



Perspectives on Jihad

The idea that it is wrong to commit indiscriminate violence against others is a fundamental principle in most cultures. The principle is understood and accepted by virtually everyone with little or no explanation. In contrast, it took Dr. Fadl¹ 107 pages and more than forty *Quranic* verses and sayings by the prophet Muhammad to reach that same conclusion. As the famous Iraqi poet *Ahmad Matar* pointed out in an article yesterday: "Although it took Dr. Fadl thirty years to discover that killing innocent people is a crime, such a view should have been instinctive given that even the illiterate and simple minded espouse such a belief without having recourse to the prophet's words or *Salafi* doctrine."

This week, two newspapers completed publication of Dr. Fadl's new manuscript about Jihad. During the past two days, experts in Islamism and political Islam published commentaries on the manuscript and participated in a symposium discussing the series. [PI Online](#) examines Dr. Fadl's manuscript drawing on the commentaries of seven of those experts.²

On the question whether Dr. Fadl's manuscript will have any impact, there are two opposing camps. Analysts such as *Diaa Rashwan*, *Muntassar Al-Zayyat* and *Kamal Habib* believe that the manuscript will have a strategic impact on the ideology of the *Jihadi* movement. *Rashwan* notes that Dr. Fadl's earlier books are still considered the primer for violent Jihad. Thus, he sees Dr. Fadl's revisionist views outlined in the manuscript as a challenge to the *Jihadi* movement and he believes those views are certain to generate disagreement within *Al-Qaeda* and the *Salafi* movement. Another analyst, *Muhammad Abu Rumman*, also sees such disagreement as inevitable given that Dr. Fadl is considered *l'émminence grise* of *Jihadi* doctrine.

On the other side of the spectrum, analysts like *Khalil Al-Anani* opine that the impact of Dr. Fadl's manuscript on *Al-Qaeda* will be minimal at best. It is noteworthy, however, that *Al-Anani* rejects the idea that Jihad as a violent political manifestation is caused by what he describes as "the manipulative adaptation of religious texts to particular existing realities." Rather, he sees violent Jihad as the direct result of existing sociological and political realities.

Looking at both positions, *Abu-Rumman* explains that *Al-Anani* blames the violence on the strategic vacuum created by the inability to confront existing socio/political challenges rather than an ideological religious agenda. *Abu Rumman* sees both forces at work. In his view, ideology and socio-economic/political factors have both contributed to the rise of violent Islamism. He is concerned, however, that re-examinations of the *Jihadi* movement will have the same result as re-examination of other Islamist ideologies. The *Jihadi* movement will go from one extreme to the other with some rationalizing violence and others who are opposed to violence giving the authorities *carte blanche* to reign in the extremists. As was the case with the Muslim Brotherhood, *Abu Rumman* also

¹ See PI 901 for background on Dr. Fadl, the ideological father of Islamic Jihad.

² **Diaa Rashwan**: editor-in-chief of the Center's Annual Directory of Islamic Movements – **Muntassar El-Zayyat**: Attorney and defender of the Muslim Brotherhood, **Kamal Habib** — a former member of Egypt's Islamic Jihad – **Khalil Al-Anani**: Political Analyst specialized in the dynamics of political Islam - **Gamal Al-Banna**: a liberal Islamic scholar and the younger brother of *Hassan al-Banna*, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood - **Muhammad Abu-Rumman**: Political Columnist writing for the Jordanian newspaper *Al-Ghad* – **Ahmad Matar**: Poet

wonders if an implicit deal between the government and the *Jihadi* groups will result in a loss of the groups' identity and balance.

Al-Jazeera in Cairo characterized the commentaries on *Dr. Fadl* manuscript as cautious, particularly the ones emanating from the Muslim Brotherhood's camp. For example, '*Isam Al-'Aryan*, one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, welcomed any initiative that would reduce violence between the population and the authorities, but was concerned about a rivalry among those members of the *Jihadi* groups newly released from prison for leadership of the movement. Oddly, he stated that the Muslim Brotherhood would not have any contact with the released Jihadists or allow their participation in the Muslim Brotherhood's political process. As *Diaa Rashwan* stated that, as far as the government is concerned, the problem with the Muslim Brotherhood is political in nature. In contrast, the problem with the *Jihadi* movement is a matter of the security and safety of the public.

The liberal thinker *Gamal Al-Banna* offered five observations on *Dr. Fadl's* manuscript:

1. *Dr. Fadl's* refusal to accept violence as a means to redress injustice should dissuade the youth from committing violent actions. He based this assessment on both the relevance of the Islamic doctrine and jurisprudence outlined by *Fadl* and their realization that they cannot attain their goal within the present national structure.

2. The manuscript will have little influence on the leaders of *Al-Qaeda* or other radicals whose past actions are governing their present views. They are primarily interested in preserving the status they have acquired rather than pursuing reform.

3. *Al-Banna* is skeptical about the relevance of the religious authorities cited in support of the peaceful initiative. He explains that many of these, such as *Ibn Taymiyyah*, can also be relied upon to support the complete opposite position. *Dr. Fadl* himself previously made opposing arguments that could be used by those who wish to attack him or his most recent writings.

4. According to *Al-Banna*, it is irrefutable that the tragedy confronting Islamists groups stems from the impasse confronting *Salafism* which is a doctrine that is not adaptable to modern times. He makes the interesting point that *Dr. Fadl* still advocates the *Salafi* philosophy and their Islamic institutions, including *Al-Azhar*. To *Al-Banna*, these organizations lack any logic in their positions and do not properly interpret the *Quran* and the *Sunnah*.

5. *Al-Banna* also claims that, regardless of how *Dr. Fadl* is attacked, the manuscript itself will withstand the assault because of its dogmatic value and because of *Dr. Fadl's* history. *Al-Banna* notes that *Dr. Fadl* has been acknowledged as a principal thinker on *Jihadi* issues and his resolve to reject violence dates back to 1993 when he resigned as Emir of the group and was replaced by *Zawahiri*. He claims that *Dr. Fadl* is vindicated by his success at persuading many other *Jihadists* to take the stand that you cannot establish justice through tyranny and injustice.

While *Dr. Fadl* makes cautionary and revisionist remarks concerning *Al-Qaeda*, *Al-Banna* points out that he lacks any vision for the future. In *Al-Banna's* view the real danger lies in the answer to the question "what next."

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