



AL-QAEDA'S CONSTRUCTIVIST TURN

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2006-05-05

"We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media...we are in a media battle for the hearts and minds of our *umma*."—Ayman al-Zawahiri, July 2005

Since the loss of its Afghan base in the winter of 2001, al-Qaeda has undergone a "constructivist turn," employing not only violence but also a dizzying array of persuasive rhetoric and public spectacle toward the end of strategic social construction. Failure to appreciate al-Qaeda's fundamentally constructivist orientation has led to a range of misconceptions about its strategy and its fortunes, as well as about the success and failure of the "war on terror." Al-Qaeda's grand strategy seeks to promote an Islamic identity, define the interests of all Muslims as necessarily in confrontation with the West, and shape the normative environment in which Muslim politics are contested. This entails heightening the salience of religion in all aspects of political life, and to "frame" world politics as a clash of civilizations in which radical Islamists such as themselves stand on an equal footing with the great powers of the state system. Al-Qaeda's constructivism derives both from structural factors—absence of a territorial base, a globalized field of contention shaped by new media and information technologies—and Islamist ideas themselves. It uses new media technologies to deliver and shape a narrative and a worldview in which al-Qaeda's definition of the world—of its meaning, the stakes of conflict, and the identity of the competitors—becomes more widely diffused and shared. For individual al-Qaeda members and suicide attackers, who have fully internalized the norms and identity of the jihad, the act of terror may be an expressive one, a literal act of devotional faith—even if that "moral act" is instrumentally exploited by the organization's leadership.

Constructivism, like International Relations theory as whole, has had surprisingly little to say about al-Qaeda, however.¹ Realism, with its emphasis on the balance of power among self-interested nation-states, had little to say about a nonstate actor motivated by religion, and doubts the systemic importance of terrorism. Liberalism, with its various arguments about international institutions, trade, and democracy, similarly offered little traction. Quantitatively oriented scholars suffered from a paucity of data.² Rationalist approaches seemed initially stymied by an organization defined by intense religious convictions, and by

individual suicide terrorism. Although constructivism seemed to be the best placed to account for such a religious, transnational movement, constructivist analyses of al-Qaeda have been few and far between.³ Whether because the Islamist movement espouses norms repugnant to the liberalism espoused by many constructivist theorists or because of a lack of interest in policy relevant research, constructivists have largely failed to rise to the opportunity of authoritatively interpreting al-Qaeda.⁴

American foreign policy has witnessed a similarly constructivist turn, as the “war of ideas” has been placed at the center of what the Pentagon’s 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review describes as a “long war struggle against Islamist terrorism...against global terrorist organizations that exploit Islam to achieve radical political aims.” But the theoretical foundations of such a war of ideas have always been alarmingly thin, particularly for International Relations theories that have traditionally downplayed the importance of ideas, norms, or public discourse. Any war of ideas necessarily takes place on a distinctively constructivist terrain, with questions of persuasion, framing, norm formation, socialization, and discourse taking priority over questions of material power, economic rationality, or formal international institutions. The United States and its allies are trying to create a norm against terror, whereas al-Qaeda and its allies are trying to establish a moral frame that not only justifies but also that makes mandatory violent jihad. As they pursue mirror strategies of normative transformation, “al-Qaeda and the American army are two sides in one war using both weapons of war and weapons of propaganda and psychology.”⁵ This article lays out a constructivist research agenda to grapple with al-Qaeda’s grand strategy as well as the potential responses.

The Constructivist Turn

In March 2005, *al-Quds al-Arabi* reported that Sayf al-Adel, a leading al-Qaeda strategist, had distributed to jihadist Internet forums an outline of the organization’s strategy to 2020. Adel argued that the attack of 9/11 had succeeded in its primary goal of enticing the United States into direct interventions in the Arab region. Only America’s entrance into the region in force—especially the occupation of Iraq—would allow al-Qaeda to achieve its goal: to awaken the Islamic *umma* and “create a direct confrontation between Americans and Arabs/Muslims at the popular level.” In this second stage, al-Qaeda has ceased to be an organization in the literal sense but has become “an idea moving across geographic boundaries carried by satellite television.”⁶ The strategy now, as Faisal Devji suggests, was to impose definitions of reality that would in turn constitute very different forms of identity and modes of action: “By enclosing the battle of state interests within a war of religion, the jihad is staking a claim to the definition of that world of global relations in which it operates.”⁷

The ability of al-Qaeda to fundamentally transform the international agenda, and its fundamentally ideational nature, would seem to offer strong support to those constructivists who had for a decade been arguing for the relevance and power of nonstate actors and global civil society. Without entering into the internecine debates about what constructivism is or is not, it is still possible to extract some core claims that make up its essence. Constructivists argue for the relative autonomy of ideas from material structures, and for the socially constructed nature of human institutions. In John Ruggie's influential summary, "Constructivists hold the view that the building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material; that ideational factors have normative as well as instrumental dimensions; that they express not only individual but also collective intentionality; and that the meaning and significance of ideational factors are not independent of time and place."⁸ This ontological stance leads to an empirical concern with a number of things neglected by nonconstructivist theories: principled action, nonstate actors, ideas, norms, discourse, and identity. It points to a reconceptualization of power, moving away from crude inferences from material capabilities toward a more social, contextual, and constitutive view of power with a greater role for legitimacy and ideas.

At one level, al-Qaeda's "constructivist turn" represents a rational adjustment to structural changes: the rise of satellite television and the Internet (Lynch 2006), the global, transnational nature of the perceived field of contention (Tarrow 2005), and the constricted material environment shaped by aggressive Western and Arab state counterterrorism operations. It also responds to organizational changes imposed by the increased American and global pressures that deprived al-Qaeda of a territorial base and that complicated its free movement across borders. The constructivist turn cannot be reduced to structural changes, however: not every actor would have responded in the same way to the structural pressures and opportunities. Bin Laden, Zawahiri, and other theoreticians of the jihad have developed a unique political practice that resonate with a constructivist understanding of the international system.⁹

Three caveats are in order. First, the novelty of the "constructivist turn" should not be exaggerated. Elements of a constructivist strategy can be found in earlier speeches and writings of al-Qaeda figures, and indeed the Islamist project itself is inherently constructivist in its embrace of the power of ideas. But I argue that those elements have become increasingly prominent as al-Qaeda has lost its territorial base as well as considerable amounts of material power. Second, this essay focuses primarily on al-Qaeda itself, and does not extend the analysis to other Islamist groups—a point to which I return in the concluding section. Finally, the claim that al-Qaeda is pursuing a constructivist strategy does not replace

or neglect attention to its terrorism or potential for violence but, rather, reinterprets that violence as part of a larger political strategy.

There also have been internal dissents from this constructivist turn, from hard men who doubted the value of such Islamist soft power. In his richly detailed account of internal jihadist arguments, Fawaz Gerges recounts a biting critique by Abu al-Walid Masri of al-Qaeda's leader: "bin Laden became a prisoner of his own public relations rhetoric and hyperbole....bin Laden enjoyed the limelight and exaggerated his strength and capabilities....[t]he hawks dismissed world, especially Western, public opinion as inherently hostile to Islam and Muslims."¹⁰ On another occasion, as Gerges recounts, "two leading senior operatives sent bin Laden a memo via Zawahiri voicing alarm at his obsession with public relations and the media"¹¹ Nevertheless, the "constructivist turn" has become a dominant theme in al-Qaeda's strategy.

Explaining the Constructivist Turn: Structural Factors

Some of the "constructivist turn" evolved for structural reasons. The first structural factor shaping al-Qaeda's constructivist turn has been the changing nature of the organization itself, from a relatively hierarchical and close-knit core to a more decentralized, diffuse network. Whatever al-Qaeda was before 9/11—a hierarchical unified organization with global reach, a loose collection of wildly divergent local groups temporarily brought together by a "base" in Afghanistan, a venture capitalist agency funding the best terrorist plans on the market—no longer exists. After the collapse of the Taliban, the escape of bin Laden and Zawahiri from Tora Bora, and years of intense multilateral counter-terrorism efforts, al-Qaeda has metamorphasized into a very different kind of creature—what Peter Bergen memorably called al-Qaeda 2.0. Without its physical "base," al-Qaeda's public role as an inspiration for Muslim agency became far more central to its *raison d'être*: it now had to assert its public leadership through media spectacle and rhetoric. By 2005, Fawaz Gerges described al-Qaeda as "a skeleton of an organization...reduced to an ideological label, a state of mind, and a mobilizational outreach program to incite attacks worldwide." The trend is toward decentralization, and to relatively autonomous action on the part of local groups (most dramatically in the case of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's organization in Iraq). For instance, when al-Qaeda webmaster Yusuf Ayiri was killed by Saudi security forces in May 2003, "rather than one successor, there were hundreds."¹² Terrorism identified as "al-Qaeda"-related is more often than not now carried out by independent groups inspired by al-Qaeda's message, rather than by a centrally directed organization. It is this al-Qaeda—a more virtual, diffuse organization lacking a clearly defined central base of operations—that made the "constructivist turn."

This changing organizational entity faced a structural change associated with the dramatic rise of satellite television and the Internet in Arab and Muslim politics, something that al-Qaeda's leaders understood and exploited quickly.¹³ The rise of a transnational Arabic language media allowed al-Qaeda to reach out to a regional field of contention in real time, in ways that simply would not have been available to earlier such organizations.¹⁴ As former CIA counterterrorism expert Michael Scheuer describes it, bin Laden "spent large amounts of money, time and imagination to build a world-class media and propaganda apparatus. Today, that apparatus is in full operation. Bin Laden and Zawahiri appear on and dominate the international media at times of their choosing."¹⁵ Fawaz Gerges argues that al-Qaeda's "media war is as important, if not more so, as their armed campaign. Bin Laden and Zawahiri know that their survival depends on gaining the support of Muslim public opinion."¹⁶

Zawahiri and bin Laden shared a recognition of the revolutionary significance of new media technologies, as sensational terror and a sophisticated media strategy allowed al-Qaeda "to speak with a voice out of all proportion to the small number of activists at its core."¹⁷ Zawahiri saw satellite television as a way past what he considered to be the failed strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood: "In an age of satellite television...international media attention must replace the patient, close work of recruitment through Islamic charity organizations that in the past had targeted potential sympathizers and militants. Television images of successful attacks, featuring hundreds of dead and wounded, would sow panic in enemy ranks while galvanizing the faithful and increasing their numbers. But above all these events would encourage martyrs to come forth and take on future suicide missions in the name of the Islamist cause."¹⁸ Bin Laden's indisputable charisma and carefully cultivated image proved a potent weapon, with his broadcasts coming to be major regional and international events.

It is important to specify the often misunderstood relationship between the Arab media and al-Qaeda carefully.¹⁹ Al-Jazeera has certainly been the favored outlet for al-Qaeda videotapes, partly because it was the only station with a bureau in Afghanistan in 2001 and partly because its mass Arab audience made it the best way for bin Laden to reach the Arab world. The Arab media landscape has changed dramatically in only a few years, however, with al-Jazeera losing the near-monopoly as a source for international news and opinion in the Arab world that it had enjoyed since 1998.²⁰ The Saudi-backed al-Arabiya, launched in February 2003, emerged as a serious competitor, running a strong second in many Arab markets and even supplanting al-Jazeera in some (such as Iraq). An ever-growing panorama of competing satellite television stations now ensures that the norm is diversity and competition rather than any kind of

stifling conformity. Furthermore, since May 2003 (when al-Qaeda attacked inside of Saudi Arabia), a significant portion of the Arab media has been engaged in an overt campaign against al-Qaeda and jihadist ideas. These stations offer an important outlet for jihadist outreach simply by covering the reality of their terrorist acts, whether in Iraq or around the world, even if none, to my knowledge, has ever aired one of the beheading videos so popular on jihadist Internet sites. But the fragmentation of the media landscape means that al-Qaeda can no longer rely on al-Jazeera's near universal reach and instead finds its messages refracted and interpreted in widely varying ways among even Arabic speaking audiences. And, as Peter Mandaville notes, the "emerging infrastructure—on the Internet and satellite television, in widely-circulated books, through major international conferences and research centers—of a countervailing effort by mainstream Islamic scholars to challenge al-Qaida's global rhetoric...in their minds, this community of shared knowledge and religious interpretation is explicitly designed as an antidote to bin Laden and the radical jihadis."²¹

If satellite television created one set of political opportunities for al-Qaeda, the Internet has created a very different set.²² For Steve Coll and Susan Glasser, "al-Qaeda has become the first guerrilla movement in history to migrate from physical space to cyberspace." This is more than a fortuitous conjuncture, in Coll and Glasser's telling: "the Web's shapeless disregard for national boundaries and ethnic markers fits exactly with bin Laden's original vision for al Qaeda, which he founded to stimulate revolt among the worldwide Muslim ummah."²³ Al-Qaeda-affiliated online forums, publications, videos, and audiotapes allowed it to formulate what Dale Eickelman has called "warm" ties among a far-flung body of Muslim readers ranging from the already committed to the merely curious.²⁴

Zarqawi's organization embraced the Internet even more fully than did bin Laden. Graphic hostage and beheading videos were distributed to online forums, allowing them to bypass television and directly reach the most dedicated jihadist sympathizers. This "gave Zarqawi the means to build a brand very quickly. . . [in order to] magnify the impact of their violence."²⁵ The production of the videos and their dissemination on the Internet were the point of these "made for TV events" rather than an afterthought. As al-Arabiya director Abd al-Rahman al-Rashed noted, the decapitation videos had been incredible public relations victories for al-Qaeda despite being shunned by the satellite television stations because "they were broadcast directly over the Internet to hundreds of thousands of youth who see and hear and read most of their information from it...most of the terrorist crimes are tied to the Internet as the preferred theater."²⁶ Taking this hostility to the satellite media even further, in the fall of 2005, Zarqawi's organization began releasing regular Internet news broadcasts, distributed on its Internet forums. As one

jihadist chat-room participant argued, “half the battle of the mujahideen is being waged on the pages of the Internet—the sole outlet for mujahideen media.”²⁷ In April 2006, Zarqawi made a rare personal appearance in a slickly produced video released to the Internet and that rapidly migrated onto satellite television.

Faisal Devji’s recent book *Landscapes of Jihad* makes the most explicitly constructivist case for the intimate connections between the mass media and al-Qaeda. For Devji, al-Qaeda today virtually is its media presence, with the universe of meanings and symbols circulating on the Internet and in the mass media constituting the very essence of a jihad fundamentally detached from any discrete actors. For Devji, “The role of mass media in the jihad goes further than mere influence. Instead the jihad itself can be seen as an offspring of the media, composed as it is almost completely of preexisting media themes, images, and stereotypes.”²⁸ He claims that “as a series of global effects the jihad is more a product of the media than it is of any local tradition or situation and school or lineage of Muslim authority. This is made explicit not only in the use of the mass media by the jihad, whose supporters refer to it constantly, but also in the numerous conversion stories that feature media.”²⁹ Devji’s account of the constitutive impact of the visual landscape offered by the global media is vivid: “From spectacular attacks to sundry communiqués and beheadings, the jihad’s world of reference is far more connected to the dreams and nightmares of the media than it is to any traditional schools of jurisprudence or political thought...For most Muslims, as for most people, the jihad site is experienced visually, as a landscape initially made available by way of international media and then redacted in conversation, posters, literature, art-work, and the like.”³⁰ Such a thoroughly constructivist account challenges the kind of “thin” constructivism advanced in this essay, suggesting the range of analyses made possible by constructivist theoretical engagement with such a rich topic as al-Qaeda and the jihad.

Explaining the Constructivist Turn: Agency, Ideas, and al-Qaeda’s Political Theory

These structural changes are necessary but not sufficient to explain al-Qaeda’s constructivist turn. Ideas matter, and al-Qaeda’s political thought represented a uniquely constructivist understanding of political practice and possibility. Al-Qaeda embraces the artificiality and constructed nature of the sovereign state so central to much constructivist theory. Its conception of power is fundamentally nonmaterial, with ideas assumed to carry autonomous power and with great emphasis placed on the importance of personal conviction and faith. It places great importance on the definition and contestation of norms—both regulative and constitutive—and on the articulation of a

distinctively normative mode of action. Its primary goal is the construction of a new, transnational and transstate identity based in Islam, to define the interests that follow from this identity, and to create transcendent norms that would establish a “logic of appropriateness” governing Muslim life. Its primary strategies in this are not only the use of sensational violence but also a sophisticated public and private outreach: from the global media, to innovative uses of the Internet, to intensely personal recruitment through religious and mosque networks that transform identity at the individual level. And although it rejects dialogue with the West, al-Qaeda is deeply enmeshed in ongoing intra-Islamist public arguments and understands their importance.³¹

The field of contention: One of al-Qaeda’s key conceptual innovations within Islamism was its reconceptualization of the field of contention from the local to the global.³² Through the mid-1990s, most Islamist action focused on particular states, with the secular autocratic existing regimes defined as the “Near Enemy” against which action should be directed. Moderate Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, attempted to work within the existing system, slowly cultivating an Islamic worldview among individuals and taking advantage of the political opportunities presented them (elections, newspapers, student elections). Radicals, such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, insisted on the need for violent, immediate change and launched local terrorist insurgencies. In both cases, despite ideological and even organizational linkages with their counterparts in other countries, the primary field of contention for these Islamists was the national state. Al-Qaeda challenged this national orientation by proposing a global field of contention, in which the only route to the hated “Near Enemy” was through its American patron. Although the structural changes noted here—along with the ever-growing involvement in Islamic politics of Muslim communities in Europe and elsewhere outside the Middle East—enabled this shift in conceptualization of the field of contention, it took the agency of al-Qaeda to globalize the field of jihadist contention in practice.

The international system: Taken to its fullest extension, al-Qaeda challenges not simply the United States, or local Arab regimes, but also the ontological status of the international system itself. Although bin Laden recognizes the power of states, he refuses to endow them with legitimacy as actors. In October 2001, bin Laden framed the struggle in religious, not nationalist, terms: “This battle is not between al-Qaeda and the US. This is a battle of Muslims against the global Crusaders.” For Devji, “this initial statement is important because Bin Laden argues that the jihad must not be described in the ready-made terms of political life...[he is] setting the terms in which the struggle is to be seen.”³³ Even as al-Qaeda seeks to transcend the state system from above, it also conceives of a central role for individuals working within transnational networks.

The Bush administration has argued that seizing a state such as Iraq is key to al-Qaeda's grand strategy: "Their stated objective is to drive the United States and coalition forces out of the Middle East so they can gain control of Iraq and use that country as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that stretches from Spain to Indonesia."³⁴ Daniel Benjamin and Steve Simon, former counterterrorism officials in the Clinton administration and otherwise fierce critics of Bush, offer a strikingly similar account: "a core tenet of al-Qaeda's strategy is that radical Islamists must gain control of a nation, from which they can expand the area controlled by believers. Holding a state, in their view, is the prelude to knocking over the dominoes of the world's secular Muslim regimes."³⁵ Fred Halliday reminds us that "al-Qaida's current status as an apparently free floating and stateless group...is for Osama bin Laden and his cohorts very much a second best."³⁶

But Faisal Devji counters that holding territory has become peripheral and secondary to al-Qaeda's political agenda: "the jihad is not concerned with political parties, revolutions or the founding of ideological states...the particular sites of these struggles are themselves unimportant, their territories being subordinated to a larger and even metaphysical struggle for which they have become merely instrumental."³⁷ Bin Laden himself, in his calls for a general withdrawal of real Muslims from the world of hypocrisy and their exertions on behalf of jihad, seems less concerned with seizing a state.³⁸ Although controlling a state might be one objective for al-Qaeda, it is tangential to its ultimate goal of transforming the identity and interests of the world's Muslims, and setting them in existential conflict with the West. Or, in the words of Salema Nemaat: "Osama bin Laden would rather keep al Jazeera on his side than win Saudi Arabia."³⁹ Iraq mattered for al-Qaeda primarily because America was there, offering it a potent focal point for the jihad and the chance to produce a seemingly endless parade of televised carnage.

Power: Al-Qaeda's theory of power is perhaps its most distinctively constructivist concept.⁴⁰ In contrast to rationalists (whether Realist or liberals) who locate power within material capacities of various kinds, al-Qaeda's understanding of power highlights the autonomous role of identity, ideas, and rhetoric. Faith, not simply material capabilities, plays a decisive role in al-Qaeda's concept of political power. Like Emmanuil Adler, al-Qaeda understands that "the imposition of meanings on the material world is one of the ultimate forms of power."⁴¹ Like Christian Reus-Smit, al-Qaeda sees political power as "deeply embedded in webs of social exchange and mutual constitution."⁴² Like the constructivist authors in a recent special issue of *Millennium*, al-Qaeda refuses a sharp

distinction between “hard” and “soft” power with the latter in a supporting role; instead, it sees ideational and material power as intimately connected and mutually constitutive.⁴³

Al-Qaeda’s theorists cast faith both as the ultimate source of power and as a key battlefield between the West and Islam. Zawahiri has argued that “the strongest weapon which the mujahideen enjoy—after the help and granting of success by God—is popular support from the Muslim masses in Iraq, and the surrounding Muslim countries.” This makes the battle for public opinion, and the battle over the definition of Islam, absolutely central to power relations: both an independent and a dependent variable, mutually constitutive in the truest constructivist sense. As Kepel put it, “bin Laden’s counter-offensive recognized that, under the right circumstances, rhetoric and satellite propaganda can be on equal footing with unmanned bombers and cruise-missiles.”⁴⁴

This is not to say that al-Qaeda scorns the conventional dimensions of power politics. Terrorism is seen as a way of evening the imbalance of power between Islam and the West. As bin Laden put it shortly after 9/11: “So as they kill us, without a doubt we have to kill them, until we obtain a balance of terror. This is the first time, in recent years, that the balance of terror evened out between the Muslims and the Americans; previously, the Americans did to us whatever they pleased, and the victim wasn’t even allowed to complain.”⁴⁵ Al-Qaeda goes to great efforts to raise money, and invests heavily in the recruitment and training of personnel. Its training videos and the Encyclopedia of Jihad show a frank, clear eyed concern for military techniques, scientific knowledge, and the like. There is little reason to believe that al-Qaeda would forego the opportunity to acquire weapons of mass destruction, or a territorial base, or even conventional military forces should such an occasion arise.

But ultimately al-Qaeda’s understandings of power focus more on the autonomous power of faith and identity than on strictly material concerns. Its political thought and practice has been shaped by the absence of such conventional material resources; and second, even it acquired such material resources, it would still have a distinctively Islamist understanding of the power of ideas and faith. Bin Laden put it like this: “God almighty said: ‘The believers fight for God’s cause, while those who reject faith fight for an unjust cause. Fight the allies of Satan: Satan’s strategies are truly weak.’ Second, we remind you that victory comes only with God. All we need to do is prepare and motivate for the jihad.”⁴⁶

Bin Laden claims not only that power ultimately derives from closeness to God but also that the West is aware of this and is targeting true Islam in response. American- and European-led reform initiatives, whether in education curricula or in the fostering of civil society, are seen as attempts to sever Muslims from their true source of power—faith. As bin

Laden argued, "The West today is doing its utmost to tarnish jihad and kill anyone seeking jihad. The West is supported in this endeavor by hypocrites. This is because they all know that jihad is the effective power to foil all their conspiracies."⁴⁷ Western ideas such as democracy or nationalism aim at the "paralysis of the powers of our umma through other means, like the deceptive idea of democracy."⁴⁸ Bin Laden cast Western policy as clearly aimed at eradicating Muslim identity, and therefore power: "The Americans' intentions have also become clear in their statements about the need to change the beliefs, curricula, and morals of Muslims in order to become more tolerant, as they put it. In clearer terms, it is a religious-economic war. They want the believers to desist from worshipping God so that they can enslave them, occupy their countries, and loot their wealth."⁴⁹

What the Muslim umma needed was not more material power, but rather the will to use it. If the Muslim world could unite, with its oil wealth and human resources, it would have all the material capabilities it needed: "Today, by the grace of God, our umma possesses enormous powers, sufficient to rescue Palestine and the rest of the Muslim lands. However these powers have been fettered and we must work to release them. For our umma has been promised victory. If it has been delayed, that is only because of our sins and our failure to help God."⁵⁰ The real obstacle was ideational, not material: the failure of Muslims to realize their true identity and act upon it. Public support, and individual faith, is a key component of power: "in the absence of this popular support, the Islamic mujahed movement would be crushed in the shadows, far from the masses who are distracted and fearful, and the struggle between the jihadist elite and the arrogant authorities would be confined to prison dungeons far from the public and the light of day. This is precisely what the secular, apostate forces that are controlling our countries are striving for."⁵¹

The jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan may have created a warped view of the importance of faith: according to Gerges, "the Afghan experience...went to bin Laden's head; he concluded that poorly armed but dedicated men can confront better-equipped adversaries."⁵² Bin Laden himself has frequently claimed that the defeat of the Soviet Union made him believe in the possibility of confronting America. For example, in October 2001, he told Taysir Allouni: "So the One God, who sustained us with one of His helping hands and stabilized us to defeat the Soviet empire, is capable of sustaining us again and of allowing us to defeat America on the same land, and with the same sayings. So we believe that the defeat of America is something achievable—with the permission of God—and it is easier for us...than the defeat of the Soviet Empire previously."⁵³

The same might follow from 9/11 itself, which to bin Laden offered “clear proof that this destructive usurious global economy that America uses, together with its military force, to impose unbelief and humiliation on poor peoples, can easily collapse.”⁵⁴ When looking at the United States, bin Laden was attentive to material reality but ultimately saw it as subordinate to the ideational as well: “We can conclude that America is a superpower, with enormous military strength and vast economic power, but that all of this is built on foundations of straw.”⁵⁵ Looking at the course of the jihad, bin Laden argued that “it has become clear to us during our defensive jihad against the American enemy and its enormous propaganda machine, that it depends for the most part on psychological warfare. It also depends on intense air strikes, which hide its most conspicuous weak points: fear, cowardice, and lack of fighting spirit among its troops.”⁵⁶ In his October 29, 2004, address, he marveled at the Bush administration’s self-defeating strategy: “It was easy for us to provoke this administration and lure it into perdition. All we had to do was send two mujahidin to the Far East to raise up a rag on which ‘al-Qaeda’ was written, and the generals came running. This inflicted human, financial, and political losses on America without them even achieving anything worth mentioning....We are continuing to make America bleed to the point of bankruptcy, by God’s will....It seems as if we and the White House are on the same team shooting at the United States’ own goal, despite our different intentions.”⁵⁷

Identity: Al-Qaeda is trying to bring forward the Muslim component of identity in order to restructure political reality. Bin Laden and Zawahiri’s rhetoric is replete with appeals to Muslims to awaken, to embrace their true identity and to act accordingly. Terrorism, and the ideational struggle that follows, is in large part aimed at awakening the Muslim identity of Arabs and Muslims. Zawahiri wrote that “the masses must become convinced that this battle, while it is taking place, involves every Muslim.”⁵⁸ Bin Laden similarly framed the issue in terms of identities transcending the nation-state: “I say that the battle isn’t between the al-Qaeda organization and the global crusaders. Rather, the battle is between Muslims—the people of Islam—and the global Crusaders.”⁵⁹

There is nothing obvious or natural about the Islamist identity proclaimed by al-Qaeda. To take this as the evocation of a deep, essentialist identity is to grant bin Laden victory in the single most important stage of constructing social reality. In fact, this appeal to identity is a radical act, demanding that actors from an enormous range of social and cultural settings both renounce their current identities and embrace a new one. Muslims around the world have long juggled multiple claims on their identity. Al-Qaeda, like other Islamists, advances a claim on identity which is radically detached from the very concept of the state, one in which every individual is directly and personally linked to a global umma

of believers. Just because Islamists declare the existence of a global Islamic umma—in which Islamic identity is the central and dominant aspect of every Muslim's identity—does not make it so. Al-Qaeda's rhetoric about a global Islamic identity aims at driving a self-fulfilling prophecy, constructing a collective identity rather than simply reflecting it.

This decades-long project to "Islamize" society from the bottom up is what gives resonance to al-Qaeda's discourse. Movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood differ profoundly with al-Qaeda on strategy, on doctrine, and on core normative beliefs. Moderates and radicals disagree intensely about political issues, about the value of democracy, about the legitimacy of violence, about the legitimacy of takfir, about the meaning of jihad, and so on. But where they agree is on the common project of constructing an Islamic identity that transcends all other aspects of personal and political identity.

Moderate and social Islamists have prepared the ground for al-Qaeda's invocation of Muslim identity through a long, patient project of reshaping personal identity.⁶⁰ Arab and Muslim worldviews have been patiently reworked through persuasion, socialization, and internalization of ideas about the way the world works. Al-Qaeda is rather peripheral to this ongoing project of constructing a global Islamic identity.⁶¹ As Peter Mandaville describes it, "Al-Qaida is not the only game in town in terms of the transnational forces competing for Muslim hearts and minds." Al-Qaeda is trying to cash in on someone else's project—and, in the case of Zawahiri, a project he himself rejected.⁶²

This appropriation of a well-developed Islamist project creates vulnerabilities as well as strengths for al-Qaeda. Few constructivists would now argue that a particular set of political interests necessarily follows from a given political or civilizational identity. The contestation of the interests that follow from any collective identity is a key site of political struggle, as those within a collective identity fought over definitions of shared interests.⁶³ This means that al-Qaeda must engage in public arguments with other Islamists and other Arab political forces over the definition of interests, rather than simply presume its leadership. When moderate and radical views converge on the latter's narrative—as they did over Israel during the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, or over the American invasion of Iraq in 2003—al-Qaeda can command far greater power than it could hope to muster for its own project. But this leaves al-Qaeda particularly vulnerable to those moderate Islamist figures who challenge its positions.

Al-Qaeda's Strategic Social Construction

Al-Qaeda's constructivist strategy follows the logic of what Sikkink and

Finnemore called "strategic social construction" at the level of the Islamic umma and at the level of individual consciousness. Strategy is aimed less at achieving specific immediate results than at reshaping the taken for granted terms of reference in Arab and Muslim societies. From this vantage point, the overthrow of Arab regimes or attacks against Western targets are the wrong metric for evaluating the strategy's success or failure. Instead, the metrics should be found in public discourse and the acceptance of narratives, arguments, and the credibility of various parties. As Jason Burke puts it, "al-Qaeda makes sense to many more people today than it did ten years ago. A previously fairly restricted discourse which is full of hate, prejudice and myth...is spreading."⁶⁴

Al-Qaeda's actions, both terrorism and rhetoric, can be conceptualized as a series of "arguments" directed primarily toward the Islamic world about the interests inherent to a Muslim identity. Its leaders are quite strategic and instrumental in their use of rhetoric and argument.⁶⁵ For instance, Zawahiri wrote in *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*: "The one slogan that has been well understood by the nation and to which it has been responding for the past fifty years is the call for the jihad against Israel. In addition to this slogan, the nation in this decade is geared against the U.S. presence. It has responded favorably to the call for the jihad against the Americans." Resonance with Arab and Muslims audiences matters more than doctrinal purity, which in turn places the utmost strategic importance on shaping that wide public consensus. Al-Qaeda's strategy targets the United States both because of a strategic analysis of its role in supporting the hated Arab regimes and also because the United States provides the best vehicle by which to reach a global Muslim public opinion.⁶⁶

Al-Qaeda terrorism is often aimed as much at the level of public discourse and debate: as an intervention in the Muslim public sphere aimed at defeating rival claimants to identity, and rival aspirants to leadership of the Islamic world. Both terrorist attacks and rhetoric are interventions in an ongoing Islamic debate about identity, interests, and strategy. Much of al-Qaeda's action is intended not to produce a specific response from its targets as to reshape the general atmosphere and content of the political public sphere. Its actions and its arguments are intended to win support for its own identity claims, and for its narrative linking that identity to a single, clear course of action. To again quote Ayman al-Zawahiri's *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, "The jihad movement must dedicate one of its wings to work with the masses, preach, provide services for the Muslim people, and share their concerns through all available avenues for charity and educational work....We must win the peoples' confidence, respect, and affection....It must be extremely careful not to get isolated from its nation or engage the government in the battle of the elite against the authority. We must not blame the nation for not responding or not living up to the task. Instead, we must blame ourselves for failing to

deliver the message, show compassion, and sacrifice.”

The logic of “strategic social construction” for al-Qaeda is powerfully demonstrated by the crisis over the publication of cartoons deemed offensive to Islam in a Danish newspaper in the fall of 2005. When there was little initial reaction to the cartoons, Internet activists and Islamist networks worked to publicize and mobilize outrage over their publication. In January 2006, a number of influential television Islamists took up the cause, calling for Muslim outrage and action. By early February, large-scale protests over the cartoons erupted around the Muslim world, setting in motion fierce public arguments about Islam and its relations with the West. The story dominated Arab and Islamic media for weeks, with attempts at dialogue and mediation floundering in the face of populist mobilization. The end result was an Arab and Muslim population more focused on its Islamic identity, and more inclined to view the West as hostile to that identity. Although al-Qaeda played little role in the initial mobilization, it stood as one of the chief beneficiaries of the crisis. When bin Laden released his first major statement in over a year, in April 2006, he lavished attention on the cartoons crisis as a leading example of the inevitability of a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West.

In contrast to mainstream Islamism, which routinely tries to engage with Western ideas about democracy or reform, jihadist public arguments are exclusively among their own, with little effort made to engage with interlocutors in the West.⁶⁷ Devji writes that “because ignorance and therefore false consciousness do not exist in the world of the jihad, neither does the liberal effort of persuasion. Unlike political movements in the past...the jihad’s votaries do not attempt to convert people to their vision of things.”⁶⁸ In 2004, Zawahiri argued that the “regimes are the wolf’s paws of the Zionist-Crusader West. Hence, dialogue with them through arguments, counterarguments, and peaceful action is useless. Besides, the attempts to change these regimes using their own laws and through their own parliaments is a violation of the sharia, because this requires recognizing the legality of these constitutions and laws, which God asks us to regard as blasphemous.”⁶⁹ And bin Laden rather straightforwardly declares that “there can be no dialogue with the occupiers except with weapons.”⁷⁰

Although al-Qaeda rejects dialogue with the West or with Arab regimes, it takes internal arguments among Islamists and Muslims as a central, not tangential, component of its strategy. Although these arguments over doctrine and strategy might once have been private matters, carried out face to face in secretive hideouts, now they are by necessity public. The decentralized, diffuse nature of al-Qaeda, the growing difficulty of private communications, and the goal of persuading mainstream and jihadi publics alike all force these arguments into the public sphere. The public nature of these arguments in turn imposes burdens of rhetoric and

argumentation on all actors, privileging some kinds of arguments over others, and at some level restrains actors from resorting simply to arguments from authority or from power. Some of these arguments take a theological form, as in the jihadist debates “over the conditions for permissible violence is therefore more than merely a conflict over ideas; it is a struggle over sacred authority—the right to interpret Islam on behalf of the Muslim community.”⁷¹ Others are tactical, as in very public disputes between Zarqawi and his jihadist mentor Abu Mohammed Maqdesi, or between Zarqawi and Ayman Zawahiri, over the best methods for achieving jihadist goals. Still others debate questions of identity, whether Muslim adversaries of the jihad can be declared non-Muslims, or whether jihadists themselves should be declared outside the Muslim umma. The Iraqi insurgency has generated tremendous internal argument and debate: “serious criticism has emerged from within jihadi ranks...the nub of the dispute centers on the killing of civilians, particularly Muslims, in suicide bombings. The nature of their arguments illustrate that the Achilles heel of the jihadi ideologues lies in their fractious and unstable justifications for the suicide attacks that intentionally target civilians.”⁷²

Perhaps the most important actors in these public arguments are respected, influential speakers which are not directly identified with either side. In March 2005, the respected Egyptian columnist Fahmy Howeydi expressed deep concern that the violence could lead to an outbreak of Sunni-Shia civil war, which would only serve to justify the continuation of the American occupation: “this has nothing to do with nationalist resistance....It is a form of terrorist crime which can not be justified in any way, and its criminal nature will never be changed by a statement or a fatwa issued by Abu Musab al Zarqawi condemning Shi’ites.” Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the leading Islamist face of al-Jazeera, condemned the 9/11 terrorist attacks almost immediately after they took place, and joined five other leading Islamic scholars in authorizing the participation of American Muslims in fighting against al-Qaeda.⁷³ Gilles Kepel argues that bin Laden was hurt by Qaradawi’s rejecting his claim that the United States was a legitimate target of defensive jihad. In 2004, Qaradawi’s condemnations of Zarqawi’s beheadings and hostage taking evidently had had some impact on the latter’s standing and strategy, leading him to denounce bitterly the “sultans of the airwaves” for “abandoning the mujahideen.”⁷⁴ “God’s curse on Qaradawi the American agent” was standard fare for jihadi chat rooms.⁷⁵

The rise of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has posed a major internal challenge to bin Laden and Zawahiri’s constructivist strategy.⁷⁶ For Zawahiri, the main battlefield is mainstream public opinion in the Arab and Muslim world, shaping the taken for granted and the narrative frame, which means that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or spreading democracy, would reduce al-Qaeda’s appeal, or undermine its narrative frame. Zarqawi has

no interest in such debates, or in reaching mass audiences. His target is galvanizing and organizing a base of already radicalized Islamists. Because Zarqawi and the new jihadists care less about the mainstream of Arab or Muslim opinion they place little priority on persuasion or on popularity. If the Amman bombing alienates two-thirds of Jordanians but inspires a few thousand individuals to join the jihad, then it has succeeded.

Zarqawi's purely strategic orientation rejects the key principles underlying Zawahiri and bin Laden's constructivist agenda, leading to very different modes of action. Both believe in spectacle and violence and the rough final goal, but have very different views of how to achieve them. For Zarqawi, power comes from the true mujahidin, who are closest to God, not from compromise or mobilization or persuasion of the masses: express the truth and hypocrites will be exposed. His actions and rhetoric aim to inspire fear among ordinary Muslims, not identification—because nonjihadist Muslims are hypocrites, he has no use for them: "We are fighting so that Allah's word becomes supreme and religion is all for Allah. Anyone who opposes this goal or stands in the way of this aim is our enemy and will be a target for our swords.... Jihad will be continuous, and will not distinguish between Western infidels or heretic Arabs."⁷⁷ In June 2005, Zarqawi lashed out against everyone who condemned the killing of the Algerian diplomats, saying that "we don't care about your condemnations because we are closer to God than you." Zarqawi's attacks on Arab diplomats demonstrate a consistent pattern of strategic rather than communicative rationality: imposing costs on Arab regimes for being involved in Iraq, with little effort to persuade.

A Constructivist Research Agenda

What follows for theory or for practice from describing al-Qaeda's strategy as constructivist? This concluding section lays out a constructivist research agenda, highlighting points of convergence with recent constructivist theory and suggesting paths for theoretical and empirical research.

Political thought: Constructivists generally argue that ideas matter in a far richer sense than usually embraced by rationalist theories. This places a greater burden on the constructivist to understand Islamist political thought and political discourse on its own terms. In a 2005 article, I focused on Islamist conceptions of "dialogue," comparing it to the concepts employed in Western political philosophy and contemporary International Relations theory. In depth analysis of al-Qaeda's conception of power, norms, agency, and structure, building on or challenging the account offered here, would seem to be essential for a good constructivist explanation.

Rationality and modes of action: Constructivists have made important advances in exploring different conceptions of rationality: strategic, normative and communicative; instrumental and expressive.⁷⁸ How do such theories help account for al-Qaeda's mode of action? Can al-Qaeda's actions be described effectively through these models, or can it help constructivists formulate new categories of social action? Analysts working outside the constructivist tradition have struggled to make sense of al-Qaeda's rationality. Benjamin and Simon wrote in 2002 that "what appears to be senseless violence actually made a great deal of sense to the terrorists and their sympathizers, for whom this mass killing was an act of redemption" and that al-Qaeda's actions did "reflect a strategy with intelligible goals and methods," but that ultimately al-Qaeda lived "in a world where cause and effect lose all meaning."⁷⁹ Faisal Devji similarly questions whether an instrumental rationality guides al-Qaeda: "for an instrumental politics of this sort to be possible, after all, some proportion between its causes and effects is required, whereas the global consequences of jihad have outstripped its local causes, and so have exceeded its intentions, to take on a life of their own well beyond the politics of control."⁸⁰ Many others have countered with rational reconstructions of al-Qaeda's strategy, on the part of the central leadership if not individual suicide terrorists. A constructivist research agenda could both explain al-Qaeda's logic of action and use this understanding to enrich existing theoretical accounts.

Strategic social construction: This article has argued that strategic social construction—actions oriented toward shaping the background beliefs and norms of international politics—is at the core of al-Qaeda's strategy. As a "norm entrepreneur," bin Laden is attempting to convince a critical mass of Arabs and Muslims to embrace a new identity and its attendant norms, interests, and strategies. The ultimate goal is the background assumptions of political life, the underlying narrative and identities that give meaning to every day political events and that establish the context for strategic bargaining and moral argumentation alike.⁸¹ But such a normative context is never fixed permanently, and is open to challenge and reinterpretation through ongoing framing struggles. As national publics responded to local terror attacks with revulsion, for example, shifting the frame from "Islam against the West" to "extremists perverting true Islam" dramatically changes the normative-political equation. Constructivism should have policy-relevant advice for those trying to construct a norm against terror, as well as for those trying to frustrate attempts to construct a normative environment receptive to terrorism (that its insights should equally be useful to the other side is a normatively uncomfortable reality).

Cultural contexts: What is the relationship between the patient restructuring of society from below pursued by groups such as the Muslim

Brotherhood and al-Qaeda's constructivist strategy? Even where moderate Islamists actively oppose al-Qaeda's terrorist methods or its political goals, their decades of efforts have clearly shaped the normative and political environment. The Muslim Brotherhood, Arab regimes, and the United States are each in their own way promoting antijihadist forces in the media and beyond. The field of Islam is therefore crowded with actors embodying different political theories, different strategies, and different priorities. A constructivist research agenda should theorize this entire field, exploring their interrelations, conflicts, and synergies—both to shed light on Islamism today and for comparative insights into similarly crowded transnational fields of contention. As Richard Price put it, "Cultural contexts are not simply found but are made through the politics of activism."⁸² Sikkink and Finnemore argue that "Norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community."⁸³ This cultural context, Rodger Payne argues, "almost certainly matters more than the content or framing of specific messages."⁸⁴ In this case, the agents are not so much al-Qaeda as they are Islamist activists working to Islamize society over a long period. Constructivist research should explore the relationship between these two very different strategies of normative action: the Muslim Brotherhood's slow, patient, process of norm-building from below and al-Qaeda's dramatic, violent galvanization from above. Beyond the Islamic world, what does this relationship say for more general theories of normative change and social action? This also should have policy relevance. For instance, if it is the case that external pressure on identity triggers defensiveness, and strengthens al-Qaeda's case that the West targets Muslim identity, should the United States avoid directly targeting "Islam" as the problem in order to avoid triggering defensive identity discourses?

Moral arguments: Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink offer three pathways for the development of norms: instrumental adaptation and strategic bargaining, moral consciousness raising, and institutionalization and habituation.⁸⁵ Of these, moral consciousness raising may be the pivotal stage in al-Qaeda's strategy. Although it may seem odd to talk about al-Qaeda as a "moral" actor, it clearly views itself as such and is actively engaged in both appealing to Muslim morality and constructing new moral norms for Muslims. Al-Qaeda employs a distinctly moral rhetoric, equating faith and virtue with a specific political course of action. This moral argument directly competes with Western moral argumentation, challenging its alleged double-standards and hypocrisy; in a video aired on al-Jazeera in January 2006, for example, Zawahiri pointedly referred to revelations about American use of white phosphorous in Iraq and secret prisons around the world for interrogating suspected terrorists in order to deflate American moral arguments. These moral arguments have been called "normative power politics," where "states seek, through rhetoric and

diplomacy, to publicly delegitimize weapons that are perceived to give the adversary a power advantage."⁸⁶ The definition of norms of appropriateness involves public argument, inflected by power but not reducible to it. Constructivism should offer a guide to the politics of moral argument at this level, and its relationship with strategic outcomes.⁸⁷

Cascades and tipping points: Sikkink and Finnemore describe the life cycle of a norm as "norm emergence," "norm cascade leading to broad acceptance," and then finally "internalization." 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks could be seen as attempt to trigger such a norm cascade. What can constructivism contribute to understanding the prospects for such a norm cascade in the Islamic world? What does the experience of the "war of ideas" since 9/11 tell us about existing theories of norm cascades? One important rationalist argument, for instance, is that people often form their opinions based on their perception of the prevailing distribution of opinion. Should the distribution of public arguments change (more pro-American voices in the media, more pro-Islamist voices in the media), individuals will reorient their own publicly expressed views in response. The introduction of voices into the public sphere could thus in principle set off a "cascade" leading to a sudden and dramatic reversal of seemingly entrenched views. This cascade logic has been an important, if untheorized, element of American public diplomacy efforts. The creation of Arabic-language radio and television stations, along with Bush's pro-democracy rhetoric and the violent shock of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, was meant to insert pro-American voices and perspectives into an Arab media environment presumably dominated by anti-American views. Such rationalist views generally tend to underestimate the role of identity and preexisting narratives, however. A constructivist research agenda should explore both theoretically and empirically this logic of normative cascades.

Socialization and identity: Jeffrey Checkel defines socialization as the point at which "an agent switches from following a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness."⁸⁸ Rather than calculate whether or not terrorism would be instrumentally useful, it would simply be rejected as morally wrong (if the antiterrorist norm had been consolidated) or accepted as an appropriate way to act in the world as it currently exists (had al-Qaeda's frame been consolidated). As Tannenwald argues, where this takes place "one should expect to see identity and self-interest defined in ways that increasingly take the taboo for granted. That is, the process of norm creation does not simply change the incentives for behavior (the rationalist view); it transforms the identity and interests of the actors themselves (the constructivist view)." A recent special issue of *International Organization* dealt with questions of socialization and persuasion in various institutional contexts (primarily Europe): What insights might be useful for evaluating the prospects of success for al-Qaeda, other Islamists, or Westernizers?

Conclusion

This essay has argued that al-Qaeda has taken a constructivist turn, with its grand strategy aimed ultimately at “strategic social construction.” But, as argued earlier, al-Qaeda is only one actor in a very crowded field of contention. The recent controversy over the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed illustrates the extent to which unforeseen events can suddenly radicalize the political atmosphere. Although al-Qaeda itself should not be credited with triggering the cartoons crisis, the unfolding of events has followed its constructivist strategy to the letter. Both Western and Arab media have largely framed the conflict around a “clash of civilizations” motif, greatly strengthening al-Qaeda’s agenda of defining Muslim identity around such monolithic and mutually exclusive identities. By striking on a deeply symbolic front, the crisis heightens the salience of the kinds of ideas and emotions most conducive to driving ordinary Arabs and Muslims into a more radical narrative of conflict and confrontation. The availability of these frames, and their resonance, suggests that al-Qaeda has considerable success over the last half decade in reshaping the narratives, identities, and taken-for-granted of Arab and Muslim political life. The violence of some of the responses—even in the face of calls by figures such as Qaradawi for “rational” rage rather than violence—shows the difficulty that moderate Islamists can have in controlling the dynamics set in motion by their Islamizing project. A constructivist research agenda should be well placed to analyze not only al-Qaeda’s strategy but also this broader cultural context and its long-term political implications.

Notes

1. I surveyed eight leading theoretical IR journals and the *American Political Science Review* between 2002 and 2005. Of 927 total articles, only 32 (3.5%) dealt with themes even loosely related to al-Qaeda, Islamism, or terrorism—and most of those 32 dealt generally with terrorism issues rather than with Islamism or al-Qaeda per se.
2. But for recent efforts, see the special issue of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (49, no. 2, April 2005), “The Political Economy of Transnational Terrorism,” edited by Peter Rosendorff and Todd Sandler.
3. Poststructuralists have been better represented: Zaheer Kazmi, “Discipline and power: interpreting global Islam,” *Review of International Studies* 30 (2004), 245–254; Richard Devetak, “The Gothic scene of international relations: ghosts, monsters, terror and the sublime after September 11,” *Review of International Studies* 31 (2005), 621–643; Anna Agathangelou and L.H.M. Ling, “Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2004), 21–50.

4. But see Fiona Adamson, "Global Liberalism Versus Political Islam: Competing Ideological Frameworks in International Politics," *International Studies Review* 7 (2005), 547–569.

5. Tawiq Ribahi, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, January 3, 2006. The Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/>.

6. Bissam Baddarin, "Al-Qaeda draws up its working strategy to the year 2020," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, March 11, 2005, p. 8; see Stephen Ulph, "Al-Qaeda's Strategy Until 2020," in *Terrorism Focus* 2, no. 6 (March 17, 2005).

7. Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005): 74.

8. John Gerard Ruggie, "What makes the world hang together? Neo-utilitarianism and the social constructivist challenge." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998), p. 879.

9. Marc Lynch, "Trans-National Dialogue in an Age of Terror," *Global Society* 19 (2005), 5–29, for an argument that Islamism is fundamentally constructivist in its orientation.

10. Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 196.

11. Gerges 197.

12. Stephen Coll and Susan B. Glasser, "Terrorists turn to the web as base of operations," *Washington Post*, August 7, 2005: A01.

13. Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001).

14. Gary Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age* (London: Pluto Press 2003); also see David Martin Jones and M.L.R. Smith, "Greetings from the cybercaliphate: some notes on homeland insecurity" *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2005), 925–950.

15. "Can Al-Qaeda endure beyond bin Laden?" *Terrorism Focus* II, 20, October 31, 2005.

16. *The Independent*, October 24, 2005.

17. Gilles Kepel, *The War For Muslim Minds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005): 108.

18. Kepel, pp. 72–73.

19. Marc Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Media Strategies," *The National Interest* (Spring 2006), pp. 51–56.
20. Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
21. Peter Mandaville, "Toward a virtual caliphate," *Yale Global Online*, 27 October 2005. <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=6416>.
22. "The Internet and Islamists and the Media Jihad," episode of *Behind the News*, al-Jazeera, aired on August 14, 2005, featuring Diya Rashwan and Mohamed Binat.
23. Coll and Glaser, "Terrorists turn to the web."
24. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age*.
25. Karen J. Greenberg, ed., *Al Qaeda Now: Understanding Today's Terrorists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 124.
26. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 18, 2005.
27. A communique on the al-Hesbah forum, Nov 14, as quoted by Stephen Ulph, *Terrorism Focus* II (22), November 29, 2005.
28. Devji 88.
29. Devji 87.
30. Devji 90–91.
31. Lynch, "Trans-National Dialogue in an Age of Terror" (2005).
32. Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
33. Devji, 75–76.
34. Bush speech to Woodrow Wilson Center, December 14, 2005, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/12/20051214-1.html>.
35. Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 134.
36. Fred Halliday, "A transnational umma: reality or myth?" *Open Democracy*, October 7, 2005.
37. Devji, 27.
38. All bin Laden speeches, unless otherwise noted, quoted from Bruce Lawrence, *Messages to the World* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 229–230.

39. Greenberg 2005, 76.

40. For a recent overview of constructivist thinking on power, see Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics," *International Organization* 59 (2005), pp. 39–75.

41. Emmanuel Adler, "Constructivism," in *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002): 103

42. Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order* (London: Polity, 2004): 41

43. Stephen Lukes, "Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds," *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005), 477–493; also see Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft," *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005), 583–612, and Steffano Guzzini, "The Concept of Power: a constructivist analysis," *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005), 495–521.

44. Kepel, *War for Muslim Minds*, 119.

45. Osama bin Laden, tape aired on al-Jazeera October 7, 2001, in Lawrence 114.

46. Bin Laden, February 11, 2003, in Lawrence 181.

47. In Lawrence 218.

48. In Lawrence, 191.

49. Bin Laden, January 4, 2004, in Lawrence 214.

50. Bin Laden, February 14, 2003, in Lawrence 190.

51. Zawahiri, July 2005.

52. Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 84.

53. Bin Laden, in Lawrence 109.

54. Bin Laden, December 200, in Lawrence 150.

55. Bin Laden, in Lawrence 195.

56. Bin Laden, February 11, 2003, in Lawrence 181.

57. Bin Laden, February 11, 2003, in Lawrence 181.

58. As quoted by Kepel 99.

59. Bin Laden, October 7 2001, in Lawrence 108.

60. Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamism* (2003); Carrie Rosefsky-Wickham,

Mobilizing Islam (Columbia University Press 2001).

61. Peter Mandaville, "Toward a virtual caliphate," *Yale Global Online*, 27 October 2005. <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=6416>.

62. Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad Organization rejected the Muslim Brotherhood's patient, society-building approach, and he himself penned the anti-MB pamphlet "Bitter Harvest," condemning their willingness to work within existing political institutions.

63. Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

64. Jason Burke, "Al Qaeda after Madrid." *Prospect Magazine (UK)*, June 2004.

65. Thomas Risse, "Let's Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54 (2000), 1-39

66. Christopher Henzel, "The origins of al-Qaeda's ideology," *Parameters* 35, no. 1 (2005), pp. 69-81.

67. Lynch 2005.

68. Devji 105.

69. Zawahiri, April 24, 2004 video, as broadcast on al-Arabiya (FBIS).

70. Bin Laden, in Lawrence 217.

71. Quentin Wiktorowicz and Jon Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11." *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 2 (2003), 76-92, quote at 81.

72. Bernard Haykel, "Jihadi discord over the War in Iraq." *The World Today*, September 2005.

73. Charles Kurzman, "Pro-US Fatwas," *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 3 (2003), p. 159.

74. Muniq Shafiq, in *al-Hayat*, December 2004.

75. Quote from the Farouq board, September 28, 2005: <http://www.al-farouq.com/vb/showthread.php?t=2143>.

76. Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Media Strategies."

77. As quoted by Murad al-Shishani, *Terrorism Monitor*, November 17, 2005.

78. Alexander Wendt and James Fearon, "Rationalism and

