THE FAR ENEMY

Since September 11, Al Qaeda has been portrayed as an Islamist front united in armed struggle, or jihad, against the Christian West. However, as the historian and commentator Fawaz A. Gerges argues, the reality is rather different and more complex. In fact, Al Qaeda represents a minority within the jihadist movement, and its strategies have been vehemently criticized and opposed by religious nationalists among the jihadis, who prefer to concentrate on changing the Muslim world rather than taking the fight global. It is this rift that led to the events of September 11 and that has dominated subsequent developments. Through several years of primary field research, the author unravels the story of the jihadist movement and explores how it came into being, the philosophies of its founding fathers, its structure, the rifts and tensions that split its ranks, and why some members, like Osama bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, favored international over local strategies in taking the war to the West. This is an articulate and original book that sheds light on the tactics used by the jihadis in the last three decades. As more alienated young Muslims are seduced into joining, the author asks where the jihadist movement is going and whether it can survive and shed its violent character.

Fawaz A. Gerges holds the Christian A. Johnson Chair in International Affairs and Middle Eastern Studies at Sarah Lawrence College. He was educated at Oxford University and the London School of Economics and has previously been a Research Fellow at Harvard and Princeton universities. He is also a senior analyst and regular commentator for ABC television news. His books include America and Political Islam: Clash of Interests or Clash of Cultures? (Cambridge, 1999) and The Journey of the Jihadis: A Biography of a State of Mind (Harcourt Press, 2006). He has written extensively on Arab and Muslim politics, Islamist movements, American foreign policy, and relations between the world of Islam and the West. His articles have appeared in several of the most prestigious journals and newspapers in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.
The Far Enemy

WHY JIHAD WENT GLOBAL

Fawaz A. Gerges
Sarah Lawrence College
For all those who died on September 11
and the loved ones they left behind
## Contents

Acknowledgments  
Prologue  
Introduction: The Road to September 11 and After  
1 Religious Nationalists and the Near Enemy  
2 The Afghan War: Sowing the Seeds of Transnational Jihad  
3 The Rise of Transnationalist Jihadis and the Far Enemy  
4 Splitting Up of Jihadis  
5 The Aftermath: The War Within  
6 The Iraq War: Planting the Seeds of Al Qaeda’s Second Generation?  

Organizations Cited  
People Cited  
Notes  
Glossary  
Index
Acknowledgments

This book has been in the making since 1999 and is based on hundreds of interviews with Islamists, former jihadists, activists, civil society leaders, and opinion makers throughout the Middle East. I benefited greatly from a generous MacArthur Foundation fellowship and a Smith Richardson Foundation grant, which enabled me to spend two years in the region conducting field research, traveling widely, and spending countless hours talking to the rank and file, not just leaders, of the Islamist and jihadist movements. The interviews I conducted inform my analysis throughout the book and complement recently acquired primary sources. This book relies overwhelmingly on original material.

When the United States was attacked on September 11, 2001, I decided to wait until the smoke had dissipated before I concluded the writing of the book. I am glad I did, because the aftershocks of the September 11 earthquake have shed more light on the internal dynamics, tensions, and struggles within the jihadist movement. I also did follow-up primary research to bring the story up to date. My hope is that the book makes a humble critical contribution, not to the polemical and charged foreign policy debate, but rather to understanding the road to September 11 and its aftermath: how and why transnationalist jihadists brought the war to American shores against the wishes of the bulk of their religious nationalist associates who wanted to keep the struggle focused on the home front. And to what extent is this global war a direct product of the internal strife among jihadists themselves?

In researching and writing this book, I have incurred many intellectual debts to friends, colleagues, and strangers who sat down with me for countless hours and shared with me their insights and views. In
x  •  Acknowledgments

particular, I cannot do justice to the hundreds of activists, students, and opinion makers in Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and elsewhere who took the time to meet with me and enrich my education on the unfolding struggles in the region. They welcomed me in their homes and offices, put up with my nonsensical questions, and provided me with precious primary sources. This book is as much theirs as it is mine, although they might disagree with my conclusions and are not responsible for any existing errors of judgment or fact.


Colleagues and friends in the Middle East generously offered intellectual nourishment as well as friendship and hospitality. In particular, I would like to thank Tariq Tal and Jocelyn DeJong, Anees al-Anani,
Bahgat Korany, Mustafa Hamarneh, and Mohammed al-Maitami for hosting me in their homes and welcoming me with open arms. I remain grateful.

I owe a special thanks to London University Professor Charles Tripp, who read an early draft essay of the book and was not discouraged by its lack of refinement. His critical feedback and insights forced me to contextualize the analysis and be more comparative. Needless to say, any remaining shortcomings are mine. Yezid Sayigh of London University also furnished me with conceptual and practical suggestions that helped me in revising the book. Kamran Bokhari, senior analyst at Strategic Forecasting, Inc., read the entire manuscript and made extensive notes throughout. The book is better thanks to his diligent efforts. Over the years Avi Shlaim of Oxford University has been and remains a source of inspiration and friendship. I also want to thank my friend J. Michael Mahoney, whose moral support has sustained me. I am grateful to Julie Kidd of the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation, which has been a generous supporter of Middle East studies and my work at Sarah Lawrence. I also want to thank my research students, Marie Webb and Anthony Fleming, for their assistance.

Special thanks go to Ms. Marigold Acland, Senior Editor at Cambridge University Press, for her patience and commitment to this book. Although my contract stipulated that I complete the book by 2002, she just gently nudged me to plug along. More important, her critical feedback enriched the overall analysis. I also want to thank Ms. Shari Chappell, my editor at Cambridge, for shepherding the book from its early conception until birth; Shari's magical editorial touch has transformed the book. The entire team at Cambridge has been most helpful.

Finally, this book belongs to my family. They invested as much time and energy, if not more so, in making it happen as I did. I could not have traveled for long periods or written the book without Nora's love and encouragement; her intellectual feedback has guided the project since its inception. My children's tenderness and affection also kept me sane during those hectic days of travel and writing. Hannah never let a day go by without reminding me that I should hurry and be done with the book. Laith wandered in and out of my study showering me with kisses. From the outset Annie-Marie never tired inquiring about "why did
xii • Acknowledgments

Al Qaeda attack America?” She motivated me to try to find intelligent answers to her question. Bassam helped me access key primary documents and listened closely and patiently to my chatter about the far enemy and the near enemy; he often had something critical to say. This book is a fruit of their love.

Fawaz A. Gerges
New York