsheir district	Communiquees and Reports		kidnapping story	Arab/Umma h/vs Shiites	oppression
17 Sep 2006	The tribes of Iraq threaten [bad consequences] if any flag is raised apart from the Iraqi flag	Communiquees and Reports			Iraqi/Arab/vs American	
17 Sep 2006	The Islamic Army of Iraq claim responsibility for the destruction of an American tank in Baghdad.	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
17 Sep 2006	A family of al-jihad district relate their terrifying experience at the hands of the Al-Mahdi army.	Communiquees and Reports			vs Shiites	oppression

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
17 Sep 2006	The village of Hambas in al Miqdadiyya is destroyed by the occupation forces and the national army	Communiqués and Reports			vs Americans/vs apostates	
17 Sep 2006	Romania to withdraw its forces from Iraq within two months	Communiqués and Reports				progress
17 Sep 2006	Saudi Arabia plans to make fences and electronic barriers along the Iraqi border	Communiqués and Reports			vs authority	
17 Sep 2006	Destroying a car belonging to the internal intelligence and killing its occupants in Samra.	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs intelligence	progress
17 Sep 2006	Finding fifty bodies of Sunni Shuhada in Baghdad – children among them.	Communiqués and Reports			vs Shiites	oppression

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
17 Sep 2006	Good news for Muslims in general and mujahedin in particular	Communications and Reports			mujahedin	progress
17 Sep 2006	Seizure of 4kg of drugs in nasiriyya	Communications and Reports		corruption	vs Americans	
17 Sep 2006	Iran wants to rebuild the Iraqi intelligence	Communications and Reports			vs Iran/ vs intelligence	
17 Sep 2006	Washington puts 20 million dollars into surveillance of media	Communications and Reports		secrecy	vs Americans	technology
17 Sep 2006	Killing of a family by a sniper of the occupation forces at Ramadi	Communications and Reports			vs Americans	oppression
17 Sep 2006	American defence ministry hides the truth – more than 10,000 Americans killed	Communications and Reports			vs Americans	progress
17 Sep 2006	The Mahdi army attacks at Batha mosque in Nasiriyya	Communications and Reports			vs Shiites	oppression

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
17 Sep 2006	bank account in Israel belonging to the head of the government of Iraqi militias.	Communicues and Reports			vs Shiites/vs Israel	
18 Sep 2006	Mujahedin Shura council in Iraq communiqu es	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
19 Sep 2006	Mujahedin Shura council in Iraq communiqu es	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
19 Sep 2006	Sada Rafidayn – the sixth issue	Media			mujahidin	
19 Sep 2006	Statement issued by leadership of ansar al sunna about the pope's communiqu es	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin/ vs pope	
19 Sep 2006	Statement for al-fajr media centre	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
19 Sep 2006	Ansar al Sunna statement for Tuesday	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	19 Sep 2006	The ultimate encyclopedia of outstanding thought on managing asymmetric warfare	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency		direction
	20 Sep 2006	Mujahedin Shura council statement	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	21 Sep 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiques for Wednesday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	21 Sep 2006	Al Qaeda and the production of red mercury	General			mujahidin	technology/direction/progress
	22 Sep 2006	Islamic collection	General	by GIMF celebrating the career of Sayf al-Din al-Kanani		mujahidin	purpose
	22 Sep 2006	The mujahedin shura council communiques	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	22 Sep 2006	Instructive examples from the lives of wise men	Da'wa		uprightness		
	22 Sep 2006	How to make a fake passport – copied	Encyclopedia of Preparation		secrecy/agency		

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
22 Sep 2006	A new film from Chechnya	Media			mujahidin/Ummah	
22 Sep 2006	The programme that infuriated the foremost hackers	Forum for the jihadi hacker		agency		technology
22 Sep 2006	How to fake a passport	Encyclopedia of Preparation		secrecy/agency		
22 Sep 2006	Lessons in hacking	Forum for the jihadi hacker		agency		technology
23 Sep 2006	The latest Jihadi news for Friday	Communications and Reports	Communications		mujahidin	progress
23 Sep 2006	Reliving the ways of our forebears in dealing with unbelievers	Media			Ummah/vs Kuffar	precedent
23 Sep 2006	Shortcomings in thought and manhaj of the present jihadi current	Military Strategy	A piece drawn from Abu Mus'ab al-Suri		jihadi	direction (-)
23 Sep 2006	Libya – we didn't fight?	General			mujahidin	progress (-)
23 Sep 2006	A reply to those who prohibited jihad in Iraq.	General			Ummah/defeatists	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	23 Sep 2006	Making a team a collective achievement	Military Strategy		agency	Jihadi	progress
	23 Sep 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Saturday				mujahidin	progress
	23 Sep 2006	Basics of planning	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	direction
	24 Sep 2006	Exegesis on 'Foundations of Takfir' by Sheikh Abu Basir	General			Ummah/kuffar	direction
	25 Sep 2006	Mujahedin Shuran council communiques for Sunday	Communiques and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	25 Sep 2006	Sada Rafidayn – 7 th issue	Media			mujahidin	progress
	25 Sep 2006	Eulogy of heroes of Chechnya	Media		uprightness	mujahidin	direction
	25 Sep 2006	A word by the shahid sheikh abu hasan al hijazi, God have mercy on him – please disseminate	Media		uprightness	mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	25 Sep 2006	The shura council of Iraq statement about an exclusive secret programme	Communications and Reports	On the misrepresentation of the mujahidin on a particular satellite channel	secrecy	mujahidin/jihadi	direction
	25 Sep 2006	The preparation of al-mujahed generation 1	Jihadi Cell Forum		uprightness/agency	mujahidin	direction
	25 Sep 2006	Download lessons by Abu Musab al-Suri	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	Jihadi	direction
	26 Sep 2006	Good news/all the issues by the organisation of the Arab peninsula	Media			mujahidin	
	26 Sep 2006	Al mujahedin communiques for Tuesday/ 1	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	26 Sep 2006	Mujahedin shura council communiques for Tuesday/2	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	26 Sep 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Tuesday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
27 Sep 2006	I seek the faith in you O muslim	Da'wa		uprightness		
27 Sep 2006	Don't be tempted by those who practice unbelief in the country	Da'wa		uprightness		
27 Sep 2006	I seek the faith in you, O sister	Da'wa	about the currents of Westernisati on devastating our women	uprightness		
27 Sep 2006	135 ways to gain benefits (copied)	General	eg repentence, sincerity, Umrah, reading and memorising the Qur'an	ritual		
27 Sep 2006	The habits of our forebears in Ramadan	General			Ummah	precedent
27 Sep 2006	The difference between insha-allah and in sha allah – a very serious subject	General	Insha' Allah means 'we have created God' not 'What God wills'	ritual		
27 Sep 2006	At the doors of Ramadan, here where you gain lessons	Da'wa	On benefits available to Muslims at the outset of Ramadan	ritual		
27 Sep 2006	Look to the Gharqad tree	General	Concerning the tree that will not speak out against the Jews		Ummah/ vs Jews	goal

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	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	27 Sep 2006	Fiqhi puzzles	General		ritual		
	27 Sep 2006	Audio by the commander of Islamic jihad of Iraq on the occasion of Ramadan	Media			mujahidin/ummah	
	27 Sep 2006	Shura jihadi council communiques for Wednesday	Communiques and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	28 Sep 2006	Condolences from the Global Islamic Media Front for the death of our brother Sayf	Communiques and Reports	The person in question - Sayf al-Din al-Kanani - is said to have been a founding member of the GIMF. He longed for martyrdom and so, 'even if he died on his mattress' he will be reckoned a martyr.		mujahidin	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
28 Sep 2006	Dialogue between an ignorant 'jaami' and an honest mujahid about Zarqawi	General	Zarqawi is accused of being a Kharajite. The 'mujahid' asks whether the Saudi army is a Muslim army. He is told that it is. But it kills Muslims. Whereas Zarqawi fights infidels. So who's the Kharajite?		mujahidin/ vs authority	direction
28 Sep 2006	Faith based preparation and psychological preparation before military preparation	Encyclopedia of Preparation	On being personally committed, giving of one's money, etc, for the jihad	agency/upri ghtness	jihadi	
28 Sep 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiques for Wednesday	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
28 Sep 2006	A word from the amir of the al Qaeda organization in the land of the two rivers	Media			mujahidin	
29 Sep 2006	The mujahedin shura council communiques for Thursday	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
29 Sep 2006	Ansar al sunna communiques for Friday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
29 Sep 2006	Advice	General	General life advice - don't get caught up with the past or the future, take exercise, do du'a, sin is the origin of sadness, don't move all the time from one activity to another - that's a way of not achieving anything.	uprightness/corruption		
29 Sep 2006	A way of seeking knowledge – yusuf al'iri (copied)	general	On the importance of seeking knowledge alongside jihad	uprightness/corruption	knowledge/agency	
29 Sep 2006	Who's knocking? (copied)			uprightness/corruption	virtue/everyday life	
29 Sep 2006	Make 70 angels pray over you, and if you die, you will die as a shahid	Da'wa	More formulas	ritual/agency	everyday life/fear of death	
29 Sep 2006	17 ways for you to get rid of sin	Da'wa	Various Islamic formulas which produce this effect	ritual/agency	everyday life/fear of death	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	30 Sep 2006	Situations that made umar bin al-khattab cry and become silent and angry	Da'wa		uprightness	Ummah	precedent
	30 Sep 2006	Mujahedin shura council communiques for Friday	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	30 Sep 2006	Ayman al Zawahiri/bush/Vatican pope/darfur and wars	General			mujahidin/ vs pope/ vs Bush/ vs Darfuris	
	30 Sep 2006	Greeting and appreciations to the Sheikh, the leader abi hamza al muhajir with support and encouragement	Communiquees and Reports	Ramadan greetings and a biography of the new leader of the Mujahidin Shura Council in Iraq		jihadi	
	30 Sep 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Saturday	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	2 Oct 2006	Sada al – Rafidayn – 7 th issue	Media			mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	2 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement for Sunday/1	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	2 Oct 2006	The way of victory film by ansar al-sunna army	Media			mujahidin	progress
	2 Oct 2006	Abu Obeid al Bashiri – a part of his biography	Miltiary Strategy			mujahidin	direction
	2 Oct 2006	The new biggest electronic battle in Ramadan	jihadi hacker forum	calling on people to take part in a ddos against 'zionist' websites	agency	jihadi	technology/ direction
	3 Oct 2006	Mujahedin Shura council statement for Sunday pt 2.00	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement for Monday	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 Oct 2006	Three video lectures by sheikh abu talal al qasim – God release him!	Media			jihadi	
	3 Oct 2006	Ansar al sunna communiqu es for Monday	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	3 Oct 2006	Important and useful information	General	a lengthy series of fairly well known facts about the Qur'an		everyday life	direction (validity of religion)
	3 Oct 2006	Mujahedin statement for Tuesday pt 1	Media			mujahidin	progress
	4 Oct 2006	Chechen mujahedin film 2006	Media			mujahidin	
	4 Oct 2006	A new message by Abi Yahia God protect him – the unbelievers of Karzai's regime	Media			mujahidin/vs authority	
	4 Oct 2006	A statement by tandhim qaadat al jihad – the state of Palestine – the statement of rational people	Media			mujahidin	direction
	5 Oct 2006	The media dept of mujahedin shura council presents: sniping the American soldiers	Media			mujahidin/ vs Americans	progress
	5 Oct 2006	An open interview with Dr Ibrahim al-Shammari	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	5 Oct 2006	The Sheikh Abu Omar Abd al Hakim Hasan's website – God protect him	General	General		jihadi	
	8 Oct 2006	The mujahdin shura council statement for Thursday	Communiq es and Reports	Communiq es		mujahidin	progress
	8 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group statement for Friday	Communiq es and Reports	Communiq es		mujahidin	progress
	8 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement for Saturday pt 1	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	8 Oct 2006	Destroying a hummer in the south of Baghdad	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Oct 2006	Mujahedin statement for Saturday pt 2	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	8 Oct 2006	An interview with the mujahid leader abu nasir al qahtani – God protect him	General			mujahidin	
	8 Oct 2006	An invitation for Ramadan important for all members to open	General	Sermon on forgiveness of sins in Ramadan	ritual		
	8 Oct 2006	The study of Islamic victory	General	Discussion for download of the mujahidin in Afghanistan		mujahidin	precedent/direction
	8 Oct 2006	These links for those who want to spread goodness and Dawa to God.	Da'wa		agency	Ummah	technology
	8 Oct 2006	A way of hiding from night cameras and infra red cameras (copied)	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency/secretcy		
	9 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council communiques for Sunday pt 1	Communiques and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	9 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council communiques for Sunday pt 2	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	9 Oct 2006	The Islamic Media department presents: destroying a car belonging to the pagan guards in Baghdad.	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Oct 2006	Keeping to the straight and narrow road.	Da'wa		uprightness		
	9 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Sunday	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Oct 2006	Advice from the tongue of a madman. The last comment from Ahmad bin Hanbal	Da'wa	Sermon about an irreligious man who learns to pray after being chided by a madman	corruption/u prightness/ri tual/health		
	9 Oct 2006	Three letters that make hearts shiver	Da'wa	Sermon on death	fear of death		
	10 Oct 2006	How to become an electronic mujahid	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	10 Oct 2006	If you want to become a rocket engineer download this file	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology
	10 Oct 2006	A new active link to DNT (copied)			agency	jihadi	technology
	10 Oct 2006	Al Fallujah lightning storms film	Media			mujahidin	
	10 Oct 2006	Rocket attack on an American base in Khoust	Media			mujahidin	progress
	10 Oct 2006	Effective moments from the life of wise men	Da'wa	On the redemptive agency of prayer	ritual		
	10 Oct 2006	Mujahedin Shura council statement for Monday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	10 Oct 2006	Dialogue between a wahhabi and a rafidi	General			Ummah / vs Shiites	direction
	10 Oct 2006	A weakness of hadith that was corrected by Al-Albani	General	the hadith is one that states - 'who wishes to advise the sultan, must not do it publicly'		Ummah/ vs authority	direction

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	10 Oct 2006	Lessons in making rockets	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology
	11 Oct 2006	How to know laylat al qadr	General		ritual		
	11 Oct 2006	Mujahidin statement for Tuesday pt 1	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	11 Oct 2006	A meeting between al-sahab establishment and the mujahid faruq al-iraqi (God accept him).	Media			mujahidin	
	11 Oct 2006	Media corporation presents: destroying the pagans' wheeled vehicle in Baghdad	Media			mujahidin	progress
	11 Oct 2006	Media corporation presents destroying a car belonging to the American intelligence	Media			mujahidin	progress
	11 Oct 2006	Toward the summit: the best 99 by sheikh hamid al ali	General		uprightness		

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	11 Oct 2006	Preparation for hacking the unbelievers and the apostates: the complete chapters	Jihadi hacker forum	Encyclopedia of Hacking by Irhabi 007	agency	vs kuffar/apostates	technology
	11 Oct 2006	The orbit in Islam	General			knowledge/c community	direction (validity of religion)
	11 Oct 2006	The miracle of the Quran	General				direction
	11 Oct 2006	Humour of the companions	General		uprightness	Ummah	precedent
	11 Oct 2006	It's time to return, youth of the Umma	Forum for Da'wa to God			youth	precedent
	11 Oct 2006	Du'a Du'a Du'a	General		ritual		
	11 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group statement for Tuesday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	11 Oct 2006	A free channel for all	Da'wa			community	
	12 Oct 2006	A study on how to make rockets	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology
	12 Oct 2006	Mujahedin Shura council statement for Tuesday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	12 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Wednesday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	12 Oct 2006	God is great enter, brother – much useful information	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	12 Oct 2006	Mujahedin Shura council in Iraq: Giving the good news to the Umma on raising 'allahu akbar'...	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	13 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement Thursday, pt 1	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	13 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement Thursday pt 2	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	13 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Thursday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	13 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement Friday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	14 Oct 2006	God is the greatest – explode it and make history	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	14 Oct 2006	The media corporation of the mujahedin shura council presents the assassination of one of the spies	Media			mujahedin/ vs intelligence	progress
	15 Oct 2006	Mujahedin Shura council statement for Saturday	Communiqués and Reports			mujahedin	progress
	15 Oct 2006	Download the special issue “the good news of victory of the falling hawk of the Islamic army”	Media			mujahedin	progress
	15 Oct 2006	These are detailed maps and important for Mujahedin, especially rocket and mortar department	Military Strategy		agency	mujahedin	direction

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	15 Oct 2006	Jihad preparation episodes – a great electronic book	Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	15 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council give the good news to the Umma, announcing the rise of the state of Iraq	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress/direction/goal
	16 Oct 2006	Sada rafidayn, 9 th and 10 th issues	Media			mujahidin	
	16 Oct 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement for Sunday	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	16 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Sunday	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	17 Oct 2006	A word from the acting leader Abu Hafs al Urduni, God protect him	Media			mujahidin	direction
	17 Oct 2006	Where are the strong ones, O ansar?	General		corruption	jihadi	progress (-)

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	18 Oct 2006	Al Fursan magazine the news of the mujahedin	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	
	18 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Tuesday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	18 Oct 2006	Absolving the men of the Islamic State of Iraq.	General	Letter from Zarqawi's people admonishing the group for not supporting the Islamic State of Iraq		mujahidin/ vs division	direction
	18 Oct 2006	The latest news from the mujahedin	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	19 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiqu- es for Wednesday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	19 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiqu- es for Thursday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	19 Oct 2006	Statement by the media ministry of the Islamic State of Iraq for Wednesday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	20 Oct 2006	The video translation and the written one to the speech announcing the Islamic state of Iraq	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	21 Oct 2006	Latest news of the mujahedin and the precise date of Eid	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin/ummah	progress
	22 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiques for Saturday	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	22 Oct 2006	A statement from the media ministry of the Islamic state of Iraq for Saturday	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	22 Oct 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Sunday	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	23 Oct 2006	Here to congratulate on the occasion of Eid al Fitr	General			forum/umma h	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	24 Oct 2006	Statement of the minister for media of the Islamic state of Iraq for Sunday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	24 Oct 2006	Baghdad sniper – part 2	Media			mujahidin	progress
	24 Oct 2006	Second issue of the eulogy of al-anbar	Media			mujahidin	
	24 Oct 2006	Videoed operations of the mujahedin army in Iraq.	Media			mujahidin	progress
	25 Oct 2006	Media minister statement of the Islamic state of Iraq for Tuesday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	25 Oct 2006	An urgent letter that cannot under any circumstances be delayed to the brother	General	A warning to a mujahid in Afghanistan called Nasir al-Qahtani to stop communicating in his own name because 23 people have been arrested because of him		mujahidin	operational

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	26 Oct 2006	Media minister statement of the Islamic state of Iraq for Thursday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	27 Oct 2006	The media ministry of the Islamic state of Iraq statement for Thursday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	27 Oct 2006	The media ministry for Islamic state of Iraq – a video release, emptying the veins of the unbelievers	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	27 Oct 2006	media exuberance	Media			jihadi	progress (-)
	27 Oct 2006	A videoed operation by Ansar al-Sunna for Thursday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	29 Oct 2006	Now 10 to 28 Islamic State of Iraq, the news report for the state	Media			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	29 Oct 2006	Beware of this word	A hadeeth which warns one not to curse the age, as this is like cursing God		ritual		the age
	31 Oct 2007	Al-Albani – what is for him and what is from him	Religious library	by Abu Qatada		jihadi	direction
	1 Nov 2006	The ruling on dealing with pagans for money	Religious library				direction
	1 Nov 2006	Tawhed book by Kudeir bin Ali al Khudeir	Religious library				direction
	1 Nov 2006	How to become a good speaker in 6 minutes	Religious library		agency	Ummah	
	1 Nov 2006	How to explain hadiths (al-Khudayr)	Religious library		agency	Ummah	
	1 Nov 2006	<i>Mustadrik al Hakim</i> with a summary by al-Dhahabi (v useful)	Religious library	Concerning the sins of the Shiites (rawafid)		Ummah/ vs Shiites	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
1 Nov 2006	The meaning of the phrase 'memoriser of hadith' can only be known in this way	Religious library		agency	Ummah	
1 Nov 2006	The voice of jihad presents al Hiyari's instructions on the lawfulness of taking Christian blood in the peninsula.	Religious library			Mujahidin	direction
1 Nov 2006	The voice of jihad presents the court of the signs of victory of the celebrated Abu Ras al-Dosari 'the signs of victory'	Religious library				progress
2 Nov 2006	The separation of Mukhalifun (jihad refuseniks) among the people of the Sunna in the Quran.	Religious library			Ummah/jiha di	direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	2 Nov 2006	The Islamic army in Iraq – good news, the production of the ground to ground Abeer rocket.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	2 Nov 2006	the Islamic State of Iraq/ the news report of an operation	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	2 Nov 2006	The Islamic State of Iraq, the news report of Baghdad state	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 Nov 2010	Now, al-Sahab presents: sins that won't be erased by Sheikh...	Media			mujahidin	
	3 Nov 2010	Important definitions	General	A selection of jihadi 'cards'		Jihadi	
	4 Nov 2010	Ansar al-Sunna group statement for Friday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	4 Nov 2010	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Saturday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	4 Nov 2010	The treatment of souls and reforming of ethics	Religious Library		uprightness/ agency		
	5 Nov 2010	The Islamic state of Iraq/the report for Diyali state for Saturday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	5 Nov 2010	The Islamic state of Iraq/ the report for al-Mosul state for Saturday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	5 Nov 2010	Sada Rafidayn – 11 th issue	Media			mujahidin	
	6 Nov 2010	The third video of 'al-rimah al awali'.	Media			mujahidin	
	6 Nov 2010	Islamic state of Iraq an announcement from the media ministry	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	6 Nov 2010	A media announcement from Dr Ali Naimi, media spokesman	Communications and Reports			mujahidin/co mmunity	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	7 Nov 2006	The media voice of the Caliphate presents...	Media			mujahidin	
	7 Nov 2006	Al-Jihad film in East Turkestan	Media			mujahidin	progress
	7 Nov 2006	Communiq ues of the Islamic state of Iraq for Thursday	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin/pr ogress	progress
	7 Nov 2006	Communiq ues of the Islamic state of Iraq for Tuesday	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	8 Nov 2006	The news summary of the revolutionary battalions of the 20 th for the month of Aylul 2006	Communiq es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	8 Nov 2006	Special subject for brother Abu Khattab al-Dalimi I would like all the brothers to take a look at. [very important]	General	A prayer offered concerning Abu Khattab's absence from the forum	ritual	forum	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	8 Nov 2006	The explanation of al-Aaqida by ibn Aathaymin	Religious library				direction
	8 Nov 2006	The curriculum of preparations of the mujahedin for the way of God	Religious Library	Primarily about the merits of tawhid	uprightness/ agency	mujahidin	direction
	9 Nov 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Wednesday	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Nov 2006	Video lectures of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam – God have mercy on him	Media			mujahidin	direction
	10 Nov 2006	A new audio from Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir	Media			jihadi	direction
	11 Nov 2006	Islamic state of Iraq, report of Baghdad state for Friday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	11 Nov 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Saturday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
12 Nov 2006	Wanted – new recruits to be trained as mujahedin for al Qaeda organisation	General		agency	mujahidin	direction
12 Nov 2006	Islamic state of Iraq report of Baghdad statement for Saturday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	
12 Nov 2006	My soul is pushing me to commit sins – what do I do?	Forum for Da'wa to God		uprightness/corruption		
12 Nov 2006	The story of three questions	Forum for Da'wa to God	A joke like tale about a doubter in God being slapped in the face	belief/unbelief	Ummah/vs kuffar	direction (validity of religion)
12 Nov 2006	Read it, because it's great	Forum for Da'wa to God	Story of redemption about drunkard	uprightness/corruption		
12 Nov 2006	Al Battar military camp and how to use howitzers and information on making 'sawaa'.	Encyclopedia of preparation		agency	jihadi	
12 Nov 2006	An invitation to join the ranks of Al Qaeda	General		agency	mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	12 Nov 2006	An intelligent way for cell members to communicate	Military strategy forum	Article on codes	secrecy	jihadi	
	12 Nov 2006	Important – for mujahedin a sniper book (M.I.I sniper) video	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	mujahidin	
	12 Nov 2006	New members wanted to be prepared as mujahedin for the Al Qaeda organisation (copied)	General		agency	mujahidin	
	12 Nov 2006	How to be a sniper	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency		
	12 Nov 2006	The library of Abu Musab al-Suri and Umar Abd al Hakim Setamariam	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	12 Nov 2006	The book of Sheikh Hassan al-Qattani	Religious library			jihadi	
	12 Nov 2006	No jihad without an Imam	Religious Library			Ummah	direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
12 Nov 2006	The explanation of the summary of the prophet, peace be upon him by Imam al-Albani	Religious Library			Ummah	direction
12 Nov 2006	70 mistakes of Rabiaa al Madkhali and his followers	Religious Library			Ummah/ vs Madhkalis	direction
12 Nov 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiques for Sunday	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
13 Nov 2006	Islamic state of Iraq communiques for Sunday	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
13 Nov 2006	Khattab – God have mercy on him!	General		uprightness	mujahidin	precedent
13 Nov 2006	Lectures by Sheikh Yusuf bin Salh al-Ayyiri – God have mercy on him!	Encyclopedi a of preparation		agency	jihadi	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
13 Nov 2006	Preparation for battle, preparing the Umma for Jihad, and for what follows	Military strategy		agency	jihadi/umma h	direction
13 Nov 2006	The development of satellites	General			mujahidin	technology/aspiration
13 Nov 2006	A collection of Jihadi books will be continued by God's permission – press and download – don't miss it.	Encyclopedia of Preparation			jihadi	
13 Nov 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Monday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
14 Nov 2006	Sada Rafidayn – 12 th issue	Media			mujahidin	progress
14 Nov 2006	Khattab 'the ruling is for God'	General			mujahidin	direction
15 Nov 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Tuesday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	15 Nov 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Wednesday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	16 Nov 2006	Islamic state in Iraq statement for Wednesday for Anbar state	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	16 Nov 2006	Islamic State of Iraq, communiqu- es for Wednesday, state of Baghdad	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	16 Nov 2006	Islamic State of Iraq, communiqu- es for Thursday, state of Baghdad	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	7 Dec 2006	A press conference with the lion of Islam sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	7 Dec 2006	Islamic state of Iraq communiqu- es for Wednesday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	7 Dec 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiques for Thursday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	9 Dec 2006	Ansar al-Sunna communiques for Saturday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	12 Dec 2006	A new video of the blessed battle of Bildruz	Media			mujahidin	progress
	12 Dec 2006	Film of a rocket attack on an American base in Kost region.	Media			mujahidin	progress
	12 Dec 2006	Sada al Jihad, 10 th issue				mujahidin	
	26 Dec 2006	A film of the American massacre at al-Hashim village	Media			Ummah/Iraq oppression / vs Americans	
	26 Dec 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Monday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	26 Dec 2006	Jihad, Jihad against the crusading Ethiopia!	General			mujahidin/ vs Ethiopia	goal

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	3 Jan 2007	An audio of the amir of the Islamic army in Iraq.	Media			mujahidin	
	3 Jan 2007	A video titled: the one who was justified among them	Media			mujahidin	
	3 Jan 2007	Eid greeting for the Ummah of Tawhid by sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, God protect him	Media			mujahidin	
	6 Jan 2007	<i>The Khawaarij of Du'a and the Marja'a with the Pagans</i>	Religious library			Ummah/vs Murji'ites	direction
	6 Jan 2007	Not obeying the governor	Religious library			Ummah/ vs authority	direction
	6 Jan 2007	Rise up to bring victory to your brothers in Somalia, by Ayman al-Zawahiri, God protect him.	Media			mujahidin/S omalis	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
6 Jan 2007	Secrets of the Mujahedin – programme – the first Islamic programme for safe communication through the network	General		secrecy	mujahidin/jih adi	technology
6 Jan 2007	<i>Nida al Haqq</i> film	Media			mujahidin	
6 Jan 2007	<i>Raising the banner of Islam</i> [book]	Religious library			jihadi	direction
6 Jan 2007	A word from Dr Ibrahim al-Shammari, the official spokesman of the Islamic army	Media			mujahidin	
6 Jan 2007	The Zoroastrian fire in the peninsula	General			Ummah/Ara bian peninsula/ vs Iran	
6 Jan 2007	A videoed interview with the aunt of the student Marwa al ‘Azzawi	Media	Girl who was kidnapped with three colleagues by Shiite gangs		Ummah/Iraq / vs Shiites	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	27 Jan 2007	An address to the Algerian Muslim people	Media			Ummah/Algerians	
	27 Jan 2007	The correct formula	Media			mujahidin	direction
	27 Jan 2007	Blowing up an American tank in al-Anbar state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	27 Jan 2007	The Muslims' joy in the rise of the Muwahhidi n state	Media			Ummah/mujahidin	goal/progress/direction
	22 Feb 2007	For the first time on the Internet – new visual lectures my Sheikh Muhammad al Fazazi	Media			jihadi	direction
	22 Feb 2007	A great and important speech by Abu Qatada, may God release him, on the explanation of a certain verse	Media			jihadi	direction
	22 Feb 2007	A beautiful website to increase your physical fitness	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency/health		

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	25 Feb 2007	A word from Sheikh Abu Hamza al Muhajir – for your sake, sister	Media			jihadi	direction
	25 Feb 2007	Destruction of an American hummer in the state of Baghdad	Media			mujahidin	progress
	25 Feb 2007	Detonation of a high explosive bomb under a hummer belonging to the guardians of apostasy	Media			mujahidin	progress
	4 Mar 2007	Advancing the argument	religious library			Ummah	progress
	4 Mar 2007	Enacting the rulings of God on the members of the internal ministry in Dyali state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	4 Mar 2007	A video by Sheikh abi al hasan Rashid al balidi, God protect him	Media			mujahidin	direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	5 Mar 2007	Sada al Jihad magazine the 13 th issue	Media			mujahidin	
	5 Mar 2007	Ansar al-Sunna statement for Sunday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	6 Mar 2007	The hunters of kasihat – film	Media			mujahidin	progress
	11 Mar 2007	The return to the mountains – film, coming soon, God willing	Media			mujahidin	progress
	14 Mar 2007	Islamic State of Iraq, statement for Tuesday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	14 Mar 2007	The number that puzzled scientists	General			Ummah	technology (validation of religion)
	9 Apr 2007	Firing rockets at an American base in Balwara	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	An operation to blow up an American car in the state of Lojer	Media			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	9 Apr 2007	The words of the Amir al Mu'mineen	Media			mujahidin	direction
	9 Apr 2007	The Islamic state of Iraq	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	Spy film – Quyum Shammari	Media			mujahidin/ vs intelligence	progress
	9 Apr 2007	Rocket attack on the apostates in Shankay – film	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	Destruction of an American tank in Mosul	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	The Just Punishment – film	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	A collection of fatwas from Sheikh Abi Muhammad al Maqdisi	religious library			jihadi	direction
	9 Apr 2007	Demolishing Al-Salaam hotel – base of the guards of the pagans in Fallujah	Media			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	9 Apr 2007	Abu al-Hasan al-Shami replied 9 th April 6.36 pm				forum	
	9 Apr 2007	Battles between the American forces and the guards of apostasy of the people of the Sunna	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	The complete security collection	Preparation		secrecy/agency		
	9 Apr 2007	The knights of the neglected duty – Al-Zarqawi and the Afghani Jihad	Religious library			mujahidin	precedent/direction
	9 Apr 2007	The heroic operation on the American centre in Kanar state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	Blowing up and American car in Khost state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	Advice to the sheikhs of Lebanon	General			ummah	direction

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	9 Apr 2007	A film of launching Saqr 20 rockets at an American base in Khost state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	9 Apr 2007	A film called 'return to the mountains'	Media			mujahidin	
	9 Apr 2007	The fourth video of the Jihadi Iraqi Asaib	Media			mujahidin	
	9 Apr 2007	Satellites, the media war and the Islamic state	General			mujahidin	direction/technology
	9 Apr 2007	Videos of the mujahedin army in Iraq	media			mujahidin	
	10 Apr 2007	Invitation to join the ranks of Al Qaeda	General	A suggestion that people form jihadi cells on their own	agency	mujahidin	direction
	12 Apr 2007	The strongest dialogue I have ever read between a mujahid and a sheikh of the last days (copied)	general	Conversation in which a young man embarrasses a shaykh	agency	jihadi/youth	direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	12 Apr 2007	A series on how to be a one-man cell, part one.	Jihadi Cells		agency	jihadi	direction
	14 Apr 2007	Islamic state of Iraq statement for Friday	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	2 May 2007	Jihad films from Bosnia and Herzegovina	Media			mujahidin/Bosnians	
	16 May 2007	Rocket attack on American base in Shankay	Media			mujahidin	progress
	16 May 2007	<i>The Politics of the Shari'a</i> (book)	Media			Ummah	direction
	16 May 2007	Burning and American tank in Diyali state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	The Tawhed of Al-Saud and the true Tawhed – Abu Yahia al-Libi	Media			Ummah/ vs authority	direction
	8 Jun 2007	The lovers of death in the way of God – a great film	Media		uprightness	mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	8 Jun 2007	Fath al Islam, give them victory, God have mercy on you!	General			mujahidin	
	8 Jun 2007	Destroying a hummer belonging to the pagans' gods in al-Ghazzaliya district	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	Destroying one of the crusaders' hummers, and the death of those in it.	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	An attack on the apostates' base in Dabaqi in Khost state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	Destroying a striker class tank and killing eleven people	Media			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	8 Jun 2007	Pictures of what remains from a super-cobra plane, shot down by the soldiers of the Islamic State	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	The revenge battle for our hostages in Fallujah	Media			mujahidin/vs Americans	progress/oppression
	8 Jun 2007	A battle and the taking hostage of three American soldiers	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	Questions about the latest explosion in Algeria	General			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	Destruction of al-Darak pagan base, and two explosions within the pagan army	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	Hunt to sweep a crusader landmine in Fallujah state	Media			iraqi/mujahid in/vs American	oppression

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	8 Jun 2007	The blessed booty that your brothers, the lions of the South got	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	They sold it for God (al-Furqan productions presents a distinguished video)	Media		uprightness	mujahidin	direction
	8 Jun 2007	Good news – the website of tandhim al Qaeda in the Islamic maghreb	Gemeral			mujahidin	
	8 Jun 2007	Songs: Embracing the Martyrs	Media		uprightness	mujahidin	
	8 Jun 2007	Destroying and burning a hummer belonging to the apostate guards by detonating a bomb near Kirkuk	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	Sniping a crusader in Diyali state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	8 Jun 2007	Shooting at Balwara base and scoring a direct hit	Media			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
8 Jun 2007	A video from the elementary manager of the organisation of Al Qaeda in the Levant	Media			mujahidin	
8 Jun 2007	An explanation of what happened against the Ahl- al-Sunna regions	General forum			mujahidin	direction
8 Jun 2007	A word of the brother mujahid Adam Yahia Gadan “Azzam” – God protect him	Media			jihadi	direction
13 Jun 2007	Revisions of Jihad – facts that cannot be questioned	General			jihadi	direction (-)
12 Jul 2007	Listen to your voice – by the mujahedin of Qa’adat al Jihad (the base of jihad) in Khurasan	General			mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Abu Hafs	12 Jul 2007	Destruction of a checkpoint of the pagan guards with casualties inflicted	Media			mujahidin	progress
	12 Jul 2007	An ambush on an American caravan in Zabil state	Media			mujahidin	progress
	16 May 2007	Download files on preparation by the direct download links from the website of the brother OZOOO	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	16 May 2010	Film about the martyrs of Bosnia - the second release	Media			mujahidin/B osnians	oppression
	7 Jun 2007	Documentar y film about sniping - direct link with high resolution	Encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency/	jihadi	
	5 Jul 2007	Website of the brother ozooo	General			jihadi	
		Download these files - don't miss them!	Encyclopedi a of Preparation	films on bomb making	agency	jihadi	
		The Global Islamic Resistance Call	General		agency	jihadi	direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Nasir al-Tajdid	19 Jan 2006	How we can destroy the house of al-sa'ud	General	Strategic study of the main strengths of the House of Saud (American support, oil, the state scholars and the intelligence) and how to strike at these. A character called 'mujahid 12' writes a critical response below. He will later be ejected from the forum.		vs authority	direction
abo_khataab	2 Aug 2006	Jihadi websites	forum for the jihadi cell			jihadi	
	2 Aug 2006	real jihadi websites	forum for the jihadi cell			jihadi	
	11 Aug 2006	urgent - the truth about the rawafid in the Lebanese war - this is the truth about the rawafid	communiqués and Reports			vs Shiites	
	2 Aug 2006	Jihadi websites	forum for the jihadi cell			jihadi	
	2 Aug 2006	Abdullah al-Janabi, a mujahid shaykh who seeks to glorify his religion in spite of the noses of traitors				mujahidin/ vs traitors	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
2 Aug 2006	Martyrdom operation against the Shiite interior ministry	forum for the jihadi cell			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
11 Aug 2006	Jund al-Sahaba group announces an explosion in Najaf this Thursday	forum for the jihadi cell			mujahidin	progress
11 Aug 2010	The pride of the leaders of the jihadi groups in Iraq - to all who are jealous in the cause of the mujahidin	General			mujahidin	
2 Aug 2006	Take care, who wishes to benefit from use of the Internet	Forum for the jihadi cell	Forms of hacking	secrecy/agency		technology
2 Aug 2006	Warning and look out	Forum for the jihadi cell		secrecy	jihadi	
2 Aug 2006	The truths of their fighting	Forum for the jihadi cell			vs jews	oppression
2 Aug 2006	Announcement to all who care about the situation of the mujahidin	Forum for the jihadi cell			jihadi	
2 Aug 2006	Thanks and estimation	Forum for the jihadi cell			forum	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Muhammad	27 Jul 2006	Membership request	general	I am from Syria and would like to join an organisation of the mujahidin in Iraq, bearing in mind that I live in a region close to Iraq, please help me. (Muhammad will later leave after a spat with Abu Khattab over his post 'Saddam the hero').	agency	forum/mujahidin	operational
Abu Othman	4 Aug 2006	News of the mujahidin	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	27 Jul 2006	Film from the 1920 revolution battalions				mujahidin	progress
	21 Jul 2006	Military tactics	Military Strategy				direction
	16 Oct 2006	Da'wi flash - please disseminate	Media			Ummah	
	16 Jul 2006	Websites for the mujahidin	Communiqués and Reports			jihadi	
Abou Sami	31 Aug 2006	How to those able to hack websites and destroy them	General	Call to destroy website insulting the prophet	agency	Ummah/ vs kuffar	technology
	2 Aug 2006	Security advice for frequenters of chat forums	Forum for the jihadi hacker	same document previously found on qmagreb	secrecy	jihadi	technology
	2 Aug 2006	Jihadi websites	Forum for the jihadi cell			jihadi	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Abu Khattab al-Dalimi	12 Aug 2006	Exalt the forums, for victory is near	Forum for the jihadi cell				
	12 Aug 2006	To whoever loves news of the mujahidin	Forum for the jihadi cell	For whoever loves or will love practicing jihad and news of the mujahidin, here is a large number of jihadi websites	agency	jihadi	
	12 Aug 2006	Have some of the youth changed?	General	About young people among the Arabs and especially the Iraqis who are betraying the call for jihad		youth/defeat ists	direction (-)
	12 Aug 2006	The Shi'ites and Hizb-Iblis which is called Hezbollah	General			vs Shiites	
	12 Aug 2006	Arrived, arrived more than a hundred sound jihadi websites, pray for me to get the shahada	Forum for the jihadi cell		uprightness	jihadi	goal
	12 Aug 2006	Worthy things done by the brother Farid Lutfi	General			forum	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
12 Aug 2006	Agreement with the brother Farid Lutfi	Suggestions and Thanks	I agree with the brother Farid Lufti - the outstanding participant - and I advance an urgent call to the administrator of the forum to change his name from 'tanzim' to 'al-sayf' on its own so that we don't get into problems		forum	
12 Aug 2006	Request for an urgent reply from the management of the forum, may God bring good to you	Suggestions and Thanks	Could the management of the forum reply urgently to what I and the brother Farid Lutfi discussed in terms of developing the management of the forum?		forum	
14 Aug 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group kill a member of the Army of the Dajjal in Mosul	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
14 Aug 2006	Killing a policeman in his civilian clothes and ramming his car in Mosul	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
14 Aug 2006	Good news	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
14 Aug 2006	Communique of the Mujahidin Shura Council about the last attack of the rawafid on the people of the Sunna	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	
14 Aug 2006	Ansar al-Sunna announces and attack on Zayuna	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
14 Aug 2006	Recent - the downing of an American helicopter on Al-Bakr base	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
14 Aug 2006	Recent - That which will draw you closer to the victory of God has greatened	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin	progress
14 Aug 2006	Dear brother Farid Lutfi concerning a request for pictures of fighting	General	These pictures were present on Al-Ikhlās network and I will contact you about how to register on this forum		community	
14 Aug 2006	Thanks for brother Farid for making a graphic design with my name	General			community	
14 Aug 2006	The legion of Umar announce the liquidation of seven members of the army of the dajjal in rasafa	Communiquees and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	14 Aug 2006	The recent destruction of a hummer of the occupying American forces in Dulu'iyya	General			mujahidin	progress
	14 Aug 2006	Good news of victory: Filmed operations from the land of the two rivers	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	14 Aug 2006	The bi-weekly news from the mujahidin shura council	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	
	17 Aug 2006	The legion of Umar announce the liquidation of seven members of the army of the dajjal in rasafa	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
	17 Aug 2006	The mujahidin shura council announces the placing of an explosive package on a car	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	17 Aug 2006	Come with me and witness a secret American report -the Iraqi resistance is winning	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs Americans	progress
	17 Aug 2006	More than a thousand pictures of the mujahidin	General			mujahidin	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
18 Aug 2006	This is what america fears to publish		Look and see what we did to America - us lions of the two rivers		mujahidin	progress
20 Aug 2006	Jihadi advice from the Shaykh Dr Mujahid Abdullah Azzam (God have mercy on him)				mujahidin	precedent/direction
20 Aug 2006	To Saddam, the Hero	general			Iraqi/Arab	precedent
20 Aug 2006	Letter from the wife of shaykh Mus'ab al-Zarqawi (God have mercy on him)	general			mujahidin	
22 Aug 2006	Operation of the Islamic Army in Iraq, Monday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	
22 Aug 2006	Urgent to the brother 'Muhammad',	General	I swear by God, if you had a tenth of what Saddam Hussein had of manliness and courage, you wouldn't have criticised the thread, and by God I haven't seen an Arabic leader like him, even though he was oppressive. He made war on the apostate Shiites	corruption	forum	progress (-)

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
22 Aug 2006	download a film of the enforcement of the law of God on an internal apostate	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress
22 Aug 2006	killing of four crusaders in an attack on their patrol in haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	injury of four crusaders from the explosion of a packet in haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	ansar al Sunna the killing of a crusader at the hand of a sniper in haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	attack on the house of a rapist whom the crusaders took to their headquarters in haditha	communiqués and Reports		corruption	Iraqi/ vs crime	
22 Aug 2006	attack on the headquarters of the crusaders in haditha, causing a great loss of soldiers	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	ansar al sunna - the sniping of a crusader in the city of haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs crusaders	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
22 Aug 2006	ansar al-sunna - large attack on the American forces in haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	the sniping of two crusader soliders in one operation in the city of haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	american dogs snap at the heroic hadithans	communiqués and Reports			Iraqis/ vs Americans	oppression
22 Aug 2006	mujahidin shura council reports clashes with ...	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	the mujahidin shura council announces the striking of the crusader headquarter s in haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	mujahdin shura council - firing grad rockets at a base	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	mujahedin Shura council announces the sniping of two soldiers in haditha	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs crusaders	progress
22 Aug 2006	heroes of haditha	communiqués and Reports			iraqi/mujahid	progress in

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	23 Aug 2006	To brother Wajih al Qamar	general	talking about Muhammad and his dispute with him		forum	progress (-)
	23 Aug 2006	To the shining character Wajih al-Qamar	general	general greeting		forum	
	23 Aug 2006	This is the heroism of the people of haditha - the lions of tawhid	communiqués and Reports			iraqis	progress
	23 Aug 2006	Explosive martyrdom operations by women in Iraq	general			mujahidin/women	progress
	23 Aug 2006	Announcement from the foundation of Muslim Ulama in Iraq	general			Ummah	direction
	23 Aug 2006	The mujahidin follow the treacherous battalion	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs Shiites	progress
	23 Aug 2006	Iraqi jihad units - film of the destruction of an American truck	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs Americans	progress
	24 Aug 2006	Lions of tawhid capture and American marine and kill him	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs Americans	progress
	25 Aug 2006	Assassination of two members of the army of the dajjal in Baghdad	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/vs Shiites	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
25 Aug 2006	Overturning of a hummer and the killing of thee crusaders and the injuring of one in Abu Munisara, West Baghdad	communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin/vs crusaders	progress
25 Aug 2006	Destruction of a GMC car of the American intelligence in South Baghdad	communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs intelligence/ vs Americans	progress
25 Aug 2006	Testimony to this operation	communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
25 Aug 2006	Striking one of the military camps of the coalition	communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs coalition	progress
25 Aug 2006	Striking one of the bases of the army of the dajjal with a mortar bomb in Baghdad	communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin/vs Shiites	progress
25 Aug 2006	Assassination of five members of the army of the dajjal in the townships of east baghdad	communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
25 Aug 2006	Striking of a joint military camp of the occupation and the pagan guard in West Baghdad	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs occupation/ vs apostates	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
25 Aug 2006	destruction of a car belonging to commandos of the army of the dajjal and the annihilation of those inside	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
25 Aug 2006	blow to the apostate pagan guard	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress
25 Aug 2006	blow to a joint military camp of the occupation and the pagan guard in yusufiyya	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs occupation/ vs apostates	progress
25 Aug 2006	armed clash with a patrol of the occupying forces and the killing of two in al-Mushahina	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs occupation/ vs apostates	progress
25 Aug 2006	destruction the wheel of a hummer of the occupation forces in Baghdad	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs occupation	progress
25 Aug 2006	destruction of the wheel of a hummer of the occupying forces and the annihilation of those inside it in Haswa	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs occupation	progress
25 Aug 2006	destruction of a nissan car belonging to the pagan guard, and the destruction of those inside it	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	25 Aug 2006	assassination of eight members of the army of the dajjal	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
	25 Aug 2006	ansar al-sunna, detonation of a car bomb targetting a transport of the guards in south baghdad	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs authority	progress
	25 Aug 2006	ansar al-sunna, detonation of a car bomb targetting a police patrol	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs authoirty	progress
	25 Aug 2006	striking of a base of the army of the dajjal with a 120 mortar rounds, townships of south Baghdad	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs shiites	progress
	25 Aug 2006	striking one of the bases of the pagan guards with c5 rockets, south baghdad	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress
	26 Aug 2006	announcements of the rashidin army	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	26 Aug 2006	suicide operation by the mujahidin shura council	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	26 Aug 2006	mujahidin shura council in Iraq announces some operations in Ramadi	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	27 Aug 2006	urgent - names of some people cooperating with the treacherous battalion in the district of al-jihad	communiqués and Reports			vs treachery	
	2 Sep 2006	the best operations of faylaq 'umar	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	2 Sep 2006	the wounding of a leader of the army of the dajjal and the killing of three in the pagan army	communiqués and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
	15 Jul 2007	excuse me for the absence. I have returned to you	communiqués and Reports			forum	
	29 Jul 2007	you shall set up	general	God willing, and with God's help we shall soon set out to develop the forum. and change some hanging symbols if we contact the administrator we shall increase the number of those present. Excuse me for my absence.		forum	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	29 Jul 2007	signature request from my dear one		to every dear one who can make a signature I hope that you will make one for me for I have returned to the forum and I hope that we shall be in contact.		forum	
	29 Jul 2007	Request of the management	Communications and Reports	God give you strength for you eagerness over the forum		forum	
	30 Jul 2007	The truth of the study in Iraq concerning discrimination by group	general			Iraqi	oppression
aicha	4 Oct 2006	I want a film about how to make a car bomb	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology
rtj forever	27 Sep 2006	I suggest that we introduce instant messenger so that we can reply, and this will encourage members to participate				forum	technology
Al Gharib	14 Jan 2007	Now! A new release from the forum 'Islamic future' - "O martyr!"	media			jihadi	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	12 Jan 2007	A conversation with shaykh Abdul Qadir 'Ali 'Umar, assistant leader to the islamic courts	Communications and Reports	An interview with the deputy leader of the Islamic Courts movement in Somalia about progress made by the movement		mujahidin	
	10 Jan 2007	remaining steady in the rank	Military Strategy		uprightness		direction/precedent
	10 Jan 2007	good news about the bringing to justice of a wrongdoer - urgent news from the Islamic State	Communications and Reports			mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress
	10 Jan 2007	series on the general preparation of a Muslim generation		virtuous qualities of the true believer	uprightness	Ummah	
Muhibb al-Mustahil	9 Sep 2006	Rare release from the salafist group for preaching and combat	media			mujahidin	
	14 Nov 2006	The raid of Bak in the province of Khost	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	14 Nov 2006	Reply concerning the massacre of Bayt Hanun				Ummah	oppression
	9 Nov 2006	Series on the Arab martyrs in Iraqi Kurdistan	general	release by Ansar al-Islam		Arab/Iraqi	oppression
Hussambik	26 Jun 2007	sections from death	Religious library		fear of death		

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
iocaws	26 Jun 2007	The islamic fleet in the battle of Dhat al-Suwari	Military Strategy			<u>Ummah</u>	precedent
	29 Mar 2007	A look into: a summary of the politics of wars					direction
	29 Nov 2006	Communicate with others instantly using MSN Messenger	Forum for the jihadi hacker			jihadi	technology
Al-Jihad Al-Islami	17 Apr 2007	request of the management	suggestions and complaints	to make the forum attractive and draw people in, please could the management add the following as soon as possible: 1. private messenger reply 2. coloured writing - and could it be bold, not light. This is a charge from the lessening of peace, and peace upon you		forum	technology

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	suggestion	suggestions and complaints	i would like to suggest that every time we add knowledge that we grace the media of the Ummah with matters and interpretations that protect the mujahidin. An extensive conversation follows. Some suggest the idea is impractical if it would apply to every post. Wajih al-Qamar wants to set up a special forum solely for earnest and uncensored conversation on such topics.		forum/jihadi	direction

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Khattab al-Yamani	31 Dec 2006	Translation project	Jihadi hacker forum	a project has come from our brothers of the English language concerning a very dangerous American encyclopedi a of computer sciences. We are looking for people to translate it. We will put out a part of it every week. I came to this forum because it is little publicised and it supports jihad. Polite responses. Finally Abu Hasan al-Shami posts saying, please show us this encyclopedi a, and we shall try to help in translating it, but it seems that this project has stopped rather than started.		forum/jihadi	technology/operational
Khadim al-Mujahidin	1 Oct 2006	Film of weapons of mass destruction in Fallujah	media			Iraqi/Arab/U mmah	oppression

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
MSK	18 Jul 2006	Request to join		I want to join agency you and train and practice jihad in the path of God. What must I do? But there is one problem. I am Egyptian and I don't know iff ('iza, spelled with a zayn) there is a branch of the organisation in Egypt. Munadhim al-Sayf says: 'I support you in your request. We await a reply from the brother 'tantheemals aif' Tantheemals aif iinvites him - if he wants more information - to contaxct him by email. 'Meda' suggests that he is in the intelligence.		jihadi/forum	
Munadhim al-Sayf	19 Jul 2006	Great flash for knowing about the prophet in several languages	Forum for Da'wa to God			Ummah	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
19 Jul 2006	How to spread Islam Da'wa to merely at the touch of a button - with explanation	Forum for Da'wa to God	Imagine that there is a person who prays and fasts and remembers God and on the day of judgement you get the same benefits as he does. He is fasting on Thursday and Monday, and you are eating and drinking. He is up at night, and you are sleeping. He gives money to the point of trouble for himself, and you hold on to yours. He is serious about his religion, and you are frivolous. (The idea being that by doing da'wa on the Internet, you can get the same benefits).	agency/ritual	Ummah	
19 Jul 2006	Very strong flash in English	Forum for Da'wa to God			Ummah	
19 Jul 2006	Some ways of communicating da'wa by email		English phrases for da'wa	agency	Ummah	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Usama Faris	18 Oct 2006	Urgent - jihadi cell, from Palestine	Forum for the jihadi cell	For our beloved brothers - knights during the day, monks during the night'- an invitation to youth in Palestine to form a new group to be called the 'tawhid battalions'.		jihadi/youth	direction
Ridwan Abdulhakim	8 Oct 2006	Who has the right to legislate in Arabic constitutions - Jordan, Egypt, Sudan?	General	Quotes sections of the constitutions of various Arabic countries giving the right to legislate to other than God		Ummah/ vs authority	direction
Abu al-Hassan al-Shami	7 Apr 2007	Physical training in the prophetic Sunnah	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency/health	Ummah	precedent
	7 Apr 2007	Military matters in the Qur'an	Military Strategy			Ummah	precedent
	7 Apr 2007	Military politics in the prophetic era	Military Strategy			Ummah	precedent

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Sayf al-Islam	5 Apr 2007	Elements of victory and its reasons	Encyclopedi a of Preparation	The elements are: (1) That the mujahidin remain faithful to their religion; that the energy of the Ummah be mobilised. The first aim of this should be to terrorise the enemy of God - a policy which has many benefits for the Ummah, such as making the unbelievers unwilling to invade the Dar al-Islam		mujahidin	direction
	13 Mar 2007	The Mujahidin brothers in Egypt	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	
	7 Feb 2007	Urgent call	suggestions and complaints	call to set up a special forum for the mujahidin in egypt. WQ replies that the forum is not for Iraq lone but for all the muslims, and that communiqu es from the mujahidin in Egypt will be welcome in the 'communiqu es' section.		forum/mujahidin	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
18 Jul 2006	New cell	forum for the jihadi cell	announcement of the creation of a new cell - the Salah al-Din Victory Battalions		mujahidin	
3 Feb 2007	Mujahidin brothers kill five american soldiers	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Americans	progress
3 Feb 2007	Mujahidin brothers kill ten partisans of the army of the dajjal	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
3 Feb 2007	Communicue of the Mujahidin brothers in the land of the two rivers	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
14 Aug 2006	A snippet about the party for the protection of Islam	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	
11 Aug 2006	Communicue of the party for the protection of Islam	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
19 Aug 2006	One of the websites of the victory battalions of Salah al-Din	Communicues and Reports			mujahidin	
	Why did Usama bin Ladin (God protect him) cry?		same story posted by WQ, above	sensitivity	mujahidin	oppression

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Tanteemal saif	10 Aug 2006	warning to the forum	general	the member mujahid 12 was ejected from the forum, and he is a spy, of the general researchers. And if you are not a real Muslim you are against us and against the jihad, and you are a dog of dogs.		forum	
	7 Aug 2006	explosive chemicals	Encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology
	27 Feb 2007	from the mujahidin battalions in eritrea	Communications and Reports			mujahidin/Ummah	
	7 Dec 2006	Thaaaaaank's brother al-Muhannad	General	thanks for a signature		forum	
	31 Oct 2006	New section	religious library	by special demand of Wajih al-Qamar, who is extravagantly grateful.		forum	
	1 Aug 2006	Studies in training	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	1 Aug 2006	correct information about explosives	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology
	26 Jul 2006	the telescopic launcher on an RPG	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	technology
	23 Jul 2006	series on preparation for jihad	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	20 Jul 2006	additional information on jihadi preparation	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Al-Muhannad	16 Jul 2006	destruction of a hummer in north baghdad	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	14 Jul 2006	fifth complete encyclopedia of preparation	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	16 Jul 2006	how to make an explosive belt	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency	jihadi	
	8 Nov 2006	The Ummayad state	general			Ummah	precedent (-)
	8 th November 2006	Developing the effectiveness of tanks	Military Strategy				aspiration/technology
	9 th November 2006	How creatures worship their God	Forum for Da'wa to God			Ummah	validity of religion
	8 th November 2006	Military courage	Military Strategy	types of courage/military courage in Islam/how you can be courageous	uprightness	Ummah	precedent
	8 th November 2006	The strategic principles of managing cooperative modern wars	Military Strategy				aspiration/direction
	10 th November 2006	The role of the true believer in modern soldiery	Military Strategy			Ummah	aspiration/direction
	10 th November 2006	Islamic military doctrine	Military Strategy			Ummah	precedent/direction

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	10 th November 2006	The benefits to be derived from the chapters of the Quran	religious library		ritual		
	10 th November 2006	The soldier's bequest and human rights	Military Strategy			Ummah	precedent
	13 th November 2006	Electronic military planes	Military Strategy				aspiration/technology
	13 th November 2006	Techniques in guerrilla warfare	Military Strategy				aspiration/direction
	13 th November 2006	Finding the enemy before battle	Military Strategy				aspiration/direction
	13 th November 2006	Cannon in wars	Military Strategy				aspiration/technology
	13 th November 2006	Land radar – technique	Military Strategy				aspiration/technology
	13 th November 2006	The fighting effectiveness of drones	Military Strategy				aspiration/direction
	14 th November 2006	A new song – Baghdad sniper – great zeal	media			mujahidin	progress
	15 th November 2006	Remaining in the ranks			uprightness		precedent
	15 th November 2006	Modern leaders and leadership			agency		aspiration/direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	17 th November 2006	Leadership in preparing for war			agency		aspiration/di rection
	18 th November 2006	Neglecting a promise to an enemy if you fear that they are cheating	Military Strategy			mujahidin	direction
	23 rd November 2006	Islamic army of Iraq accepts responsibili ty for attack on green zone	Communiq ues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	23 rd November 2006	The latest news from Chechnya by the voice of the Caucasus.	Communiq ues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	23 rd November 2006	Al Mahmudiah witness the killing of four American soldiers	Communiq ues and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	23 rd November 2006	A violent melee between the resistance and the occupation in Ramadi	Communiq ues and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	23 rd November 2006	A huge explosion shakes the Syrian-Iraqi border	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	23 rd November 2006	Taliban attacks kill six Afghani police in Kandahar.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	23 rd November 2006	In spite of the occupation the resistance destroy four tanks in al-Haditha	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	23 rd November 2006	The receptionist of Hell is spreading horror in Tel Afar.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	24 th November 2006	Al Mujahedin operations in Gaza, Palestine – films	communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	24 th November 2006	Download the wishes of the shahida of al-qassam, Umm Muhammad with a video of an operation that involves the destruction of a tank.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin/w omen	progress
	25 th November 2006	The American intelligence in the streets of Baghdad	Communi- es and Reports	video release by al-Furqan		vs Americans/v s intelligence	oppression
	27 th November 2006	Expectation s of spontaneou s American exit soon from Iraq.	general forum				progress
	29 th November 2006	Video of an F16 plane being destroyed	forum for the jihadi cell				progress
	1 st December 2006	And in hell we have many men and jinn	Forum for Da'wa to God		fear of death		
	1 st December 2006	Aspects of rocket system developme nt, and new generations of the technology	General		agency		

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	2 nd of December 2006	First issue of al-mujahid al-taqi magazine	media			mujahidin	
	3 rd December 2006	God is great – the killing of approximately 1,500 – 2,000 American soldiers	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 rd December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq give the good news to the patient people	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 rd December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq – report the news of Al-Anbar state	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 rd December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq – a blessed martyrdom operation against a building...	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 rd December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq – blessed martyrdom operation against the pagan guards	Communiqués and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	3 rd December 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group 'the start of the victory campaign for our teachers and students'	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	3 rd December 2006	Ansar al-Sunna 'the killing of one of the members of the army of Dajjal who had been responsible for killing students...'	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
	3 rd December 2006	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan website and voice of the Caucasus	Media			mujahidin	
	3 rd December 2006	Download film... an armed confrontation in Diyali region against the pagan guards	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress
	4 th December 2006	The jihadist groups of Iraq statement for 4 th December 2006	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	4 th December 2006	The Islamic State of Iraq – news report for Baghdad state	Communique es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	4 th December 2006	The Islamic state of Iraq – a blessed martyrdom operation against...	Communique es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Americans	progress
	4 th December 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group/ arresting and killing a member of the army of Dajjal in Qada.	Communique es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
	4 th December 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group attacking the council of Diyali	Communique es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs authority	progress
	4 th December 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group attacking and confronting	Communique es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Shiites	progress
	5 th December, 2006	Ansar al-Sunna statement for 5 th December 2005	Communique es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	5 th December, 2006	Islamic state of Iraq, news report for Baghdad state	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	6 th December 2006	Download/t he army of Abu Bakr executes three apostates as revenge for the Palestinian women in Baghdad.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs apostates	progress
	6 th December 2006	Statement '70' the armed forces 'ammuriya' news.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	6 th December 2006	The resistance increase their operations and replenish Hell with 15 'alj.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	15 Apr 2007	Baghdad under fire/2 '6 th December 2006'	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin/Ira oppression qi	
	8 Apr 2007	An electronic jihad group invites you to join	Forum for the jihadi hacker		agency	jihadi	technology

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
4 Apr 2007	Umm Ibrahim pays the dowry of a Huri for her son – at a cost of 10,000 dinars	Forum for Da'wa to God	The story concerns a woman in Basra, facing invaders, who hears a sermon about the beauties of the hur al'ayn and therefore promises her son, and pays for his equipping.		mujahidin/Ummah/women	hur al 'ayn
17 Mar 2007	An operation, unique of its kind, destroying an American tank in al-Anbar state	Communications and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Americans	progress
17 Feb 2007	A video called – the losers' harvest in the land of the two rivers	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
15 Feb 2007	The new Quran in Kuwait – a huge disaster, please enter	Forum for Da'wa to God	A piece about the 'true Furqan'		Ummah	direction (-)
7 Feb 2007	Two examples of how leadership is connected to obedience	Military Strategy	Islamic military history about Usama bin Zayd against the Romans	agency	Ummah	precedent/direction

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	4 Feb 2007	Command and control in Islamic battles	Military Strategy	More Islamic military history. 'Many have tried to suppress Islamic military knowledge and prevent it from being revived, and refused its being followed by Arabs and Muslims in all spheres - even that of military thought'... However, Islam originally had a comprehensive military system		Ummah	precedent
	4 Feb 2007	The good characteristics of Abu Bakr al-Saddiq, God be pleased with him	Religious library		uprightness	Ummah	precedent
	1 Feb 2007	On the same day a number of American intelligence operatives are killed	Communications and Reports			mujahidin/ vs intelligence	progress

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
1 Feb 2007	Killing of more than 10 members of the American intelligence and the burning of more than 3 cars	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs americans/ vs intelligence	progress
1 st February 2007	Islamic state of Iraq – news report for al-Ramadi city	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
1 st February 2007	Islamic state of Iraq – news report for the south region – Baghdad state	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
1 st February 2007	Islamic state of Iraq – news report for Fallujah state	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
1 st February 2007	Islamic state of Iraq – news report for The city of Salah al deen	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	1 st February 2007	Islamic state of Iraq, the spoils of the operations of the battalion of the mother of believers.	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	16 th December 2006	Asaib al Iraq al Jihadiyya	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	16 th December 2006	State... Taliban – the news report for Friday	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	16 th December 2006	Ansar al-Sunna group	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	15 th December 2006	The Islamic Army in Iraq	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	15 th December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq news report for Baghdad state	Communi- es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	11 th December 2006	The direction of rocket developme- nt	encyclopedi a of Preparation		agency		technology
	15 th December 2006	Lasers	general	an article on the physics of lasers and their possible battlefield uses		progress/tec hnology	aspiration/te chnology

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	9 th December 2006	A statement regarding the 'failure report' issued by Beaker Hamilton's committee.				vs Americans	progress
	9 th December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq – condemnati on of the crusaders' crime in Al-Ishaqi.	Communi es and Reports			mujahidin/ vs crusaders	oppression
	9 th December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq news for Salah al- Din state	Communi es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	9 th December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq congratul es the victories of brothers in the Islamic courts	Communi es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	7 th December 2006	Preventing the murder of Abi Daraa	General	About the kidnapping and rescue of an Iraqi Sunni		vs shiites	progress
	7 th December 2006	Islamic State of Iraq news report for Baghdad state	Communi es and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	7 th December 2006	The American holocaust in Khurasan	media			mujahidin/ vs Americans	progress
	7 th December 2006	Ansar al- Sunna statement 6 th December 2006	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	7 th December 2006	Islamic state of Iraq news report for Baghdad state	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	4 th April 2007	Principles of engineered barriers	Military Strategy		agency		technology
	1 st April 2007	A statement by the national Iraqi Islamic resistance office	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	21 st February 2007	Instruction videos on bomb making	encyclopedia of Preparation		agency		technology

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	9 th December 2006	Netwar in the digital battlefield	Military Strategy	essentially compiled from American ideas on the topic - 'today, the superiority of an army is measured not in terms of its firepower, but in terms of the circulation of information within it'			aspiration/di rection
	28 th November 2006	Firepower resources in ground forces		military strategy			aspiration/di rection
	25 th November 2006	Time and its importance in military forces.					aspiration/di rection
	21 st November 2006	The electronic war and IFF	Military Strategy	IFF = identification , friend or foe			aspiration/te chnology
	18 th November 2006	Aiming plastic rockets	general		agency		technology
	16 Nov 2006	The art of modern leadership	Military Strategy		agency		aspiration/di rection
	16 Nov 2006	The effectiveness of technology on military strategy	Military Strategy				aspiration/te chnology

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
Farid Lutfi	14 th December 2006	Sixteen names of returned hostages.	general			Iraqi/Arab vs Shiites	
	30 th November 2006	Film... the crusaders' occupation of the East of the Peninsula	media			vs crusaders oppression	
	26 th November 2006	Photos of the three martyrs	general			Iraqi/Arab/U mmah	oppression/ progress
	26 th November 2006	Labayk presents: photograph s of the three martyrs	general			Iraqi/Arab/U mmah	oppression/ progress
	25 th November 2006	Encouragem ent	general			-	
	7 th November 2006	Series on the Arab martyrs in Iraqi Kurdistan	general			Iraqi/Arab/ mmah	oppression/ progress
	7 th November 2006	A word from the leader Abdullah Turki God protect him for Muslims in Turkey	Communiqu es and Reports			mujahidin	direction
	17 th August 2006	Two new banners for the forum	general			forum	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	17 th August 2006	The new banner for the forum	general			forum	
	15 th August 2006	Satan's ID card	general			forum	humour
	15 th August 2006	Some signs	general	Signs of the coming of the Dajjal		Ummah	direction/apocalypse
	15 th August 2006	A Shiite returns to the true Islam	general			Ummah/ vs Shiites	progress
	15 th August 2006	The idol	general	by 'Abu Basir'	ritual (-)	Ummah	
	15 th August 2006	The manners of the mujahid	general	historical exemplar from the time of Umar bin al-Khattab	uprightness/ agency	Ummah	precedent
	15 th August 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement for Monday	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress
	15 th August 2006	Within the series of the American holocaust in Khurasan three rockets on...	Communications and Reports			mujahidin/ vs Americans	progress
	15 th August 2006	Mujahedin shura council statement for Monday, 19.7.1426. (13.08.06)	Communications and Reports			mujahidin	progress

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	15 th August 2006	Ijtihad on seeking jihad	general	quotations such as 'doing ribat for a night is better than praying laylat al-qadr by the black stone', or 'doing ribat for a night is better than the world and all that is in it'	ritual	Ummah	direction
	15 th August 2006	Reasons for defeating enemies	general	god abandons the one who doesn't pray. 'between the man and the unbeliever is the abandoning of prayer' various similar maxims		Ummah	direction
	15 th August 2006	One of the bases of takfir	general			Ummah/vs Kuffar	
	15 th August 2006	Belief and its contrast	general	on avoiding shirk		Ummah/vs Kuffar	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	15 th August 2006	The three foundations and their proofs	general	the three foundations are: 'to know that God created us and raised us up, to know that he does not accept association with other than Him, and to know that the one who obeys the prophet and unifies God must only associate with others who do so.		Ummah/vs Kuffar	
	15 th August 2006	The importance of the saved sect	general	by Abu Qatada		Saved Sect/vs Kuffar	
	15 th August 2006	What do they hate about us?	general	piece about al- wala wa al-bara		Saved Sect/vs Kuffar	
	15 th August 2006	The Muslims' duty towards their hostages	general	story about Abu Bakr		Ummah	precedent/direction
	15 th August 2006	Our advice to mujahedin	general	a piece on excess in takfir		mujahidin/Ummah	direction (-)
	15 th August 2006	When enemies surrender	general	historical exemplar		Ummah/jiha di	precedent

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	15 th August 2006	Discovering some of the rules on the zenith of Islam [ie, jihad]	general	from tawhed.com		Ummah/jihadi	precedent/direction
	15 th August 2006	The truth about the rafida in countries of tawhid	general	anti the shiites in Saudi Arabia		vs Shiites	
	13 th August 2006	Please - an exhortation to stop attacks	general	request to change name of the forum from 'organisation of the sword' to 'the sword'		forum	
	23 rd July 2006	A film showing the suffering of the Chechens	media			Ummah/Chechens	oppression
	18 th July 2006	Physical exercise before jihad – by the mujahid sheikh, the shahid, yusuf.	general		agency	jihadi	
	23 rd July 2006	Very important – please, it is seriously dangerous, so read it and send it to others.	Communications and Reports	a piece about the 'true Furqan'		Ummah	direction (-)
	16 th August 2006	Give me your opinion	general	about some flash banners		forum	

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

	Date	Subject	Chatroom	Comment	Individual	Community	Cosmos
	27 Jul 2006	An urgent report	general	on crimes of Iran in Iraq		vs Shiites	oppression

Explanation of codes:

Secrecy refers to information on how to carry out activities without being monitored or discovered. Posts dealing with issues of secrecy may be understood as reinforcing the sense of an elite, underground community, of its opposition to authority and of the possibility of individual agency - see below.

Agency Refers to posts which emphasise the potential for an individual to make a difference through his or her actions - whether by preparing for jihad, carrying out a violent act, learning how to spread Islam through da'wa or acquiring more general abilities, eg leadership skills.

Uprightness refers to a certain type of moral quality which can best be defined through that with which it is constantly opposed - giving in to the temptations of comfort and popular media entertainment such as music or celebrity culture. Occasionally, a post deals purely with the opposite of uprightness - aimlessness.

Fear of Death applies where a post deals specifically with the premature death of an individual, with the horrors of death, with the fact of people being generally afraid of death, or with the brevity of life. It does not necessarily apply to posts about hellfire or judgement day in general, where a larger moral point is intended.

Health likewise applies specifically where a post deals with ways of being healthy, with 'Islamic' health issues where the point seems mainly the medicine itself rather than the moral virtue of, say, early Muslims.

Ritual applies where the concern is with a religious practice (eg du'a) where the concern is not with some wider moral point that might apply across religions and cultures (eg, patience or steadfastness), but rather with specifically (and perhaps mechanically) fulfilling a ritual obligation simply in order to acquire divine 'benefits' (*hasanat*).

Ummah applies where the community - or one of the communities being referred to seems to be that of Muslims as a whole

Mujahidin applies where the reference is to actively operating organisations of fighters.

Jihadi applies where the reference is to the community of those who support the mujahidin, without being directly engaged in the action themselves

Forum applies where the reference is to the community of the forum itself.

Versus - the above 'in-groups' are constantly faced with opponents of various kinds. These are broadly replicated in the codes. 'Shi'ites' is used in place of *rawafid*. 'Apostate' is used both for *murtadd* and for *wathini*, as this latter term is consistently applied not to actual 'pagans' but to Iraqi governmental forces, where it seems to be interchangeable with the former.

Coding Sheet for Al-Sayf Posts with Explanations Below

Cosmos The term 'cosmos' as a whole refers to the overall justifications for the community's existence and its activities, whether actually 'cosmic' (eg, vindications of Islam with reference to scientific findings about the universe) or 'strategic' discussions about the jihad.

Progress is used for any post which implies that the mujahidin have actually achieved something positive (eg, launching a mortar attack on an al-Mahdi Army compound).

Direction is used where a post seems concerned with the broader picture of the state of the jihad movement as a whole.

Goal is used where an end state for the jihad is mentioned

Precedent is used for a post which invokes Islamic or mujahidin history with lessons for the present

Aspiration is used for a post which references strategic or advanced technological knowledge which seems not to be immediately relevant to the condition of the jihad movement, but which may inspire a sense of military fantasy regarding its possible future development.

Oppression relates to posts concerned with the actions of external forces against the various in-groups (Ummah, mujahidin etc.)

Technology relates to the positioning of the various in-groups in relation to the field of technology - its mastery and their familiarity or ability to acquire familiarity with it.

Natural Environment Relates to the expression of harmony between the in-groups (particularly the Islamic Ummah) and the natural environment.

Appendix 2: Coding of Results of exploratory search for 'jihadi' web content

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
directory of websites	content	yes	blog	Iraqi
biography	both	yes	content hosting	Islamic State of Iraq
treasury of jihadi followers	content	yes	blog	
salafi jihadism	real	no	wikipedia	
golden collection of jihadi discs	content	yes	jihadi forum	
centre of jihadi thought	real	no	news site	
nasheeds	content	yes	forum	
encyclopedia	content	yes	Islamic site	
supporters of 'salafi jihadism'	real	no	Islamic site	
supporters of 'salafi jihadism'	real	no	Islamic site	
al majid jihadi units	real	yes	content hosting	
network	content	yes	jihadi forum	
jihadi movements	real	no	news site	
salafi jihadi groups	real	no	news site	
leaders of 'salafi jhadism'	real	no	news site	
salafi jihadism	real	no	news site	
jihadi condition	real	no	news site	
Egyptian jihadism	real	no	news site	
jihadi groups	real	no	news site	
salafi jihadis	real	no	news site	
military camp of jihadi groups	real	yes	jihadi forum	salafi
jihadi Dechira	real	yes	no	peaceful jihad?
supporters of 'salafi jihadism'	real	no	news site	
jihadi films	content	yes	yes	
jihadi forums	real	no	no	
jihadi groups	real	no	no	
jihadi albums	content	yes	no	
salafi jihadi groups	real	no	no	
jihadi operations release	both	yes	yes	
jihadi movements	real	no	no	
high leadership of the jihad	real	yes	yes	
salafi jihadi name	real	no	no	
salafi jihadism in gaza	real	no	no	

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
salafi jihadi current	real	no	no	
jihadi network	content	yes	yes	
jihad flash	content	yes	possibly	
biggest jihadi websites	content	yes	no	
jihadi details forum	real	yes	yes	
reminder of the types of jihadi movement in Palestine	real	yes?	no	
high leadership	real	yes	yes	
salafi jihadi movements	real	no	no	
operations	both	yes	no	
salafi jihadism	real	no	no	
jihadi channel	content	yes	yes	
jihadi operation images	both	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
collection of jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
operations releases	both	yes	yes	
jihadi revisions	real	no	no	
leader image	both	yes	no	
leader image	both	yes	no	
leader image	both	yes	no	
jihadi current	real	no	no	
Al Rawabi	content	yes	Islamic	
Al Rawabi	content	yes	Islamic	
the jihadi in south Lebanon	real	yes	yes	Hezbollah
media	content	yes	yes	
thought	real	no	no	
thought	real	no	Islamic	
current	real	yes	yes	
current	real	no	no	
jihadi media	content	yes	no	
jihadi leader	real	yes	yes	Hamas
jihadi media	content	yes	yes	
jihadi pages	content	no	no	
Islamic jihadi movement	real	no	no	

Appendix 2: Coding of Results of exploratory search for 'jihadi' web content

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
jihadi manhaj	real	yes	no	
abu anas al jihadi	both	yes	no	Hezbollah
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi current	real	no	no	
jihadi violence	real	no	no	
tourist museum	real	yes	yes	Hezbollah
tourist museum	real	yes	yes	Hezbollah
jihadi leader	both	yes	no	
pictures of the jihadi march/crawl	both	yes	no	
our jihadi work	real	no	no	
assistance	real	yes	yes	Iraqi resistance
voice	content	yes	no	
media	content	yes	no	
media	content	yes	paldf	Palestinian
salafi jihadi thought	real	no	no	
abu anas al jihadi	real	yes	no	Hezbollah
jihadi albums	content	yes	no	
jihadi work	real	yes	no	
jihadi leadership images	both	yes	no	
jihadi media	content	yes	yes	
jihadi films	content	yes	yes	
jihadi hacker	real	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi project	real	no	no	
jihadi media	content	yes	no	
jihadi media	content	yes	paldf	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	yes?	
jihadi hacker	real	yes	no	
jihadi poetry	content	yes	Islamic	
role of the jihadi woman	real	yes	Islamic	
jihadi media	content	yes	yes	Hamas
jihadi album	content	yes	yes	
jihadi album	content	yes	no	
jihadi anasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
salafi jihadism	real	no	no	
websites and forums	content	unknown	unknown	
directory of websites	content	yes	yes	

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
jihadi releases	content	yes	no	
jihadi websites	content	yes	yes	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	Islamic	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi works	real	uncertain	Islamic	
jihadi releases	content	yes	Islamic	Al Qaida
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	Islamic	Islamic state of Iraq
jihadi operations for sale	real	no	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	Islamic	Islamic state of Iraq
jihadi group	real	no	no	
operation release	both	yes	no	Islamic army of Iraq
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi mission	real	yes	yes	Hezbollah
Jihadi group	real	no	no	
jihadi battle	both	yes	no	Ansar al-Sunna
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi releases	content	yes	Islamic	Al Qaeda
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	Hamas
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi websites	real	no	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi operation	both	yes	no	Hamas
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi graphic design	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi releases	content	yes	yes	shabab al-mujahidin
jihadi films	content	yes		
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi operation	both	yes	yes	naqshbandi army
jihad cards	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi film release	content	yes	yes	Al Qaeda
jihadi verses	content	yes	no	Hamas
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed request	content	yes	yes	Hamas

Appendix 2: Coding of Results of exploratory search for 'jihadi' web content

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
jihad nasheed	content	yes	no	
collection of books	content	yes	no	
nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi video	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
nasheed	content	yes	Islamic	
nasheed	content	yes	paldf	
conversation between jihadi and defeatist	real	yes	yes	
jihadi journey	real	no	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	Islamic	
jihadi journey	real	no	no	
first Pakistani global jihadi?	real	no	no	
jihadi al-husayn	real	unclear	unclear	unclear
salafi jihadi moroccan	real	no	no	
"jihadi" raises the american flag!	real	no	no	
jihadi nasheed video	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	yes	Al-Qassam
jihadi poetry	content	yes	yes	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi journey	real	no	yes?	Shabab al-mujahidin?
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
video clip	content	yes	no	
jihadi poetry	content	yes	no	Al Qaida in Spain
jihadi poetry	content	yes	no	Al Qaeda in Iraq
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	yes	
jihadi park	real	yes	no	Hezbollah
jihadi history	both	yes	no	Hamas
jihadi leader	real	no	no	
jihadi forum	content	yes	yes	
jihadi album	content	yes	Islamic	
jihadi forum	content	yes	yes	
jihadi film	content	yes	no	Al Qaeda
jihadi books	content	yes	yes	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi cocktail	real	yes	yes	
jihadi films	content	yes	no	

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
jihadi journey	real	no	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi flash	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	Islamic	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi book	content	yes	yes	
between the jihadi of the sahel	real	no	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	yes	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	yes	
jihadi clip	content	yes	no	
jihadi star	real	yes	yes	
jihadi flash	content	yes	no	
jihadi work	real	yes	yes	
jihadi video	content	yes	yes	
nasheed	content	yes		
nasheed	content	yes		
dialogue between a 'jihadi' and a defeatist	real	yes	yes	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi announcements	both	yes	no	Al Qassam
jihadi announcements	both	yes	no	Al Qassam
British jihadi revisionism	real	no	no	Al Muhajiroun
video	content	yes	yes	Hezbollah
jihadi politics	real	unclear	no	
'veiled jihadi'	real	yes	no	
Salafi Jihadi' organisation	real	no	no	
stubborn jihadi'	real	yes	yes	
Moroccan jihadi	real	no	no	
stubborn jihadi'	real	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
Moroccan jihadi	real	no	no	
jihadi website	content	yes	no	
jihadi project	real	no	no	
jihadi resistance	real	no	no	
salafi jihadi organisation	real	no	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi qamishlu'	real	yes	no	

Appendix 2: Coding of Results of exploratory search for ‘jihadi’ web content

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
jihadi forum (multuqa)	content	yes	yes	Al Qassam
94 jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
To all who know a jihadi website	content/real	yes	no	
flash movies	content	yes	yes	Al Qassam?
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
poetic jihadi sunrise	content	yes	no	
jihadi beacon	real	yes	no	
jihadi poetry	content	yes	no	
jihadis	real	no	no	
my jihad’	real	yes	no	
Chinese jihadi organisation	real	no	no	
jihadi directory	content	yes	yes	
jihadi video site	content	yes	no	
jihadi way	real	yes	unknown	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	unknown	
jihadi websites	content	yes	no	
jihadi ‘snapshots’	content	yes	no	Iraqi resistance
jihadi films	content	yes	yes	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi operations	real	yes	no	
jihadi films	content	yes	yes	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi resistance	real	uncertain	no	
jihadi salafism	real	no	no	
foundations, corporations, groups	real	yes	Islamic	Ahwaz Liberation Organisation/Hezbollah, Fatah
foundations, corporations, groups	real	yes	Islamic	Ahwaz Liberation Organisation/Hezbollah, Fatah
jihadi flash	content	yes	Islamic	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	Palestinian	
magazine	content	yes	yes	Al Qaida
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi judgements	real	yes	yes	Al Qaida
jihadiyya’	real	yes	no	
jihadi promises	real	no	no	
jihadi anasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi anasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi anasheed	content	yes	Islamic	

Context	Content/Real	Sympathetic?	Location	Group, if apparent
jihadi poem	content	yes	no	
jihadi anasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadis	real	no	no	
jihadi forum	content	yes	yes	Islamic Army in Iraq
jihadi operations	real	yes	no	Iraqi resistance
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi movements in Egypt	real	no?	no	
jihadi dreams	real	yes	Islamic	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
Islamic video and audio, jihad section	content	yes	Islamic	
jihadi operation	real	yes	yes	Islamic State of Iraq
nasheeds	content	yes	no	
forum	content	yes	yes	Naqshbandi Army
jihadi books	content	yes	yes	
jihadiyya (ie, jihadi content)	content	yes	no	
jihadi expeditions	real	yes	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi nasheed	content	yes	no	
jihadi fatwa	real	no	no	
jihadi poetry (chanted at football match)	both	no	no	
jihadi nasheeds	content	yes	no	
jihadi excursion	real	yes	yes	Islamic Army in Iraq
jihadi websites	content	yes	Islamic	
jihadi flash	content	yes	no	

Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'



Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'



Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'



قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :

مَنْ احْتَبَسَ قَرْصًا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِيْمَانًا
بِاللَّهِ وَتَصَدِّقًا بِوَعْدِهِ ، فَإِنَّ شِبَعَهُ وَرِيَّهُ
وَرَوْثَهُ وَبَوْلَهُ فِي مِيزَانِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

رواه البخاري

AlBetaqa.com

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَا يَكَلِّمُ أَحَدٌ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ - وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ يَكَلِّمُ
فِي سَبِيلِهِ - إِلَّا جَاءَ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّوْنُ لَوْنُ الدَّمِ
وَالرِّيحُ رِيحُ الْمَسْكِ

متفق عليه

يكلّم : يجرح

AlBetaqa.com



قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :

AlBetaqa.com

مَنْ قَاتَلَ لِيَكُونَ
كَلِمَةً لِلَّهِ هِيَ
الْعَلِيَا فَهُوَ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

رواه البخاري



AlBetaqa.com

قال الله تعالى :

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ
تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ
وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ
الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا
مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمِ
الصَّابِرِينَ

(آل عمران : 142)



قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مِائَةَ دَرَجَةٍ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّهِ
لِلْمُجَاهِدِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
مَا تَيْنَ الدَّرَجَتَيْنِ
كَمَا تَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ

رواه البخاري

AlBataqa.com



قال الله تعالى :

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

رجال

صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ
عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَضَىٰ
نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْتَظِرُ
وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا

الأحزاب : (23)

AlBataqa.com



Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'



Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :

ما يجد الشهيد من مس
القنل إلا كما يجد أحدكم من
مس القرصة

قال الألباني ، حسن صحيح

AlBeteqa.com

فضل الجهاد

عن عبادة ابن الصامت
أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال. ((جاهدوا في سبيل الله
فإن الجهاد في سبيل الله باب من أبواب الجنة ينجي به الله تبارك
وتعالى به من الهم والغم)) صحيح البخاري







قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :

لُغْدُوهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
أَوْ رَوْحُهُ خَيْرٌ مِنَ
الدُّنْيَا وَمَا فِيهَا

رواد البخاري

AlBetaqa.com

اركاب
اعداء الله

قال الله تعالى

وَأَعِدُوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَعْتَجْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ
تَرْخِيبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَأَخْرَيْنَ مِنْ دُونِكُمْ
لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ

(الأنفال : 60)

AlBetaqa.com



Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'



Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: **مَارَوْهُ سَلَامُ الْإِسْلَامِ**
الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

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أسير

أسير في غياهبهم أسير أسير في سجونهم حشير
بدنس عزتي علج رماني على الرمضاء يلفحني الهجير
بدوس كرامتي حيناً وحيناً يقيقه وهو خمار سكير
وأقار الأسارى شهادت على مبارككم أين الضير
واين الفارس المعوار يأتي يضك القيد اعباني الزفير
ولو أن التطيع لنا جوار لنا طابت لسكنانا الحميم
ايهنا عيشكم يا قوم اني اجرع كأس حنظلهم مريض
ولكني اخبركم بانا كمثل الاسد اذ خفي الزفير
لنا العزماء رغم القيد انا بقيد السرع احرار نسير
ايا جبناء قد حان انتقامي ايا ثارات قد صاح السندير
وميثاق مع الله اشترينا تكاد نفوسنا شوقاً تطير
وبك ذات الإله تهون نفسي ونفس القاعدين لها شخير

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Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'



Appendix 4: 'Jihadi Cards' from 'Luqman'



Appendix 5: Full List of ‘Jihadi Books’ from Hadhrmut Forum

The Future of the Peninsula and Iraq by the Shahid – God Willing – Yusuf bin Salih al-‘Uyayri, may God accept him in the heights

The American Presence in the Peninsula – Its Truth and its Aims – Yusuf al-‘Uyayri, may God accept him

A Gift to the One Who Is Confused About the Permissibility of Killing Prisoners – Yusuf al-‘Uyayri

Thus We See Jihad and Desire It – Hazim al-Madani

The Creed of the Saved Sect – Abdul-Majid Muhammad al-Mani‘, may God accept him in the heights

The Neighing of the Horses in Explanation of the Book of Jihad – Abd al-Rahim al-Shafi‘i

A Late Warning to the Most Important of Necessary Matters – ‘Izz al-Din al-Maqdisi

The Individual Ninja for the Strong Mujahid – A Great Book – I don’t know the name of the one who wrote it, we ask God that he reward him with martyrdom in His path

Bringing about Victory in the Land of the Two Shrines – Saqr al-Ghamidi, you are blessed living and dead O Saqr

The Map of the Path of the Mujahidin... the Abu Hafs Battalions

The Rafidi-Crusader Alliance in Iraq and its Influence on the Region – Abd al-Muhsin al-Rafi‘i

God is Great – America is Destroyed – by the imprisoned mujahid knight Shwil al-Zaharani may God release him from imprisonment

Unless the Victory of God is Near... the World is a Prison... Shaykh Salman al-‘Awda, may God break his imprisonment

The Meeting of the Quranic Armies Concerning the Crimes of the Crusader United States – Wassim Fatah-Allah

Ibn Ladin, the Peninsula and I... Jamal Isma‘il

Disquisition to People on the Virtues of Jihad... The shahid scholar Abdallah Azzam

Announcement of Jihad... Abdallah Azzam my God accept him

Questions, and their Jihadi Answers... Abdallah Azzam

Hijra and Preparation – 1-2... Abdallah Azzam

In Jihad there are principles and rules... Abdallah Azzam

In the Midst of the Battle 1-2

Follow the Caravan... Abdallah Azzam

The Lost Minaret... Abdallah Azzam

The Creed, and Its Influence in Building the Generation... Abdallah Azzam

The Red Cancer... Abdallah Azzam

Outstanding Aspects of the Martyrs of the Peninsula

The Creed is Copied and the Situation is Lost... by the mujahid shahid Ayman al-Zawahiri may God preserve him

The Truth about the Crusader War... Yusuf al-‘Uyayri, may God accept him

The Book of Ijtihad Concerning Calling for Jihad... Ibn Kathir

Why Do we Fight, and Who Do We Fight?... Abu Hamza al-Baghdadi

The Greater Middle East Project... the imprisoned scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi – may God release him from his imprisonment

How the Tatars Entered the Lands of the Muslims... Salman al-‘Awda

Works Authored by Sultan bin Bijad al-Utaybi, may God accept him in the heights

Matters and Misconceptions Concerning the Operations of the Mujahidin

Merchants of War... Abdallah Azzam

Poetry Among the Depths... Abdallah Azzam

In the Shadow of Surat al-Tawba 1-2-3

Words from the Line of Fire 1-2

Copied from the post of the brother “Turahil” in Al-Ikhlās network

International Relations in Islam – in the third Halaqa of the shaykh Faris Al Shwil Al-Zahrani may God release him from his imprisonment

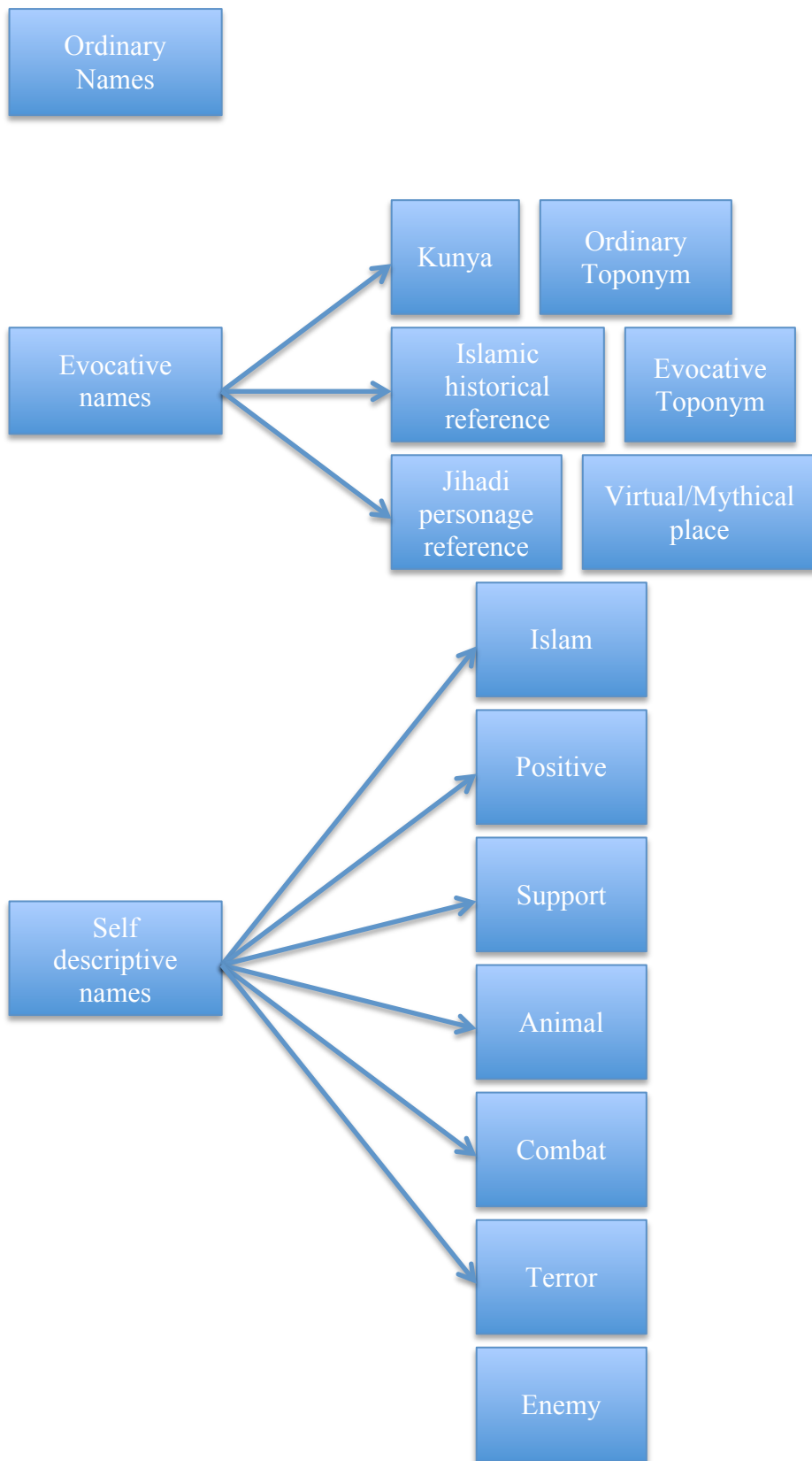
Years of Treachery... Yahya bin Ali al-Ghamidi (Sawt al-Jihad)

Letter to Students of Knowledge by the pen of Abu Abd al-Rahman bin Sulayman al-Mahmud (Sawt al-Jihad)

Letter to the ‘Ulama and Du‘a by the pen of Abdallah bin Sulayman al-Mahmud (Sawt al-Jihad)

Copied from the Contribution of the Brother Faris al-Tu‘an from Al-Ikhlas Network

May God give them goodness in payment and God’s blessing on them and these books as a work in the balance of their good deeds



	Ordinary Arabic names	Islamic heroes	Jihadi heroes	Places (real)	Places (mythical or virtual)	Islamic concepts
Zarqawi's eyes			X			
Song of terror						
Al Layth (122)	X					
tholqarnain		X				
asadallah al-shishani	X			X		X
if only I were with them						
sniper of the Islamic state					X	X
abaljin						
great commander						
victor of the Islamic state					X	X
ganral						
calendar of the mujahidin						X
ahmad29	X					
al-salafi al-jihadi		X				
sniper of Islam		X				
safyah	X					
detonator						
Abu Qutada al-Muhajir	X		X		X	
seeker of the truth						
Abu Qutayba	X					
Abu Ayyub	X					
The prisoner of Sana'a 7				X		
Abu Dujana	X					
Abu 'Asim	X					
Light of Faith						X
Mahir Yasin	X					
Abu Mu'adh 1	X					
Messenger of Al-Mujahidin Network					X	X
The Egyptian 'Bara'				X		X
abadee						
Killer of the Jews						
alshadey	X					
Salafi Army of Abu Bakr al-Sadiq		X				X
Abu Anas the Partisan (al-Ansari)	X					X
The Tayjani Munir	X			X		
Abd al-Rahman	X					X
irhabi_001			X			
Sniper of the peninsula				X	X	

Abu-Ward the Palestinian	X			X		
Guards of the Moon					X	
Son of Islam						X
Father of Khattab 7	X					
Abu Musa'ab al- Maqdisi	X		X	X	X	
Abu Humam	X					
Al Aqsa is in Danger					X	
Abu Hudhayfa al- Libi	X			X		
Cub of Al-Qaida			X			
Islam 1						X
Al-Zubayr the Gazan	X			X		
Usama al-Narjisi	X			X		
The supporter of Daghmarsh			X			
The lover of what God tells						X
Abu Mu'adh al- Iraqi	X			X		
Abu Qutada al- Libi	X		X	X		
Azam	X					
terrorist from the top drawer [misspelled]						
Muhibb Abu Tamim al-Azdi			X			
Believer in God						X
Conquest of Islam						X
The seagull 07			X			
darer of the ansar						X
sa'ad the algerianX				X		
granddaughter of Umar		X				
sayf sa'ad	X					
Abu Khaythma al-Libi	X			X		
Abu Hafsa	X					
Atom of glory						
Abu Tamim al- Libi	X			X		
Abu Dhirr al- Baghdadi	X			X		
The most important one						
Player of bullets						
The grandson (since eleven hours ago)						
Abu Jalibib	X	X				
Abu Majd	X					

The Falcon of Sulaymaniyya				X		
Abu Harith al-Ansari	X					X
Free Mujahid						X
Abu Hamza	X					
Abu Majid	X					
Sword of Usama			X			
Abd al-Ilah al-Shami	X			X		X
Abu Talha	X					
Abdul Malik	X					X
abdulhak71	X					X
Abu Khalid al-Manbaji	X					
Servant of Usama			X			
Reformer (or member of the forum "islah")						
Abu Jalal	X					
Abdullah Al-Rushud	X					
The Falcon						
Falcon of Islam						X
akrama		X				
Son of the Nile				X		
Son of Shamil	X		X			
Daughter of Kurdistan				X		
Lover of annihilation						
Sword [Sarim] for truth						
Lion of Islam						X
Abd al-Rahman bin Abd al-Rahman	X					X
Fizzy sound						
Abu Gharam al-Harmi	X					
TNT_ON						
Ra'ibal						
aiman-mujahid	X					X
Army of God						X
Abu Musa'ab the Palestinian	X		X	X		
Abu Bara' the Syrian	X			X		
Al Walid al-Maqdisi	X		X		X	
Asim the Somali	X			X		
Abu Talha the partisan	X					X
muslim						X
The Gazan				X		
Bilal Abu Ribah	X					

Seeker (ess) of Paradise						X
The Sword						
Asim of Jiddah	X			X		
Lover of the Islamic state					X	
Abu Asim	X					
Heart of the Rock					X	X

Animals	Violence (military)	Violence (terror)	general positive characteristi cs	declaration of support/affili ation	enemies	miscellaneous/ unknown
		X				
X						
X						
				X		
	X					
						X
	X					
			X			
			X			
	X					
	X					
	X					
			X	X		
			X			
						X
	X				X	
	X					
		X				
	X					
	X					
				X		

				X	
X			X		
			X		
			X		
		X			
			X		
	X				
X					
			X		
	X				
			X		X
			X		
	X				X
				X	
X					
			X		
	X				
				X	
			X		
X					
X					

				X		
				X		
		X		X		
	X		X			
X						
				X		
						X
		X				
						X
	X					
	X					
				X		
	X					
				X		

Appendix 8: Translation Sample

Peace be upon you and the blessing of God

Often we hear, and it is said:

Should we serve the jihadi media **or** mobilize for jihad and emigrate. The absence of some of the members of the forums, **or** the media groups, has influenced many. The presence of a brother **cannot be replaced** in his field.

And before beginning, and speaking on the subject, it is necessary that we distinguish between two things:

1. Those media foundations and other [entities] which are founded by the mujahidin, and these, if it is said to them: go here or here or do this or that, these are with the mujahidin and our words are not about them.
2. Supporters of the jihad of those who have not mobilized to the land of jihad and who have not associated with an organization, **and our words are about them**, those who have mobilized or served the jihadi media and not sought emigration, and especially our words are about the most experienced, and best known among them.

We must know that conveying what is - by the grace of God - our jihadi media, today, and after this stage of formation, cannot be left to individuals, but rather is the responsibility of groups with our knowledge, the presence or absence of which is of great significance.

We shall recall for example **Younis Tsouli Irhabi 007**, and some of the affairs of his life, and what we have read about him. And I think that all of us know with what skill he advanced our jihadi media at the early stages of its development, and, before long, of the victory which he brought to our jihadi media, and we shall see why the brother became

famous and advanced what he advanced, and we esteem him, and we reckon him, and God is his reckoner.

The brother Younis was not just a hacker or websites and administrator of a forum, but he was able to successfully manage a number of brothers and participate with them to great benefit for our jihad.

The brother Younis, it can be recalled in summary, took part in the following matters:

1. A great service to the jihadi media at a very early time of our modern media
2. His desire to emigrate to Iraq for jihad
3. His individual terrorism or individual jihad in his efforts with the groups which he contacted over the net as it was said, or otherwise, for the carrying out of operations against Europe and America and if we today we see the absence of communication (on account of the security known to be present in this field) in matters like this by the Internet according to the nature of the situation now, but we cannot know the detail of what occurred with the brother and how his recruitment happened and who worked with him in the field, and all of us know the story of the brother's arrest and his imprisonment and the rest of the matters, may God end his imprisonment and that of his brothers
4. His presentation of many studies – even the Media Front produced a book from his studies for teaching hacking.
5. The brother wrote a will and published it on the Internet, and God Almighty knows but it was reckoned to indicate his presence on the way to jihad, or that he was close to a jihadi operation, or that he was afraid of imprisonment for one thing or another, and God Almighty is all-knowing, and consider how he thought of the benefit of his brothers and his determination.

6. His humility and restraint with his brothers, to the extent that often he felt that people who had no experience were more knowledgeable than himself.
7. He studied “**information technology**”
8. He presented in the field of preparation and explosives what at the time was considered a rare treasure, and by God, a pearl from a lion.

Hence, the media mujahid, and I speak of **the most important of them and of most of them** in terms of influence, and the majority

Our duty is **service to the jihadi media**, with everything that we can do for it, and we do not suppose or consider that we are individuals, who may not be able to do any good or have any influence.

Thus we must work to **prepare ourselves** well, and to train ourselves in the best way possible.

Work and seek for emigration to the land of jihad, and we would benefit there more than you benefit by being in your house

Work on individual jihad, and this is at the foundation of the work and it is necessary that we seek it together with seeking for emigration and jihad.

And the truth is that **preparing ourselves well**, and **seeking for emigration**, and for **individual terrorism**, if they all came together in us, could be a reason for service to the land of jihad or a big operation in your country, or that there will be destruction in America. And

do not forget the stories of the heroes of September, and the lion Khalid Shaykh Muhammad may God free him from imprisonment and the base of jihad.

The object is the complete transmission of experience to the Internet. It is true that one of our brothers is missing, and by God he has left a profound influence in the heart. But it is necessary that jihad not rely on any single person. And if we have experienced a loss, then I say as a media mujahid that we have not joined except so that we can experience imprisonment. We ask God for mercy and forgiveness. I ask God to accept us for recruitment to the lands of jihad and martyrdom. Right now, your duty is to have conveyed all your experience and all your information to others, whether in a manual, or forum threads, and you will have a reward, God willing, which will reach you after death and martyrdom. A brother who is inventive in the field of **graphic design** of videos or banners, if he presented a study, and tried to summarise the essence of what he knows will, God willing, complete the preparation of ten others beside himself. It is true that every brother has skills and creativity. But the transmission of information remains necessary, and it influences many. Another example: a brother who is a ***munshid***, if he mentioned to us the programmes he uses and the useful programmes, and ways to record (but with the **condition that this does not implicate him, or constitute a security risk**), and this **munshid** brother has a voice and an outstanding way of singing nashids, but by this means there become known, and we see, twenty munshids who did not know how to get started. And always the words of the **one who works** in a certain field will have a place in people's hearts.

Have you seen **the manual** which contains the advice of the brother Younis (may God end his imprisonment).

Have you seen **the will** of the brother?

This is the condition of one who wishes for jihad and supports the jihadi media.

There is no place in our jihad for secrets or for an individual to possess a capability which others do not know about.

Urge towards the benefit of your brothers, and for knowledge, and we must be humble and take our brothers by the hand and encourage them, not making one of them feel that he is the most stupid person in the world, and God is our help.

If only we would benefit from the biography of this lion, may God end his imprisonment.

And he is a media mujahid *par excellence*

And he is one of those who wanted to emigrate

And he is one of those who wanted individual jihad

And he is one of those who prepared himself and his brothers in the field of explosives

And he is one of those who worked gently with his brothers, and who was able to work with tens of his brothers.

And he was one of those able to found a jihadi cell (naturally here is not the place to discuss whether he carried out this matter by means of the Internet, or in a direct manner, or how, but it must be known that the times have changed, and it is not necessary to mix with this and start messaging each other today and mention information about ourselves).

He is one who studied in the field which I love, and understood in it, and knew it, and did not spend years as did some since the imprisonment of the brother, and they say ‘who do we have like him?’ (And this is true and we know his ability well). But at the same time, they don’t

think of studying computer science or of developing their ability in ways that are permitted and available.

And remembering my beloved brother is not just about a section from the life of the brother Younis (may God free him from his imprisonment), but rather he is an example for us to observe of the media mujahid, and how he must be, and the best of the necessary conditions.

Please read this poem, and by God, everyone who knew the hero, and all who knew the truth about the man and heard about what he presented, will feel like crying and remember our prisoners and our duty towards them.

And I have not forgotten our situation when we said farewell!
It was a condition for anyone who has loved someone departing.

These are groans of longing for the present-absent

Younis Tsouli – Irhabi007

We shall not forget you, with God's permission, O hero, and we are joining up behind you, O beloved one.

And so to victory over the creatures
And so to God in the everlasting

The letters scattered for missing you

And the sadness started to move in my clothes
As if I hadn't talked to you for nights
And I hadn't read the sahab posts
As if you were like a candle playing with the wind
And the sun doing a magical disappearing act
Ah Younis! I did not feel upset or miserable
With the colours of problems, with being away from home,
And I couldn't be away from terrorism
But your disappearance from among us is the reason for my torment
If you went to *Ikhlaṣ* one day, your steps were crying 'O best of youth!'
For you is the increase of longing
And *Ikhlaṣ* is for you - in the best of places
And every day is a memorial to you
Remind us of colours and shades of torment
You made terrorism a practice for us
And you terrorised the pagan dogs
And you supported the jihad and you were on your own
As if you were in the battles, a lion of the jungle
And no, by God... we shall not forget you, O you who
Drew for us the path to the high ground
And we shall not forget you, O you who were a young lion
Brave in the pursuit of the riders
I saw you after you were imprisoned. If only, through my poetry
How much the heart longed to go
They think that the prisoner dies conquered

They didn't know of the faith of the companions

And the age of youth does not last for long

And all the universe crumbles to dust

These two things are not equal to us!

On the one hand glory, or entering the maelstrom

On the other the vigilance of foxes in the nights

Or the howl that comes at the dawn of the wolves

Your good health, your well-wisher, 'The Poet of Al Qaida' the Nabatean, but this poem came out in classical Arabic.



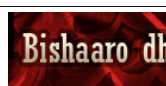
Boga hore

Nala xiriir

Al-qimmah Media



Alqimmah waa Shabakad islaami ah oo daneysa arimaha Ummadda
Waxkasta oo lagu qoro Qasab ma aha in uu maamulka Raali ka yahay
waana shabakad madax banaan oo aan taabacsaneyn Urur gaar ah ama Dowlad, laakiin waa mid Xaqa Raadisa xili ka
Qof walba oo Muslim ah Xaq ayuu uleeyahay in uu akhristo ama uu wax ku qoro shabakada



Alqimmah-Golaha Ansaarta Mujaahidiinta - منتدى العربي
النفير و الجهاد x خدمة الإعلام الجهادي

Magaca Xubinta Magaca Xubi ☐ Remember Me?

Password Galid

Is diiwaan gali

Su'aalo & Jawaabo

Liiska Xubnaha

Taariikhda

Today's Posts

Raadi

Jawaab bixi

View First Unread

22nd June 2009

Thread Tools Display Modes

1

Abu Hassan
AlQawlu Qawlu Sawarim

Join Date: Jan 2009
Location: Inshalah firdaws
Posts: 4,734

النفير و الجهاد x خدمة الإعلام الجهادي

السلام عليكم و رحمة الله و بركاته

كثيرا ما نسمع و يقال

- هل نخدم الإعلام الجهادي او ننفر للجهاد و نهاجر
- غياب بعض أعضاء المنتديات أو المجموعات الإعلامية قد أثر كثيرا
- وجود أخ لا بديل عنه في مجاله

و قبل البدء و الكلام في الموضوع فيجب أن نفرق بين اثنين

- 1- المؤسسات الإعلامية و غيرها ممن هم أساسا من المجاهدين , فهم إن قيل لهم اذهبوا لهنأ أو هنا و قوموا بهذا أو ذاك فهؤلاء مع المجاهدين و كلامنا ليس عنهم
- 2- أنصار الجهاد ممن لم ينفروا لأرض الجهاد و لم ينتسبوا لتنظيم و كلامنا عنهم , هل ينفروا أو يخدموا الإعلام الجهادي و لا يطلبوا الهجرة , و خصوصا كلامنا للأكثر خبرة و معرفة بينهم .

يجب أن نعرف أنه بفضل الله إعلامنا الجهادي اليوم و بعد مرحلة التمكين هذه لا يمكن اعتباره يقوم على أفراد بل على مجموعات مع معرفتنا بأثر كثير منهم و غيابهم

سنذكر مثالا عن الأخ **يونس تسولي إرهابي 007** و بعض الأمور في حياته و ما قرأناه عنه , فاطن أن جميعنا يعلم مقدار ما قدمه لإعلامنا الجهادي في مراحل مبكرة و قبل فترة كبيرة من النصر الذي وصله إعلامنا الجهادي , و لنرى لماذا الأخ اشتهر و قدم ما قدم و نحسبه و الله حسبيه

الأخ يونس لم يكن فقط مخترق للمواقع و مدير لمبتدى كما أنه استطاع و بنجاح إدارة عدد من الاخوان و المشاركة معهم في إنجازات كبرى لجهادنا

الأخ يونس يمكن باختصار ذكر قيامه بالأمور التالية

- 1- خدمة الإعلام الجهادي بشكل كبير في وقت مبكر جدا من إعلامنا الحديث
- 2- الرغبة في الهجرة للعراق للجهاد
- 3- الإرهاب الفردي أو الجهاد الفردي في محاولته مع مجموعات اتصل فيها عبر النت كما قبل أو غيرها للقيام بعمليات ضد أوروبا و أمريكا , و لو أننا اليوم نرى بعدم الاتصال (حسب الأمنيات المعروفة في هذا المجال) في أمور كهذه بالانترنت حسب طبيعة الوضع الآن , لكن لا نستطيع أن نعرف تفصيل ما حدث مع الأخ و كيف تم تجنب من عملوا معه ميدانيا , و كلنا نعرف قصة اعتقال الأخ و أسرته و باقي الأمور فك الله أسرته و أخوانه تقديمه لدروس كثيرة : حتى قامت الجبهة الإعلامية بعمل كتاب من دروسه لتعليم الاختراق
- 4- كتب الأخ وصية نشرها على الانترنت و الله تعالى أعلم إما لأنه حسب وجود طريق - 5 للجهاد , أو قرب عملية جهادية أو خوفا من الأسر لأمر أو لآخر و الله تعالى أعلم , و انظروا كيف يفكر بإفادة اخوانه و العزيمة
- 6- تواصله الجم مع أخوانه , حتى كان الكثير ممن لا خبرة له يشعر أنه أكثر علما منه
- 7- Information Technology الأخ درس
- 8- قدم في مجال الإعداد و المتفجرات في وقته ما كان يعتبر كنزا نادرا فله دره من أسد

إذا المجاهد الإعلامي و أقول أهمهم و أكثرهم تأثيرا و الجميع

الواجب علينا خدمة الإعلام الجهادي بكل ما نقدر عليه و أن لا نعجز أو نطن أننا أفراد قد لا نفيد أو نؤثر

كذلك علينا العمل على إعداد أنفسنا بشكل جيد و تدريب أنفسنا بأفضل الطرق

العمل و السعي للهجرة لأرض الجهاد فقد نفيد هناك أكثر مما نفيد و أنت في منزلك

العمل على الجهاد الفردي , فهذا من أسس العمل و يجب السعي له مع سعينا للهجرة و الجهاد

و الحقيقة فإعداد أنفسنا جيدا , و السعي للهجرة , و الإرهاب الفردي لو اجتمعوا فينا قد يكونوا سببا لخدمة أرض الجهاد أو لعملية كبرى في بلدك أو في أمريكا تكون مدمرة , و لا تنسى قصص أبطال سبتمبر و الأسد خالد شيخ محمد فك الله أسرته و قاعدة الجهاد

السعي لنقل كامل الخبرات للانترنت , صحيح أن غياب أحد اخواننا و الله يترك الأثر العميق في القلب لكن الواجب في جهادنا ألا يعتمد على أفراد و إلا ضعنا فأقول كمجاهد إعلامي لا نضمن ألا نقع بالأسر نسأل الله العفو و العافية , أسأل الله أن يوفقنا للنفيير لأرض الجهاد و الشهادة فعندها الواجب عليك أن تكون قد نقلت كامل خبراتك و معارفك لغيرك , أو في موسوعة أو مواضيع فيكون لك ياذن الله من الأجر ما يصلك بعد الممات و الشهادة أخ مبدع في مجال التصميم فيديو أو بترات لو قدم دروس و حاول بلخص جل ما يعرفه لكان ياذن الله أن يتم إعداد عشرات غيره صحيح أن لكل أخ إبداع و فدرات , و لكن يبقى نقل الخبرات واجب و يؤثر كثيرا مثال آخر أخ منشيد لو يذكر لنا البرامج التي يستعملها و البرامج المستعملة و طرق التسجيل , لكن بشرط أن لا يؤثر ذلك عليه أو يشكل خطرا أممي فالأخ المنشيد هذا له صوت و طريقة إنشاد مميزة , لكن بعمله هذا قد يعرف و نرى 20 منشيد لم يعرفوا كيف يبدؤا , و دائما كلام العامل في مجال ما يكون له الوقع في النفوس

هل رأيت الموسوعة التي فيها شروح الأخ يونس فك الله أسرته ؟
هل رأيت وصية الأخ ؟

هذا هو الحال لمن يريد الجهاد و دعم الإعلام الجهادي !! لا مكان في جهادنا لأسرار أو لفرد لديه خدمة لا يعلمها غيره

أحرص على إفادة اخوانك و التعلم و علينا بالتواضع و أن نأخذ بيد أخواننا ونشجعهم لا أن نشعر أحدهم أنه أغبي إنسان في الأرض و الله المستعان

لينا نستفيد من سيرة هذا الأسد فك الله أسرته

فهو مجاهد إعلامي بامتياز
و هو من أراد الهجرة للعراق و الجهاد فيها
و هو من أراد الجهاد الفردي
و هو من اعد نفسه و أخوانه في مجال المتفجرات

و هو المتعامل باللين مع أخوانه و الذي قدر التعامل مع عشرات من اخوانه و هو من استطاع تأسيس خلية جهادية (طبعاً هنا لا مجال لمناقشة هل تم الأمر عبر الانترنت أو بشكل مباشر أو كيف و لكن يجب معرفة أن الوقت تغير و الزمان تغير فلا يجب (الخلط في هذا و تبدأ بمراسلة بعضنا اليوم و ذكر معلومات عنا هو الذي درس في المجال الذي أحبه و يفهم فيه و يعرفه , و لم يقضي سنوات كما فعل البعض منذ أسر الأخ و هم يقولون من لنا بمثله (و هذا حق فنعرف قدره جيداً) لكنهم في نفس الوقت لم يفكروا في دراسة في مجال الحاسب أو تطوير قدراتهم بالطرق المتوفرة و الموجودة ..

و تذكر أخي الحبيب فالموضوع ليس فقط عن جزء من حياة الأخ
يونس فك الله أسره , بل هو مثال لنرى المجاهد الإعلامي و كيف
يجب ان يكون و أفضل الحالات الواجبة

و أرجو أن تقرأوا هذه القصيدة و الله كل من عرف البطل , و كل من عرف حق الرجل و سمع بما قدمه سيشعر بالبكاء و يتذكر أسرانا و واجبنا نحوهم

و هذه قصيدة في يونس تسولي كتبها شاعر القاعدة النبطي

! ولم أنسى موقفنا للوداع
.. وقد حال ممن أحب الرحيل

هذه آهات مشتاق .. للحاضر الغائب

يونس تسولي - ارهابي 007

.. لن ننساك ياذن الله يا بطل
.. و نحن خلقك ماضون يا حبيب

.. فإمّا إلى النصر فوق الأنام
.. و إمّا إلى الله في الخالدين

تناثرت الحروف عليك شوقاً
و راح الحزن يعيث في ثيابي

كانّي لم أحدثك الليالي
ولم أقرأ مواضع السحاب

كانك شمعة عبت بريح
وشمس عالها سحر الغياب

**أبويني إنني ما صفت ذرعاً
.. ب ألوان الهموم مع اغترابي**

**!.. ولم أعجز عن الإرهاب لكن
غيابك .. بيننا سر العذاب**

إذا ما جئت للإخلاص يوماً
يكبت خطاك يا زين الشباب

.. لك الأشواق تترى ثم تترى
.. لك الإخلاص في أحلى رحابي

أسرت وكل يوم فيك ذكرى
.. تذكرنا ب أطياف عذابي

جعلت النّ للإرهاب درباً
ف أرهبت الطواغيت الكلاب

و ناصرت الجهاد و كنت فرداً
كانك في المعارك أسد غاب

.. فلا والله .. لن ننساك يا من
رسمت لنا الطريق إلى الهضاب

.. ولن ننسبك يا من كنت ليثاً
.. شجاعاً في ملاحقة الركاب

.. رأيتك بعد أسرك ليت شعري
.. كم اشتاق الغواذ إلى الذهاب

.. بطنون الأسير يموت فيهِراً
.. و ما علموا ب إيمان الصحاب

.. فلا عمرُ الفتى يبقى طويلاً
.. و كل الكون حتماً للتراب

.. هما أمران ليس لنا سواهم
.. ف إما العز أو خوض العباب

.. إذا سهر الثعالب في الليالي
.. فويل إن أتى فجر الذئاب

و سلامتكم
محكم / شاعر القاعدة النبطي
و لكن هذه القصيدة خرجت بالفصحى

منقوووووووووول

منقوووووووووول

أين أنتم يا أسود الاعلام لا يؤتين الاسلام
من قبلكم



Jawaab bixi

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Saacada oo Dhan Waa GMT +3. Hadana Saacada waa 11:56.

English (US)

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