

## 6 : Global Jihad – or Islamic insurgency

*The appeal of radical Islam in Afghanistan*

*Afghanistan as a global cause*

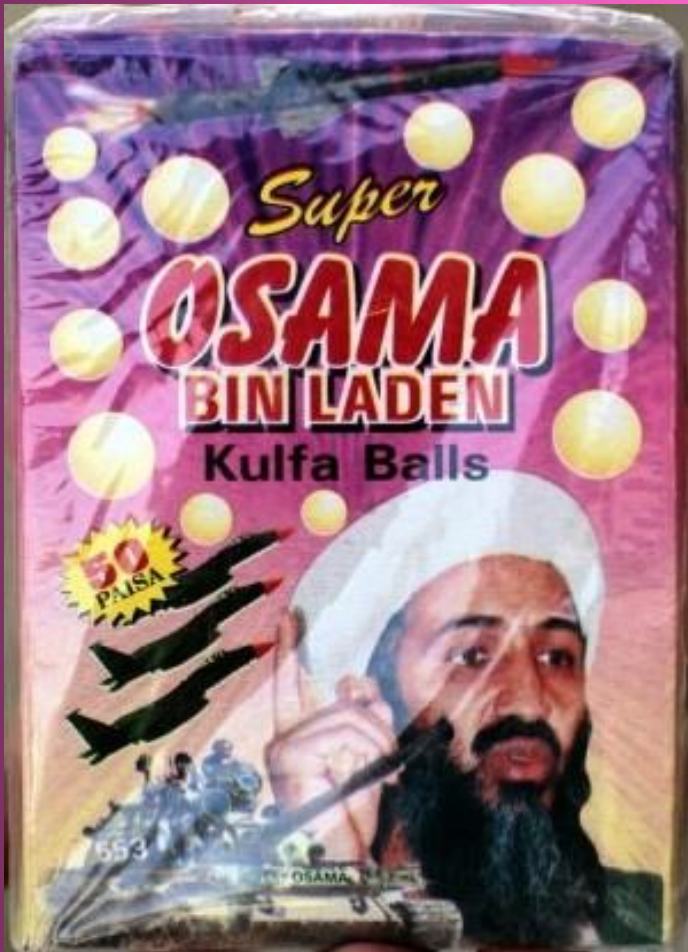
*The Taliban, Al Qaeda and Islamic State*

*Western perceptions*

Required reading: Osama Ben Laden video message to the American People, 'The Solution', Sept 2007.

Recommended reading: Osama Ben Laden: Full Text of Letter to the American People, 2002

Devji, Faisal: The Terrorist in Search of Humanity; Salafist online publications.





**A familiar narrative  
in global popular  
culture**



Masyaf castle, seat of the  
Assassins (near Hama)



Roots in Islamic Culture: the right  
to rise against an unjust ruler







# The story of 9/11 as told on a West Bengal pat: a universal story





# Roots of Al Qaeda: in Saudi Arabia



*Ikhwan, Saudi Arabia, 1911*

**The capture of the Haram El Sharif in Mecca, 1979, by Juhayman al Otaibi and his followers**







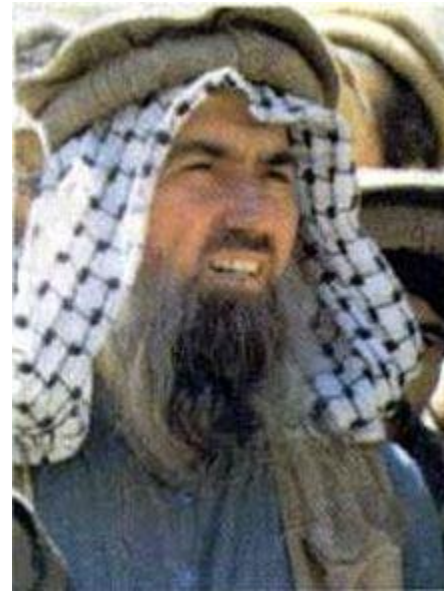
SAUDI BINLADIN GROUP





## The Genesis of Modern Jihad

- Popular discontent in Saudi Arabia with rulers' corruption and pro-US policies
  - Palestinian problem, betrayal by Egypt and other Arab League countries
  - Revolution in Iran leading to theocracy
  - Opportunity to fight in Afghanistan
  - Support by Saudi royal family, CIA, ISI, Mossad and others
  - Influence of Sayyed Qutb (intellectual father of the Muslim Brotherhood)
  - Training and strengthening in Afghanistan, fighting with the mujahidin
- The mujahidin: 1960s-70s phenomenon, inspired by Muslim Brotherhood. Islamic resistance (within the state)*
- New theatres of jihad: Kashmir, Algeria, Somalia, Bosnia, Chechnya, Palestinian intifada... a pattern emerges, and the network expands



*Abdallah  
Azzam,  
Palestinian  
'Godfather of  
Global Jihad'*

## The Rise of Al Qaeda

- Early years in Afghanistan
- Saudi Arabia, Sudan 1992-96
- First major action: 1998 bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania
- 2000: Attack on USS Cole in Yemen's territorial waters
- 2001: Twin Towers
- 2003: AQI formed by Zarqawi (later disowned by AQ)



# Al Qaeda and the Islamic Establishment



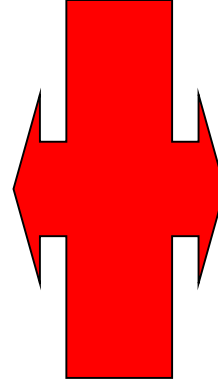
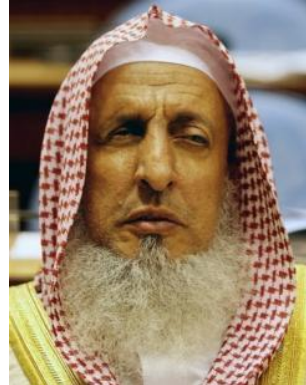
Grand Mufti of Riyadh Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh:  
“Gross crimes and sinful acts” (15 Sep 2001)

*“Al-Qaeda’s importance in the long run lies not in its pioneering a new form of networked militancy (...) but in its fragmentation of traditional structures of Muslim authority within new global landscapes”*  
(Faisal Devji, ‘Landscapes of the Jihad’)



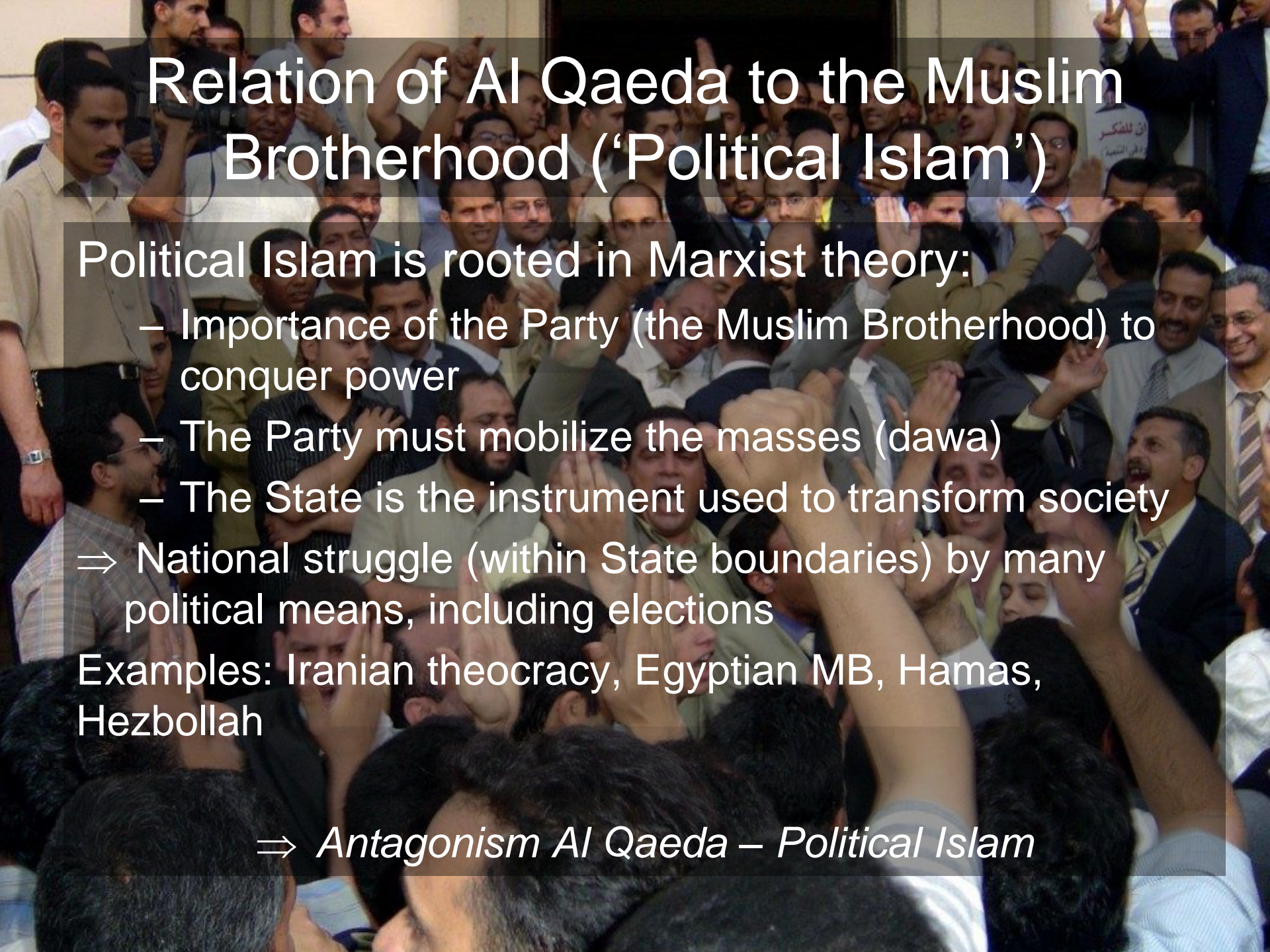
# Effects of 9/11 on Global Islam

- Islam becomes a global political force (no longer confined to own region)
- Islamic establishment dethroned by young upstarts 'out of nowhere'



- Islamic establishment aligns closer with Western powers for preservation of the status quo





# Relation of Al Qaeda to the Muslim Brotherhood ('Political Islam')

Political Islam is rooted in Marxist theory:

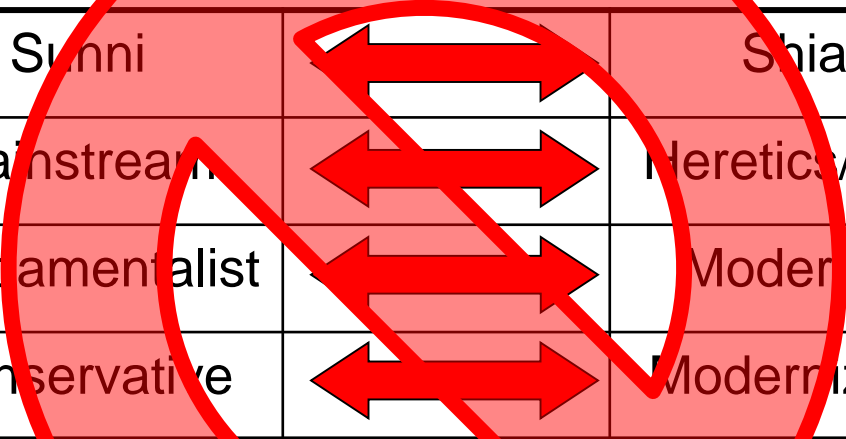
- Importance of the Party (the Muslim Brotherhood) to conquer power
  - The Party must mobilize the masses (dawa)
  - The State is the instrument used to transform society
- ⇒ National struggle (within State boundaries) by many political means, including elections

Examples: Iranian theocracy, Egyptian MB, Hamas, Hezbollah

⇒ *Antagonism Al Qaeda – Political Islam*



# Al Qaeda within Islamic dialectics



The diagram consists of a 2x2 grid with a large red 'X' overlaid on it. The grid is divided into four quadrants by a vertical line and a horizontal line. The top-left quadrant is labeled 'Sunni', the top-right 'Shia', the bottom-left 'Fundamentalist', and the bottom-right 'Modernizing'. In the center of the grid, there are four horizontal double-headed arrows, one in each row, indicating a relationship or dialectic between the two columns. The 'X' is formed by two diagonal lines crossing in the center of the grid.

Sunni		Shia
Mainstream		Heretics/Sufi
Fundamentalist		Moderate
Conservative		Modernizing

Al Qaeda is a heretical/syncretic movement that blows up the previously known oppositions in Islam

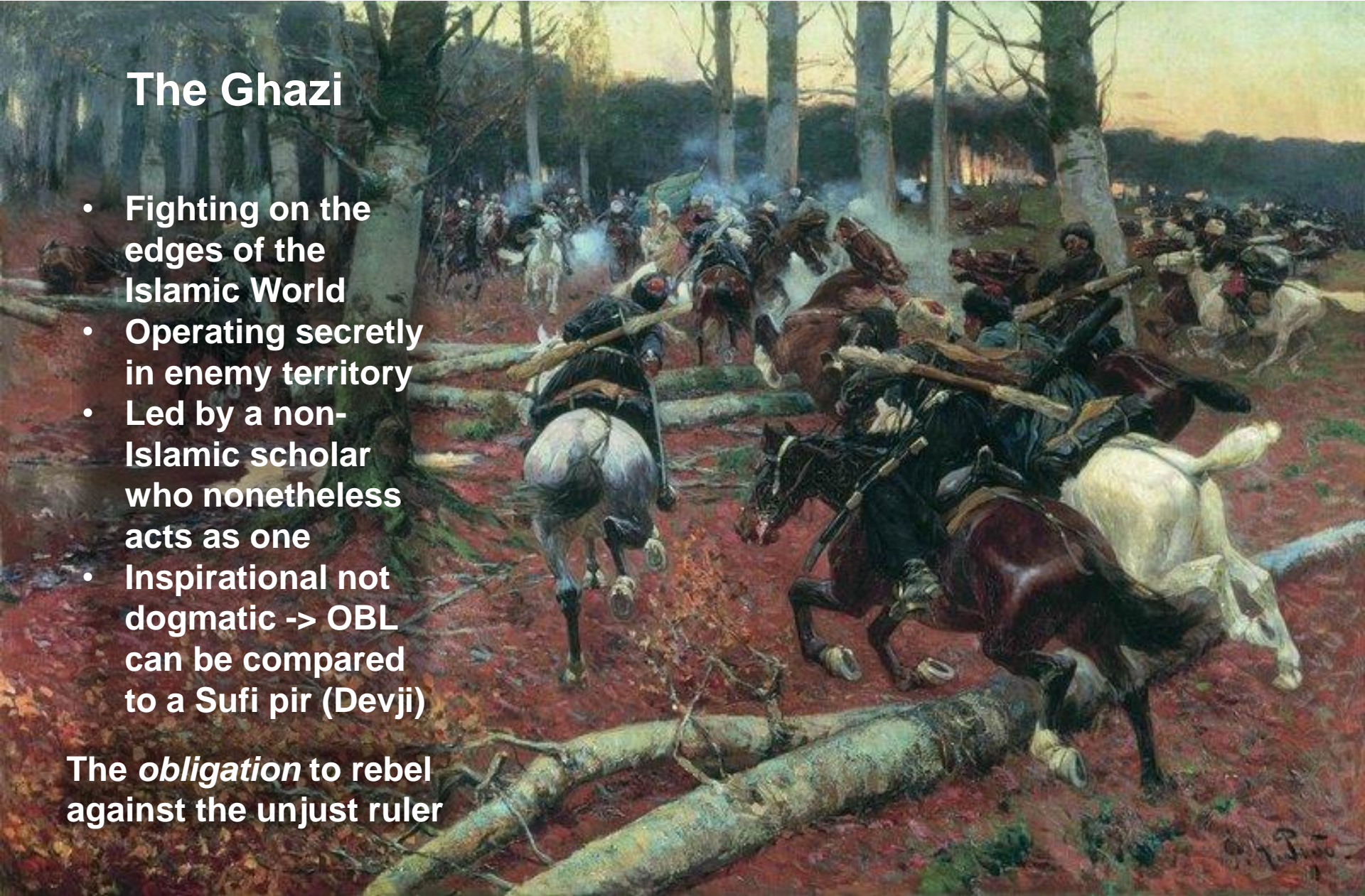


# Insurgency within the Islamic tradition

## The Ghazi

- Fighting on the edges of the Islamic World
- Operating secretly in enemy territory
- Led by a non-Islamic scholar who nonetheless acts as one
- Inspirational not dogmatic -> OBL can be compared to a Sufi pir (Devji)

The *obligation* to rebel against the unjust ruler





# Geopolitics of Islamic Insurgency

Emerged in the interstice between the West and the Islamic world

Tactical goal: undermine regimes in the Middle East

Local causes used as stepping stones

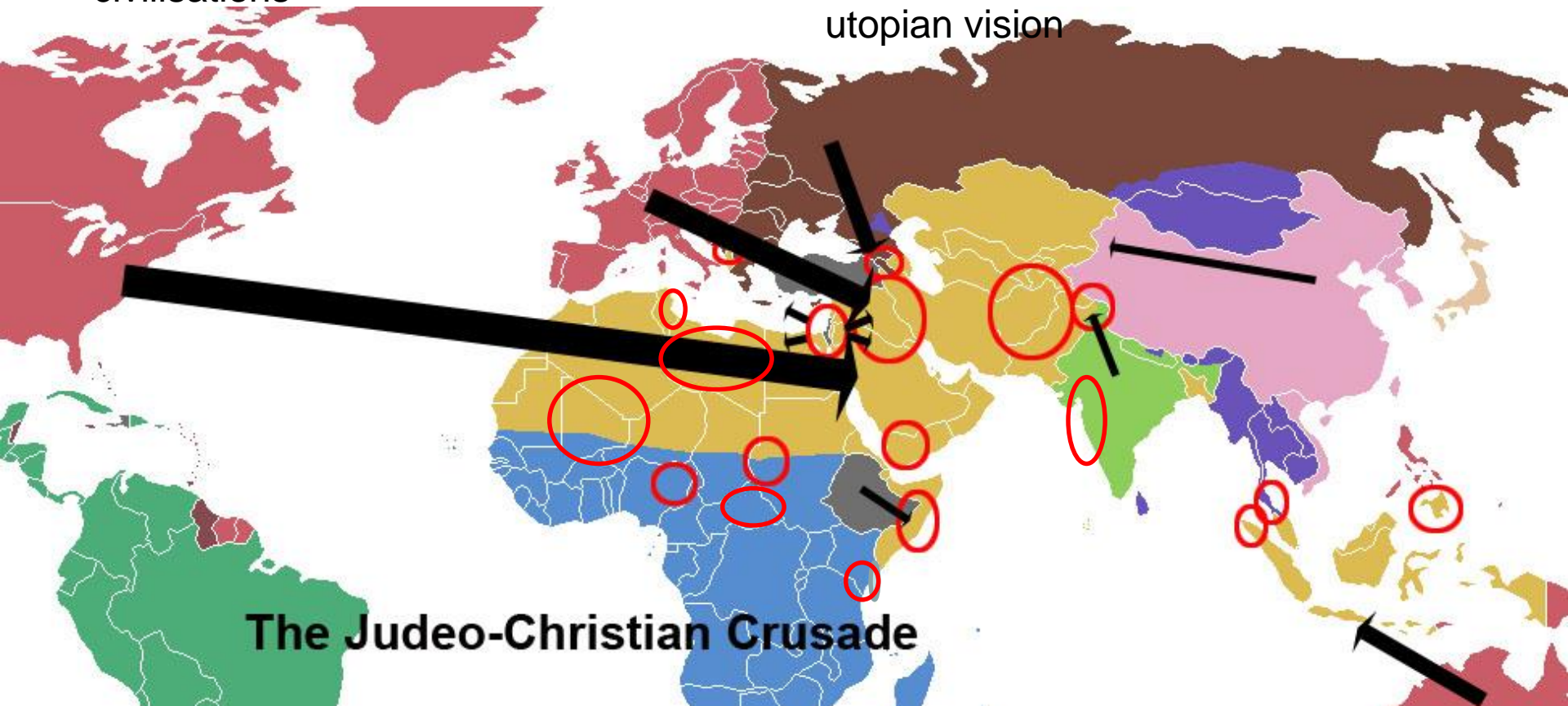
Strategic objective: unifying the Islamic 'umma' to win the clash of civilisations

Jihad is de-territorialized, of global scope

Opponents: the Judeo-Christian 'crusaders' and their local allies (not religions)

Similar to other global protest movements (environment, human rights) in its form:

- a network based on common values,
- without clear plan or alternative, only a utopian vision



# Al Qaeda's message to the West (as extracted from Osama's texts)

You don't act according to your own principles and laws

You elect your leaders democratically and are thus responsible for their acts

You are responsible for the Holocaust and other massacres of civilians, not we

You are cynical about freedom, democracy, human rights and equality



Your media distort the truth and lie

You pervert your principles for your material benefit

You are hostage to the corporations which benefit from the war

You have no right to rule the world

You are destroying the planet

You deny us the right to defend ourselves

You have lost all sense of honour and dignity

You should revolt against the capitalist-'democratic' system that exploits you

**You should embrace Islam**



# Who are the targets of OBL's messages, and did he reach them?

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla



bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla

bla bla bla  
**Islam**

# Popular perceptions of AQ/ISIS in the Islamic World

**Sympathy among 5 – 10% of the population? Which groups?  
Politicized young people connected to the internet?**

**A band of lunatics who *don't* represent 'our' Islam. Deluded heretics.  
Assassins killing other Muslims.**

**A creation by the CIA to ensure global US domination (or AQ and  
ISIS may be unaware that they help Western imperialism)**

**The main cause for the West's fear of, and attack on, the Islamic  
world: racism, visa problems, continued subjugation etc.**

**In Afghanistan and among many other non-Arab Muslims : AQ and  
ISIS are arrogant Arabs**

**AQ and ISIS have monopolized and delegitimized Islamic resistance**

**⇒ To which extent are AQ and ISIS embedded in local societies? Or  
are they a truly global phenomenon, a kind of poison secreted by  
the Western system of global governance?**



# From Al Qaeda to Islamic State

Islamic State = successor to AQ in Iraq/Zarqawi, Baathist organizers  
Al Qaeda was ineffective in accommodating sympathizers. IS, in contrast, made space for them by establishing a territory and a functioning state with own income, governance systems and ideology, and a powerful military drive

Main target of AQ: kufr Muslim states; main target of IS: Western system of global dominance

Issues of competing demands of loyalty by AQ and ISIS

*Is the West fighting terrorism or an Islamic insurgency???*

# The nature of the Islamic State

Erasing borders traced in the Arab world by European imperial powers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.





## Evolution of propaganda styles and messages



*Jordanian pilot confronted with the result of his aerial bombardment – [ISIS propaganda video](#), 22'34", 2014-15*

# Culture of the Islamic State



Culture is seen as an accretion, over the ages, of layers of filth over the true message of Islam – not any specific culture, but culture **generally**



# KHILAFAH WILL TRADITION

Al Qaeda, and definitely Islamic State, seem more rooted in global pop culture than in Islamic theology.

This explains why their Salafist claims sound spurious to most ulama

However, the success of IS among young Muslim worldwide is forcing the Islamic establishment to review its approach – effort to piggyback on the wave of Islamic insurgency by Gulf monarchies, evident from 2011 onward.

IS derives its legitimacy from having established a territorial entity, but most strongly from its resistance against what many people see (also non-Muslims) as a deeply unjust Western global system.

IS does not seek a sustainable system, but is eager to bring about an apocalypse; **CULTURE OF DEATH vs CULTURE OF LIFE** – false dichotomy?



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# Some perspectives on ISIS

- Edgar Morin: we must regenerate our own Western culture
- Tahar Ben Jalloun: the West's support of fundamentalism vs democracy has created this monster, which is not Islamic at all. 126 Sunni experts, in an open letter to Al Baghdadi, use purely religious arguments to condemn IS
- Olivier Roy: new Salafism born out of destruction of Islamic culture (also by Saudi Arabia) and rootlessness of Islamic youth in the West. We have to help Islam reculturalize, not proscribe it.
- Regis Debray: we must assume our own cultural heritage, don't be so afraid, defend our 21<sup>st</sup> century against the Middle Ages. Laugh. Others: it's the fault of the left, the right, the voile, etc. Also Arabs in Paris, defending the French esprit
- Geopolitical and historical explanations, gravitating around the West's politics in the ME over the last 100 years, notably the invasion of Iraq in 2003.
- Dounia Bouzar's anthropological findings: 80% of people leaving to fight in the ME have not religious or immigration background; idealists looking for a cause, recruited through internet
- Gilles Kepel: 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of jihadists, 'le djihad de proximite', rhizomatique
- Gerard Chaliand: communication war, war of ideas
- Many experts: it's the fault of Saudi Arabia and our support to the Kingdom



# Western cultural limitations in dealing with the Global Jihad

- Confusion of jihadists with 'evil' (religious obfuscation) makes W mythomaniac/hysteric and unaware of reality.
- The emotional appeal of the struggle 'against evil' or 'for civilization' is much more mobilizing (and thus politically convenient) than a look at the root causes and a cultural analysis of the jihad
- West keeps seeing itself as the target of global jihad (blinding egocentrism) thereby mistaking the objectives of jihadists abroad.
- Inability to distinguish Western from non-Western jihad. The 'jihad' in and against the West has other root causes (social injustice, culture of self-righteousness, individualism, access to weapons...) than that of the Levant, Somalia or Afghanistan