

An insight into the Philosophical Dynamics of Al-Qaeda

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Abstract

Al-Qaeda, headed long by Osama bin Laden (OBL), has convincingly emerged as the most powerful and ideologically motivated organization with objectives to politically spread worldwide itself and its ideological stance in the post-cold war period. Though it was nurtured by the West through CIA and ISI, and fostered by Arab volunteers to stem out the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, it later turned its guns towards the US and US-backed regimes in the Muslim countries on the pretext they were serving the cause of infidels who deserved *elimination*. *The infiltration of Takfiri doctrine, once formulated by Ibn Taymiyya*, during Mongol invasion of Mesopotamia, made the Salafism-inspired militant activists of AQ to indulge into and justify their terrorist activities against non-combatant civilians. An attempt has been made here to trace the roots and dynamics of the philosophical thought that gradually drove AQ to what it is now known as the most dreadful outfit, both for the West and the Muslim world.

Keywords: Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya, Takfir, Infidel, Salafism

Introduction:

“Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.” Pascal

Al-Qaeda (AQ) has become an enigma which continues to grab the world attention. Exploring its origin, ideology and operationalization are the points of debate among the analysts across the world. An attempt has been made in this study to identify its origin, emergence and ideology from the annals of history.

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Emergence of Al-Qaeda:

Before tracing the historical and ideological roots of AQ, it would be apt to look into the background of its name that attained a lot acceptance later on as was missing in its early decade and so. The word Al-Qaeda has its roots in Arabic word “qafayn-dal” that implies a base or a foundation (Best, 2012). This word perhaps was used in the late 1980s during the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union in the meaning of a base for all Arab and other Mujahideen along with the local Afghans to fight against Soviet forces. The expressed intent of AQ was to retain the unity of diverse ethnic groups of Muslims which would cater the Muslim interests of resistance to oppression at international level.

However, it was as early as 1990s when the activists associated with OBL referred to their organization as AQ. This word was mentioned in 1996 in one of the CIA’s reports though imprecisely. The State department nevertheless used the word AQ in early 1998 a bit clearly but again not to mean an organization but “as an operational hub, predominantly for like-minded Sunni extremists” (Bruke, 2003, 7-10).

Some researchers trace the establishment of AQ in 1998 while the majority of analysts rely mostly on 1989 as the year of AQ’s formation. Jason Burke described AQ as a loose network of networks and he asserted that OBL along with dozen or so aides and with a hundred or so personnel who were loyal to him may be termed as “al-Qaeda hardcore” rather than an organization at its inception in late 1980s. He further highlighted that extensive propaganda is in air to relate every bad thing with AQ and OBL. In this connection, he stated that during the Soviet-Afghan war, OBL was merely a marginal player. He asserted it a gross over-simplification to relate every religious militancy with OBL and AQ so as to understand a diverse and complex phenomenon of religious extremism and militancy (Bruke, 2003, 11-22).

Historically, AQ evolved from another organization “Maktab-al-Khidmat” (Afghan Service Bureau) or MAK which was set up in early 1984 in Peshawar by Prof. Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, a born Palestinian and the former teacher in King Abdul Aziz University of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia where OBL was also studying at that time who got impressed by his ideas and took him as mentor. Azzam is known as the Godfather of Jihad who was motivated with the idea of pan Islamic jihad. MAK’s objectives were inspired by the activity of jihad by the Arab youth who were coming from Middle East, mostly Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt, to fight against the foreign occupation of Afghanistan. He travelled to more than fifty states for presenting his agenda of global jihad, raising funds and securing recruits and remained successful in collecting as many as 20,000 Mujahideen from around 20 states in 1980s (Nasiri, 2008, 324).

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Earlier OBL came to Peshawar in January 1980 to serve the cause of Afghan Jihad against Soviet Union. Abdullah Azzam was supported in establishing MAK not only ideologically but financially by OBL who had vast contacts with the Saudi elite. At Bayt al-Ansar both OBL and Azzam were active in delivering lectures to train mujahedeen in Peshawar (Downing, 2009, 93). It was in 1986 that both built their first training camp in Afghanistan by the name al-Ansar that was later used to be called AQ or the base camp. However, some wrote the name of 1st training camp in Afghanistan as Arin al-Assad (The Loin Lair). After the assassination of Abdullah Yusuf along with his two sons (al-Mdaires, 2010, 248), the MAK was transformed gradually into a full bloom ideological organization which was then officially labeled as AQ that was later headed, steered and flourished under the full control and command of OBL with some senior aides in its current manifestation.

There are some opinions suggesting that a moderate Abdullah Azzam, the co-founder of AQ but its formal head in the beginning, was perhaps eliminated by ISI or an Egyptian 'Takfirist' who wanted to clear the way for OBL to take the main command. As a rift was there between Azzam and OBL as the later was in favor of toppling down the governments of Egypt and Yemen at least initially and later of all Muslim states as were declared infidel according to him (Ryan, 2013). However, this version of opine on Azzam's assassination was denied by ISI and OBLs supporters time and again and also it lacks strong evidence.

According to some researcher, it was 1989 when AQ was established in Al-Farooq camp located in Jaji, in Paktia province of Afghanistan (Gunaratna, 2013, 18-19), and that it utilized the data base estimated to be around 20,000 individuals of MAK for establishing its global network with support from various Islamists in about ninety states, thus the name Al-Qaeda or the database. Meanwhile AQ also started preaching its ideology to the other radical groups. Dr. Aymen al-Zawahiri further translated this ideology into military action and filled the gap that was created due to Abdullah Azzam's death (Bruke, 2003, 45-47). Both OBL and Zawahiri were having complete harmony in identifying West as the hub of evil for Muslims and were holding the most radical form of Salafist Islam. For them all the Muslim states which are cooperating with the West are apostate (Ryan, 2013).

The historical roots which led to the formation of AQ can be shown by the following chart:

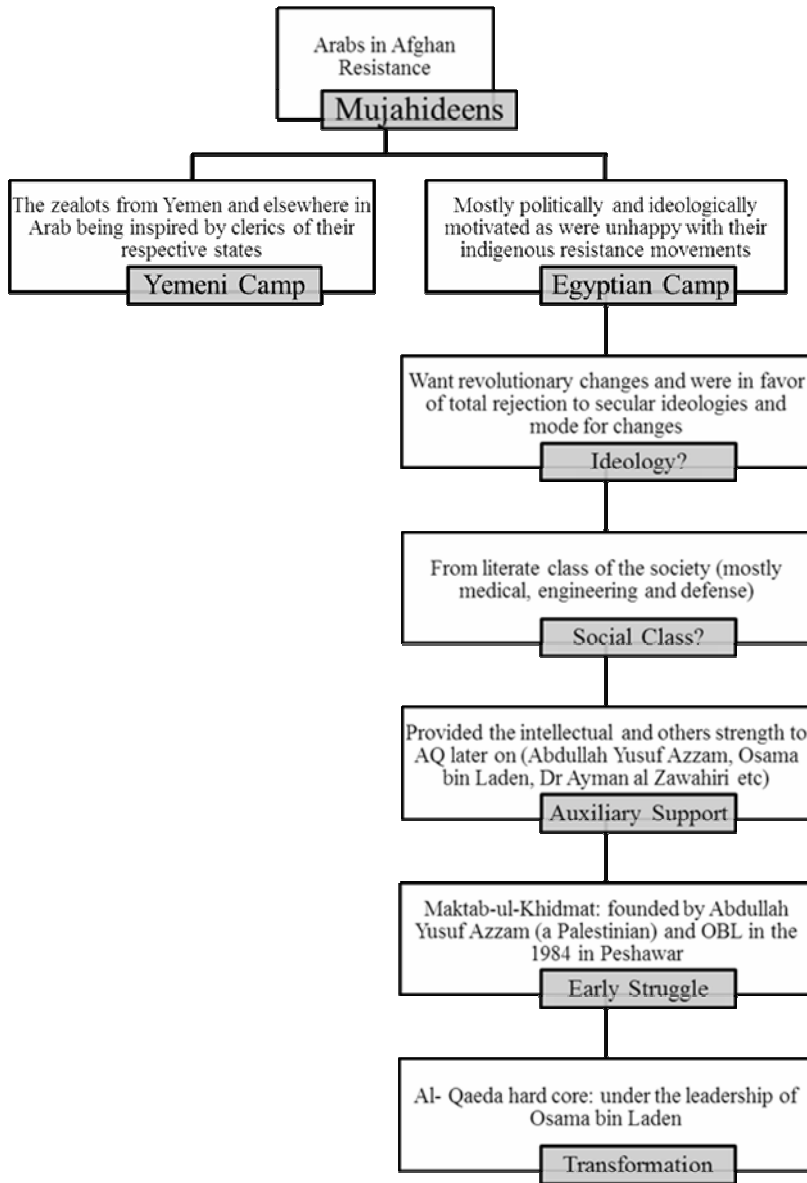


Figure I: Historical Roots of Al-Qaeda Formation

OBL introduced a more radical ideology to ‘Jihad’ that Islam should be defended by the military action when and where it is threatened. The training of Islamists was resumed by OBL on his return to Afghanistan from Sudan in May 1996 (Moghadam & Fishman, 2011, 122). OBL’s exposure to work with

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highly sophisticated intelligence agencies such as CIA and ISI (Howe, 2011, 183) during the Soviet-Afghan war gave him much knowledge and skill of the working of these top agencies.

In 1998, OBL established eight camps in Afghanistan in response to its loss of training asylums from Pakistani territory. The radical Islamists were with no option but to stay in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghan territory as, on the one hand, their traveling documents were confiscated by the CIA and other intelligence agencies on their arrival to join Afghan Jihad during late 1970s onward while on the other, their native countries were not interested to take these Mujahideen back because they, being habitual to fighting, could create conditions of instability there. These Jihadists were thus owned by OBL as he had contacted them by using the database of MAK and he remained successful in organizing a Jihadist force. OBL with assistance from Mullah Omer (who secured an alliance with Yunus Khalis and Jalaluddin Haqqani) (Moghadam & Fishman, 2011, 123) transformed Taliban, the indigenous militant force representing mainly the Pushtuns of Afghanistan, into a dynamic force for pushing the pan-Islamic movement which was lacking in earlier 1990s among the Taliban (Aziz, 10-16).

Ideological roots of Al-Qaeda

AQ has its ideological roots in the Arab world (see Figure I) but this organization chooses Afghanistan as its base location rather than any of the Middle Eastern state. Afghanistan was selected in order to fulfill the prediction of Holy Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) who prophesied that ancient Khurasan would be the initial theater of war for the “end of times battles” (Shahzad, 2011). It is equally essential to note that Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan, modern Iran and parts of Pakistan as well come under the region of Khurasan geographically. Huge literature was produced by the Abbasids that Mehdi would come from this area (Cook, 2008, 173). Therefore, AQ came to this region with an international agenda to first launch battle against the Western Allies and then turn it into an Anti-Christianity campaign for the liberation of Palestine afterwards.

Effect of Salafism and Wahabism on various Islamic Resistance Movements and AQ

It is important to reflect on Salafism as some analysts have argued about the ideological connections and harmony between AQ's ideologies with that of Salafism. According to them, it is Salafism which has provided an intellectual and philosophical foundation to various existing Jihadi and Resistance

Movements among the Muslim world and the AQ as well. Even some scholars have declared Salafism as a brand of Sunni Islam which has also provided rational to 'Terrorist' Movements. However, the other school of thought refuted such connection between the both. Therefore, it is very relevant to have a glance on the basic understanding to the point of view taken by the Salfism.

Salafists are the followers of Hanbalite Jurisprudence who lays utmost focus on monotheism while denouncing the intercession of Saints which have occupied a profound space in Sufism. It is pertinent to note that on the fundamental understanding of Islam, a consensus does exist among the followers of Salafism. However, a disagreement is there on the use of violence. The ideologues of AQ and other Islamic revivalist movements do believe in the use of violence against the West and its allies in which the Muslims states are also included. However, the other fraction of Salafism rejects the use of violence and is emphatic in the tool of propagation and advice to the incumbent rulers of the Muslim world (Volpi, 2011, 271).

The adherents of Salafism rejected the concept of Western democracy (Wright, 2012, 35) while declaring it incompatible with the tenets of Islam. One group within Salafist school of thought is fully convinced of the active struggle towards the application of their ideas. According to them, almost all the rulers in the Muslim world are 'infidels' and an Islamic state can only be attained by waging militant struggle against them. Even at times this doctrine has been used by the governments for undermining other sects by their active involvement to curb other sects while declaring them infidels.

Thoughts of Imam Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) who was declared as the 'Sheikh al-Islam' by OBL in his open letter to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia (Berner, 2007, 8) and, so in the ranks of AQ, has laid profound effects in casting the ideological matrix of AQ and same in the case with various resistance movements particularly in the Arab world. Ibn Taymiyya added a critical approach to the Hanbalite Jurisprudence and smashed its various principles (Al-Matroudi, 2006, 5). Thus without getting through the background of Ibn Taymiyya's thinking and philosophy, AQ's ideology cannot be understood properly which is the main focus of this study. For comprehending the ideological insight provided by Ibn Taymiyya, it is very crucial to look at the historical context which shaped his ideas that are known to be the most radical and even controversial in the course of Islamic history.

It was the time, when the Abbasid Caliphate was vandalised by the Tartar invasion of Baghdad. Consequently, in this worst period of Muslim history, the Sharia law, political order, culture, tradition and everything which was established by Muslims was toppled down by the Mongol's attack. Although

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these Mongols did not capture all the areas which were under Muslim rule yet the rulers of free areas did not stand with the Muslims of captured areas against Tartar invasion. They were lacking in their courage to stand against the Tartars and so surrendered before them.

It was in this perspective that led Ibn Taymiyya to postulate radical ideas particularly to instigate the Muslims to revolt against the submissive Muslim rulers and also against all those segments of society who had surrendered before the collapse of the Muslim dominancy at the hands of Mongols. He emerged as the prime advocate of volunteers to punish the Tartars for abolishing the Abbasid Caliphate and also all those who did not stand against the Tartars.

Resultantly, he worked on three different fronts simultaneously such as a Muslim theologian, a reformer and also as the commander of the resistance movement among Muslims. His theology of 'Takfir' was debated most among the academia for its practical application in various resistance movements across the Muslim world. It is a controversial notion among the Muslim scholars. Therefore, it is a broader concept of tagging other Muslims and non-Muslims as infidels who disagree with them.

He in his theory of 'Takfir' declared Tartars and also all those who claimed themselves as Muslims but created hurdles in the way of Muslim resistance as 'infidels'. He blatantly criticised those Muslim scholars who had issued verdicts that a "righteous infidel ruler was better than a tyrannical Muslim ruler". Furthermore, he issued a fatwa (proclamation) that it was compulsory to launch a war against the Mongols despite their conversion to Sunni Islam. He upheld that Mongols could not be the true Muslims as they had made a 'Yaasiq' code as the state law while denouncing the Islamic law (Shahzad, 2011, 148). According to Ibn Taymiyya, the mongols were to be treated as infidels despite their formal conversion to Islam owing to their "obstinate pagan beliefs" and must be executed (Rapoport & Ahmed, 2010, 18).

This Yaasiq code was a collection of rules which was derived from various religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam and other creeds as was enforced by Genghis Khan. This Yaasiq code was declared as disregard to the laws of Allah by many scholars such as Ibn Katheer and Ibn Taymiyya, etc., and the adherents of this code were declared as non-believers and needed to be exterminated with a forceful hand, according to these scholars. Ibn Taymiyya classified the enemies of Islam into four categories which are as under (Aziz, 4):

1. Infidel Christians with whom it was permissible to make peace and their lives can be spared provided they were made prisoners;

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2. No peace settlement with those Muslims who had reverted to infidel habits unless they returned to the fold of Islam in its fullest;
3. Killing should be of those Muslims who did not follow the rituals of Islam;
4. Killing of those who have rejected Islam but claim themselves as Muslims.

It is very pertinent to look into the thoughts of Imam Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792) who was a scholar and reformer of the 18th century and his writings were greatly inspired by Ibn Taymiyya. At present the word Wahhabism which is widely used for one band of Islam is after his name who was inspired by neo-Hanbalite school of thought with its roots in Ibn Taymiyya's ideology. It was he who brought the philosophy of Ibn Taymiyya into Islam's mainstream. He has appreciated Ibn Taymiyya's social ex-communication of the ruler if he abandoned the path of Islamic sharia.

The followers of Ibn Abdul Wahhab themselves do not like to be called by the name "Wahhabi" by their detractors as according to them it is a disparaging remark to their thinking. They rather prefer to be called "Unitarians" (Mawahiddun) (Esposito, 2002, 50). The primary doctrine of Wahhabism is Tawhid, or the uniqueness and unity of God, as described in his book 'Kitab-al-Tawhid' relying on Quran and hadith, questioning medieval interpretations of Islam. Wahhabis preached against a perceived moral decline and political fragility in the Arabian Peninsula and condemned idolatry, the popular cult of saints, and shrine and tomb visitation.

Some are of the vantage point that Wahhabism does not support any violence (Schaefer, 2010, 149). The primary doctrine of Wahhabism, described in his book 'Kitab-al-Tawhid' relying on Quran and hadith, questions medieval interpretations of Islam and emphasises on Tawhid, or the uniqueness and unity of God who does not share his powers with any Imam or material object. In reality Wahhabism as a form of Islam, as a theology and as jurisprudence within Islam does not exist as such. The terms "Wahhabism" and "Salafism" are often alternatively referred but Wahhabism may be categorised as "a particular orientation within Salafism", an orientation that some may consider too conservative. Ibn Wahhab also advocated, like Ibn Taymiyya, a return to the practices of the first three generations (Salaf) in the Islamic history which is the standard principle of Salafism.

In his book "The Ten Voiders of Islam", Ibn Wahhab has outlined ten nullifiers of Islam which automatically expel anyone from Islam (automatic apostasy) which are as under (Volpi, 2011, 278):

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1. Polytheism;
2. Reliance on mediator for Creator;
3. Suspicions in believing the non-Muslim as non-believers;
4. Reliance on non- Islamic laws and considering it superior to Islamic law;
5. Despising anything the Holy Prophet (PBUH) practiced;
6. Mocking Islam or the Holy Prophet (PBUH);
7. Usage or support to magic;
8. Helping or supporting the non-believers against the Muslims;
9. Turning away from Islam by its non-practicing;
10. Believing someone as he has the right to curtail the implementation and practice of Islam.

On the basis of these voiders that a person can be declared as apostate if he found guilty of any one from the ten above mentioned voiders, grabbed particular importance for AQ. In this connection, three voiders were of particular worth for AQ and other Islamic Revivalist Movements. First one is related to polytheism and the second one was the implementation of human-made laws while rejecting the divine law as supreme. The last and most important one was related to the support and alliance of Muslims to the non-Muslims against the Muslims as criteria to declare its followers as practicing apostasy which cast much influence among the circles of AQ. It made it easy for them to use these bases for declaring any Muslim regime with the charge of apostasy.

The modern Saudi state is founded by the Al Saud family of Najd, the central region of Arabian Peninsula, where Ibn Wahhab hailed from and started preaching his ideology in the 18th-century. A natural alliance therefore emerged between the Wahhabi Religious Movement and the House of Saud. Wahhabism thus became the dominant form of Islam enforced in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. It is well spread and popular in Kuwait, Egypt, UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania as well as in many other parts of the Muslim world. Nonetheless its spread over the entire Arabian Peninsula by way of royal decree caused resentment for its strictness and narrow-mindedness among other communities particularly the urban and business cultures of Hijaz that include towns of Mekkah, Medina and Jeddah along the Red Sea. The American officials have time and again criticised Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia as the epicentre of support and financing for global terrorism.

Roger Hardy highlighted that Wahhabi Movement was with no political objectives unlike AQ which is politically militant. Although some similarities are there between the (then) Taliban regime led by AQ and the Saudi version of Islamic law yet the roots of the Taliban lies into the Deo-bandi Movement

which was initiated at the time of Britain in subcontinent in 1860s. In other words, he has explained AQ as a "radical fringe" rather than a mainstream Sunni Islamic movement (Hardy, 2001).

Ibn Taymiyya's decree of 'Takfir' (Apostasy) later revived by Ibn Wahabb laid tremendous effect on various resistance movements among Muslims in the later course of history particularly in the Arab world. Two great scholars of 20th century, Sayyid Qutb (Egypt, 1906-1966) and Syed Abul A'ala Maududi (Pakistan, 1903-1979) reinvigorated his theology into the contemporary Muslim thought. They applied his teachings in refuting socialism, Western democracy and secularism while declaring these contrary to Islamic teachings. However, unlike Ibn Taymiyya, Maududi adopted an evolutionary approach and denounced the use of violence in the enforcement of Sharia Law (Islamic Jurisprudence). He endorsed the idea of adult suffrage for the Muslims to get access to the corridors of power for paving way for the enforcement of Islamic Sharia as the supreme law of the state.

As far as Sayyid Qutb is concerned, he instigated the Muslims across the globe to refute the Western system in all its economic, social, political and cultural manifestations and called for its replacement with Islamic revolutions. He was hanged by Abdul Nasir. He was also the follower of 'Takfir' ideology of Ibn Taymiyya. It is important to mention here that OBL was the one from amongst the great admirers of Syed Qutb's ideology as was inspired by Ibn Taymiyya and Abdul Wahhab. In one of his books "Milestone" which got fame among the Muslim youth of that time, Sayyid Qutb reinvigorated the ideology of Takfirist movement in its practical force against Abd ul Nasir, the ruler of Egypt. His thoughts are considered as the most influential in terms of its impact on Islamic militant groups. His work published by his brother Muhammad Qutb after his hanging laid much influence on AQ and OBL (Barnaby, 2007, 180-181).

However, in the later course, it was the uprising in Makkah on 20th November 1979 and invasion of Afghanistan on 24th December 1979 that provided an opportunity for AQ theoreticians to take a shape of a visible force as in earlier years since the adherents of the above mentioned ideological discourse went underground then. It is equally important to note here that in the past years, a small band of Muslims remained successful to get the command of the grand mosque known as "Khana-e-Kaba" for a short period of time with the objective to instigate a rebellion against Saudi Monarchy (Trofimov, 2008). This very siege was seen as the first true "khuruj" on the benches of AQ's ideologues in 1979. It provided the intellectual basis to AQ (Thomas & Youssef, 2006, 66). However, the leader of this siege of Mekkah, Juhayman Ibn Sayf al Otabi from a powerful Otaiba tribe (Quandt, 1981, 93) did not get the approval from within

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the circles of those ideologues. The declaration of Muhammad bin Abd Allah al-Qahtani as al-Mehdi (the redeemer of Islam) on the part of Juhayman also did not get the acceptance by such ideologues. The main objectives of the Juhayman's struggle can be highlighted as under:

1. Removal of corrupt leaders;
2. Establishment of Islamic state in Saudi Arabia while breaking its alliance to the non-Muslim states;
3. Ban on television and music;
4. Replacement of Saudi monarchical rulers with the elected representatives to be chosen from Arab tribe of Quraish.

For securing above mentioned objectives, Juhayman led an organised struggle. In this connection, his booklet "Saba Rasa'il" (The Seven Letters) was illegally distributed lavishly among the whole Arab youth (Dekmejian, 1995, 135) as was banned by the Saudi government (Thomas & Youssef, 2006, 67). The main themes projected by Juhayman in "Saba Rasa'il" can be highlighted as under (Dekmejian, 1995, 135):

1. Revelation, propagation and military coups are obligatory for the pursuit of Sunnah;
2. No justification lies in Islam for fraudulent rulers for their subjugation so they must be dethroned as in Islam, the legitimate rulers are only those who reflect their devotion to the enforcement of Islamic Sharia;
3. An obligation is stick towards building the Islamic faith on the Quran and Sunnah rather on the basis of equivocal interpretations enunciated by the state appointed Ulemas;
4. Indispensability to denounce the official socio-political system if in conflict with Islamic law;
5. Husayn bin Ali is Mehdi who meant to overthrow the existing unjust system for bringing peace and equity to Muslim faith;
6. Rejection to all those who worship the companions of Allah such as Mohammad (PBUH), Ali (RA), Fatimah (RA), Khawarij and those who indulge in music etc and they are Mushrikeen;
7. Paving the way for puritanical Islamic community from the clutches of unbelievers is an obligation.

Although AQ did not endorse many points entailed by Juhayman at that time yet these letters served as the most important political guide among the Arab youth who later joined the Afghan Jihad. His movement brought the prevalent corruption, un-Islamic practices and Muslim state's alliance with western powers (infidels) from bottom to limelight. Signing of peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979 was interpreted as the work of 'apostate'

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Muslim state by the radical youth who viewed this development through the prism of the seven letters by Juhayman (Shahzad, 2011, 130-131). Consequently, a conflict between the radical militants and the Egyptian rulers led to a large scale unrest which spilled over to other Muslim states as well particularly in the Arab world.

It was in this perspective when the Soviet Union invaded the Afghan territory and provided an opportunity to such radical minds to make an attempt to get their ideas materialised. Resultantly, Pakistan appeared as the strategic backyard to the Mujahideen from Arab world and from across the globe. It was this time when the process of Islamization by General Zia-ul-Haq was at its peak for securing legitimacy and consolidation to his rule. It is important to note that Zia established an International Islamic University in Islamabad and invited Muslim scholars from across the globe who were known as “ultra-radical”. It was during this time that Dr. Abdullah Azzam visited Pakistan who later established Maktab Al-Khidamat for recruitment of Arab youth in Afghan jihad as has been mentioned above.

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, attention was paid towards the global agenda of AQ. However, in this respect, the most important debate which started within the circles of AQ was regarding their policy of first coping with the Muslim states and their rulers which were un-Islamic in their outlooks or first settling scores with the western powers alone. The writings of Al-Maududi, Sayyid Qutub and Dr. Ali Shariati which were inspired by Taymiyya and Wahhab were read by the young Muslims who wanted to bring a change to the existing system. However, differences remained intact among them on the issues of jurisprudence in terms of Shitte, Sunni, Salafi and Sufi interpretations of Islam. However, a change commenced with the simultaneous event of Afghan invasion by Soviet Union, Siege of Makkah and the Iranian revolution which challenged the western hegemonic designs and provided a conducive environment for the growth of AQ hard core. Though, even till 1990s, this was not recognised as an organisation rather it was associated with like-minded group of radicals as has been explained above who want to revolt against the existing western system and the corrupt Muslim rulers serving as the lackeys of western powers.

It was in this context that the AQ viewed the Saudi monarchy as submissive to the Western powers and massively criticised it for its pro-Western foreign policy. In this connection, in the later years an open letter was written by OBL to the Saudi monarch, the mention of which cannot be skipped here. He said, “You (King Fahd) have also taken the disbelievers as allies and protectors against Muslims. These violations clearly make you an apostate making your system invalid and one that must be toppled” (Berner, 2007, 26). He further

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demanded King Fahd to yield his resignation along with his administration in 1995. In another letter dated 23rd August 1996, OBL issued a declaration to launch jihad against America particularly objecting the presence of its forces on the sacred land (Berner, 2007).

It is also pertinent to note that OBL in one of his open letters to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia dated 3rd August 1995 has referred to Ibn Taymiyya's vantage point of monotheism while denouncing the humanly made laws and declared King Fahd and his government guilty of polytheism by associating partners with Allah while diluting the Shariah laws in running state affairs (Berner, 2007, 3-8). Furthermore on 23rd February 1998, OBL, in one of his declarations quoting Ibn Taymiyya, stated that on the basis of his views on jihad and in fulfilment of Allah's command "the ruling to kill the Americans and their allies –civilians and military– is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the sacred mosque (Makkah) from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim" is justified (Berner, 2007, 68). The following reasons were explained by OBL for issuing a fatwa of jihad against the USA on the part of her (Kean, 2011):

1. Support to Israel;
2. Ties and close relationship with Saudi royal family;
3. Embargo against Iraq;
4. Involvement with the Arab world and so on.

Back to the point, Ibn Taymiyya not only refuted the converted Mongols as infidels but also many schools of Sufism while declaring it contrary to Islamic spirit. Added to this, Shias were also declared as 'heretics' (mushrikeen). He also identifies similarities in the Shia's with that of Christian and Jews (Rapoport & Ahmed, 2010, 15). According to his ideology, even those sectors of the society who do claim themselves as the Muslims but transgresses Shariah law must be combated with an iron hand.

OBL and Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri initiated a new era for the implementation of 'Takfir' doctrine in their actions. In this respect, Zawahiri served as an advisor to OBL. Therefore, it is equally important to look at the ideas presented by him. Though, Zawahiri got indulged into the sectarian killings in Iraq but these are said to have been done in his personal capacity away from AQ's policy, according to an AQ spokesman, as he was convinced of the fact that by doing so, he can urge Iran to go for war against Iraq. However, OBL's main focus has remained on attacks against US-led NATO forces.

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Brian Glyn William, an Associate Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth in his research, “On the Trail of the Lions of Islam: Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan 1980-2010”, mentioned that during one of his interviews with Taliban prisoners who were under the custody of General Rasheed Dostum, the warlord of Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, it was stated by him that if he was not a captive then he would even try to kill him while calling the author as “an American kafir (infidel)” (Williams, 2011, 216-218). This can be the best illustration of the ideological thinking of a Taliban member impressed by the AQ ideology about how they see the outside world and the people who profess other beliefs and creeds.

The Professor held that Arabs joined the Afghan Jihad at the later stage and declared that the defeat of the Soviet forces at the hands of Arab fighters is a popular myth which floats in various debates. He also added that in one of his interviews with Marc Sageman, a CIA operative in 2005 who was active in mujahideen operations from Pakistan, he stated that CIA did not provide arms to OBL or any Salafist and Wahhabi Arab Mujahid (Williams, 2011, 219). Here one may disagree with the author as this interview was conducted after the incident of 9/11, when the projection of OBL and AQ was no more in the interest of the USA. Here one may refer to the statement of Hillary Clinton who candidly confessed that it was the USA who created and funded the Taliban and AQ as it was in their best interest at that time to use these forces against the USSR.

Prime Objectives of Al-Qaeda

AQ soon emerged as a global representative of jihad. Initially, the purpose was to recruit the volunteers to resist the Soviet aggression (Bergen, 2002). Global jihadists have used this ideology for four purposes to:

1. Revive Islamic golden time;
2. Cope with anti-Islam propoganda and attacks by the crusaders and Zionists and Apostates;
3. Establish a true alliance of right-minded adherents of this ideology; and
4. Launch Jihad as a program of action for all above goals.

In other words, the original purpose of AQ was initially to recruit, train and mobilise mujahedeen to resist the Soviet troops in Afghanistan with a core end to materialise the idea of a pan-Islamic caliphate across the globe later on. By using the doctrine of ‘Takfir’ as explained by Ibn Tamiyya, the AQ members justified the killing of those Muslims who rejected their ideas. It is important to note that AQ is not just about ideologically homogeneous membership but its strategies and tactics are based on certain beliefs and tasks. First question is:

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Who are the real enemies of Islam – apostate regimes, Shias or other enemies? Another question is: Who are the other enemies of Islam – Americans or Zionists? Another one is: Is the use of violence legitimate? Also: Is the killing of Muslims justified during jihad? (Brown, 2011, 16-19).

Concluding Remarks:

Violence in the name of so-called Islamic doctrine was enunciated by Ibn Taymiyya. After the synthesis of both, it was brought into the mainstream of Islamic ideology in the modern times by Ibn Wahhab and exhibit into its most rigid form by AQ. Besides, Ibn Wahhab, founding on Ibn Taymiyya, has inspired the revisionists as near as Iraq and as far away in the Muslim world as Indonesia. He is acclaimed as the main architect of Salafism, the prevailing belief embraced by the revisionist movement endeavouring for a return to the halcyon days of Islam that was only during the time of Prophet.

Today it is hard to conduct a scholarly analysis of religious extremism in Islam without a direct reference to Ibn Taymiyya. He is as important today as he was when he issued his famous Fatwa (religious edict) to wage jihad against the invader Mongols in Iraq through the use of 'Takfir' doctrine. This polemical practice of "Takfir" brought him to a more strong limelight and has inspired many scholars since then. The ideology of "Takfir" by him was fully exploited by AQ for furnishing a plinth to its ideological and political manifestations. Following the footsteps of Ibn Taymiyya, AQ warranted the killing of non-combatant civilians and all those who come in conflict to their campaign against foreign culture and everything in pursuit of its political global agenda under the cover of controversial concept of 'Takfir'.

AQ leadership's own ideological platform was essentially inspired from Salafism and Hanbalism, one of four Sunni Schools of Thought that is prevalent in Saudi Arabia. However, the organization's canvas has, at times, embraced a range of various schools of thought and political inclinations under the impulse of pan-Islamism. Thus AQ was successful in rallying around members and supporters associated with schools of thought other than Wahhabism like Shafi'ism, Malikism and Hanafism as well.

For instance, Yunis Khalis was a devoted Afghan mujahid leader whose beliefs and practices were directly opposed to Salafism but he became an associate of AQ since their enemies were common. He had a faith close to mysticism and believed in visiting tombs of saints and seeking their blessings, practices that are blatantly opposed to OBL's thinking based on Wahhabism and Salafism. The only exception to this standard of pan-Islamic policy has been Shia school of thought as Al-Qaeda lately seems clearly opposed to it

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since it holds Shia beliefs to be at odds with their criterion of takfirism. In Iraq it has waged war against the Badr Brigades because they acted as US allies fully cooperating with them during the Iraq War. Similarly even Shia civilians have been legitimate targets of AQ for acts of violence as in Pakistan and AQ's ally Al-Nusra Front is now launching attacks against the Shia dominated Syrian government.

In other words, Ideology of AQ can be explained as neo-Salafism and neo-Wahabism as it has introduced certain drastic changes to original spirit of Salafism and Wahabism for materialising its political and other objectives at global scale. Moreover, followers of AQ do not attend to the notion of modern nation state rather they divide the world into two halves, which are believers and non-believers. Through the jihad against the US-led NATO occupied forces, the chief aim of AQ is to cause the downfall of US whom AQ believes as a strong demonic force that is also the only obstacle in the way of world peace, promotion of Islam and establishment of Islamic Caliphate following the shining examples of first four Islamic Caliphs.

An insight into the Philosophical Dynamics of Al-Qaeda

End Noted

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