Paradise in the shadow of swords

In defence of Islam?

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Preface

*All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.*

(Thomas. E. Lawrence)

*If there must be trouble let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.*

(Thomas Paine)

I owe a debt of gratitude to my thesis advisor, Anders Kjølberg at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment. Without his patience and guidance this thesis would not have come to be. Furthermore, even though he was only obligated to advise me during the spring and autumn terms of 2007, Anders did not hesitate in wishing me all the best when I abruptly left Oslo for a six-month internship at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, which inevitably delayed the completion of this thesis. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a generous grant for my internship at UNODC for which I am most grateful. Thanks are also due, of course, to my parents for their support during my studies.

Needless to say, the author alone bears the responsibility for the contents and conclusions of this thesis and any errors it may contain.

Mathias Rongved

Oslo, October 2008
Chapter overview

In Chapter 1 I introduce the subject and put it into a contemporary context, before elaborating on the research question in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 paints, with very broad strokes, a picture of the political Islam’s historical background, the ideology of jihad and the rise of al-Qaida. Chapter 4 introduces the theoretical framework of securitization and contains remarks on how the research subject fits with that theory. Chapter 5 contains the main part of the thesis, the analysis, which leads to the conclusion in Chapter 6.

Arabic words are explained on their first appearance, as well as in an appendix.

A note on the source material

The selection of texts has been limited to all known, fairly verifiable and easily obtainable English translations of statements by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri in the period between 1993 and 2004.

Two developments that began around 2004 make it sensible to end the selection of texts there. The first is the post-2004 increase in the frequency of new statements by Osama bin Laden and particularly Ayman al-Zawahiri, as well as by others who speak for al-Qaida, such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Azzam al-Amriki. The second is that the major fronts in the battle between — and here the use of quotation marks must be emphasized — “the West” and “the Muslim world/al-Qaida/Islam/terrorists/insurgents” have moved to Iraq, blurring the distinctions between terrorism and insurgency, between sectarian violence and civil war, between exogenous al-Qaida fighters and endogenous resistance fighters, and between (from

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1 Literally: “the base”.

2 As well as ten other interesting and most likely bona fide al-Qaida statements from the same period.

3 Until his death in 2006.

4 This is the nom de guerre of Adam Gadahn, an American appearing in numerous al-Qaida videos after 2004 and incidentally the first American charged with treason since 1952.
the point of view of the U.S. administration) offensive acts of terrorism and (from the point of view of the perpetrators) defensive resistance against an occupying force. Thus, the post-war al-Qaida rhetoric operates in a slightly different universe than the pre-war rhetoric and the demarcation appears reasonable.

At any rate, retrieving all public statements by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri is an almost impossible task, and ascertaining the authenticity of some texts can be equally difficult, although this has changed with the increase of audio and video based statements on the expense of written messages. The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) has made a number of statements (video, audio and text) by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri available. However, this archive is far from complete. The American company IntelCenter has, at the time of writing, a library consisting of about 130 audio and video statements by bin Laden, al-Zawahiri and others, as well as videos from the Taliban, al-Qaida in Iraq, Ansar al-Islam and others. However, access to this material is only available for a fee.

67 of the 68 statements\(^5\) used in this thesis were collected by Thomas Hegghammer at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt, FFI) and published in two reports (Hegghammer 2002 and 2005b). Most are reproduced in their entirety whereas others are abbreviated. A number of alleged pre-9/11 interviews with bin Laden (Hegghammer 2002:202 – 213) have proved virtually impossible to locate. Also, some statements with highly uncertain authenticity were included in the FFI reports but with major caveats. The analysis omits those texts whose authenticity could not be verified with a fair degree of certainty, including the 2002 “Letter to America” (Hegghammer 2002:189), which is credited to bin Laden, but is quite different in style and prose from his other statements. Full transcripts on the texts that have been analysed, as well as notes on the origin, context and apparent authenticity of the statements can be found in the two FFI reports.

\(^5\) The exception being al-Zawahiri 2001, the excerpt from *Knights under the Prophet's Banner.*
A note on transliteration and translation

There is no standardised way of transcribing from Arabic script to Latin script, and most Arabic words and names used in this thesis can be transliterated in several different fashions. For instance, while *bin Laden* is the most common spelling of the family name, it can also be spelled *bin Ladin* (which appears to be the predominant pre-9/11 spelling), *Binladen, Binladin, ben Laden* or *ben Ladin*. *Usama* is often used instead of *Osama* – the U.S. intelligence shorthand for Osama bin Laden is still *UBL*, not *OBL*. *Al-Qaida* occasionally appears as *al-Qaeda* and less frequently as *al-Qa'ida* or *al-Qa'idah*. *Koran* is also spelled *Quran* or *Qu’ran*. The prefixes “al” (“the”) and “bin” (“son of”) can be spelled with the initial letter in either upper or lower case. *Shariah, umma* and many other words can be written with or without the final *h*. For the sake of simplicity, this author has used the most common spellings, and the spelling has also been changed where necessary in the quoted material.

The texts used in this analysis have been translated from Arabic to English by various actors: sometimes by the media outlets receiving the statements, sometimes by the journalists who performed the interviews, and sometimes by supporters or observers of al-Qaida who run websites that serve as repositories of al-Qaida statements. Some have also been edited by Hegghammer in cases of poor English. Recently, some al-Qaida statements have been translated into languages such as English, German and Spanish by as-Sahab, the so-called “media wing” of al-Qaida – a clear indication on who the intended audience is and on as-Sahab’s increasing capabilities.

In any translation and editing, information gets lost, and al-Qaida statements contain linguistic nuances, metaphors and references to historic places and events that may mean nothing to the casual Western reader, yet are of great importance not only to the messenger but also to parts of his audience. In our case this includes references to the dismantling of the Caliphate, the *reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula and the Mongol sacking of Baghdad. Furthermore, one needs to be aware of some of al-Qaida’s

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6 The group of countries that provided troops for the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, the so-called “Coalition of the willing”, included Mongolia. The Mongols invaded – and burned – Baghdad in 1258, so one can only speculate what effect the inclusion of Mongols in the modern-day capture of Baghdad had on bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.
naming conventions: Saudi Arabia is “The land of the two holy places”, Iraq is “The land of the two rivers”, Palestine is also called “The Prophet’s night travel land”, and Jerusalem is sometimes called “Bayt-al-Muqaddas”. Furthermore, different translations of the same source texts often vary slightly. Usually these discrepancies will be insignificant, but one needs to be aware of the fact that using translated texts inevitably complicates the process and adds a number of trapdoors for the analyst to fall into.

A note on distribution

“We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media,” Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, whose brutality seemed to disturb even al-Zawahiri and bin Laden, in 2005 (Wright 2006). Indeed, the rise of al-Qaida overlaps almost exactly the rise of the premier Arabic TV network al-Jazeera. The 24 hour news network began broadcasting in late 1996, about the same time as bin Laden declared war on the United States, and to the Bush administration’s chagrin, al-Jazeera was the primary source of audio and video messages from al-Qaida in the years before and after 9/11.

The likelihood of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri ever giving a regular interview to a neutral medium again is virtually non-existent. The shift from text-based statements to audio and video statements make it far easier to ascertain the authenticity of messages and to pass judgment on the physical state of the messenger: When bin Laden appeared with a noticeably dyed beard in a 2007 video, speculation followed on whether he was ill and thus dyed his beard to look healthier or whether it was meant as a signal to his followers. After 9/11, the number of videos featuring bin Laden has decreased and al-Zawahiri has been the most visible face in al-Qaida propaganda, and the addition of other spokesmen such as Azzam al-Amriki, Abu Mohammad al-Ablaj and Abu Yahya al-Libi has caused a great increase in the total number of al-Qaida statements. In 2007, as-Sahab released 97 videos (Whitlock 2008), and the rate of releasing a new video roughly every three days kept up in the first half of 2008. At the time of writing, the most recent bin Laden message is an
audio tape from May 2008, while al-Zawahiri most recently appeared in a September 2008 video tape.

However, time has not passed al-Qaida by. While in the 1990s al-Qaida statements to the world were delivered by faxing them to newspapers or giving interviews to journalists who journeyed to Afghanistan or Sudan, the post-9/11 period has seen a change in the way al-Qaida communicates to the world. Although al-Qaida has sent written messages after 9/11, their means of delivery is now primarily audio and video tapes sent to journalists, TV networks or increasingly published on Islamic websites and message boards. The video messages are edited in advance by as-Sahab, whose logo appears on the messages, which often are interspersed with clips of Muslims fighting or suffering in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even the use of videotaped monologues sent to al-Jazeera or put directly on the Internet is being accompanied by a more interactive form of dialogue. In December 2007, Ayman al-Zawahiri announced that he would answer questions from the public. Anyone could post questions to al-Zawahiri on one of four Islamist websites, and he would answer some of the questions (Musharbash 2008). True to his word, in April 2008, two digital audio files were released where a voice that sounded like Zawahiri’s answered many of the more than 900 questions posed to him.
1. Introduction

On April 8, 1966, the cover of Time Magazine asked simply “Is God dead?” Five months later, one of the most important writers of radical Islamism, Sayyid Qutb, “the father of modern Islamist fundamentalism” (Irwin 2001) and the author of the 1964 manifesto of political Islam, Milestones, was executed by Gamel Abdel Nasser’s relatively secular Egyptian government. The execution of Qutb, a leading member, writer and ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, was not the end of radical Islamism: It created a martyr whose ideas would come back to haunt governments first in the Islamic world and later in the West.

In modern politics, God is decidedly not dead, though she may have been comatose in the Cold War period, awoken only by the thundering collapse of bipolarity that followed the crumbling of the Berlin Wall. A look at the international section in any newspaper testifies to this phenomenon, the “revitalization of religion” (Huntington 2002:28) or even the “revenge of God” (Kepel 1994). Scarcely a day passes by without reports of Shia-on-Sunni violence in Iraq, clashes between Palestinians and Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank, Qassam rockets fired from Gaza to Israel, Christian-on-Muslim violence in Nigeria or other acts of or threats of violence based partly or in full on religious convictions. Some describe the phenomenon as a fourth wave of terrorism: The anarchists, the national liberation fighters and the socialists have come and gone, now is the era of the religious terrorists.

This is not to say that terrorism inspired by or justified in religion is a new phenomenon, far from it. The words thug, assassin and zealot have entered our contemporary vocabulary, but are today primarily used to describe bullies, murderers and fanatics, not the three religious groups whence the names originate (Rapoport 1984:659). However, whereas conventional state-versus-state wars have been on an overall decrease in recent decades, the frequency of terrorist attacks by Islamic terrorists has increased dramatically after the end of the Cold War, not only in the Middle East but also in Europe, Asia and the United States.
1.1 Global jihad

The quintessential occurrences of religion in international relations in the first decade of the twenty-first century are the words and deeds of various groups of Islamic terrorists, first and foremost by the network of terrorist groups operating under the al-Qaida label, an enemy that is “fluid, borderless, clandestine, undeterrable and without conventional forces or headquarters” (Spiers 2003).

Borderless indeed: After the end of the cold war, Islamic terrorists affiliated to or inspired by al-Qaida have carried out a number of terrorist attacks in a broad geographical area, including Yemen, Saudi Arabia, England, Spain, Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania and most spectacularly in the United States. Furthermore, European, American and Asian police and intelligence forces are believed to have thwarted dozens of intended acts of terrorism, both before and after September 11, 2001. Some of these plans, had they been carried out, would have caused loss of human life on a scale that would rival that of 9/11, and these are merely the acts of terrorists equipped with explosives and box cutters. The results of an attack with non-conventional weapons on a major city are almost too horrible to contemplate, but contemplate them we must, knowing that al-Qaida has made some efforts into acquiring non-conventional weapons, however crude these efforts may be (Lia 2004).

The men behind these attacks differed in nationality, age and education. Although most of the terrorists behind the high-profile attacks in the last decade were born in predominately Muslim countries, some, including three of the four bombers who carried out the attacks on London in 2005, were born in Europe. Some were ethnic

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7 Henceforth referred to as “9/11”.
8 In the so-called “Bojinka plot”, Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed intended to blow up a dozen U.S. airliners in mid-air in 1995 with a loss of life that could have surpassed that of 9/11. See United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit v. Yousef et al 2003:9-14.
9 Men have perpetrated most if not all of the attacks that can reasonably be called al-Qaida attacks. There are, however, numerous cases of female Muslim Chechen suicide bombers (“black widows”), e.g. as documented by Jusik (2005). Additionally, Kurdish, Sri Lankan and Palestinian terrorists have occasionally employed female suicide bombers. One disturbing innovation by the Chechen suicide bombers is the implementation of remotely detonated bombs carried by women, effectively rendering the term “suicide bomber” pointless. Also, female suicide bombers have started to appear in Iraq.
Arabs, but not all: The plotters behind the 2002 Bali bombings which killed more than 200 people were Indonesian; “Fritz the Taliban”, the man suspected of plotting to blow up several targets in Germany in 2007 was born in Munich; and Richard Reid, the so-called “shoe bomber” who tried to detonate a bomb on a Boeing 767 en route from Paris to Miami, was English-Jamaican. Those who aim to kill in the name of Allah certainly do not constitute a homogenous group.

However, they were all radical Muslims, and though they sometimes justified their attacks with profane motives such as forcing Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories (or demanding an end to Israel’s existence per se), demanding full independence for Chechnya, or bringing forth the removal of American military forces from Saudi Arabia, the metaphysical and the sacred was virtually always part of the casus belli: without religion, the presence of kuffar11 in Saudi Arabia would not be an issue; without religion, neither the Jews nor the Muslims would claim holy sovereignty over Jerusalem; and without religion, re-establishing the Caliphate would be a non sequitur.

An infamous hadith12 states that the Prophet Muhammad said that “Paradise is in the shadow of swords” (Lewis 2004:28, see also Bukhari), and there is no denying that Islamic groups occupy most starring roles on the scene of international religious terrorism. According to the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center (2007:21), more than half of all fatalities caused by terrorism in 2006 where the category of the perpetrator was known were caused by “Islamic extremists”, and about 25 of the 42 groups on the U.S. State Department’s 2005 List of Foreign Terrorist Organizations can be described as ”Islamic” in nature. Clearly, the presence of grievances in this

10 This is not to say, of course, that Islamists are the only ones perpetrating acts of religious terrorism, whether by means of suicide attack or otherwise. The Tamil Tigers (LTTE) of Sri Lanka has frequently used suicide bombers. According to Jane’s Information Group (2000), the LTTE carried out 168 suicide attacks between 1980 and 2000, more than twice as many as Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad combined in that time period, (Note that this number does not take into account the spectacular increase of suicide bombs in Iraq post-invasion). Adherents to other religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism have also carried out acts of terrorism with religion as their justification (see Juergensmeyer 2003 and Stern 2004), although suicide terrorism has been virtually non-existent in these religious traditions.


12 The hadith are the oral traditions regarding Muhammad’s words, opinions and deeds. Thousands of these have been collected, on matters as diverse as eating habits and how to treat non-combatants.
world and belief in rewards in the next world is an explosive combination. Adding modern technology to this mixture has caused some to fear a nuclear apocalypse triggered by religious extremists:

Indeed, religion is as much a living spring of violence today as it was at any time in the past. [...] Add weapons of mass destruction to this diabolical clockwork, and you have found a recipe for the fall of civilization.

(Harris 2006:26)

A gloomy picture, but a plausible case can be made that terrorists determined to acquire nuclear weapons do constitute a greater threat to the safety of the West – and other countries deemed enemies or apostates by the terrorists – than “rogue nations” or members of any “axis of evil” do. Whereas the leaders of a nation-state know that they will face immediate retaliation should they launch a nuclear attack on a country in the West, terrorist groups have no “return address” toward which to direct an armed response, and their first strike will also perhaps be their last, delivered by way of a suicide attack.

Religious terrorism is not merely “regular” nationalistic or political terrorism with religiosity added on top, or terrorism perpetrated by actors who happen to be extremely pious, it is a field of study of its own. Cronin (2003:41) lists five reasons for the danger posed to international security by religious terrorism:

1. The exclusivity and group-feel of the terrorists leads to dehumanization of “the others”, rendering them fair game for indiscriminate violence.

2. Because the terrorists to some extent act to please a deity and not the population or decision makers, their actions may be unpredictable and impervious to public reaction.

3. The terrorists consider themselves to be unconstrained by secular values and laws. Often, secular values and laws are prime targets for attack in themselves.

4. The goal is not to correct the existing system but to destroy it.
5. The movements feed on dispersed popular support.

All these points apply to al-Qaida. First the degree to which their enemies are dehumanized: They are seen as infidels, apostates or servants of “the Zionists” and “the Crusaders”; second, their continued support of violence, including against Muslims, show no signs of abating; third, their supreme law is the shariah\(^\text{13}\) (e.g. bin Laden 1995) and they have nothing but disdain for secular laws; fourth, they are ultimately trying to replace secular, semi-secular and insufficiently religious regimes with some reincarnation of the Caliphate; and fifth, they do have a certain level of popular support, which, among other things, is vital for financing and recruitment.

Whereas the terrorists of the past wanted a lot of people watching but not necessarily a lot of people dead, today’s terrorists seemingly want everybody watching and the largest possible number of people dead.\(^\text{14}\) The combination of the tactic of terrorism and the ideology of radical Islamism has had and will continue to have immense impact on international and domestic politics, and merits increased attention in the field of political science.

\(^{13}\) Islamic jurisprudence.

\(^{14}\) When Ramzi Yousef planted a bomb in the basement of the World Trade Center in 1993, he hoped for one of the towers to topple over the other, killing 250,000. (Trial testimony of Brian Parr, United States v. Yousef, quoted in The 9/11 Commission Report 2004:72)
2. Research question and research method

The research question is *not* about whether religion in general or Islam specifically is inherently violent, or whether Islam contains a larger potential for violence than other religions. This has been done before (e.g. Fox 2000). Nor is it about whether the Koran and the *hadith* legitimize violence, terrorism or killing of civilians. As is the case with most religious texts, much of the meaning of the different verses of the Koran and the *hadith* is in the mind of the reader, although to Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Koran and the *shariah* are the supreme – and only – sources of law, and cannot be modified or compromised on.

Rather, I will explore the following:

*Does al-Qaida*\(^{15}\) *legitimize its calls for acts of terrorism with the claim that Islam itself is being attacked, that is, is al-Qaida acting in defence of Islam? Is al-Qaida trying to securitize Islam?*

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative analysis will be performed on a collection of primary sources from the al-Qaida leadership: interviews, letters/faxes and speeches given in the form of audio and video tapes.\(^{16}\) A summary of the analysis will also be presented quantitatively. Since the Saudi Osama bin Laden and the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri constitute al-Qaida’s de facto leadership, the focus of the analysis will be on statements by these two individuals, whose statements must be considered “official” as far as al-Qaida’s ideology goes. Al-Zawahiri is bin Laden’s right hand man – though clearly more a partner than a subordinate – and is arguably the more important ideologue of the two. Indeed, al-Zawahiri has featured in more video and audio tapes in the post-9/11 media campaign of al-Qaida than bin Laden has.

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\(^{15}\) One important caveat that will briefly be explored in the conclusion is to what extent it actually makes sense to describe al-Qaida as an *organization* rather than an *ideology*. As far as the research question goes, “al-Qaida” shall mean those members of the leadership of al-Qaida whose public statements are being analysed, that is, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden, Abu Ghayth and the four statements by unknown authors, not the various cells that *carry out* the acts of terrorism. Grammatically, al-Qaida will thus be treated in the singular, not plural (“al-Qaida *has*” rather than “al-Qaida *have*”).

\(^{16}\) Henceforth lumped together as “statements”.

Although it has been pointed out that adherents to religion can become more violent as they become more radical (Juergensmeyer 2003), this is not a given. Followers of some religions become more pacifistic the more radical they become, to the point that followers of Jainism\(^{17}\) sweep the ground in front on themselves so as not to step on insects. Sam Harris (2004) has pointedly asked: Where are the Palestinian Christian suicide bombers, or the Tibetan Monk terrorists?\(^{18}\)

What might explain the – for all intents and purposes – non-existence of terrorist attacks from the Jains, Palestinian Christians, Tibetan Monks and most followers of other religions, including of course the vast majority of Muslims? By and large most believers have not lifted their religion and its survival over and outside of the ordinary politics and thereby made a claim to be justified in breaking the “rules of the game” in defence of that religion (Buzan et al 1998:23-24). However, the hypothesis that will be tested is that al-Qaida has indeed securitized Islam and taken it upon themselves to act in defence of their religion.

Barry Buzan (2006) has proposed the notion of raising the idea of securitization to a macro-securitization, I will explore whether one can extend the theory to include a form of micro-securitization, specifically with one religion – Islam – as the referent object. I shall examine statements given by the leaders of al-Qaida and see to what extent the acts of terrorism and calls for such are legitimated by the threat, real or perceived, to Islam. In other words, is Islam the referent object in a securitizing move?

2.1 Definitions

If we are to study an object we need to get the vocabulary sorted out first. Countless definitions of terrorism have been used since the term originated during the Reign of

\(^{17}\) A religion with some 4 million followers, predominantly on the Indian subcontinent. Incidentally, the emblem of this exceptionally peaceful religion, the swastika, was hijacked by the Nazis.

\(^{18}\) At the time of writing, the Chinese government, in a crackdown of Tibetan dissidents keen on using the upcoming Beijing Olympics to gather attention to their cause, described the Tibetan Monk \textit{par excellence}, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, as a terrorist (Yardley 2008).
Terror during the French Revolution. The most widely used definition is probably that of the United States State Department (2006), which says that “the term ‘terrorism’ means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”

In our case, however, a more fruitful definition is that introduced by the United Nations in Security Council resolution 1566 (2004), as this explicitly mentions the terrorist demand for action or inaction on the part of the terrorized. Here, terrorism is defined as an act “with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.”

So much for the act, now for the actors. As the old saying goes, one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. Thus putting the “terrorist” label on any person or group should be done with caution, however, I shall not spend any time arguing the case for calling al-Qaida a terrorist organization and Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri terrorists as defined above. Al-Qaida and a number of affiliated persons are on the terrorist lists of the United Nations and countless countries. Osama bin Laden himself has been ambiguous when confronted with the designation as a terrorist, sometimes wearing it as a badge of honour: In 2001 he said that “if killing those who kill our sons is terrorism, then let history be witness that we are terrorists” (Aluni 2001), and on other occasions he has returned the charge and called Presidents Bush (I), Clinton and Bush (II) the “real” terrorists. Describing al-Qaida as a terrorist organization and bin Laden and al-Zawahiri as terrorists need not be defended at length – at least not in the Western world. It should be noted, though, that in some countries where Muslims are in the majority, substantial proportions of the populace believe that bin Laden and al-Qaida are, in fact, “doing the right thing” (See Tables 1 and 2).

The rise of terrorism perpetrated by Muslims against Western and “apostate” Muslim targets has given birth to a plethora of terms\textsuperscript{19} to describe the specific kind of terrorist operations.

\textsuperscript{19} For a further exploration of the typology of radical Islamist actors, see Hegghammer (forthcoming).
terrorism we are dealing with, most of them broad and imprecise: “Islamic fundamentalists”, “jihadists”, “Islamofascists”, “Islamic terrorists” and so on. “Fundamentalist”, a term originally used to describe American protestants, does not do much good, as most if not all Muslims believe that the Koran is the perfect and inerrant word of God and are therefore fundamentalists in the original meaning of the word, even if they do not support terrorism in defence of religion. As far as “Islamofascist” goes, the ideologies we are studying are very diverse, and have little in common with Mussolini-style fascism. The term “jihadist” is probably the most useful of the above-mentioned terms, however I shall mostly use the generic “terrorist”.

Last, but not least, the “al-Qaida” label is in itself problematic, and should be used with caution. “Al-Qaida” is being thrown around left, right and centre, to the point where anyone who matches the criteria of being a Muslim and a violent criminal is liable of being labelled an “al-Qaida member”. Having a “link” or “ties” to al-Qaida is a badge that is easy to gain but hard to lose. However, some researchers, such as Hegghammer (2004) and Sageman (2008) argue the term “al-Qaida” is decreasingly valid in describing an organization that to some extent no longer exists, and should rather be used to describe an ideology or a social movement. Others, (e.g. Lawrence Wright in Rongved 2008) argue that there’s still a core of the organization left and that Osama bin Laden still commands where the terrorists go and what targets they attack.

For the sake of simplicity, I shall mainly use the term “terrorist(s)” to describe those who perpetrate acts of terrorism as defined above (but who may or may not be in direct two-way contact with al-Qaida), and “al-Qaida” to describe those who call for these acts and give justification for them in their statements, that is, the securitizing actors, which are what we are studying. Specifically, this will mean Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, and to a lesser degree Abu Ghayth and a few other anonymous authors. However, some overlap is inevitable. One may be a terrorist without being affiliated to al-Qaida, one may have trained at an al-Qaida camp
without subsequently performing acts of terrorism, and one may be a member of al-Qaida, such as it is, without ever having killed anyone.

### 2.2 Levels of analysis

According to Buzan et al (1998:5-6), the most frequently used levels of analysis in international relations are *international systems* (the entire planet), *international subsystems* (the European Union, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), *units* (states, nations, multinational corporations), *subunits* (bureaucracies, lobbies) and *individuals*. The analysis will focus on actors at the subunit and individual levels. The individual level “covers the perceptions, choices, values, and beliefs of individuals, and the impact they can have on international relations” (Thomas 2005:36). As Buzan et al (1998:6) note, an actor can act at several levels, but as far as bin Laden and al-Zawahiri go, they can reasonably be placed on the individual and subunit level, depending on whether one focuses on them as individuals or on al-Qaida as a subunit, that is, “organized groups of individuals that are able (or that try) to affect the behaviour of the unit.”

Certainly the individuals we are dealing with have had a massive impact on international relations, and arguably, if one sees al-Qaida as an organization with a hierarchical command and control structure, it would be tempting to place it on the *unit* level, along with other organizations, states and multinational corporations. Indeed, the system of levels of analysis has been criticized for being state-centric and discriminating against “those transnational units that do not fit clearly into the scheme” (Buzan et al 1998:6-7), such as al-Qaida. However, as the focus of the thesis is more on the statements and ideology of the al-Qaida leadership than on its global actions, it will be placed on the lower levels of analysis.
3. **Historical background**

Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, as well as those who act in their name or on their command, are Muslims, and their grief has its origin in contemporary politics, recent history, and events on the Arabian Peninsula fourteen hundred years ago. They draw inspiration and justification not only from current events, but also from the Koran, from the *hadith* and the *shariah*, and from Islamic ideologues of the past and present. In order to understand the grievances and mindset of al-Qaida, we must therefore briefly explore the history of Islam, the ideology of *jihad* and martyrdom and the evolution of political Islam before we turn to the emergence of al-Qaida itself.

### 3.1 The origins of Islam

Islam began in what today is Saudi Arabia with the prophecies of Muhammad, who was born in or around year 570. In the year 610, he claimed to have received his first revelation from the archangel Gabriel and, claiming to be a prophet of Allah, began the spread of Islam. Muhammad and his growing band of followers condemned the presence of *jahiliyyah* on the Arab peninsula. However, Muhammad’s preaching led to his and his followers’ persecution in Mecca, as it challenged the *status quo* (Lewis 2004:29), and in 622, in an event known as the *hijra*, Muhammad fled from Mecca to the city of Yathrib, which later changed its name to Medina – the city of the prophet.

After the death of Muhammad in 632, the community descended into a conflict over

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20 Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri refer to Saudi Arabia as “The land of the two holy mosques/places”, as they do not recognize the House of Saud as legitimate rulers.

21 Muslims consider Muhammad as the last of a series of prophets, of which Jesus was one.

22 The Arabic word “Allah” simply means “(the) God”.

23 A condition of ignorance and unbelief that is believed to have existed before Muhammad’s revelations. This is heavily present in the later writings of Sayyid Qutb.

24 Literally: “migration”. The significance of this event is signified by the fact that the Muslim calendar starts not at Muhammad’s birth, but at the *hijra*. 
who would succeed him as leader of the Muslims (Lewis 2004:37), eventually causing the faith to split into its two main branches, the Sunni and the Shia. The main differences between the two branches are that the Sunni reject the idea of a clergy, while the Shia have a highly organized clergy (Sardar 2006:9), and that whereas the Sunni believe that the most qualified person should be selected as Muhammad’s successor after his death, the Shia believe that Muhammad designated his son-in-law Ali to be the leader, keeping leadership of the Muslims within Muhammad’s family (Esposito & Mogahed 2008:2). The name Shia is derived from *shiat Ali* – followers of Ali. Estimates place the percentage of Shia Muslims at between 10 and 15 percent, and the Sunni percentage at 85 to 90 percent. Al-Qaida is an intensely Sunni organization, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was the *de facto* leader of al-Qaida in Iraq from late 2004 until his death in June 2006, gained notoriety for his all-out war on Shia Muslims in Iraq, as well as for his grisly video tapes of hostages being beheaded.

Having taken Mecca in 630, followers of the nascent religion set upon the task of extending Muslim authority to the rest of Arabia and beyond. Persia and large parts of the Byzantine Empire were overrun, and subsequently served as bases for the invasion and conquest of Spain, Portugal and Southern Italy. By 730, almost all of Spain had been conquered (Catherwood 2006:86), and even small parts of modern-day France fell under Muslim rule. (Lewis 2004:29; see Figure 1). At its height, the Muslim world was vast (Lewis 2004:33), and to those who want to re-establish the Caliphate, no land that was once ruled by Muslims can ever be relinquished; it must be conquered again. Thus al-Qaida counts the Iberian Peninsula as one of their targets for conquest.

In 1095, Pope Urban launched the first crusade, in order to win back The Holy Land (Catherwood 2006:99). Four years later, Jerusalem was conquered by the Christians, only to be reconquered by Saladin, the revered Kurdish warrior, in 1187.
Incidentally, and serving as a good example of his habit of using historical references in his messages to the world, bin Laden has on at least two occasions made references to Saladin in his statements, including in his “Message to the Iraqi people” (bin Laden 2003e) which was broadcast on al-Jazeera on October 18, 2003:

In conclusion, my compliments to my brothers the mujahideen25 in Iraq, to the heroes in Baghdad, the centre of the Caliphate, to the supporters of Islam, the descendants of Saladin, to the free people of Baquba, Mosul and Anbar,26 to those who have immigrated27 for the sake of God so that they may be killed for the sake of their religious faith.

Keeping in mind that bin Laden repeatedly describes his enemies as “Crusaders” (e.g. Miller 1998a, Miller 1998b), it is not surprising that he pins the Saladin badge on those who fight them. Equally unsurprising was the consternation caused by President George W. Bush’s initial description of the U.S. response to the September 11, 2001

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25 Literally: “strugglers”. Muslims involved in jihad – the singular mujahid has the same root (J-H-D) as jihad.]

26 These three cities have majority Sunni populations. In Iraq as a whole, the Sunni are in the minority.

27 This is a reference to foreign fighters – “insurgents”, in U.S. government jargon – fighting in Iraq after the 2003 invasion.
attacks as “this crusade” (Ford 2001). As we will see, bin Laden took notice of the President’s choice of words.

At about the same time as the First Crusade, the Assassins, an offshoot sect of the Ismaili Shia Muslims, who sent murderers to kill Sunni leaders, was born. Because of their insistence on using daggers and knives as weapons, they rarely escaped alive, although they would not deliberately kill themselves after carrying out their assassinations. The Assassins’ use of murder as a political weapon means that they “may well be the first terrorists”, argues Lewis (1985:129). Even more topical is what Lewis (1985:131) writes about the foundation of the Assassins, which may well be kept in mind when analysing al-Qaeda in general and its suicide attacks in particular:

> For such a campaign of sustained terror there were two obvious requirements – organization and ideology. There had to be an organization capable both of launching the attack and surviving the inevitable counter-blows; there had to be a system of belief – which in that time could only be a religion – to inspire and sustain the attackers to the point of death.

However, the Assassins were decimated by the invading Mongols in 1272, and ever since the Ottoman Empire failed to take Vienna in 1529 and again in 1683, the Islamic world’s power has been in a relative decline compared to the West, a decline that perhaps reached its nadir with the twin disasters at the end of the first World War: the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 that divided up the parts of the Middle East into colonial spheres of influence, and Ataturk’s abolition of the caliphate in Istanbul in 1924. The latter was described by Gilles Kepel (2002:43) as “one of the greatest traumas to affect Islam in the early twentieth century”, and both bin Laden and al-Zawahiri have referred to the cataclysms that befell the Arab countries 80 years ago, including in bin Laden’s (2001g) first video statement after 9/11:

> Praise be to God. What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years. Our nation²⁸ has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than 80 years.

²⁸ It should be noted that when al-Qaeda speaks of “the nation” it must usually be understood as the umma, that is, the global community of Muslims, not a specific nation-state.
Its sons are being killed, its blood is being shed, its holy places are being attacked, and it is not being ruled according to what God has decreed.

3.2 Jihad

A basic understanding of the concept of jihad\(^{29}\) is essential, as it is used frequently by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri – “Our duty is to incite the jihad against America, Israel and their allies” (bin Laden in al-Jazeera 1998a) – as well as by politicians, journalists and academics to describe the ongoing campaign of violence. The term, however, is highly controversial, and there’s no consensus definition of jihad, which to a large extent “means different things to different people” (Hegghammer 2008) and can be interpreted either as a “moral striving” or as an “armed struggle” (Lewis 2004:25).

Islamic law permits the waging of war against the following: “infidels, apostates, rebels and bandits”, of which only battles against the first two count as jihad (Lewis (2002:26). One must distinguish between offensive and defensive jihad: Offensive jihad is forward-leaning, intent on expanding the domain of Islam, and relies on the efforts of volunteers or professionals. Defensive jihad, on the other hand, is fought in defence of Islam and Muslims and is therefore an obligation for all able-bodied Muslims. It is the defensive form of jihad which bin Laden (1996) invoked in his declaration of war against the United States, as well as in one of his first post-9/11 interviews (Mir 2001):

We ourselves are the target of killings, destruction and atrocities. We are only defending ourselves. This is defensive jihad. We want to defend our people and our land. That is why I say that if we don’t get security, the Americans, too would not get security. This is a simple formula that even an American child can understand. This is the formula of live and let live.

\(^{29}\) For a more thorough discussion of jihad, see e.g. Hellestveit 2005. The question of whether suicide attacks against civilians count as jihad and whether those who perform these acts attain martyrdom will not be discussed due to space constraints. Suffice to say, in al-Qaida doctrine, suicide attacks against the enemy are permitted and those who perish performing them are seen as martyrs.
Cecilie Hellestveit (2005:70) and others argue that *jihad*, although not constituting one of the five pillars\(^{30}\) of Islam, should be regarded as a central tenet of the faith, and some go as far as calling it the “sixth pillar” of Islam. Gilles Kepel (2002:432) gives the following definition of *jihad*, which is probably close to how al-Qaida defines it: “holy war; effort to propagate Islam within society or in the world by any means; lawful war or holy war, prescribed by the *shariah* against infidels.”

### 3.3 The rise of political Islam

The end of the caliphate in Istanbul was by no means the end of political Islam. Only four years later, the quintessential Islamic political organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, was born. Radical political Islam takes several forms: Some groups are state-sponsored while others are popular movements from below (Lewis 2002:20), but no discussion of radical Islam is complete without mention of the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood was “the first mass-supported and organized, essentially urban-oriented effort to cope with the plight of Islam in the modern world” (Mitchell 1969:293). Their slogan, “the Koran is our constitution” (Kepel 2002:27), leaves no doubt as to their goal: the founding of an Islamic state. In 1949, al-Banna was assassinated, most likely by the Egyptian secret police, but the Brotherhood thrived and remains an important factor to this day, although in several countries it is barred from electoral competition or banned outright.

One of the most important Brotherhood members, and certainly one who had a lasting legacy, was Sayyid Qutb. In November 1948 he left Egypt for studies in the United States, a visit which appears to have shocked him and driven him further towards puritan Islam. Disgusted by what he saw as American racism, materialism and degeneracy, he left the U.S. in 1950 (Wright 2007:9, 28), and began publishing for the Brotherhood soon after his return to Egypt. Most of Qutb’s rhetorical anger was

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\(^{30}\) The five pillars of Islam are the profession of faith, the prayer, the giving of alms, the fasting during Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca.
directed towards the “internal enemy” – the Arab regimes – and the return to the *jahiliyyah* that in his opinion had come upon the Islamic world. (Lewis 2004:68). Whereas al-Banna had believed in peaceful *jihad*, Qutb did not (Burke 2007:52). Imprisoned by the Nasser government and ultimately executed in 1966, Qutb wrote the seminal Islamist book *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (*Signposts or Milestones along the road*), regarded as one of the most influential works of Islamism, in which he calls for a society based strictly on the *shariah*. Amongst other things, Qutb called for a vanguard of “true Muslims” who would fight the state of *jahiliyyah* both by preaching and by physical power.

In 1988, Abdullah Azzam – a partner of bin Laden – echoed that call in an article in the magazine *al-Jihad*. The vanguard must, wrote Azzam, “comprehend the magnitude of international conspiracies against Islam.” (Kepel and Milelli 2008:14) As Azzam himself well knew, that vanguard was already being formed.

### 3.4 The emergence of al-Qaida

1979 was a year of seismic shifts in the Islamic world. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Tehran from exile, sparking the Iranian hostage crisis, driving Iran towards a more conservative form of Islam and severely damaging Iran’s relationship with the United States. Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel, a treaty that directly led to the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. In November, a group of armed militants entered the Grand Mosque in Mecca, stunning the Saudi government and triggering a two-week standoff before they were evicted by force, leaving hundreds dead in Islam’s holiest place. Rounding off the year, Soviet tanks rolled into Afghanistan to support that country’s Marxist government, beginning a nine-year conflict between the Red Army and the Afghan *mujahideen* resistance, and leading the United States to participating by proxy in that conflict.

Thousands of young Arabs – the so-called “Afghan Arabs” – quickly made their way to Afghanistan, often via Peshawar, Pakistan, to join the resistance against the Red Army. Eager not only to fight but ultimately to die the death of martyrs, the Afghan
Arabs’ apparent obsession with martyrdom struck the Afghans, who were fighting for their country, not for Paradise, as bizarre (Wright 2007:124). According to the Pakistani journalist Rahimmullah Yusufzai, the Arabs would pitch white tents out in the open in the hopes of attracting Soviet fire, anxiously awaiting their martyrdom. “I saw one person who was crying because he survived an air attack”, Yusufzai later said (Bergen 2001:12).

One of the men who joined the mujahideen was a Saudi twentysomething named Osama bin Laden. He claims to have entered Afghanistan before the end of 1979 (Fisk 1993), however it is likely that he crossed the border a few years later. Bin Laden was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the forty-third of fifty-plus siblings (Atwan 2006:33). He was educated in economics and business administration at King Abdulaziz University. During his university years he studied the writings of Islamic ideologues including Sayyid Qutb’s brother Muhammad, as well as Abdullah Azzam (Atwan 2006:34), the latter heavily inspired by Sayyid Qutb (9/11 Commission Report 2004:55). His father Muhammad was one of the most important businessmen and entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s and 1960s, in practice becoming “the king’s principal builder” (Coll 2008:83). Not only did Muhammad bin Laden build roads and buildings, he was entrusted first with the task of renovating and expanding the mosque in Medina, then with increasing the capacity of the Holy Mosque in Mecca, and finally with repairing the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem (Coll 2008:83-89). In other words, Osama bin Laden’s father played a major part in the maintenance of the holiest sites in Islam.

Since his father was a very successful businessman before he died, bin Laden inherited a substantial fortune, although nowhere near large enough to warrant the title “the Saudi billionaire” which sometimes is given him. Wright (2007:165) estimates bin Laden’s fortune in 1989 to about 7 million U.S. dollars, clearly undermining speculation that bin Laden funded al-Qaida’s estimated $30 million annual budget.

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32 Various estimates are given for his date of birth; Interpol states it as 10 March 1957 and Lawrence Wright (2005:83) as January 1958.
(9/11 Commission Report 2004:171) out of his own pocket. Furthermore, in the 1990’s, bin Laden had accounts frozen and lost a large amount of money and equipment when he left Sudan for Afghanistan.

Although “merely” a millionaire at the time of the Soviet-Afghan war, Bin Laden was nevertheless more of a financier than a warrior, raising a substantial amount of money for the mujahideen (Wright 2007:117), and spending time both in on the front lines of Afghanistan and the border areas inside Pakistan. Bin Laden provided twenty-five thousand dollars a month to keep the “Services Bureau” (Makhtab al-Khadamat) office running in the University Town section of Peshawar (Wright 2007:119). The bureau, which bin Laden ran together with Abdullah Azzam, provided funds and training for mujahideen engaged in the war in Afghanistan.

**3.4.1 The birth of al-Qaida**

Despite bin Laden’s involvement, the Afghan Arabs’ role in evicting the Red Army was far smaller than bin Laden’s subsequent grandiose statements would lead one to believe (Kepel 2002:147). Only a few thousand Arabs actually joined the mujahideen, an almost insignificant number in a country twice the size of Germany, in a war that killed perhaps two million Afghans out of a 1979 population of thirteen million. Furthermore, the Afghan Arabs were often utterly inept and hopelessly under-equipped on the battlefield, at times being chased away from the front by exasperated Afghans before and during battle. Yet, in 1988, the Soviets, having lost about fifteen thousand soldiers, began their retreat. The same year, al-Qaeda’s first “official” meeting, attended by bin Laden and four other men, took place, and after one month, al-Qaeda had between fifteen and thirty members (Wright 2007:150, 153). The Afghanistan quagmire was a major influence in the implosion of the Soviet Union – which bin Laden does not hesitate in taking credit for (e.g. al-Jazeera 1999a, Aluni 2001). Despite the Soviet withdrawal, peace did not break out in Afghanistan, which was ravaged by a violent post-war struggle for power.

In September 1996, the Taliban took power in Kabul and promptly introduced the strictest form of shariah law in the world. Music was prohibited, women were banned
from wearing white socks because they were deemed provocative, the 1500-year-old Buddha statues of Bamyan were destroyed in the face of massive international protests, and one cleric allegedly went as far as banning the use of paper bags on the remote chance that they might contain recycled copies of the Koran (Bergen 2001:9). Only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates recognized the Taliban government, which was a de facto pariah state, more intent on ruling and purifying than on governing. Although the Taliban rule received international condemnation, little if anything was done to topple it. Perhaps, argues Scheuer (2004), because attention at the time was focused elsewhere, like Iraq, where a U.S.-led coalition was administering a no-fly-zone and the United Nations’ inspections regime was ensuring Iraqi compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions on weapons of mass destruction (WMD), all the while keeping Iraq under a sanctions regime – in turn stoking al-Qaida’s fire of grievances.

The U.N. sanctions regime was the inconclusive ending to the Persian Gulf War of 1990 – 1991. Indeed, two of bin Laden’s most important accusations against the U.S. – that its soldiers occupied Saudi Arabia and that the sanctions regime meant the deaths of thousands of Iraqis – both flow from the wellspring of the Persian Gulf War. In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. An international coalition, mandated by the United Nations and led by the United States, responded by launching operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, which forced the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. Before, during and after Desert Storm, American forces were stationed in Saudi Arabia. To Osama bin Laden, this was utterly unacceptable, as he has stated on several occasions, including in his first interview with John Miller (1998a):

\[ The \ call \ to \ wage \ war \ against \ America \ was \ made \ because \ America \ has \ spearheaded \ the \ crusade \ against \ the \ Islamic \ nation, \ sending \ tens \ of \ thousands \ of \ its \ troops \ to \ the \ land \ of \ the \ two \ Holy \ Mosques \ over \ and \ above \ its \ meddling \ in \ its \ affairs \ and \ its \ politics, \ and \ its \ support \ of \ the \]
Bin Laden’s agony over the presence of troops from the U.S. (and smaller contingents from other members of the coalition) on Saudi soil has its origin in the seventh century. Muhammad’s dying words are believed by Muslims to have been “Let there be no two religions in Arabia” (Lewis 2004:xxvii). Although the meaning of these remarks have been disputed since, the exercise of other religions is de facto prohibited in Saudi Arabia today, Israelis are denied visas to enter the country, only Muslims are allowed to enter Mecca and Medina, and there is at least one documented case of a Saudi convert to Christianity being punished by means of beheading (Amnesty 2007). To al-Qaida, the meaning of Muhammad’s words is clear: non-Muslims are indisputably personae non grata in Saudi Arabia:

*The country of the two holy places has in our religion a peculiarity of its own over the other Muslim countries. In our religion, it is not permissible for any non-Muslim to stay in our country.*

*(Bin Laden in Arnett 1997)*

Outraged by the thought of armed American men and women on the land of the Prophet, Bin Laden urged King Fahd and Prince Sultan of Saudi Arabia not to take American protection against Iraq, offering to protect the Kingdom with “one hundred thousand fighters with good combat capability within three months” (Wright 2007:178-179). The offer was dismissed as an inadequate and unrealistic non-starter, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was eventually driven back by the international coalition. At the start of *Desert Storm*, the United States had 550,000 troops in Saudi Arabia (Otterman 2003), decreasing to between 5,000 and 10,000 in the interwar period. In 2003, the U.S. withdrew its troops from Saudi Arabia – but only after invading Iraq. As we will see in the analysis, as far as Osama bin Laden goes, the importance of the stationing of American troops on Saudi soil can hardly be overestimated. To him, it is part and parcel of the American onslaught against Islam,

35 Bin Laden apparently intended to use some of the Saudi Binladen group’s earth-moving equipment to dig trenches before taking on the fourth largest army in the world, and it seems unlikely that he would be able to field one hundred thousand soldiers in Iraq when only a few thousand Arabs fought in Afghanistan over a ten-year period.
Muslims and the Middle East:

The American targeting of the area in general and specifically the division of the Land of the Two Holy Places is not just a passing summer cloud; it is a strategic aim which deceitful American policy has never lost sight of.

(Bin Laden 2003b)

Adding insult to injury, the post-war sanctions regime caused childhood mortality in Iraq to rise sharply (Ali & Shah 2000), and references to the sanctions and its impact on child mortality are recurring themes in al-Qaida’s statements (e.g. Fisk 1996b, Nida al-Islam 1996, Miller 1998a). To bin Laden, the sanctions regime is a prime example of American and Western aggression against Muslims and “the greatest mass slaughter of children mankind has ever known” (bin Laden 2004d). Shortly after the war, bin Laden moved to Sudan, where he spent about five years until, ever more unpopular and distrusted by the Saudi, American and Sudanese governments, returning to Afghanistan in May 1996 (Burke 2007:157) – “a land in which I can breathe a pure, free air to perform my duty in enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong” (Arnett 1997).

In post-war Afghanistan, as in Sudan, bin Laden was joined by Al-Qaida’s chief ideologue, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Born into a highly respected family in Egypt in 1951, al-Zawahiri decided after Qutb’s execution – when al-Zawahiri was fifteen – to form an underground cell aiming “to put Qutb’s vision into action” (Wright 2007:37). A surgeon by education, al-Zawahiri had been arrested and tortured after the assassination of Anwar Sadat (Lewis 2004:19). He eventually became the leader of the Islamist group Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which later merged with al-Qaida. Zawahiri is believed to have orchestrated the massacre of Western tourists in Luxor, Egypt in 1997, and has been sentenced to death in absentia by the Egyptian government (Lewis 2004:19-20).

In Afghanistan, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri became instrumental in the running of the
infamous training camps in which an estimated 10,000 to 20,000\textsuperscript{36} of would-be jihadists received training between 1996 and 9/11 (9/11 Commission Report 2004:67). Some of the goals of al-Qaida are plainly – and chillingly – spelled out in class notes (Bernstein 2002:86) from recruits in these camps:

1. Establishing the rule of God on Earth.
2. Attaining martyrdom in the cause of God.
3. Purification of the ranks of Islam from the elements of depravity.

Although the existence of these training camps was well-known before 9/11, little was done to eliminate them, although the U.S. did fire missiles\textsuperscript{37} into several camps (and a pharmaceutical facility in Sudan, which in retrospect turned out to be unrelated to any terrorist activities) after the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Several of the 9/11 hijackers spent time in these camps before entering the United States and subsequently carrying out the attacks, prompting the destruction of the camps by the U.S. – at which point they were long since abandoned by al-Qaida.

3.4.2 Does al-Qaida still exist?

Egyptian intelligence reportedly estimate the current al-Qaida membership to less than two hundred, while American intelligence estimates range from less than three hundred to more than five hundred (Wright 2008). The American government has repeatedly claimed (e.g. Bush 2007) that they have killed or arrested a large proportion and/or number of al-Qaida members, in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{38} However, talking about al-Qaida as a highly organized group of terrorists with central command and control in the same vein as the Irish Republican Army or Baader-Meinhof is problematic. With the destruction of the al-Qaida training camps in

\textsuperscript{36} According to bin Laden (al-Jazeera 1999a), 15,000 men trained in the camps.

\textsuperscript{37} Wright (2007:323) writes that several of the Tomahawk missiles reportedly failed to detonate and were subsequently sold for a substantial sum by bin Laden to China.

\textsuperscript{38} However, the Bush administration is notorious for its wide definition of the terms "al-Qaida" and "terrorists", and the claim that in the first seven months of 2007, U.S. forces killed or captured 1,500 "al-Qaida terrorists and other extremists" every month uses a very wide definition of the term "al-Qaida", and certainly belongs in the al-Qaida-as-ideology camp, even if the Bush administration continuously uses the organizational perspective in its statements on al-Qaida. (See also Sageman 2008).
Afghanistan and the driving into exile of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri soon after 9/11, al-Qaida as an organization effectively ceased to exist, argues Hegghammer (2004:9). He goes on to describe al-Qaida as a “dying organization”, but puts emphasis on the continued importance of al-Qaida’s ideology.

Al-Qaida is by some seen as an “ideological virus – a spore that floats invisibly across borders and replicates itself anywhere there are discontented young men and Internet connections” (Worth 2006). This ideology continues to inspire would-be jihadists who may or may not have been in actual contact with al-Qaida. More often than not, as in the London and Madrid bombings, there is seemingly no chain of command between bin Laden and al-Zawahiri and the men who perpetrate attacks. In most attacks from 2004 and onwards, including the 2004 Madrid bombings, the killing of Theo van Gogh in 2004, the Sinai bombings of 2005, the plot to blow up German trains in 2006, the plots to bomb London and Glasgow in 2007, the bombing of the Marriott hotel in Islamabad in 2008, et cetera, little or no such contact existed.

At this point, the al-Qaeda organization was effectively overshadowed by the al-Qaida social movement or ideology, argues Sageman, who writes (2008:136): “The official acceptance into al Qaeda comes after the fact, as in Madrid. The bombing is the de facto official initiation ceremony into the al-Qaida social movement.” Burke (2007:312) agrees: “You are a member of al-Qaida if you say you are.” A different view is argued by Wright (Rongved 2008) who argues that there’s still a core organization, led by bin Laden, which plans attacks and directs their followers.
4. Theoretical background

I will be using the theory of securitization as a theoretical framework for my analysis. It is therefore necessary to introduce this theory and place the pieces and actors into the relevant slots of this theory before beginning the analysis.

4.1 The theory of securitization

The concept of securitization is part of the so-called “Copenhagen School” of security studies (which also includes the concepts of sectors and regional security complexes) and is presented in Security (1998) by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde. Securitization is, in a sentence, “the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics” (Buzan et al 1998:23). Securitization is a speech act: the utterance in itself is the act (Buzan et al 1998:26). The theory aids understanding of the “escalatory dynamics of securitized religion” (Wæver 2007:4). Laustsen and Wæver elaborate on securitization of religion in Hatzopoulos and Petito (2003), while Kjølberg (2003) examines the reasons for and consequences of the securitization of religion by radical Islamite groups. Furthermore, Buzan, in a paper in International Affairs (2006:1103), expands the theory of securitization to include macrosecuritization, that is, he argues that the so-called “Global War on Terror” is a “rather successful macro-securitization”, though he does not believe it is one that has the potency to last as long as the Cold war.

The central issue in securitization is the survival of something. That something is the referent object, that which “must establish security legitimacy in terms of a claim to survival” (Buzan et al 1998:39). The referent object can be virtually any physical or metaphysical entity: the sovereignty of the territorial borders of Poland (having been breached repeatedly in the previous centuries); the survival of the almost extinct Sumatran Rhino (of which only two to three hundred specimens remain); or the position of a religion (e.g. Islam) in a given country, region, or in the world.
In other words, the referent object is *that which is at stake*, “that to which one can point and say, ‘It has to survive, therefore it is necessary to...’” (Buzan et al 1998:36). However, security and insecurity are, unlike “war” and “peace”, not binary opposites: “Security” marks the presence of a security problem and some countermeasure, whereas “insecurity” is a situation with a security problem but no response. When a security problem doesn’t exist, the concepts of security/insecurity are simply irrelevant (Wæver 1995:56). Indeed, write Buzan et al (1998:4), one should “aim for desecuritization: the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere”.

There are three components to a successful securitization: “existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules.” (Buzan et al 1998:6) When an actor securitizes an issue, that act has consequences because the actor will operate in another mode than he otherwise would have, but also unsuccessful or partially successful attempts at securitization are interesting because they offer insights into “the stability of social attitudes toward security legitimacy, the process by which those attitudes are maintained or changed, and the possible future direction of security politics” (Buzan et al 1998:39).

An attempt to lift something above normal politics, elevating it to the status of a referent object, by saying, “this is important and therefore we must take extraordinary measures to defend it” is a securitizing move, performed by a securitizing actor. Note that a threat doesn’t necessarily have to objectively to exist (to the extent that a threat is ever objective, not subjective) in order for an actor to claim (in)security – it is enough that the securitizing actor argues that a threat does exist – regardless of whether the actor himself feels threatened or just uses the “threat” as an argument to gain some objective. It is important to note that the securitizing actor is usually not the same entity as the referent object, that is, “only rarely do they [the securitizing actor] speak security through reference to the need for their own survival” (Buzan et al 1998:40).

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39 In other words, moving something from being merely politicized to being securitized.
A securitizing move is a necessary but not a sufficient element in order for a referent object to be successfully securitized. Crucially, an issue is securitized only if and when the intended audience accepts it as being securitized. For instance, the territorial borders of a country will in most cases be accepted as a legitimate referent object by the population of that country. Related to this is the question of who has the authority to securitize. However, the subject in this thesis is the securitizing moves by the securitizing actor, not the acceptance or non-acceptance by the audience, although this will briefly be discussed where relevant.

Once the securitizing move has been made, the actor can take it upon himself to act in whatever way he sees fit in order to defend the referent object by taking emergency measures (or having others do it for him, as is the modus operandi of al-Qaida post-9/11: bin Laden and al-Zawahiri speak, others act.)

Themes and vulnerabilities can arise in many different areas, military and non-military, but to count as security issues they have to meet strictly defined criteria that distinguish them from the normal run of the merely political. They have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind.

(Buzan et al 1998:4. My emphases.)

In the following it may be helpful to think of the referent object as Islam, the securitizing actor as al-Qaida (chiefly Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri), the existential threats as what al-Qaida perceives as threats against Islam from the U.S. and others, and the emergency measures as acts of terrorism.

4.2 Securitizing religion

An actor that makes a securitizing move vis-à-vis a referent object implicitly or explicitly claims that the object is exceptional – whether he is trying to securitize the whales, the liberal international economic order or the Dutch dikes, and thus he is

40 That is, al-Qaida’s own exegesis of Islam, which many moderates would describe as a “perverted” or “extreme” version of Islam.
justified in taking extraordinary (and in some cases extralegal) means in defending it. However, religion is arguably exceptionally exceptional, as it deals with the issue of being, and thus the stakes arguably cannot be higher. Hence, there is no room for pragmatism or compromise (Laustsen and Wæver 2003:158, Kjølberg 2003:9): An actor who makes a securitizing move for a religious referent object is not likely to dissuaded from acting by arguments about the virtues of atheism or secularism or by being told that he is wrong in his belief that his religion is threatened. Moreover, one cannot simply counter an attempt to securitize religion by saying that the actor only thinks he is threatened (Buzan et al 1998:34).

Wæver (2007:5) writes that fundamentalists who securitize religion see a situation where “we are so threatened, the attack on our faith is so serious, that one must venture out in the world and act in defence of faith”. The parallel to al-Qaida is obvious. All in all, Laustsen and Wæver (2003:159) claim that “the possibility of success in making the security move on behalf of sacred objects is greater than when attempting to securitize most other objects.” Yet, apart from the works mentioned, little has been written on how securitization of religion takes place in practice.

### 4.2.1 Modes of securitization

If one believes that one’s very being is in peril, it is entirely rational to act in defence of it, to securitize it. According to Laustsen and Wæver (2000:720) there are three specific ways in which religion can be drawn into a securitization process:

1. A religious group is considered to be a threat to the survival of the state.

2. Faith is seen as threatened by whoever or whatever ‘non-religious’ actor or process (states, technology, industrialism, modernism, etc).

3. Faith is seen as threatened by another religious discourse or actor.

What about al-Qaida, which represents the threat which is to be defended against, in which one of Laustsen and Wæver’s three ways do they securitize religion? Mode 2 and mode 3 are clearly related to each other in a way that mode 1 is not, and the latter can be dismissed immediately in our case, as al-Qaida itself fills the role as the
threatening actor referred to. To the extent that regimes in the Middle East (al-Qaida’s “near” or “internal” enemy) have securitized religion, a case can be made that they have done so with mode 1, in seeing religion as a threat to the survival of the state. The Egyptian government’s incessant crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and the Algerian military’s intervention with the electoral process in the early 1990’s, for fear of a hard-line Islamist takeover, are prime examples of mode 1 securitization.

According to Kjølberg (2003:9), in a traditional Muslim worldview – which is a fairly indefinable term – a far larger threat will be seen coming from Western secularism, that is, mode 2, than from Western Christianity, mode 3. Laustsen and Wæver (2003:161) also place “the phenomenon that is usually called fundamentalism” in mode 2. According to Wæver (2007:3), one is “rarely witnessing one deeply religious group engaged in conflict with another; rather, the battle is between those who want more religion in politics, and their adversary, who insists on a strict separation of religion and politics, the secularists.” Following that line of argument, Wæver emphasizes that “Radical Muslims” are not engaged in a war with another religion, but with “anti-religion”. According to Hegghammer (2005a:24), the global jihadist groups see themselves as engaged in a global defence against the external enemies of Islam: the Judeo-Christian world in general and the United States in particular.

In this conflict, both parts – the religious political actor and the “secularist” – lead security policy (Wæver 2007:3), although from opposing points of view: “When the religious actors lead security policy, it is called fundamentalism. When secularists lead security policy, we call it – security policy, defence of freedom or something similarly heroic”, claims Wæver (2007:4). The question of whether al-Qaida primarily operates in mode 2 or 3 as far as their threat perception goes will only be touched briefly in the analysis. Here, it will suffice to note that a case can be made that Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and other al-Qaida spokesmen at various points in the past have seen Islam as threatened both by (in their eyes) non-religious actors, such as the communist Soviet Union in Afghanistan and “apostate” Muslim
regimes, as well as by other religious discourses, primarily the “Zionists and crusaders” to which al-Qaida refers unremittingly (e.g. bin Laden 1996, Ghayth 2001b).

4.3 Sectors

The importance of religion is an underdeveloped field in classical security studies. In *People, States and Fear*, Buzan (1991:19) writes that the security of human collectivities is affected by factors in the following major sectors: military, political, economic, societal and environmental. The word “religion” doesn’t appear in the index of that book, but is mentioned as a tangential element of societal security, which deals with relationships of collective identity such as religion (Buzan et al 1998:7). And indeed, thus far religion has been studied as part of the societal sector (Laustsen and Wæver 2003:151), as one of several “large-scale collective identities that can function independently of the state” (Buzan et al 1998:22). If one must put religion in one of the five above-mentioned sectors, it makes the most sense to group it with societal identities. Indeed, Wæver’s (1995:70) description of society can also be used about religion: It in itself it never speaks; it is only there to be spoken for.

In the later work *Security*, Buzan et al explore different sectors of securitization. Apart from two ill-omened remarks (Buzan et al 1998:53 and 145) they do not linger on the securitization of religion:

*In the contemporary world, religion has not yet transcended the state as a referent object for military security except on the small scale of extremist cults (Branch Davidians, Aum Shin Rykyo). Lying in the background, however, are Western fears of Islam, the rise of “Hindu nationalism,” and theories about the “clash of civilizations” – all of which suggest that the Westphalian state’s claim to exclusivity as the referent object for military security is not beyond challenge from both larger and smaller entities.*

[…]

The predominant form of political organization in the contemporary international system is the territorial state, which is obviously the main referent object of the political sector. [...] Some world religions occasionally qualify here (the Catholic Church in earlier times, Muslims at times following such appeals but lacking one generally recognized authority).

The decade after the above was written has seen an emergence of a number of vocal critics of radical Islam, who fear that radical Islam is a threat to Europe (Bawer 2006), the U.S. (Scheuer 2004) or Western civilization (Harris 2006). In tandem with the rise of smaller non-state entities as major players in international security (of which al-Qaida may be the primus inter pares), Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have emerged as the premier spokesmen of ultra-radical Islam. At least, that is the position they seem to have in their sights.

4.4 Audience

Neither speech acts nor acts of terrorism exist in a vacuum. To achieve successful securitization, the actor must receive acceptance for his move from an audience (Buzan et al 1998:31-33), therefore he must be able to speak with some authority on the issue. “Whether the security move succeeds depends crucially on the audience, often most importantly inhabitants of a state”, write Laustsen and Wæver (2003:159). However, although al-Qaida’s audience is sometimes the inhabitants of a state – most often those of Saudi Arabia (bin Laden 1995), the U.S. (bin Laden 2002d, 2004d), Afghanistan (al-Zawahiri 2003c), Iraq (bin Laden 2003a) and Pakistan (bin Laden 2001e) – they often intend to reach a broader audience outside of a narrow territorial area. This includes, depending on the message and its means of delivery, the people and politicians of the West, the Muslim umma, the political leaders of the Muslim world, and the radicals who may be driven into acting, that is, the terrorists and would-be terrorists.
4.5 Authority

Traditionally, the securitizing actors as envisaged by Buzan et al (1998:40) and Wæver (1995:57) are *elites*: leaders, governments, lobbyists and states, for instance. Placing al-Qaida in the role of the securitizing actor involves a slight deviation from this; however, Buzan et al (1998:24) do argue that “other social entities” outside of the state can perform securitization moves. Furthermore Taureck (2006) argues the following:

*A securitizing move is in theory an option open to any unit because only once an actor has convinced an audience […] of its legitimate need to go beyond otherwise binding rules and regulations […] can we identify a case of securitization.*

Because the securitizing actor is dependent on the audience accepting his securitizing move, one vital question is with what authority Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri speak when they repeatedly call for *jihad* against a given target in defence of Islam. This is important because an issue is securitized *if and only if* the intended audience accepts it as being securitized (Buzan et al 1998:25). Otherwise, the referent object has not been successfully securitized. Whence do bin Laden and al-Zawahiri draw their authority? As has been pointed out by the journalist Peter Bergen (2001:78), who met bin Laden in 1997, bin Laden is no religious scholar, and as a matter of fact Mullah Omar, the leader of the Afghan Taliban, argued in June 2001 that bin Laden's *fatawa* were “null and void” because he had no authority to proclaim them (Bergen 2001:164). Wright (2007:194) argues that the al-Qaida leadership are “essentially theological amateurs”.

Yet bin Laden and al-Zawahiri’s words and actions do have a certain level of support in parts of the Muslim world: In a Pew poll from 2007 (Table 1), respondents were asked specifically if there were cases where suicide bombs and other forms of violence against civilians were justified in order to “defend Islam from its enemies”. The results show significant support for violence in defence of Islam, even in

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41 *Fatwa*: religious ruling. Plural *fatawa*, though in English *fatwas* is more common.
countries that are usually labelled as moderate: 25 percent of Turkish Muslims and 51 percent of Egyptian Muslims agreed that there were occasions when suicide bombings were justified in defence of Islam. In the Palestinian territories, the number was 81 percent. Furthermore, the same poll (Table 2) reveals that substantial numbers of Muslims have at least some confidence in Osama bin Laden, even in countries where terrorists have killed numerous Muslim civilians. 18 percent in Egypt, 20 percent in Jordan, 37 percent in Bangladesh, 38 percent in both Indonesia and Pakistan, and 57 percent in the Palestinian territories have “a lot” or “some” confidence in Osama bin Laden “doing the right thing” in world affairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Don’t know or no answer</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td>71</td>
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</table>

"Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often used to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?"

Note that countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan were not included in this poll. Had they been so it is likely, as Harris (2006:125) points out, that they would have dominated the higher end of the scale as far as support for bin Laden and suicide bombing goes. Even in European countries, polls consistently put the level of support for suicide bombs in defence of Islam at above ten percent among

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42 That is, the percentage of respondents who agreed that suicide attacks in defence of Islam were "Often justified", "Sometimes justified" or "Rarely justified". If "Rarely justified" is placed on the other side of the dichotomy, the numbers decrease from 25, 51 and 81 percent to 16, 8 and 70 percent.
second or third-generation Muslim immigrants, and these are people who have not lived in refugee camps in Palestine or under oppressive governments in the Middle East. One poll (Taher 2008) indicated that one-third of British-Muslim university students condoned killing in the name of Islam. A similar proportion expressed support for the creation of a worldwide caliphate. However, the focus in this thesis is not on the more than one billion members of the umma, but on the few couple of people making up the leadership of al-Qaida.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Not too much confidence</th>
<th>No confidence at all</th>
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Table 2: Pew Global Attitudes Project, Spring 2007 Survey, question 56d. (Question only given to Muslims). All answers in percentages. N not specified.

4.6 Poor and uneducated?

An oft-repeated axiom in Western media, politics and academia is that the main factors that drive people into terrorism are poverty, low levels of education and a feeling of not having opportunities, and that religion doesn’t enter into the equation. Although terrorist profiling is outside the scope of this thesis, several studies\(^{43}\)

\(^{43}\) A comprehensive multi-year poll of the world’s Muslims was conducted by the Gallup Poll between 2001 and 2007 (Esposito & Mogahed 2008), and found that 7% of Muslims in the ten countries that make up 80% of the world’s Muslim population regarded the 9/11 attacks to be “completely justified”. Regrettably, the author was unable at the time of writing to find this number controlled for education and poverty, nor to find the percentage that viewed the attacks as “somewhat justified”.

undermine the argument that variables such as poverty and a lack of education have substantial explanatory power as far as support for terrorism goes. A 2002 poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research shows that support among Palestinians for bomb attacks inside Israel is higher among college graduates (57%) than among the illiterate (47%), and even higher among current students (66%). Krueger and Maleckova (2002:119) report similar numbers, and conclude: “Any connection between poverty, education and terrorism is indirect, complicated and probably quite weak.” It has also been widely reported that most if not all “high-profile” al-Qaida members and affiliates, such as Mohammad Atta, Ramzi Yousef, Khalid Shaykh Mohammad, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri et cetera have some form of higher education. However, an interesting new study by Marc Sageman (2008:58) suggests that although the first Islamic terrorists were highly educated, the level of education appears to have dropped significantly with the more recent “waves” of terrorists.

4.7 The units

Before beginning the analysis, we will recapitulate the elements involved:

- **The referent object**: Islam, its very existence, the integrity and security of Muslims, but also the ability to practice Islam and have its laws rule the lands of Muslims. Obviously, the tenets of any religion can be perceived and twisted in an infinite number of ways, and with a religion that covers more than a billion people in countries as diverse as Yemen, France and Indonesia, there exists not one true form. However, to bin Laden et al, their version of Islam is the one – and only – true Islam. The referent object is threatened by:

- **The existential threat**: Threats against Islam, as al-Qaida perceive them. These threats are as diverse as the potential banning of headscarves in France, the American intervention in Somalia in 1993, or (crucially) the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia. Perhaps needless to say, al-Qaida’s perception of a threat against Islam is not necessarily shared by other Muslims,
nor even meant as a threat by the “threatening actor”, but that is inconsequential from the point of view of those who implore resistance against the existential threat:

• **The securitizing actor:** As mentioned, focus will be on Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, as these two men are in a league of their own in al-Qaida, whether one sees al-Qaida as an organization or as an ideology, and their statements must be considered as “official” as al-Qaida statement get. Furthermore, four statements by Abu Ghayth, the “official spokesman” of al-Qaida, have been included in the analysis, as well as two interviews with other actors: a 2002 interview with Ramzi bin al-Shib and 9/11 “mastermind” Khalid Shaykh Mohammad; and one with Abu Hafs al Mauritani, believes to have ties to the 1998 bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Four statements by unknown authors are also included. The first (2002a) was published on a website run by a Jordanian Islamist and is believed (Hegghammer 2002:167) to originate from the “inner circles” of al-Qaida. The second and third (2002b and 2002c) were published on what was believed at the time to be al-Qaida’s official website. The fourth (2002d) was published on numerous websites simultaneously and is believed to be authentic since Abu Ghayth referred to it in a later statement (2002b). The securitizing actor calls for, performs and/or retroactively justifies:

• **The emergency measures:** In this context, these are the acts of terrorism performed by al-Qaida members and followers as a response to the securitizing moves by the securitizing actors. As mentioned previously, the level of involvement by bin Laden et al in these acts differ greatly, from those which are financed and planned by al-Qaida (9/11, Kenya and Tanzania 1998) to those for which some al-Qaida credit is claimed but where al-Qaida probably played a very small if any role (Somalia 1993, Madrid 2004).

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44 Not to be confused with Abu Hafs al-Masri, a.k.a. Mohammed Atef, the deceased so-called “military chief” of al-Qaida.
• **The audience**: The audience in these statements differ, although with the massive attention that any high-level al-Qaida statement will receive in the post-9/11 world, the intended and actual audience will often include a number of receivers with different roles and ideologies: the *umma*; the United States and its allies; those who are de facto terrorists and those radical Muslims who are “on the fence”, so to speak, and who al-Qaida would like to encourage into becoming actual terrorists; the media; politicians both Muslim and non-Muslim and so on.
5. Analysis: Defence of Islam?

Virtually unknown outside of some academic and political circles before the September 11, 2001 attacks, al-Qaida is now a household name, and new audio or video statement from bin Laden or al-Zawahiri makes global headlines. Whenever a frightening, unusual and violent event occurs, more or less well-informed members of the media will inevitably ask: “Was it terrorism? Was it al-Qaida?” even when the events in retrospect turn out to be the acts of people who have no relation to al-Qaida whatsoever. Clearly, the existence and fear of this nebulous network of terrorists is part of the zeitgeist.

After 9/11, many Americans inevitably tried to understand why someone would perpetrate such an unprecedented act of terrorism, and more than one analyst and pundit asked the question “Why do they hate us?” (Zakaria 2001). The answer, according to President Bush (2001) and others, is that “the terrorists hate our freedom”. Not so, writes Peter Bergen (2001:222): Osama bin Laden has never spoken out against Western policy on alcohol and drugs, sexual freedom or pornography, or Hollywood movies. As bin Laden himself has said (2004d), if it is freedom he hates, why does he not attack Sweden?

There are some (e.g. Scheuer 2004) who argue that American foreign policy has caused the frustration and anger that leads these men to attack the U.S. and their allies, sometime killing themselves in the process. Others again claim that peaceful coexistence between the West and Islam is in practice impossible, that there can be no reconciliation between the principles of the West and the demands of al-Qaida, and that the 9/11 attacks marks the outbreak of a war between civilizations (Harris 2006).

5.1 What does al-Qaida want?

In an International Herald Tribune opinion piece, Ronald Spiers (2003), a former U.N. Undersecretary-General and U.S. Undersecretary of State, claims that al-
Qaida’s aims are “difficult to spell out with precision”. However, for twenty years, al-Qaida has repeatedly and unequivocally outlined their demands, although to Spiers’ defence these are sometimes quite vague, referring to sundry acts of aggression and repression. Yet even a cursory reading of al-Qaida statements reveals a seemingly endless list of grievances, associated both with the sacred and the profane. Most of the charge sheet can be narrowed down to a handful of particular grievances – what bin Laden describes as a “fierce Jewish-Christian campaign against the Muslim world” (Nida al-Islam 1996).

In the statements examined in this thesis, the grievances include, but are certainly not limited to the following:

- The policies of the Saudi government, including its failure to fully implement Islamic law, its repression of religious authorities and the stationing of U.S. forces (“American occupiers”) on Saudi soil (e.g. Arnett 1997, al-Jazeera 1999a, al-Jazeera 1999b).
- Israeli policy vis-à-vis Muslims in the Palestinian territories and Lebanon, in particular the massacres in Sabra, Shatila and Qana (e.g. Fisk 1996a, bin Laden 2004b), as well as U.S. support for Israel in general (e.g. Fisk 1996a, Arnett 1997) and the very existence of Jews and Israel.
- U.N. sanctions against Iraq in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm and Anglo-American bombings of that country between the two U.S.-Iraq wars (e.g. Fisk 1996a, bin Laden 1996).
- The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan and toppling of the Taliban after 9/11, and the coming to power of the Karzai government (e.g. bin Laden 2003b).
- The invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003 (e.g. bin Laden 2003a).

In addition to righting and revenging these wrongs, bin Laden ultimately wants to restore the Caliphate, with the *shariah* as the supreme law (bin Laden 2003b).
However, al-Qaida has not once explained how they would govern an Islamic state or region, in the unlikely case that they were to come to power in a country. Al-Qaida has never presented a manifest describing how they would rule or what their policies would be in areas such as economics, trade, taxation, education et cetera. On the few occasions bin Laden has been asked how his ideal state would be governed and what policies he would espouse (e.g. Arnett 1997), he has been extremely vague: Islam is the answer and whoever lives under Islamic law will be content, so there is no need to further spell out any governing policies. Clearly, preparing a detailed governing platform is not high on al-Qaida’s agenda, indeed in a statement released in 2002, al-Qaida stated that it “has never since it was founded adopted a cause in order to achieve governmental power” (Unknown 2002).

5.2 Operationalization

The texts used in the analysis include 16 interviews with Osama bin Laden between 1993 and 2001, two interviews from 2001 and 2002 with other al-Qaida members, four statements by Abu Ghayth released in 2001 and 2002, 14 statements by Ayman al-Zawahiri released between 2002 and 2004, 28 statements by Osama bin Laden between 1995 and 2004, and four other al-Qaida statements. In total this makes for 68 separate pieces of text, differing in length from a few paragraphs to substantial manifestos like the 11 000-word “Declaration of war against the Americans occupying the land of the two holy places” (bin Laden 1996). All in all, the texts total about 120 000 words, or roughly 320 pages. Some of the statements refer to very specific events, such as al-Zawahiri’s (2003b) statement on the Guantanamo prisoners, while others, for instance Robert Fisk’s pre-9/11 interviews, are more general in their content.

I have looked for instances where al-Qaida claims that Islam is threatened and explicitly or implicitly uses that as a justification for violence, either by their own hand or by others.

45 Including one in which he appears with Ahmed al-Haznawi, one of the 9/11 hijackers.
Using this criterion, 40 texts refer to Islam being threatened, whereas 28 texts contain no such reference. The analysis is mostly qualitative, but a brief quantitative summary will be given at the end.

5.3 The utility of the analysis

What good does the analysis do? What is the value of knowing if al-Qaida has securitized Islam? According to Wæver (2007:21), an awareness of the arguments and rationalization used by the securitizing actor has value because:

_The image of the West influences recruiting for militant groups [...] For this purpose, it makes sense to listen to how terrorists formulate their arguments and with reference to what/whom they justify their actions. Particularly important is the point at which security and religion meet – religion defended and religion feared._

This thesis deals with one of the points at which security and religion meet – when religion needs to be defended.

In addition as its value vis-à-vis the recruitment factor, knowing why and how al-Qaida argues is valuable in interpreting their statements, as well as for countering the al-Qaida rhetoric in order to prevent support for its ideology. Knowing why your enemy fears you is useful when you seek to alleviate those fears by “draining the swamp” from which the enemy draws new recruits, as well as in predicting if and how he might react to your own actions. Therefore, I disagree with what L. Paul Bremer, who would become head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq in 2003-2004, argues in the following – pre-9/11 – statement:

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There's no point in addressing the so-called root causes of bin Laden's despair with us. We are the root cause of his terrorism. He doesn't like America. He doesn't like our society. He doesn't like what we stand for. He doesn't like our values. And short of the United States going out of existence, there's no way to deal with the root cause of his terrorism.

(PBS Newshour 1998)

5.4 Analysis: the case of al-Qaida

The analysis is divided into three parts, chronologically from 1993 to 2004. The first period contains 21 al-Qaida statements, the second 27 and the third 20.

The dividing of the time periods might appear arbitrary, but the reasoning is as follows. In the first period (1993 – September 10, 200148), al-Qaida published its first and most important fatwa against Saudi Arabia and the United States. Furthermore, all statements in this period were given by bin Laden, with the caveat of the fatwa against the U.S., which had co-signers. The second period, beginning on 9/11 and ending just before the American invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, covers the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. response against al-Qaida and their Taliban hosts in Afghanistan, with the inevitable change in the al-Qaida discourse. Finally, the third period (March 20, 2003 – December 2004) encompasses the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the following insurgency.

5.4.1 1993 – 9/10: The shape of things to come

In late 1992, a UN multinational task force arrived in Somalia to ensure safe working conditions for the humanitarian operations in that war-torn country. Bin Laden has later claimed credit for what may be seen as al-Qaida’s first “official” attack on the U.S.: Two hotels in Yemen believed to be housing American soldiers were attacked in December 1992. The American soldiers were staying at a different hotel (Wright 2007:198) and no Americans were killed in that incident, but the U.S. forces and the mission’s popularity suffered a severe blow with the infamous “Black Hawk Down”

48 “9/10”
incident, wherein two American helicopters were shot down and CNN broadcast images of the body of an American airman being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Although the mission was humanitarian, bin Laden saw it as an act of aggression, “a blatant invasion under the eyes of the whole world. Somalia was occupied for crusader-colonialist purposes”, he later said to journalist John Miller (1998b).

In February 1993, the World Trade Center in New York was the target of a bomb set off in a car parked in the basement of the North Tower. It is unclear whether the architect of the attack, the Kuwaiti Ramzi Yousef, acted on al-Qaida’s orders, but he had trained at one of their camps in Afghanistan (Wright 2007:201-202), and bin Laden later called him “a Muslim who defended Islam from American aggression” (Miller 1998a). In December, bin Laden gave his first known interview to a Western journalist, Robert Fisk (1993) of The Independent. Here, bin Laden is portrayed – by himself and by Fisk – as an ex-jihadist, more concerned with building roads in Sudan than with fighting: “I am a construction engineer and an agriculturalist”, he says, dismissing accusations of running terrorist camps in Sudan.

In 1994, Ramzi Yousef, in a test run for the Bojinka plot, placed a bomb on a Philippine Airlines flight. The bomb exploded while the plane was airborne, killing one person but not downing the aircraft, and Yousef was arrested before being able to carry out Bojinka. On June 25, 1995, an attempt was made on the life of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, an attack presumably orchestrated by al-Zawahiri (Lacroix 2008:157), and on August 3 that year, bin Laden, at the time in Sudan and having had his Saudi citizenship revoked the previous year, sent a fax (bin Laden 1995) to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, making the case that Fahd was an apostate and asking him to abdicate.

The letter – “a frank manifesto to make apparent that which you, and those around you, have committed against Allah and Islam, against the Land of Islam and the Muslims, and against the Sacred City and the Muslim Nation” – is one of bin Laden’s
most famous declarations. It is a furious attack on the king and his reign, overflowing with quotes from the Koran and references to Islamic scholars.

In the first paragraphs of the letter bin Laden, in a scathing tone, mentions all sorts of grievances: oppression of the people of Saudi Arabia, corruption and bribery and the post-war economic downturn. But severe as these wrongdoings may be, they are, he writes, not his reasons for writing to Fahd. In bin Laden’s eyes, the Saudi regime has failed in instilling shariah law in the country. And, since he sees legislation that is not derived from the Koran as a form of apostasy, Fahd – in bin Laden’s eyes – is an apostate:

The quintessence of our dispute is the fact that your ruling system has transgressed ‘la ilaha illa Allah’, and that is the basis on which rests tawhid that differentiates between belief and disbelief. [...] The arbitration of positivistic laws and judging by them is, without doubt, a form of worship to the author of these laws, and a form of distancing those who follow these legislations from the ones set by Allah.

The primacy of man-made laws over divine laws is a recurring theme in this and later statements from bin Laden directed towards the Saudi and other Muslim regimes. In his 1995 letter this is nowhere more clear than when he turns to Saudi Arabia’s “submission” to the Committee for Conflict Resolution for countries of the Gulf Council for Cooperation, in which Islamic law is subordinate to the constitution of the Council of Cooperation and international law and norms:

What mockery of Allah’s religion and what disdain of His Law!!! You have put the Islamic law only at the very end of the above mentioned list of legislative sources even after the garbage of human thoughts, norms and traditions of the disbelieving nations and the laws of the disbelieving regimes!

Bin Laden moves on to mention a number of grievances that amount to an attack on Islam – usury, Saudi support of the comparatively secular Yasser Arafat, et cetera – “these great crimes against the religion and the umma”. However, furious though he

49 La ilaha illa Allah: “There is no God but God.” Tawhid: The oneness of God, monotheism.

50 Shariah does not allow the charging of interest.
may be, bin Laden does not present any threats against the regime in this statement, but merely demands that Fahd resigns. Thus it is not a securitizing move: though bin Laden may claim that Fahd has betrayed his religion, he does not go as far as claiming the need for emergency measures, merely for political change. However, the American forces in Saudi Arabia would soon be targeted by people with connections to al-Qaida.

In November of 1995, a bomb went off outside a Saudi National Guard building, killing seven, including five Americans. At least one of the perpetrators – who were all promptly beheaded – had trained at an al-Qaida camp in Afghanistan (Wright 2007:240). In June 1996, 19 Americans and one Saudi were killed when a military compound outside Dhahran in Saudi Arabia was bombed by a truck bomb, by perpetrators who may or may not have been connected to al-Qaida. Next month, bin Laden, whose fame in the West was on the ascendancy, granted a second interview to Robert Fisk (1996b), who asked whether bin Laden was declaring war on the West. According to bin Laden:

*It is not a declaration of war – it’s a real description of the situation. This doesn’t mean declaring war against the West and Western people - but against the American regime which is against every Muslim.*

Later that year, bin Laden did declare war outright, in the release of one of his most-read and most important documents, addressed to “his Muslim brethren all over the world generally, and in the Arab Peninsula specifically”. The *Declaration of war [jihad] against the Americans occupying the land of the two holy places* (bin Laden 1996) is directed primarily against the United States, whose forces had been stationed in Saudi Arabia for six years at the time. However, the document is also an indictment of the Saudi regime and its actions which bin Laden argues have “torn off its legitimacy”, including those mentioned in his 1995 letter to Fahd: usury, the presence of manmade laws and “the arbitrary declaration of what is halal and haram” regardless of the shariah as instituted by Allah”.

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51 Halal is that which is proscribed or allowed in Islam, haram is that which is forbidden.
Bin Laden here presents the two-step argument that would reappear in a multitude of his later statements: Islam is being threatened (in this case by the presence of American troops on Saudi soil) and therefore whoever resists the Americans is not only *justified* in doing so, but *obligated*: “To terrorize you” – the Americans – “while you are carrying arms on our land is a legitimate and morally demanded duty”, he says, and urges the *umma* to “defend the faith of Islam and the land of the two holy places against the invaders and the occupying forces”. Furthermore, quoting Ibn Taymiyya52 on the need to fight in defence of religion:

“To fight in defence of religion and belief is a collective duty; there is no other duty after belief except fighting the enemy who is corrupting the life and the religion. There are no preconditions for this duty and the enemy should be fought with one’s best abilities.”

Bin Laden closes the statement by praising those who have “raised the banner of jihad against the American-Zionist alliance occupying the sanctities of Islam” and calls upon Muslims to help expel the Americans and the Israelis from Palestine and Saudi Arabia.

Later that year, the magazine *Nida’ al-Islam* (1996) published an interview53 with bin Laden, where he again denounces the Saudi regime, labelling its policies *kufr*, especially as regards the *ulama*.54 In this, as in previous and later statements, bin Laden stresses that the most important duty for a Muslim, after faith itself, is to repel the “enemy which corrupts the religion and the world”. Again, as in his letter to Fahd, bin Laden does not threaten the regime with retaliation for their sins, but merely calls for political change and the introduction of complete *shariah*. His real anger, and the securitizing move, is directed towards the Americans: “After the end of the Cold War, America escalated its campaign against the Muslim world in its entirety, aiming

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52 A Sunni scholar (1263 – 1328), known for his insistence on *jihad* as the premier duty for Muslims.

53 It ought to be mentioned that the interviewer serves bin Laden softball questions and displays a definite slant against the Saudi regime, calling it “apostate” and the Americans “occupiers” – language completely in line with bin Laden’s.

54 The community of Muslim legal scholars. Plural: *Ulama/ulema*, singular: *alim*. 
to get rid of Islam itself.” Consequently, terrorizing the “occupiers” of Saudi Arabia is a “religious and logical obligation”:

What bears no doubt in this fierce Jewish-Christian campaign against the Muslim world, the likes of which has never been seen before, is that the Muslims must prepare all the possible might to repel the enemy on the military, economic, missionary, and all other areas.

In March 1997, bin Laden gave an almost hour-long interview (Arnett 1997) – his first on western TV – to CNN in Afghanistan. With its loyalty – “subordination” – to the U.S., the Saudi regime has “committed an act against Islam”, and is thus cast outside the religious community, he argues. The interview is noteworthy for being one of very few in which bin Laden is asked what sort of regime “the Islamic movement” would run if it were to take over Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden’s answer is so vague as to hardly be an answer at all:

We are confident, with the permission of God, praise and glory be to Him, that Muslims will be victorious in the Arabian Peninsula and that God’s religion, praise and glory be to Him, will prevail in this peninsula. It is a great pride and a big hope that the revelation unto Muhammad, peace be upon him, will be resorted to for ruling. When we used to follow Muhammad’s revelation, peace be upon him, we were in great happiness and in great dignity, to God belong credit and praise.

When asked why al-Qaida declared war against the U.S. in their 1995 fatwa, bin Laden gives the following reasons: American support of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the killing of Muslims there as well as in Lebanon and Iraq; and the American “occupation” of Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden reiterates that the presence of any non-Muslims will not be tolerated in Saudi Arabia and therefore jihad is declared to “drive the Americans away from all Muslim countries”. In this interview, notably, bin Laden specifies that American civilians are not targeted. This would change in 1998.

The umma, says bin Laden, is uniting in jihad because the U.S. “has in collaboration with the Israeli government led the ferocious campaign against the Islamic world in occupying the holy sites of the Muslims”. This leads to his securitizing move: While not claiming responsibility for the explosions in Riyadh and Dhahran, bin Laden says
that they were intended to drive the U.S. out of Saudi Arabia, and that the U.S. should get out in order to avoid further attacks.

However, while bin Laden again excommunicates the Saudi regime, he – again – does not threaten it with retribution. In a securitization context, while the Saudi regime is merely apostate, the existential threat to the referent object is the United States:

It is known that every action has its reaction. If the American presence continues, and that is an action, then it is natural for reactions to continue against this presence. In other words, explosions and killings of the American soldiers would continue. These are the troops who left their country and their families and came here with all arrogance to steal our oil and disgrace us, and attack our religion.

In November 1997, dozens of tourists were killed in Luxor, Egypt, an incident that massively turned the public opinion there against Islamic extremists. The horrific attack was blamed by Egyptian authorities on the Islamic Group and Egyptian Islamic Jihad,55 the latter of which was led by Ayman al-Zawahiri at the time. This was an emergency measure that was not accepted by the audience, and conspicuously, Egypt was spared from massive attacks for almost a decade after Luxor, until 2006, when 23 people were killed in the holiday resort town of Dahab on the Sinai Peninsula, an attack in which, incidentally, there appears to be no involvement by the al-Qaida leadership.

In 1998, due to Iraq’s weapons program activities, tensions between Iraq and the U.S. were high, and American and British forces carried out air strikes on the country. The same year saw the publication of bin Laden’s (1998a) second major declaration of war against the United States, the Declaration from the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders, in which bin Laden submits the fatwa announcing that killing Americans – military and civilian, in any country – is the duty of all Muslims.

55 In 2001, EIJ and al-Qaida merged.
He lists three bones of contention: the American “occupation” of Saudi Arabia, the invasion of and subsequent sanctions against Iraq, and his conclusion that these two acts against Islam were performed for religious and economic reasons, as well as to serve Israel. Therefore and in order to liberate Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem, **jihad** against the Americans is an individual duty for all Muslims in every country:

*First, for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbours, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighbouring Muslim peoples. If some people have in the past argued about the fact of the occupation, all the people of the Peninsula have now acknowledged it.*

These crimes and sins “are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger, and Muslims”, says bin Laden, “and ulama have throughout Islamic history unanimously agreed that the **jihad** is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries.” The statement represents a clear securitizing move by bin Laden:56 The enemy has declared war on that which he holds holy, therefore defensive acts — *jihad* — are necessary:

*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 mosque57 and the holy mosque58 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.*

Three months after the 1998 *fatwa*, ABC News’ John Miller (1998a) interviewed bin Laden in Afghanistan, and the *fatwa* was naturally a major point of their conversation. The U.S. was targeted because it headed “the Western and the crusading forces in their fight against Islam and against Muslims”, bin Laden says,

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56 And by his co-signers of the declaration, including Ayman al-Zawahiri and representatives of *jihad* movements in Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

57 In Jerusalem, considered the third holiest shrine in Islam.

58 In Mecca.
and in what amounts to another securitizing move, bin Laden says that the call to war against the United States was made because:

America has spearheaded the crusade against the Islamic nation, sending tens of thousands of its troops to the land of the two Holy Mosques over and above its meddling in its affairs and its politics, and its support of the oppressive, corrupt and tyrannical regime that is in control.

The United States, he says, “heads the list of aggressors against Muslims”, indeed, “our religion is under attack”, and therefore bin Laden and his men “fight the governments that are bent on attacking our religion and on stealing our wealth and on hurting our feelings.” The first Miller interview is perhaps the most openly aggressive pre-9/11 statement by bin Laden, who argues that the U.S. expresses “hostility” towards Muslims in the way they have “mobilized their people against Islam and against Muslims” and “represent the spearhead” of the attack on Muslims. Also, as ever, Palestine and Iraq feature heavily in his argument, although the focus is on Saudi Arabia. However, although he says that he is fighting “the governments that are bent on attacking our religion and on stealing our wealth and on hurting our feelings”, he still does not explicitly threaten Saudi Arabia, only the Americans there:

Allah ordered us in this religion to purify Muslim land of all non-believers, and especially the Arabian Peninsula where the Kaba is.

When asked if he has anything to add, bin Laden urges American journalists “not to ask why we did that, but to ask what had their government done that forced us to defend ourselves?” In this, as in other pre-9/11 statements, bin Laden – whom Miller calls “the Middle East version of Teddy Roosevelt” – denies any explicit connection to terrorist attacks, but he gladly claims credit for instigating them. On the other hand, he does say that his enemies are the enemies of Islam and therefore he practices a “commendable” terrorism because it is “directed at the tyrants and the aggressors and the enemies of Allah, the tyrants, the traitors who commit acts of treason against

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59 The Kaba in Mecca is a building inside the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the holiest site in Islam. During prayer, Muslims face the Kaba, and legend has it was built by Abraham and Ishmael.

60 Presumably declare the fatwa against the Americans.
their own countries and their own faith and their own prophet and their own nation.”

The umma and Islam is under attack, but they are fighting back, he says:

\[ \text{The truth is that the whole Muslim world is the victim of international terrorism, engineered by America at the United Nations.} \]

[...]

\[ \text{Tell the Muslims everywhere that the vanguards of the warriors who are fighting the enemies of Islam belong to them and the young fighters are their sons. Tell them that the nation is bent on fighting the enemies of Islam.} \]

Seven weeks after the first Miller interview, and eight years to the day after American troops entered Saudi Arabia in conjunction with Desert Shield and Desert Storm, on August 7, two nearly simultaneous explosions tore apart the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing more than 200 people, including 12 Americans. The fact that the African Muslim casualties vastly outnumbered the American deaths caused criticism of the attack from people who otherwise supported attacks against Americans, and both bin Laden and al-Zawahiri would be pressed to defend the attack in later interviews.

Bin Laden gave a second interview to Miller (1998b) in December, a week after, U.S. and British planes had carried out air strikes against military installations in Iraq, intended to impede Iraq’s ability to produce nuclear, chemical and biological weapons (CNN 1998). Bin Laden sees the air strikes, which feature heavily in the conversation, as part of a U.S.-British-Israeli plan to enslave the Muslim world and steal its wealth. As regards the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, he states that his only involvement was to instigate the umma to participate in jihad, that he will continue to do this, and that the East Africa attacks were intended to liberate the Kaba and expel the Americans from Islamic countries. When asked how the deaths of so many Muslim Africans could be justified, bin Laden both dodges the question and gives justification for the casualties:

\[ \text{This question pre-supposes that it is me who carried out these explosions. My answer is that I understand the motives of the brothers who carry out acts of jihad against the enemies of the nation, namely} \]
the Americans and their supporters. [...] in a case like this, when it becomes apparent that it would be impossible to repel these Americans without assaulting them, even if this involved the killing of Muslims, this is permissible under Islam.

His enemy, says bin Laden, is the “crusader alliance led by America, Britain and Israel”, and the only way to repel them is through jihad. He migrated to Afghanistan, he says, to “defend the religion of God” and to liberate the holy sites of Mecca and Jerusalem. In a securitizing move, bin Laden argues that Muslims, who are subject to “a ferocious crusader-Jewish offensive”, should not count on the present regimes – apostates in bin Laden’s mind – rather, “they should defend their religion and themselves and the sanctuaries of Muslims.”

In January 1999, Newsweek printed the transcript of an interview (Isma’il 1999) bin Laden had given to a Palestinian journalist in December 1998. This interview was given the same week as the Miller interview above, and bin Laden repeats the issue of U.S.-British air strikes on Iraq. The Americans and the British want to “destroy” Iraq to prevent it from challenging Israel, he says, and the Israelis are “killing the small children in Palestine”, supported by the Americans, therefore Muslims are justified in killing Americans.

At this point in time, al-Qaida’s suspected pursuit of weapons of mass destruction was an increasing headache for Western intelligence services, and both in the Isma’il and in the second Miller interview, bin Laden is asked whether he has acquired or plans to acquire WMD. Noncommittal about whether he has or plans to acquire such weapons, he states unequivocally that the acquisition and use of weapons mass destruction – the ultimate emergency measure – would be justified in order to liberate Muslim lands:

We don’t consider it a crime if we tried to have nuclear, chemical, biological weapons. Our Holy Land is occupied by Israeli and American forces. We have the right to defend ourselves and to liberate our Holy Land.

Bin Laden urges Muslim nations to “start fighting, or at least to start preparing to fight, against the enemies of Islam”, primarily the Americans, who are waging a war
“against Islam and Muslims all over the world”. Time also published a bin Laden interview (Yusufzai 1999) in January 1999. The interview was given at the same time as the Newsweek and the second Miller interview, and the similarities between bin Laden’s interviews in this period are remarkable. Consistent in his themes, bin Laden sticks to a number of talking points which in sum amount to a securitizing move: Infidels walk on the land of the Prophet, the regimes are corrupt and powerless to stop them, therefore the umma needs to take matter into its own hands and fight back. This is evident in the following extract which is a prime example of bin Laden’s securitization rhetoric. The regimes have forfeited their duty to defend Islam and Muslims, therefore non-state actors such as himself, but also other Muslims, are not only justified in taking matters in their own hands, they must do so:

Now infidels walk everywhere on the land where Muhammad was born and where the Koran was revealed to him. The situation is serious. The rulers have become powerless. Muslims should carry out their obligations, since the rulers of the region have accepted the invasion of their countries. These countries belong to Islam and not the rulers.

Al-Jazeera (1999a) also published a bin Laden interview in 1999, in which he denies being an accomplice to the Kenya and Tanzania attacks – “unless it means that I am involved in inciting and goading them, which is very clear and to which I confess at all times.” He also claims that the U.S. plotted a partition of Sudan from the Nairobi embassy. When asked as to his demands, they are that “our lands be liberated from the Americans.” The occupation of Muslim lands, argues bin Laden, justifies action from his and his fellow Muslims’ part, because “if we do not move now when the holy site of 1,200 million Muslims has been usurped, then when should people stir?” Again, jihad is the means with which to protect Islam from “the enemies of Islam”, in particular “the greater external enemy – the Crusader-Jewish alliance”:

The present regimes no longer have the power. Either they are collaborators or have lost the power to do anything against this contemptible occupation. So Muslims should emigrate somewhere where they can raise the symbol of jihad and protect their religion and world, otherwise they will lose everything.
In June of that year, *Al-Jazeera* (1999b) aired a documentary, which featured an interview with bin Laden. What bin Laden wants, he says, is to see his land “freed of the enemies” and to enforce *shariah*, therefore he and his compatriots are pursuing their right to have the Americans “evicted from the Muslim world countries and to prevent them from dominating” Muslims:

> There was an attack on the countries of Islam, especially on the holy shrines and on al-Aqsa Mosque, the prophet’s first qibla. And then the aggression continued with the Crusader-Jewish alliance being led by the United States and Israel. Now they have taken the country of the two holy mosques.

To bin Laden, there are two parties in the conflict: the alliance of Christianity and “Zionist Jewry”, represented by the U.S., Britain and Israel; and the Muslim world. Therefore, he believes that it is his and his followers’ “religious duty to resist this occupation with all the power that we have and to punish it using the same means it is pursuing against us”, and he says in no uncertain terms that he will carry out *jihad* against the Americans:

> The people who had the honor of engaging in jihad in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Chechnya - we had such an honor - are certain that the nation nowadays can, God willing, engage in jihad against the enemies of Islam, particularly, the external archenemy, the crusader-Jewish alliance.

In the last months of 1999, American intelligence worried that terrorists would pull off a spectacular attack during the New Years Eve celebrations, and at least three planned Millennium attacks by would-be Islamist terrorists were thwarted. One of these was a scheme in which a group of men intended to attack the missile destroyer *U.S.S. The Sullivans* in Aden harbour by means of manoeuvring an explosives-laden boat towards it before detonating (Wright 2007:339). The plot failed because the boat was too heavily loaded with explosives and subsequently sank.

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61 The interview, however, may have been recorded before 1999.

62 The direction that should be faced during prayer, towards Mecca and the *Kaba*.
The plans, however, remained, and although 1999 turned to 2000 without incident, the suicide boat plot succeeded on October 12, 2000 when the American destroyer U.S.S. Cole, berthed outside Aden, Yemen, was hit by a team of suicide bombers arriving by boat. 17 sailors were killed, and one of the most advanced ships in the U.S. Navy suffered hundreds of millions of dollars worth of damage. The attack had clear ties to al-Qaida, but it is uncertain as to how much bin Laden and al-Zawahiri were involved (9/11 Commission Report 2004:202). However, in the wedding of one of his sons, bin Laden read out a poem about the attack, ostensibly written for him by his speechwriter:

A destroyer, even the brave might fear,  
She inspires horror in the harbor and the open sea, 
She goes into the waves flanked by arrogance, haughtiness, and fake might, 
To her doom she progresses slowly, clothed in a huge illusion, 
Awaiting her is a dinghy, bobbing in the waves.

5.4.2 9/11 – Iraq invasion: Attack and aftermath

On August 6, 2001, President George W. Bush received, as part of the Presidential Daily Brief, a memo with the title “Bin Laden determined to strike in U.S.” which warned that bin Laden’s followers would “bring the fighting to America” (CNN 2004). Five weeks later, four airplanes departing from the east coast of the U.S., bound for California, and therefore carrying large amounts of fuel, were hijacked. Two planes crashed into either of the tallest buildings of the World Trade Center, one plane hit the Pentagon, and one crashed into the ground in Pennsylvania, probably steered to the ground deliberately by the hijackers after passengers, having been told of the crashes in New York, tried in vain to gain control of the plane. About 3,000 people from more than 90 nations were killed, all but 55 of them civilians. Within weeks of the attack, the U.S. aided by the United Kingdom launched an attack on Afghanistan. The “war on terror” had begun, but the “war” would only increase the frequency of statements from al-Qaida. On September 17 and 24, 2001, al-Jazeera published letters allegedly received by fax from bin Laden (2001e), in which he urges Muslims, in particular in Pakistan and Afghanistan, to “rise in defence of Islam”,


against the invading “crusaders”. “This battle is considered one of the battles of Islam”, says bin Laden.

In October, an al-Jazeera correspondent was granted the first post-9/11 interview (Aluni 2001) with bin Laden. However, al-Jazeera did not air the interview, and it was only shown publicly when CNN acquired a copy of it. Bin Laden denies having anything to do with the 9/11 attacks, but, as was the case with the 1998 East Africa bombings, he boasts of having agitated for such attacks. After denying affiliation to the attacks, bin Laden subsequently praises them, saying that they were carried out – “as we understand it” – in self-defence, for two reasons: because of the situation in Palestine and in order to “liberate our sacred religious sites”, that is, Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem. The ongoing battle is not between al-Qaida and the U.S., but between Muslims and “the global crusaders”, says bin Laden. Again, jihad is a duty for all Muslims, because the U.S. “is against the establishment of any Islamic government”, and Muslims are being attacked in “Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, Kashmir, the Philippines and everywhere else”.

While denying being an accomplice to 9/11, bin Laden still says that he is defending his values and his brothers, and does admit to carrying out unspecified acts of terrorism while renouncing the U.S. and Israel in the same breath: “America and Israel exercise the condemned terrorism. We practice the good terrorism which stops them from killing our children in Palestine and elsewhere.” In this interview, bin Laden makes a point of the fact that President Bush initially described the U.S. response to 9/11 as a crusade: “Our goal is for our nation to unite in the face of the Christian crusade. This is the fiercest battle. Muslims have never faced anything bigger than this. Bush said it in his own words: ‘crusade’. ” Crucially, bin Laden states his conditions for ending the confrontation: “America won’t get out of this crisis until it gets out of the Arabian Peninsula, and until it stops its support of Israel.”

*The events proved the extent of terrorism that America exercises in the world. Bush stated that the world has to be divided in two: Bush and his supporters, and any country that doesn’t get into the global crusade is with the terrorists [Bush 2001]. What terrorism is clearer than this?*
Many governments were forced to support this ‘new terrorism.’ They had to go along with this although they knew that we are defending our brothers and defending our sacred values.

On October 7, the day of the first U.S-British strikes against Afghanistan, al-Jazeera aired the first post-9/11 bin Laden (2001f) video, although it is unknown when it was recorded or how al-Jazeera acquired it (Hegghammer 2002:149, see also IntelCenter 2008:5-6). It is believed that the video had been recorded some time earlier and kept on hand, its release triggered by the expected post-9/11 attack on Afghanistan. Again, bin Laden’s focus is on the sanctions regime against Iraq, the situation in Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, and the “humiliation” that has been suffered upon the umma:

Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than 80 years. Its sons are being killed, its blood is being shed, its holy places are being attacked, and it is not being ruled according to what God has decreed. Despite this, nobody cares.

Repeating the point made in the previous al-Jazeera interview, bin Laden says that the United States will not be secure until the Palestine situation has been resolved and “all the infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad.” The Americans, says bin Laden, “came out to fight Islam in the name of terrorism”:

I say that the matter is clear and explicit. In the aftermath of this event [9/11] and now that senior US officials have spoken, beginning with Bush, the head of the world’s infidels, and whoever supports him, every Muslim should rush to defend his religion.

The following week, two videos were published wherein al-Qaida spokesman Abu Ghayth read short written statements. In the introduction to the first statement, Ghayth (2001a), as did bin Laden in his previous statement, claims that the umma has been “under the yoke of the joint Jewish-Crusader aggression” for 80 years and mentions two specific grievances: the “Jewish occupation” of Palestine and the presence in Saudi Arabia of “those who came to occupy these lands, usurp the holy places, and plunder these resources.” Abu Ghayth focuses on the “Crusader war” that has, in his view, been launched against Muslims in Afghanistan. The attack on

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63 Another reference to the fall of the caliphate in Istanbul and Sykes-Picot agreement.
Afghanistan, however, is merely one front of a war against the entire *umma*, he argues. He then urges Muslims to fight back against those who ostensibly attack them because of their religion:

*I address Muslim youths, men, and women and urge them to shoulder their responsibility. They should know that the land of Afghanistan and the mujahideen there are really facing an all-out crusader war which is aimed at eliminating this group which believes in God and fights on the basis of a creed and religion.*

In his statement released three days later, Abu Ghayth (2001b) – as did bin Laden in his statements in this period – declares his unconditional support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the face of the American response to 9/11, which Ghayth describes as a crusade against Islam:

*Those who supported this crusader campaign should realise after things have been clarified that it is a crusader campaign against Islam and the Muslims.*

On behalf of al-Qaida, he *orders* the U.S., British and other “infidels” to leave the Arabian Peninsula and lists five conditions for the “storms” (of attacks) to cease: the Americans must retreat from Afghanistan, cease assistance to “the Jews in Palestine”, end the “siege” of Iraq, withdraw from the Arabian Peninsula, and end their “support for the Hindus against the Muslims in Kashmir.”

On November 3, al-Jazeera aired yet another bin Laden (2001g) video, in which he focuses on the American attacks against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan that were taking place at the time, and claims that the Western campaign in Afghanistan is merely “a link to a long series of crusader wars against the Islamic world”. Furthermore, he mentions the demonstrations against the U.S. attack against Afghanistan that were taking place at the time, in particular in Islamic countries. This fact, in bin Laden’s eyes, “clearly indicates the nature of this war. This war is fundamentally religious”, and “the enmity is based on creed.”

While bin Laden mostly deals with the Afghanistan issue in this statement, he still reviews his usual litany of grievances, amongst them the occupation of Palestine, the
sanctions regime on Iraq, U.S. missile strikes against Sudan, the unresolved territorial conflict in Kashmir, U.N. and U.S. intervention in Somalia, the Russian quagmire in Chechnya, the conflict in Bosnia and the separation of East Timor from Indonesia, and condemns the United Nations for their complicity what he describes as crimes against Islam. Yet again, the argument is that the Islamic world has been the victim of a Crusade ever since the fall of the last Caliphate: “It is a question of faith, not a war against terrorism, as Bush and Blair try to depict it”, he says:

After the US politicians spoke and after the US newspapers and television channels became full of clear crusader hatred in this campaign that aims at mobilizing the West against Islam and Muslims, Bush left no room for doubts or the opinions of journalists, but he openly and clearly said that this war is a crusader war.

Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir (2001) interviewed bin Laden in early November, 2001, while the initial American operations against Afghanistan were ongoing. Ayman Al-Zawahiri was also present. Still not claiming responsibility for 9/11, bin Laden nevertheless justifies the attack with the logic that since Americans attack Muslims in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir and Iraq, they are therefore justified in responding:

We ourselves are the target of killings, destruction and atrocities. We are only defending ourselves. This is defensive jihad. We want to defend our people and our land. That is why I say that if we don’t get security, the Americans, too would not get security.

As he did in the statements of October 7 and November 3, bin Laden focuses on Bush’s description of the war on terror as a “crusade”. Bin Laden is also asked whether he foresees a political solution to the conflict with the U.S., and answers that the journalist “should put this question to those who have started this war. We are only defending ourselves.”

On December 13, Britain and the U.S. published a video allegedly found in Jalalabad the previous month, in which bin Laden (2001h) more or less confesses to the 9/11 attacks. In bin Laden’s opinion, the event “benefited Islam greatly”, because it spurred interest in the religion by non-believers. He then quotes a poem with the lines
“Our homes are flooded with blood and the tyrant is freely wandering in our homes […] We will not stop our raids until you free our lands’, and then recites several hadith, including one which says: “I was ordered to fight the people until they say there is no god but Allah, and his prophet Muhammad.”

On December 22, 2001, British-Jamaican Richard Reid, an alleged al-Qaida member (CNN 2003) attempted to blow up an aircraft en route from Paris to Miami. Incidentally, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri have never mentioned this attempted attack publicly64 – they rarely speak of failed operations. In December 2001 and January 2002, Singaporean authorities arrested more than a dozen people, some of which had stayed in an al-Qaida safe house in Pakistan, on charges of planning to blow up Western diplomatic missions in Singapore.

In his last video of the year, aired on al-Jazeera on December 27, bin Laden (2001i) summarizes the situation three months after “the blessed strikes against world atheism and its leader, America”, and two months after the U.S. response in Afghanistan, “the fierce crusade against Islam.” Bin Laden focuses, as he increasingly does in this period, on Afghanistan, and finds it “clear that the West in general and America in particular have an unspeakable hatred for Islam.” The high civilian casualties in Afghanistan testifies to this, argues bin Laden, and claims that Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. Secretary of Defence, “said it was the United States’ right to exterminate the peoples since they are Muslim and since they are not American. It is a blatant crime.” In this statement, however, bin Laden mentions only one of America’s actions apart from its armed response against al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan: “Its support for Israel, which kills our people”.

In late 2001, the newspaper al-Sharq al-Awsat published a serialized text by Ayman al-Zawahiri (2001), titled “Knights under the Prophet’s Banner”. Al-Zawahiri argues65 that the countries of the West have

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64 It is however mentioned among numerous other post-9/11 operations in Unknown 2002d.
65 The text used in the analysis is heavily abbreviated. The complete text was only recently made available in English.
adopted a number of tools to fight Islam, including the United Nations; the servile rulers of the Muslim peoples; multinational corporations; international communications and data exchange systems, international relief agencies and nongovernmental organizations, which are used as a cover for espionage, conspiracies, and arms smuggling.

After 2001, most of these “tools” have been attacked by al-Qaida and their affiliates: the U.N. in Iraq in 2003 and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Algeria in 2007; HSBC, the world’s largest banking group in Istanbul in 2003; attacks on the Saudi and Yemeni oil industry in 2006; numerous kidnappings and killings of relief workers in Iraq and Afghanistan. On al-Zawahiri’s list of targets, only international communications systems have been spared thus far.

Al-Qaida’s battle, writes al-Zawahiri, “is that of every Muslim: we must reiterate that this battle, which we must wage to defend our faith, community, sanctuaries, honor, values, wealth, and resources, is that of every Muslim, young or old.” Luckily, writes al-Zawahiri, “a new awareness is developing among the sons of Islam, who are eager to ensure their victory: namely, that no solution is possible without jihad.”

On April 11, 2002, 21 people were killed in a suicide bomb attack in Djerba, Tunisia. Abu Ghayth (2002a) later claimed responsibility on behalf of al-Qaida for this “quality operation”. In April 2002, three unsigned al-Qaida statements were published on what was believed to be al-Qaida’s official website at the time. In one of them (Unknown 2002b), it is argued that the sole motivation of the 9/11 attackers was to defend the religion of God, their honour and that which is sacred, not to serve mankind or in support of any Eastern or Western ideology, but in service to Islam and to defend its people entirely for their benefit whether they wished it or not.

The argument is that Muslims are being “exterminated” by the Crusaders, who needed no excuse to “attack the Muslims and expel them and wage war on their religion”. In another unsigned statement (Unknown 2002c), the writer states that al-Qaida has never sought governmental power; its motivation for the attacks – “these operations” – is the defence of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina and the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, and more generally defence of the territory and honour
of Muslims. The unknown author argues that “jihad is the only way at this time to support the religion of God everywhere.”

On May 8, a suicide bomber killed 11 French engineers as well as two Pakistanis in a suicide bombing in Karachi, Pakistan, and on June 14, a suicide car bomb against the U.S. consulate in the same city killed 12 Pakistanis. On October 6, the French oil tanker Limburg was attacked outside Yemen by a bomb delivered by boat, and on October 12, more than 200 people were killed in three explosions in Bali, Indonesia. The perpetrators in the Bali attack were members of Jemaah Islamiyah, an Islamic terrorist network based in Southeast Asia with ties to al-Qaida.

Al-Jazeera aired a purported bin Laden (2002c) audio tape on November 12. In this tape he focuses more on the profane than the sacred, and argues that whatever acts of terrorism are incurred upon the West are quid pro quo acts, “carried out by the zealous sons of Islam in defence of their religion”:

*The incidents that have taken place since the raids on New York and Washington up until now – like the killing of Germans in Tunisia and the French in Karachi, the bombing of the giant French tanker in Yemen, the killing of marines in Faylaka*66 *and the British and Australians in the Bali explosions, the recent operation in Moscow*67 *and some sporadic operations here and there – are only reactions and reciprocal actions.*

On November 28, in a rare lethal attack on Israeli interests outside of Israel, 13 people died when an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya was the target of a suicide bomber, and an Israeli charter plane narrowly missed being hit by two surface-to-air missiles fired upon it. A statement (Unknown 2002d) which appeared on several Islamic websites the next month claimed responsibility for the Mombasa attack, which, the statement says, was carried out in revenge for the situation in Palestine, which is part of a campaign against the Islamic world that “aims primarily

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66 In Kuwait.

67 Most likely the October 2002 hostage situation in a theatre in Moscow. The perpetrators were Chechnyan terrorist groups who according to the U.S. State Department have links to al-Qaida (BBC News 2002). Actual involvement by al-Qaida leadership in this situation is unlikely.
at uprooting Muslims, destroying their faith, occupying their homes and stealing their wealth.” The unknown author of this message writes that “The strikes will continue so that the whole world knows that the Crusader war against Islam and Muslims has failed”.

A few days later, in an audio statement by Abu Ghayth (2002b) was published on a Islamic website, Ghayth states that al-Qaida’s primary goal, “for which all efforts and forces must unite”, is the liberation of their holy sites and countries, “first and foremost Palestine and the Land of the two Holy Mosques.” Ghayth also warns against “the danger of what America and its allies are preparing against Iraq”.

5.4.3 March 20, 2003 – December 2004: Invasion and insurgency

In 2003, the U.S invaded Iraq with the aid of the United Kingdom and smaller contingents from other countries. Saddam Hussein was captured, tried and executed, but the weapons of mass destruction that were the *raison d’être* for the invasion proved to be non-existent, and the U.S. retroactively gave other justifications for the invasion, including regime change, removing al-Qaida terrorists from Iraq and building democracy in the country and the region. At the time of writing, the U.S. has some 150,000 forces in Iraq (in addition to a large number of private contractors and a smaller number of British and other forces). In the run-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, al-Qaida’s focus inevitably shifted to that new front, and the question of the American “occupation” of Saudi Arabia became less important (see Table 4). However, to al-Qaida, the invasion of Iraq was merely the opening of another front in what they perceive as a war against Islam.

On February 11, when war between the U.S. and Iraq seemed inevitable,68 al-Jazeera broadcast an audio statement by bin Laden (2003a), addressed to his “Muslim brothers in Iraq”, in which he recommends “martyrdom operations” against the enemy, and again excommunicates those Arab countries that have collaborated with the United States: “they are apostates and outside the community of Muslims. It is

68 Colin Powell had given his infamous Security Council briefing the previous week.
permissible to spill their blood and take their property.” Before urging Muslims in general and Iraqis in particular to repel the Americans, bin Laden states that “this crusade war is primarily targeted against the people of Islam.”

Five days later, a 53-minute bin Laden (2003b) audiotape was posted on an Islamic website, in which bin Laden declares that Bush and Blair are bent on destroying and plundering the umma:

_The Bush-Blair agreement pretends that it wants to put an end to terrorism. However, it is no longer a secret even from the masses that it wants to put an end to Islam._

The coming invasion of Iraq is merely one of many plots against Muslim countries, he says, the main goal being the division of Saudi Arabia: “The American targeting of the area in general and specifically the division of the Land of the Two Holy Places is not just a passing summer cloud; it is a strategic aim which deceitful American policy has never lost sight of”, bin Laden says. Therefore _jihad_ is necessary and deserving of the support of all Muslims. The defenders of Islam need strength and perseverance, he says, and in this as in other statements, bin Laden says that the most important duty of the believer is to repel the enemies, and since Arab regimes cannot be trusted to do this, other Muslims must take matters into their own hands.

In a securitizing move, bin Laden repeats his maxim that “the most important religious duty – after belief itself – is to ward off and fight the enemy aggressor”, and says that while President Bush – “the Pharaoh of our generation” – may claim that al-Qaida attacked the U.S. because of the American way of life, the truth is that “we strike at them because of the way they oppress us in the Muslim world, especially in Palestine and Iraq, and because of their occupation of the Land of the Two Holy Places.” Bin Laden praises the 9/11 hijackers who “managed to protect their religion and effectively to serve the objectives of their Nation better than the governments and peoples of the fifty-odd countries of the Muslim world, because they used _jihad_ as a means to defend their faith.” Bin Laden then urges all members of the umma to join the _jihad_: 
God, in His grace, has opened the heart of many of our young people to engage in Jihad for His sake and to defend His religion and His servants. It is incumbent upon the Nation to help them, encourage them and facilitate things for them, so that they can defend it [the umma] and protect it from injustice, shame and sin.

In March, the Kashmiri-born naturalized American citizen Iyman Faris confessed to having planned to blow up the Brooklyn Bridge, and to having met Khalid Shaykh Mohammad. On April 8, the Associated Press reported the existence of a new bin Laden (2003c) audio tape, of which only an edited transcript was made public. According to the AP, the only theme of the message was “martyrdom” attacks. The infidels, says bin Laden, “cannot bear the existence of Muslims”, and if Muslims do not take to arms against the U.S. and Britain they “will be ashamed in front of God.”

On May 12, 34 people perished when three expatriate housing compounds in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, were struck by bomb blasts. Four days later, in Casablanca, Morocco, five suicide bomb blasts claimed the lives of 41 people. On July 7, 2003, a 96-minute purported bin Laden (2003d) audio tape was published on several Islamist websites, in which he mourns the situation of the umma – “The nation has never been as damaged by a catastrophe like the one that damages them today” – and scolds the clerics of the Muslim world who, in his opinion, are corrupt and loyal to their (apostate) regimes and not to their religion. Jihad is a duty for all Muslims, says bin Laden, and emphasizes the use of suicide attacks:

The spirit of martyrdom is our strength and our weapon for the sake of the survival of our religion, and for resistance to any domestic or foreign attempt to distort our religion.

On August 5, twelve people were killed in an attack on the Marriott hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia. In an unsigned statement, responsibility for the attack was placed on al-Qaeda and Ayman al-Zawahiri (Sydney Morning Herald 2003). On September 28, 2003, al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya aired an alleged al-Zawahiri (2003c) audio tape containing a message to Muslims in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In this statement, al-Zawahiri calls on Pakistani Muslims to overthrow then-President Musharraf and “install a sincere leadership that would defend Islam and Muslims.” The U.S.-led “crusade […] seeks to undermine Islam” and “subjugate the Muslim nation”, says al-
Zawahiri, who urges Muslims to “examine their situation, and then strengthen themselves and rely on Almighty God in resisting this Crusader-Jewish campaign, which is aimed at destroying Islam and Muslims.”

On October 18, 2003, al-Jazeera broadcast two extracts from a bin Laden (2003e) audio tape. The first extract is an address to the American people, who bin Laden says are not only “vulgar and without sound ethics or good manners”, but led by the rich – Jews in particular – to “support the Israelis and their schemes and in complete antagonism towards our religion.” Because of the invasion of Iraq, bin Laden reserves the right to “retaliate at the appropriate time and place against all countries involved”, including Muslim states. While bin Laden in his message to the American people does not argue that Islam is threatened, he does so in the other part of the message, which is directed to the Iraqi people, and implores the umma to join in jihad. He also conveys his greetings to the foreign fighters who have immigrated to Iraq to join the insurgency:

*Be aware that this war is a new crusade against the Islamic world. It is a decisive war for the whole community. [...] To those who have left their parents, their sons, their relatives and towns, I convey my greetings. I am also telling you that you are the soldiers of God, the arrows of Islam and the first line of defence for this nation.*

On November 8, three suicide bombs went off in a housing complex in Riyadh. Then, on November 15 and 20, Istanbul was the target of four truck bombs against synagogues, the British bank HSBC and the British consulate, killing 57 people.

On January 4, 2004, al-Jazeera aired a 14-minute bin Laden (2004a) audio tape, with a “message to brothers and sisters in the whole Islamic nation”. The invasion of Iraq is merely one of many “grand plots” hatched against the umma, and the rest of the Gulf states will soon be occupied by the Zionist-Crusader alliance, says bin Laden. Since he is “keen on safeguarding your religion and your worldly life”, he urges a discussion on how to “find a way out of these adversities and calamities.” Noting that the conflict between Muslims and the West is old and will last until Judgement Day,
and that “apostate” rulers are unqualified to defend Muslims, bin Laden states that “jihad is the path, so seek it.”

On February 24, al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya aired two alleged al-Zawahiri audio tapes in which bin Laden’s second-in-command (al-Zawahiri 2004a) denounces claims by President Bush that a large number of al-Qaida forces have been killed or arrested:

_We remind Bush that he did not crush two-thirds of al-Qaida. On the contrary, thanks be to God, al-Qaida remains on the battleground of the holy war, raising the banner of Islam in the face of the Zionist-Crusader campaign against the Islamic community._

On March 11, 2004, Madrid was rocked by a series of bombs placed on commuter trains, killing 191. The year before, when bin Laden (2003e) had reserved “the right to retaliate” against countries involved in the 2003 Iraq invasion, Spain was one of the countries he named as potential targets. The Spanish authorities, however, found no link between al-Qaida’s leaders and the Madrid attacks (Reuters 2007). Next month, however, bin Laden in a message to Europe (2004b) states that the Madrid attacks were “reciprocal treatment” for Europe’s sins and attacks on Muslims’ security, while “the killing of Americans on the day of New York was after their support of the Jews in Palestine and their invasion of the Arabian Peninsula.” Referencing European polling that showed strong opposition to the Iraq war at the time, bin Laden makes an offer to Europeans: He will cease and desist any and all attacks “against every country that commits itself to not attacking Muslims or interfering in their affairs”.

On May 6, 2004, a 20-minute bin Laden (2004c) audio tape was posted on several Islamist websites. Two months earlier, the Iraqi Governing Council had agreed on a transitional constitution that would take effect when the country gained sovereignty on July 1. The constitution specified that _shariah_ would be _a_ source of legislation, but not _the sole_ source (Ignatius 2004). As bin Laden has said on several occasions, any law that is not _completely_ based on _shariah_ is unacceptable, it comes as no surprise that he dismisses the new Iraqi constitution in this statement:
Bremer announced that he will not accept that Islam be the source of all legislation, meaning that he will not accept Islam as a religion for Iraq. Hence, the announced constitution came according to his will. This clearly shows on one hand that the [Iraqi] Governing Council is but a puppet and a tool in their hands to implement their plans against an unwary people and on the other hand shows the extent of their hidden hatred against Islam. This also shows that the struggle is an ideological and religious struggle and that the clash is a clash of civilizations. They are keen to destroy Islamic identity in the entire Islamic world.

Because of this, says bin Laden, “jihad becomes the individual duty of Iraqis not only against the crusaders but also against the infidel government and its supporters.”

On October 1, 2004, al-Jazeera aired parts of an al-Zawahiri (2004f) audiotape. Defending Palestine, says al-Zawahiri, is a duty incumbent on all Muslims, because they are living in “the century of the Islamic resistance after the governments have weakened and kneeled down before the invading crusader.” Four weeks later and shortly before the U.S. presidential elections, al-Jazeera broadcast a bin Laden (2004d) video tape in which he discussed how the U.S. could avoid “another Manhattan”. Bin Laden and his people fight in order to restore freedom to the umma, he says, and dismisses the importance of the elections as far as attaining security goes. Rather, Americans must cease their aggression:

In conclusion, I tell you in truth, that your security is not in the hands of Kerry, nor Bush, nor al-Qaida. No. Your security is in your own hands. And every state that doesn’t play with our security has automatically guaranteed its own security.

In a statement released a month later, but probably recorded before the U.S. elections, Ayman al-Zawahiri (2004g) is equally dismissive of whether Americans elect Bush, Kerry or “the cursed devil himself”.

On December 15, 2004, a 74-minute bin Laden (2004e) audio tape was posted on several Islamist websites. In this, one of the longest post-9/11 statements by bin Laden, he focuses on Saudi Arabia. In his opinion, the Saudi regime has committed sins so grave as to render them outside the realm of Muslims: In their abandonment of the Arabian Peninsula “to the Jews and Christians”, the royal family has betrayed
its religion and its nation, which has nullified their sovereignty. In particular, bin Laden takes issue with demands from U.S. government and the Freedom House organization (Shea 2006) that Saudi Arabia change the contents of some textbooks used in Saudi schools. The textbooks clearly state that *jihad* is “one of the most magnificent acts of obedience to God”, that the clash between the *umma* and the Jews “will continue as long as God wills”, and that “the apes are Jews, the people of the Sabbath; while the swine are the Christians, the infidels of the communion of Jesus.” Bin Laden warns against secular encroachment on the curricula:

> This Crusader intervention in the changing of the curricula is absolutely the most dangerous intervention in our affairs, because it is, in short, a change in the religion, while the religion is a whole, which is indivisible. [...] It is evident that the outcome of changing the religious curricula is damaging both to religion and to material interests. As for [the damage to] religion, you already know that it is blatant apostasy...

On December 27, 2004, al-Jazeera aired an excerpt of, and the next day Islamist websites posted in its entirety, Osama bin Laden’s (2004f) last message of 2004. The most interesting element of this statement is the fact that bin Laden formally declares Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to be the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq. The new Iraqi constitution is, he says, *jahiliyya*, and the “conflict with the West is a fateful war between unbelief and Islam, between the army of Muhammad, the army of belief, and the people of the cross”.

### 5.5 Summary

The analysis yields some interesting results that can be summarized quantitatively. However, because some statements were abbreviated, the quantitative findings must be seen as preliminary until further and more comprehensive research is carried out. First, and most importantly as regards the theme of the thesis, I have looked for explicit instances where the messenger says or writes that the religion of Islam is under attack. As can be seen in Table 3, this is the case in 59 percent of the statements. However, the difference between bin Laden and al-Zawahiri in this regard is readily apparent. Whereas bin Laden in two-thirds of his statement makes that
argument, al-Zawahiri only does so in less than one-third of his. The total prevalence of the Islam-under-attack argument does not fluctuate greatly in the three different periods analysed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The argument that Islam is threatened and/or attacked</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Not present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40 (59%)</td>
<td>28 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Bin Laden’s statements</td>
<td>30 (68%)</td>
<td>14 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Al-Zawahiri’s statements</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>10 (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In other statements</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 – 9/10</td>
<td>12 (57%)</td>
<td>9 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 – March 19, 2003</td>
<td>15 (56%)</td>
<td>12 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 2003 – 2004</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Statements containing references to Islam being threatened.

One of the ways in which the perceived threat against Islam is manifested is the presence of American military forces in Saudi Arabia after 1990, and indeed, a striking difference between bin Laden and al-Zawahiri appears when one looks for arguments that before, during and after the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, Saudi Arabia was under a *de facto* occupation by the Americans (Table 4). Ayman al-Zawahiri alludes to this only once (2002), while bin Laden refers to this explicitly in 26 of 44 statements. While Saudi Arabia – home to the Prophet and the two holiest sites in Islam – is of immense symbolic value to all Muslims, Bin Laden was born a Saudi, whereas al-Zawahiri is an Egyptian, and the “occupation” argument is far more common in bin Laden’s rhetoric than in al-Zawahiri’s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The argument that Saudi Arabia is occupied/invaded.</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Not present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32 (47%)</td>
<td>36 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Bin Laden’s statements</td>
<td>26 (59%)</td>
<td>18 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Al-Zawahiri’s statements</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>13 (93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In other statements</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 – 9/10</td>
<td>17 (81%)</td>
<td>4 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 – March 19, 2003</td>
<td>11 (41%)</td>
<td>16 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 2003 – 2004</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>16 (80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Statements containing references to Saudi Arabia being under a *U.S.* occupation.
The issue of Saudi Arabia is highly personal to bin Laden. Not only is he a Saudi, but his own father and the patriarch of the bin Laden family, Mohammed bin Laden, was tasked with repairing the mosques of Mecca and Medina as well as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Mohammed bin Laden came from modest origins in Yemen and became the King’s most trusted engineer and builder. It is hard to conceive of any bigger honour for him than to be given these tasks. Indeed, due to his use of a private plane, bin Laden the elder sometimes prayed in Islam’s three holiest sites in one day, something bin Laden has mentioned on several occasions (al-Jazeera 1999a, al-Jazeera 1999b). Three decades later, bin Laden sees these sites as occupied, by the Americans in Saudi Arabia and the Israelis in Jerusalem. And, since bin Laden is _persona non grata_ in Saudi Arabia, spurned by the ruling family and deprived of his citizenship and unable to return, he cannot even perform the _hajj_, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The importance of the Saudi Arabia issue in al-Qaida’s rhetoric drops after the 9/11 attacks, and more so after the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the American troop withdrawal from Saudi Arabia. However, bin Laden mentions the U.S. presence in four of his nine statements after the invasion of Iraq. The decreasing significance of the “occupation” is caused by the fact that eleven statements post-Iraq are by al-Zawahiri, in which the issue of Saudi Arabia is not mentioned. The seeming drop in importance is therefore in part a consequence of the increasing presence of al-Zawahiri in al-Qaida’s messages to the world.

The other major recurring theme in al-Qaida’s argument that Islam is under attack is the Israel-Palestine issue (Table 5). Some have argued that this issue only gained prominence in al-Qaida’s statements _after_ 9/11, yet the analysis shows this not to be the case. As far as the 9/11 attacks and the Iraq war go, there is no substantial drop in importance of this issue in al-Qaida’s argumentation, and both bin Laden and al-Zawahiri focus on it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The plight of the Palestinians and the Israeli occupation</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Not present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46 (68%)</td>
<td>22 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Bin Laden’s statements</td>
<td>31 (70%)</td>
<td>13 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Al-Zawahiri’s statements</td>
<td>7 (50%)</td>
<td>7 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In other statements</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 – 9/10</td>
<td>15 (71%)</td>
<td>6 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 – March 19, 2003</td>
<td>18 (67%)</td>
<td>9 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 2003 – 2004</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Statements containing references to the situation in and/or occupation of Palestine.

5.5.1 Modes of securitization revisited

As mentioned above (4.2.1), Laustsen and Wæver (2000:720) argue that there are three ways in which religion can be drawn into a securitization process: when the state sees its own survival threatened by a religious group, when faith is seen as threatened by a non-religious actor or process, and when faith is seen as threatened by a different religious actor or process. Whereas for instance the United States (after 9/11) and Algeria (after the electoral success of Islamists in the 1990s) have arguably performed the first kind of securitization, can anything be said about in which way al-Qaida has securitized religion?

As far as al-Qaida goes, they make no apparent distinction between non-religious actors and other religious actors. On the one hand, al-Qaida first tasted combat against the Soviet Union, an “atheist power” (Miller 1998b), and they refer to some of their enemies, including the U.S. and other Western countries, as apostates or non-believers, as in John Miller’s (1998a and 1998b) interviews with bin Laden:

Allah ordered us in this religion to purify Muslim land of all non-believers, and especially the Arabian Peninsula where the Kaba is.

[…]

Pushing back the assault of the non-believers can only be achieved through jihad.

However, as we have seen in this chapter, on other – and more numerous – occasions, al-Qaida refers to their enemies as other religious actors: crusaders, Jews and
Zionists. The reason for this mixed nomenclature could be that whereas mainstream Islam ordinarily sees Christians and Jews as fellow believers – “people of the book” as is written in the Koran – al-Qaida deems anyone who doesn’t follow their strict Sunni Islam as a non-believer. This includes Christians, Jews, atheists, Shia Muslims and even those Sunni Muslims who don’t follow their specific exegesis of the Koran and the hadith. Thus al-Qaida does not fit neatly into the three-tiered classification of Laustsen and Wæver.
6. Conclusion

Does al-Qaida legitimize its calls for acts of terrorism with the claim that Islam itself is being attacked, that is, is al-Qaida acting in defence of Islam? Is al-Qaida trying to securitize Islam?

What drives al-Qaida? “Robotic repetition of ‘because they hate freedom’ does not do as an explanation”, Ronald Spiers (2003) observes. Neither does the frequently repeated post hoc ergo propter hoc argument that these terrorists are religious and therefore their religious belief is the sole cause of their actions. On the one hand, al-Qaida’s rage is clearly drawn from specific real-world events and policies such as the presence of American armed forces in Muslim countries, the seemingly perpetual conflict in Palestine, and the poor economic development of the Muslim world. The suffering of other Muslims as a source of al-Qaida’s anger is perhaps nowhere more clear than in what bin Laden said in the 2001 al-Jazeera interview (Aluni 2001), in which the anger, grief – and sadness, perhaps – of the world’s most wanted man is clear:

Those who talk about the loss of innocent people didn’t yet taste how it feels when you lose a child, don’t know how it feels when you look in your child’s eyes and all you see is fear, don’t know how it feels when, in Palestine, our brothers are being hunted by army helicopters in the middle of their own homes with their families and children. Every day.

On the other hand, that al-Qaida’s worldview is shaped by religion and that their anger is justified in religious terms is undeniable. In a March 2008 letter (Wright 2008), Ayman al-Zawahiri writes that the mujahideen attack the West not because they are bloodthirsty, frustrated or deranged, but because “they were forced to defend their community and their sacred religion from centuries of aggression. They had no means other than suicide attacks to defend themselves.” And as we have seen, al-Qaida clearly sees their conflict with the west as a religious conflict.
6.1 Securitized religion?

Is the al-Qaida leadership acting, and asking others to act, in defence of Islam? This thesis has only scratched the surface of one particular area of al-Qaida study. However, a few conclusions can be drawn. As far as the research question goes, the answer is in the affirmative. Osama bin Laden argues that Islam is being attacked, that a new crusade is upon Muslims, and that these crusaders are intent on destroying Islam. Claiming that rulers of Muslim countries – the House of Saud in particular – have failed in their defence of Islam and Muslims, bin Laden argues that individuals and groups in these lands are justified in taking up jihad both against the threat from without but also, akin to a Lockean right to rebellion, the rulers within. In bin Laden’s view, al-Qaida is engaged in a defensive war to defend Islam and is justified in their actions and instigations for others to act: He has on numerous occasions performed securitizing moves. This is also true for Ayman al-Zawahiri, but to a lesser degree. As for the statements by Abu Ghayth and the unknown authors go, n is too small and the origins of some of the unsigned statements are too uncertain to make draw any definite conclusions, although securitizing moves do occur in these statements.

The perceived threat against Islam takes several manifestations, but the dominant two are the American presence in Saudi Arabia from 1990 to 2003 and the situation in Palestine, which includes not only the occupation but also the very existence of Israel. The importance of the American military presence in Saudi Arabia can hardly be overestimated – as far as Osama bin Laden goes. For Ayman al-Zawahiri, it seems to be of lesser importance. However, it must be kept in mind that all statements by al-Zawahiri used here were given after 9/11, and most of them after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, at which point the issue of American troops in Saudi Arabia inevitably faded into the background, since the troops were no longer there and the “occupation” had ceased – only to be replaced with another and far more tangible occupation, this time in Iraq. The situation in Palestine is also of tremendous importance to al-Qaida, and has remained so after 9/11 and the 2003 Iraq invasion. Indeed, the importance of that situation seems to be constant in all three periods analysed (see Table 5).
Although Al-Qaida’s two main grievances are at first glance based on the issues of occupation and nationalism, they have their origins in the sacred: The presence of American troops on Saudi soil is seen as an insult to and attack on Islam because in al-Qaida’s interpretation of the hadith, the Prophet Muhammad explicitly forbade the mere presence of non-Muslims in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular has importance to Muslims – as well as to Jews and Christians – precisely because of its role as hub of the three monotheistic faiths. “These battles”, says bin Laden (2001g), “cannot be viewed in any case whatsoever as isolated battles, but rather, as part of a chain of the long, fierce, and ugly crusader war.” The image Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have of the worldly affairs is always placed in a religious frame. The same goes for those who, inspired by these two men, carry out acts of terrorism. Mohammad Sidique Khan, the oldest of the four 2005 London bombers, and the presumed ringleader, said it thus in his martyrdom tape (BBC News 2005): “Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer.”

One might wonder what world one would be living in if Osama bin Laden’s two biggest grievances with the United States had been addressed before 2001, if the Palestinian issue had been resolved with the Oslo accords and the American troops had left Saudi Arabia immediately after Desert Storm, or never entered in the first place. Would Osama bin Laden have stayed in Afghanistan or Sudan and Ayman al-Zawahiri in Egypt, destined to become local nuisances rather than global terrorists, or would they find enough grievances in other issues – the American-led interventions in Somalia and the Balkans, for instance – to decide take the battle to the United States? And if they did, would seemingly endless numbers of recruits still volunteer for suicide missions? Would fifteen Saudis volunteer to fly planes into skyscrapers if their land was not “occupied”?

Although there is no lineage from the Assassins to al-Qaida, what Bernard Lewis wrote (1985:139) in his conclusion about the former can equally well be said about the latter. According to Lewis, four things may be said about the Assassins with reasonable assurance. First, that they were regarded as a profound threat to the
existing order; second, that they were no isolated phenomenon, but merely one in a series of messianic movements, “from time to time exploding in outbreaks of revolutionary violence”; and third, they had an ability to reshape the desires, beliefs and rage of the discontented into an organization without precedent, not least in its purposive violence. However, Lewis’ fourth point – and the one that may offer a glimmer of hope for those trying to stop al-Qaida’s onslaught – is the Assassins’ “final and total failure. They did not overthrow the existing order; they did not even succeed in holding a single city of any size.”

6.2 Further research

This subject of this thesis has been the securitizing actor, the one(s) that perform the securitizing move. However, a securitizing move is only complete insofar as the actor gains acceptance for that move. A few polls (e.g. Pew 2007) have briefly explored the question of the extent to which al-Qaida’s actions are accepted by Muslims in general, but there is room for broader and deeper studies in this area. For instance, several countries in which radical Islam is prevalent, such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen, have not been polled to a great extent, and in the countries where questions of acceptance of violence in defence of Islam have been asked, they have been somewhat generic and results controlled for age, education, gender, income, religiosity and other potential intermediate variables have not been published. Furthermore, this thesis has only dealt with al-Qaida statements up until 2004, for reasons given above. Although the findings are interesting, the past is merely prologue, and recent years have seen a number of new issues that could exaggerate the so-called clash of civilizations. The Iranian nuclear programme, the continuation of the Iraq war and the Danish cartoon controversy69 are but a few of the new conflict areas. How do bin Laden and al-Zawahiri react to new events? To what extent do they incorporate these events into their statements?

69 In a 2008 tape, bin Laden states that the printing of Mohammad cartoons was a bigger tragedy than the loss of civilian lives (Agence France-Presse 2008).
7. Appendices

7.1 Glossary

*Alim/ulama*: Scholars in Islamic law (*shariah*).

*Fatwa/fatawa*: An Islamic religious ruling; edict.

*Hadith/ahadith*: The collection of Muhammad’s words and deeds.

*Jahiliyyah*: The perceived pre-Islamic state of ignorance and barbarism.

*Koran*: The holy book of Islam, as believed revealed to Muhammad.

*Kufr/kuffar*: An infidel; non-believer.

*Mujahid/mujahideen*: Someone involved in *jihad*, a holy warrior.

*Qibla*: The direction that should be faced during Islamic prayer, that is: towards Mecca.

*Shariah*: Islamic law.

*Tawhid*: The oneness of God, monotheism.

*Umma*: Community, nation. In this context used to describe the global community of Muslims.
7.2 Tables of statements

The following three tables break down the numbers given in tables 3, 4 and 5 for the three time periods in the analysis. “Present” means simply that the argument or justification named in the column above is present in that particular statement. A blank cells mark the absence of that argument or justification.

7.2.1 1993 – 9/10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Argument: Islam is threatened</th>
<th>Argument: Saudi Arabia is or was occupied</th>
<th>Argument: The situation in Palestine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fisk, R. (1996a)</td>
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<td>Fisk, R. (1996b)</td>
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<td>Arnett, P. (1997)</td>
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<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bin Laden, O. (1998a)</td>
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<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, J. (1998a)</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, J. (1998b)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bin Laden, O. (2001b)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Bin Laden, O. (2001c)</td>
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</tbody>
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### 7.2.2 9/11 – March 19, 2003

<table>
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<th>Argument: Saudi Arabia is or was occupied</th>
<th>Argument: The situation in Palestine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bin Laden, O. (2001e)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bin Laden, O. (2001f)</td>
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<td>Unknown (2002c)</td>
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<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
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<td>The Sunday Times (2002)</td>
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<td>Bin Laden, O. (2002c)</td>
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### 7.2.3 March 20, 2003 – 2004

<table>
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<th>Argument: Saudi Arabia is or was occupied</th>
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Most interviews, articles and statements by the al-Qaida leadership used in this thesis have been reproduced in two FFI reports (Hegghammer 2002 and 2005b). A large number of al-Qaida/jihadist video/audio messages and/or transcripts are also available at the websites of YouTube, MEMRI, LiveLeak and IntelCenter.\(^{70}\) Selected transcripts are also available in printed and annotated anthologies, such as Kepel and Milelli’s *Al-Qaeda in its own words*.

Note that for some statements the dates must be seen as approximate. Some videos are clearly recorded days or weeks before being published, while some interviews with the actors were printed or aired days or weeks after the actual interview was given. For a comprehensive list of al-Qaida statements, approximate dates and the nuances involved in dating them, see IntelCenter (2008).

Interviews with Osama bin Laden


**Interviews with other al-Qaida members**


**Statements by Ayman al-Zawahiri**


Statements by Osama bin Laden


**Statements by other actors**


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