systematically thwarted the attempts by the Muslim Brothers to represent the devout bourgeoisie politically, by outlawing that organization. Nor did the regime leave any room for a Center Party, which, had it come to anything, would have competed with the government's own attempt to rally the middle classes.

Mubarak's state was able to do all this because the economic situation was favorable after the Gulf War. Part of Egypt's foreign debt had been written off as a reward for its participation in the alliance, and Egyptian émigrés, alarmed by the disappearance of Kuwait's bank for several months, began to put their savings in Egyptian banks instead. The policy of privatizing and modernizing the economy led to the emergence of a new class of entrepreneurs whose presence changed the Egyptian middle classes more radically in the space of ten years than anything else had in the thirty years since Nasser. The regime gambled that the growth of wealth would allow the social interest of the devout middle class to prevail over their ideological inclinations and that it would join the bandwagon of prosperity while at the same time deploying and funding a species of piety that would acknowledge political consensus, instead of encouraging the kind of confrontational Islamism embodied by the Brothers and the Gamaa. The retrieval of a whole series of symbols that had formerly been identity tags for militant Islamism, such as the hybridizing of Islamic emblems and their transformation into merchandise, all helped this process—thus, the chic hijab framing a carefully made-up woman's face, the beard cut in the latest Italian style, or the evening meals (*maidat al rahman*) served gratis during the month of Ramadan. Formerly offered under the Muslim Brothers' ubiquitous slogan "Islam Is the Solution," today these Ramadan dinners operate as a kind of charitable endeavor for companies and shops, which put out tables in front of their establishments.[52]

Once again, there is a parallel with Algeria. The Egyptian government seems to have gambled on the idea that market-economy Islamists would eventually absorb the energy of Islamic fundamentalism. But the market may do more than that: it may push those involved in it to express their preference for the kind of political pluralism and genuine democracy that Egypt and Algeria have yet to see.

CHAPTER

13

Osama bin Laden and the War against the West

The jihad intensified in 1992 in Bosnia, Algeria, and Egypt, as soon as veterans of the Afghan war began arriving home from Peshawar. In Egypt as in Algeria, the combatants were native born; they had made the pilgrimage to the Afghan camps in the mid-1980s, discreetly encouraged to do so by their governments, which were only too happy to rid themselves of potential malcontents and troublemakers.[1] In Bosnia, the jihadists were all foreigners, Arabs for the most part, many of them Saudis. In Tajikistan—and in Chechnya after 1995—other Arab volunteers played an important role in the attempt to turn a local conflict into a full-blown jihad.

The dispersion all over the world, after 1992, of the jihadist-salafists formerly concentrated in Kabul and Peshawar, more than anything else, explains the sudden, lightning expansion of radical Islamism in Muslim countries and the West. These hardened veterans of the Afghan jihad excited the enthusiasm of zealots around the globe, who saw "heavy blows" being struck at the "godless" and the "apostates." In the last decade of the century, the bombing of the World Trade Center in February 1993 and the GIA's campaign against France in 1995 were the most striking examples of the new battlefronts opening up in the backyards of Islam's "enemies." Yet the savage violence of these operations, carried out by terrorist networks cut off from any social movement and manipulated by obscure forces, had an effect that was the exact reverse of the one their authors probably hoped for. By the turn of the century, the image not only of the extremist fringe but also of the

Islamist movement as a whole was badly tarnished. Worse, those voices in the West that had supported the idea of the Muslim Brothers entering government alongside other "moderates" from the devout bourgeoisie, as the only force capable of bringing an end to the cycle of violence, had fallen silent. The near impossibility of telling apart the various Islamist factions or of crediting one group with influence over another gradually led the West to distrust any interlocutor who claimed to represent Islamism; and this precipitated a series of crises and changes within the movement.

When Kabul fell into the hands of a coalition of Afghan mujahedeen parties in April 1992, the objective of the jihad was to all intents and purposes achieved. An Islamic state was installed on the wreckage of the communist government, even if the country was in a state of semi-chaos until the Taliban gradually took over. The Arab and international jihadists had no further reason to stick around, especially since the United States was pressing for the dispersal of all military forces in Afghanistan that could no longer be kept under control. Hundreds of fighters returned to their home countries; but many others found themselves physically prevented from doing so. Most Arab states viewed the veterans of Afghanistan as a real danger, and border controls were tightened against them. They constituted a kind of demobilized army of several thousand seasoned warriors, all without passports, in search of a place to fight or hide. As combatants they were ready to serve anyone willing to fund them and help them travel from one place to another around the globe.[2] Yet they were completely divorced from the social realities of the wider world around them, locked as they were into a sectarian religious logic.

The attempts of these extremists to export jihad were thwarted in Bosnia, Algeria, and Egypt, and in Western countries their plight was even worse. At first, Western nations, particularly France and the United States, which had served as sanctuaries and refuges for the "Afghans," became targets of violence and terrorism. During the 1980s the United States had played a pioneering role in financing the Afghan jihad, facilitating the movements and even the comings and goings on American territory of preachers and recruiters. In 1986, two years after his release from prison, the blind Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman obtained his first American visa through the CIA, which he used to attend conferences of Islamist students in the United States.[3] Next, he visited Pakistan, where he preached at Peshawar, lunched at the Saudi embassy in Islamabad, and was lionized at receptions heavily attended by Americans. The sheik was a leading figure in the campaign to recruit fighters who were ready to face martyrdom for the chance to enter paradise—and in the process bring about the fall of the Soviet system for the greater benefit of Washington, D.C.

Nevertheless, as an amir of the Gamaa Islamiya in his home country of Egypt, the sheik was in a delicate position regarding the regime of President Hosni Mubarak, whom he was wont to castigate at length in his sermons. On April 22, 1990, he was interviewed for an hour and a half by Interior Minister Abdel Halim Moussa, with a view to reaching a gentleman's agreement whereby Omar Abdel Rahman would call his supporters to order in exchange for an improvement in the detention conditions of the Islamist militants still in Egyptian jails.[4] Three days later the sheik left Egypt for the Sudan. On May 10 he was given an American visa in Khartoum, and he finally arrived in New York on July 18.[5] There he was taken in by Mustafa Shalabi, an Egyptian activist based in Brooklyn, who had set up a support center for the jihad in Afghanistan in 1986 with a view to raising funds and recruits in the States—and who was assassinated a few months after the sheik's arrival in New York.[6] In January 1991, Sheik Abdel Rahman applied for a permanent U.S. resident's visa, on the grounds that he was a minister of the El Salam mosque in Jersey City, commonly known as Little Egypt. With unusual rapidity, a green card was issued to him in April.[7] During this period, he traveled frequently to Europe and the Middle East, haranguing congregations on the need for jihad in Afghanistan. This continued until the fall of Kabul in April 1992.

Since the 1980s, all activities of this kind had been gratefully assisted and subsidized by the CIA. But from 1990–91 onward, other American interest groups had begun to question the perverse effects of this policy, and gradually these critics prevailed. The U.S. public and its leaders had a complete change of heart when the Islamist freedom fighters who had fought the Red Army and the "Evil Empire" were suddenly depicted as terrorists and fanatic criminals. Sheik Abdel Rahman was both the pivotal force and the instrument of this change.[8] In June 1991, while he was on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the American authorities noticed that he was an undeclared bigamist and had therefore lied on his administrative application.[9] They immediately began proceedings to remove his resident status. In June 1992, he filed for political asylum in order to forearm himself against an expulsion decision, and he began soliciting support from human rights jurists, without ceasing to preach jihad. In Jersey City, the sheik was surrounded by a circle of poor Arab immigrants, black converts, and Muslims from the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent who were enthralled by his sermons but cut off from the mass of American Muslims. It was in this small, precarious world, infiltrated by *agents provocateurs* and spies, that the first plan to destroy the World Trade Center was hatched.

The trials that followed the 1993 bombing of the WTC established the identity of those directly involved beyond any doubt. They were all close to Sheik Abdel Rahman and all had been swayed by his fiery sermons against America in particular and the West in general. On the other hand, the contention made by the American Justice Department that a wide "conspiracy" had been masterminded by the sheik himself was still open to doubt several years after the fact.[10] Quite apart from the practical impossibility of a blind man picking out targets he had never seen and could imagine only with great difficulty, it is hard to believe that his accomplices, who were anything but bright and had only the haziest idea of the nature of American society, could have imagined an attack of such spectacular proportions without outside help. At the trial, the defense stressed the role of an Egyptian informer infiltrated into the group by the FBI, whose recorded conversations with the accused showed that he openly incited them to carry out the attack.[11] Another theory has it that Saddam Hussein's Iraq, newly defeated in the Gulf War of 1991 and under heavy American military pressure, was the instigator; and this theory spotlighted the central role of a mysterious figure, Ramzi Yusef, in the logistical preparation of the bombing.[12]

In the absence of any certainty in this domain, we may at least take it for granted that the explosion which shook the famous twin towers—the emblems of triumphant American capitalism—on February 26, 1993, marked a symbolic twist in the special relationship between American authorities and those who had fought in Afghanistan.[13] These warriors became the object of unremitting repression. To an even greater extent than in Egypt and Algeria, the militants had engaged in terrorist violence (or had allowed themselves to be manipulated to that end) without being in step with any kind of broader social movement. They were crushed for a time. But they would come back with a vengeance on September 11, 2001.

While Sheik Abdel Rahman was waiting out his awkward exile in the United States, large numbers of other jihadist-salafists obliged to leave Afghanistan at the end of the jihad in 1992 were looking for asylum in European countries—where they hoped to build up new networks for funding, supplies, information, and communication. Scandinavia had a generous tradition of granting asylum, with equally generous financial provisions for its beneficiaries; also, the local authorities were for the most part ignorant of radical Islamism and those involved in it, and this allowed a number of militants to find a safe haven there. Copenhagen became the headquarters of the Egyptian Gamaa Islamiya in exile, while Stockholm provided the Algerian GIA with the wherewithal to publish and distribute its *Al-Ansar* bulletin. In these countries, the Muslim population was a tiny minority and possessed nowhere near the same explosive political potential as in France or Great Britain.

On the issue of asylum, London and Paris took positions diametrically opposite one another. London, still traumatized by the Salman Rushdie affair, freely gave safe haven to militants from all over the world. Paris, on the other hand, whose political landscape had for some time been disturbed by controversy over the wearing of the veil in state schools, kept its frontiers firmly closed to militants. Thus, in the final years of the twentieth century, Great Britain became the axis around which the small world that had coalesced at Peshawar in the 1980s revolved. In return for this hospitality, the militants declared Britain a sanctuary: no act of terrorism was committed there, and the refugee activists made no attempt to stir up the young Indo-Pakistanis who had demonstrated against the *Satanic Verses* in 1989. (Of course, most of the Afghan refugees in Britain were Arabs who were not directly in touch with Britain's Indian and Pakistani Muslims.) In France, by contrast, the government lived in dread of what might happen should the Arab jihadists penetrate and influence its three-million-strong North African population, many of whom originally came from Algeria, where the civil war was just heating up.

For these geopolitical reasons, the Egyptian leaders of the Al-Jihad group found themselves rubbing elbows with their counterparts of the

Gamaa Islamiya in London after 1992. They had the opportunity to restructure or rebuild their Islamist movements and disseminate bulletins by fax or Internet. They also put pressure on the Egyptian government by denouncing torture and the arbitrary arrests and death sentences handed down by military courts.[14] London became a base for an ultra-radical faction of the Al-Jihad group, the Vanguard of Conquest (Talai al-Fath), who were opposed to any suggestion of a ceasefire in Egypt.[15] Following the example of the Saudi Islamist Mohammed al-Masari— who sent out his bulletins by fax from London until the colossal bill he owed to British Telecom brought his activities to a halt— the partisans of Talai al-Fath inundated the newspapers with grandiloquent proclamations that did not necessarily reflect their actual strength on the ground.

As had been the case in Peshawar, the concentration in "Londonistan" of these groups led to a tempest of reciprocal excommunications and anathemas. On the other hand, London offered a space for free discussions and exchanges of views that could possibly lead to reconciliation between radicals and moderates.[16] The presence in one country of the "international representative" of the Muslim Brothers, of the charismatic leader of the Tunisian Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique, Rashid al-Gannushi, and of the headquarters of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester run by members of the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami facilitated this free exchange of ideas.[17] The radical Syrian Omar Bakri, who managed to organize two mass meetings at Wembley Stadium in support of the jihad, made a number of contacts with these so-called moderate leaders before communication was cut off under pressure from the British.[18] All benefited from the presence in London of the daily newspapers *Al Hayat* and *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (Arab Jerusalem), which provided considerable media attention, ensuring that their discussions were followed all over the Arab world.

The centralizing function of the English capital reached its highest point of effectiveness during the Algerian Civil War. The GIA was able to build its image and establish its legitimacy thanks to the mediation of the jihadist-salafists publishing the bi-monthly *Al-Ansar*, "the voice of the jihad in Algeria and throughout the world," after they had relocated it from Stockholm. Run by two leading Afghanistan veterans, the Syrian Abu Musab and the Palestinian Abu Qatada, this publication

kept open the lines of communication between the GIA in Algeria and the international salafist network, translating the GIA's activities into the latter's politico-religious language and categories. Everyone had something to gain by this communication. The Algerian activists, whose Islamic culture was rudimentary at best, found in the bulletin's support a religious endorsement of their violent acts, while the intellectual preachers in London found in it the social grounding that they lacked in England. Thus the GIA continued to operate in a curiously disjointed way, with the young urban poor doing the physical fighting at home while the Islamist intelligentsia abroad took care of propaganda.

Distance was a problem, however. Even with modern communication facilities, the link between London and the Islamist underground had to be indirect and was therefore vulnerable to all manner of interference and manipulation. Sometimes the actions of the GIA in Algeria seemed coherent only in light of the filtered, selective, largely unverifiable information and communiqués published in *Al-Ansar*, which were edited by non-Algerians with little real knowledge of the country, seeing it through a kind of "Afghan" prism. The two great crises of the GIA were thus quite naturally expressed at the interface between these two poles.

After the purges and the execution of Mohammed Said in the fall of 1995, the intellectuals in London gradually distanced themselves from Djamel Zitouni and eventually closed down *Al-Ansar* by June 1996. But in the following February, the bulletin was revived by the Anglo-Egyptian activist Abu Hamza, in support of Antar Zouabri's amirate, only to go out of circulation again following the massacres of civilians for which Zouabri claimed responsibility. After that, the GIA ceased to exist as such, though massacres carried out by its operatives continued as late as 1998. As soon as there was no more recognized Islamist intelligentsia speaking on its behalf, the GIA lost its composite identity and broke into a multitude of tiny groups that either fought one another to a standstill or fell back into simple brigandage.

In contrast to the British policy that turned London into the capital of world Islamism in the 1990s, Paris made access to French territory very difficult for Arab activists coming from abroad. A "Franco-French" network of FIS sympathizers had grown up alongside the

Fraternité Algérienne en France (FAF), whose weekly bulletin, *Le Critère*, published news of the jihad from the outset of Algeria's civil war. *Le Critère* was eventually banned by the authorities in a sharp demonstration of the limits to government tolerance.[19] On the other hand, Sheik Abdelbaki Sahraoui, a founder member of the FIS living in exile who supervised a mosque in the Barbès quarter of Paris, was viewed by Charles Pasqua, the French interior minister, as one of his most valuable intermediaries with Islamist circles.[20] The sheik discreetly used his strong moral authority to make quite sure that France remained a real sanctuary for all the party militants who had taken up residence there. He realized that rallying sympathizers, putting together funds for the armed struggle, and organizing clandestine deliveries of arms from the former Eastern Bloc were possible only if this business was kept strictly separate from French political concerns about Islamism within metropolitan France and from tensions in the *banlieues* about whether the veil should be worn by Muslim schoolgirls. The authorities were obsessed with the idea that the violence of Algeria's jihad might cross the Mediterranean and enter France, in the form of an activist-inspired intifada among second-generation immigrants in the poorest urban areas.

As we have seen, since 1989 the various Islamist movements based in France itself had pursued a very different course. The Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF) and groups resembling it had been in the forefront of the squabble over veils in French schools: they viewed the growing number of young French Muslims as a sign that France had become a part of the "land of Islam" (dar el-Islam). According to the UOIF, young Muslims ought to be able to apply the sharia to their personal lives without interference from the state. Guided by Islamist militants and at their behest, the UOIF saw its role as being a necessary intermediary between this new Muslim community in France and the French administration.[21] Once France was viewed as an Islamic land, radicalization or violence over foreign issues was unwelcome, and jihad on French territory was expressly forbidden. France, like Britain, was a sanctuary. At stake was the Islamist movement's credibility vis-à-vis the French authorities, whom they wished to convince of their crucial role as community mediators who could keep the social peace.

Prior to 1994, these "Franco-French" Islamist organizations did not mix or mingle with the support networks for the Algerian Jihad. The former avoided the Algerian question, and the latter stayed aloof from local Islamic affairs that it felt were properly the business of the French.[22] But in August of that year, following the GIA's assassination of five French officials in Algiers, French police rounded up a large number of people, including the leaders of the FAF and an Algerian imam, Larbi Kechat, the head of one of Paris's biggest mosques.[23] They were all interned at a military camp in Folembray, in the north of Paris, and some were later expelled to the Burkina. In the growing antagonism between the armed Islamist movement and the French state, the government had given unmistakable notice of its determination to maintain control. It would tolerate no repercussions of the Algerian conflict on French territory. During the crackdown on Algerian militants, the police did not disturb Sheik Sahraoui, however—he was providing France its sanctuary status.

The response from the Algerian jihadists was not long in coming and was preceded by worrying signs from Morocco. On August 24, a band of young terrorists murdered some Spanish tourists in a Marrakesh hotel, and their accomplices were arrested in Fez and Casablanca. All were found to be the sons of Algerian and Moroccan immigrants resident in France, in the Paris and Orléans regions. Reciprocal arrests made by the French police—and the trial that followed— revealed for the first time the existence of a transnational network based on young Muslims from the housing projects, trained to violence and the use of weapons.[24] Like the group centered on Sheik Abdel Rahman in the United States, this network included student idealists as well as young men on the dole who had records of delinquency and drug abuse—some of whom had committed robberies and hold-ups to finance the group. After discovering—or rediscovering—religion at the end of the 1980s, they were taken in hand by two figures whose previous careers had been shadowy, to say the least. One, a former leader of a radical Islamist movement in Morocco, had taken refuge in Algeria before moving on to France using an Algerian passport. As the group's principal activist and theorist, he had arranged for some of its members to spend time in the Afghan camps in 1992; thereafter, the group's activities had been directed toward destabilizing the Moroccan regime with spectacular terrorist attacks on Jews and tourists, after the fashion of the Egyptian Gamaa Islamiya. Like their New York counterparts, the conspirators in France were characterized by naiveté, rashness, fanaticism, and a rudimentary intellect. Most were sent to prison.

This sequence of events in the late summer of 1994 made clear that the sanctuary status of French territory was beginning to crumble under pressure from radical Islamist groups. For the first time, young French Arabs had been implicated in a well-organized armed operation with international ramifications, even though their shift to terrorist tactics had taken place abroad. This showed, at the very least, that some young people in French housing projects who came in contact with re-Islamization by way of extremist preachers in the mosques could be vulnerable to the call for jihad—despite the guarantees given by Islamist self-proclaimed community mediators. A year later, Islamist terrorism entered France itself.

Jihad against France

The holy war against France was launched by the Algerian amir Djamel Zitouni with the seizure of an Air France Airbus departing from Algiers on Christmas Eve, 1994. It reached its height with a series of attacks on French territory in the summer and fall of 1995 and continued with the massacre of the Trappist monks of Tibéhirine, who were found beheaded on May 21, 1996. To this day, this onslaught remains as hard to decipher as every other major Islamist terrorist operation against the West, including the World Trade Center attacks and other terrorist acts imputed to Osama bin Laden. Behind the people who carried out these operations were a number of obscure suspects, including Zitouni himself. The organizational structure of the GIA, with its leaders in Algeria, its outpost in London, and its terrorists in France, was diffuse and mysterious. But whatever the identities and calculations of those who planned and carried out the French jihad, it had a high profile and very important consequences for the future of the Islamist movement, both north and south of the Mediterranean.

When the Air France Airbus was stormed by gendarmes on the tarmac at Marseille-Marignane and its four hijackers killed, the best-informed observers pointed out that the war had reached a turning point and that henceforth it would be waged on French territory. But the expected onslaught did not begin in earnest until six months later, on July 11, 1995, when Sheik Sahraoui, the guarantor of French sanctuary, was assassinated in his mosque with one of his closest collaborators.[25] The murder weapon was later found in the backpack of Khaled Kelkal, who was shot by the police after a manhunt through the woods near Lyon on September 29. Eight attacks were carried out between July 25 and October 17, leaving 10 dead and more than 175 injured.

None of these operations was ever expressly claimed by the GIA as its work—if one discounts the litany of threats against France as the enemy of Islam and exhortations to President Chirac to embrace the Muslim faith. Nevertheless, the proven involvement in the attacks of people belonging to the GIA, the funds they received from one of the directors of *Al-Ansar* in London, and the declarations of one of the leading culprits during his trial in 1999 have convinced most analysts that Zitouni's GIA was behind them. By spreading terror in France, Zitouni had hoped, presumably, to force the French state to cut off its support for the Algerian government, thus hastening the regime's fall. But given the GIA's nebulous character and the fact that many FIS leaders in exile (as well as independent observers) suspected that it had been infiltrated and manipulated by the special services of the Algerian army, many analysts saw the war against France in 1995 as a plot from *within* the Algerian government itself to obtain exactly the opposite effect—a stiffening of Paris's support for Algiers and a ruthless repression of all the support networks in Algeria, France, and Europe available to the armed Islamists.[26] Whatever the merits of this theory, the fact remains that those who carried out these acts of terrorism, even though they may have had no clear understanding of the consequences of what they were doing, did claim to have the support of the GIA.[27]

After the arrests, the reports of the investigating magistrates and the declarations made in court built up a picture of young men of North African origin (as well as a few European converts), living in abject poverty and mostly out of work, who had turned to militant Islamism as a reaction to their wretched social conditions. Some were former drug dealers and petty criminals who had spent time in prison, where they had begun to embrace Islam. Both the preparation and execution of their attacks were unprofessional: they had very little money behind them, they survived on petty drug deals, they forged their papers amateurishly, and they had great difficulty making the simplest bombs out of gas containers. One of these bombs failed to explode and eventually yielded Kelkal's fingerprints. With the police on his heels, Kelkal disappeared to a makeshift camp in the woods, where he was provisioned by two friends driving an old red car. With the equivalent of only eighteen dollars in his pocket, he was finally caught and killed while waiting at a bus stop. Nothing about him or his confederates relates to the world of professional terrorism, with its sophisticated systems and its ability to exfiltrate suspects sought by the police.

The life of Khaled Kelkal, who had earlier—by chance—been a subject in a remarkable sociological study in 1992, illustrates the alienation experienced by a young man from the French *banlieue*, born in Algeria in 1971 and subsequently growing up in France.[28] Kelkal claimed to have been rejected by his schoolmates in a "highly thought of" *lycée* because he was the only Arab there; he felt "more comfortable" in the "outsider atmosphere, among thieves," especially since, in the public housing project where he lived, "70% of the young people stole." When he was sent to prison for robbery, he rediscovered religion through the "Muslim Brother" who shared his cell. His return to Islam gave him an opportunity to substitute another community for his gang of thieves, while representing a break with the "arrogant Westerners" whose "Christian religion . . . was a false religion."

In his narrative of the first part of his life, Kelkal mentions *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which reached young Muslims of the French suburbs through Spike Lee's film and was distributed gratis on videocassettes by Islamist associations. The film illustrates the same disappointment of a student who felt he deserved better, the same drift into delinquency, encounter with islam in prison, and sense of redemption afterward that Kelkal described.[29] Abundant research into Islam in France during the 1990s now shows that this career, while hardly the norm, was by no means unusual. Social unrest, after the antiracist movements of the previous decades had run their course, led a certain number of young people to re-Islamization, which they perceived as a break with the past.[30] This sometimes took the form of verbal violence, as in "Islamic rap," or else was converted into political engagement by one or another of the Islamist organizations within France, such as Jeunesse Musulmane de France (JMF), which was linked to the UOIF, or Union des Jeunes Musulmans (UJM), which was firmly established in the Rhône-Alps region.[31] But this political engagement had never found an outlet in terrorism on French soil, because the Islamist social movement that emerged in the suburbs in the early 1990s had steadfastly refused to countenance violence.

Like the members of the Marrakesh network, Kelkal resorted to terrorism after being socialized by activists outside of France. At the end of his 1992 interview he declared: "I want to do something, I want to leave France altogether. *Forever.* And go where? Home, to Algeria. *There's no place for me here.*"[32]

And to Algeria he went, in 1993. The civil war was just beginning, and he returned to France a full-fledged "fanatic," according to testimony made at his trial by his then-girlfriend.[33] He organized showings at home of his GIA videos and was identified as a "reliable contact" by the Holland-based Ali Touchent, who had been appointed by the "Amir of the GIA" as the group's European representative. Thereafter, activist cells were established in Lyon, Paris, and Lille, where militants who had come expressly from Algeria met with young French recruits. These constituted the interface between the Algerian leadership and the Muslim youth of France's outer suburbs. According to the incomplete information available, it would seem that the terrorist attacks that followed were carried out by these cells, on the orders of Ali Touchent.

Thus the 1995 terrorist violence in France was an operation orchestrated from abroad but dependent on networks in which a few young Islamists from the suburbs had been enlisted. Although several dozen of them were involved, they were unconnected with the broader re-Islamization movement that was taking place at the same time, in the same milieu. Its organizations and leaders had kept well away from Algerian affairs. The terrorist operations were not intended to spark a youth uprising but to utilize some of their number to strike a blow at the French state, in the name of Algerian political issues and interests. The failure of the project, the dismantling of the networks, and the catastrophic image of militant Islam created by this latest wave of terrorism were later to hamper the movement's penetration of North African youth in France. The organizations claiming to represent that movement, which were seeking to promote a social dynamic within an Islamist perspective, found themselves confronted with pressures and dilemmas to which they could find no response.

For one thing, their credibility with the French authorities, to whom they had presented themselves as guarantors of public order because of their religious education of the young, was seriously impaired: they had signally failed, after all, to stop a few individuals from heading down the path of terrorism—individuals who had previously moved in circles where they were very much present. Their claim to exercise control at the community level had proven empty, at a moment when public order was under serious threat.

Moreover, among the more general Muslim population of France, the events of 1995 caused real outrage. They expressed indignation at the bombings and sympathy for the victims, and they absolutely rejected the exploitation of their Islamic faith as a pretext for terrorism. North African immigrants saw violence on this scale as a threat to relations with mainstream French society that they and their children had patiently constructed, at a moment when, despite the difficulties of the past, integration at last seemed possible.[34] Although the younger generation of North Africans initially expressed their admiration for Khaled Kelkal and their disgust at the way he was shot to death by the police, even those youth in the poorest suburbs saw no reason to go down the same dead-end street of violence.

Islamist organizations whose defense of the wearing of the veil in schools had previously attracted some sympathy now found themselves rejected as potential troublemakers. Worst of all, these organizations found themselves faced with a credibility problem in their own ranks, because after a decade of presence on the ground, they had nothing to show for it and no social platform whatever. Their success had been built in the late 1980s on the waning of the "beur" movement and SOS Racisme, which had promised much but delivered little. In those years they had been helped forward by the development of re-Islamization all over the world, which reached a climax in about 1989; they had also capitalized on their political successes over the wearing of the veil, the fight against drugs in the public-housing projects, and the creation of training institutions for imams (which had attracted generous funds from the Arabian peninsula). But despite these promising beginnings, they were confronted with the same obstacles as the secular antiracist movements they had supplanted: in the last analysis, they had nothing of significance to offer that might help with social integration and access to jobs. Their religious approach had proved of little help to people grappling with social conditions in France's low-income housing.

The Islamist line, which had been made so fashionable in the early

1990s by charismatic preachers (winning over the sympathy not only of journalists and academics but also of Christian ecclesiastics), had lost the attraction of novelty—and had never found a sound anchorage in society. This disaffection was made acutely clear when the UOIF, which for many years had held its annual meeting at Le Bourget on Christmas Day, attracting thousands of young people along with extensive press coverage, was obliged to cancel the event in 1997.[35] The reason given was that the public was no longer interested, and the cost of the operation was simply too high. The organization was taken over by leaders of Moroccan origin, whose moderation softened its image. The same thing happened with the Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France, which was also headed by a team approved by Rabat.

Thus, the events in France in 1995 played a major role in the transformation of the Islamist movement, and the same was the case (though on a much larger scale) in Algeria and Egypt. The drift into terrorism cut off the most radical groups from the young urban poor whom they aspired to represent, and this also affected the alliance between poor youths and devout middle-class intellectuals. At the same time, the middle class, through the organizations they ran, had no choice but to adopt a more and more democratic and liberal stance in order to negotiate (from a position of weakness) their own participation in political life following the evaporation of their radical base. There was no more talk of breaking with the system, as there had been during the campaign over the wearing of the veil at the beginning of the decade.

Osama bin Laden, Apocalyptic Terrorist

The most complete and media-conscious drift into terrorism of any among the jihadist-salafist faction was that of Osama bin Laden. In 1996 the United States dubbed him worldwide public enemy number one because of a wide range of terrorist acts attributed to him, and as a result bin Laden had become, by the turn of the century, the new visage of the Evil Empire.[36] His name and face ensured the success of dozens of television programs, magazines, books, and Internet sites and justified a wide range of American policy decisions. Ironically, all of this exposure would make him a hero of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world.[37]

Born in 1957, Osama was one of the 54 sons and daughters fathered by Mohammed bin Laden. Mohammed, who belonged to a family of masons from the Hadramout region of South Yemen, emigrated to Saudi Arabia in 1930 and was recruited by the House of Saud. He delighted the Saudi monarchy with his flair for palace-building, and over the years this royal favor turned his family business into the largest construction company in Saudi Arabia and one of the largest in the Middle East. He obtained an exclusive concession for the extension and maintenance of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the most sacred site of Islam, as well as that of all freeways leading to it from other major cities in the kingdom.[18] Mohammed's feats of engineering along the pilgrim road from Jeddah to Mecca, through the mountains of the Taif region, quickly established his reputation, and by the time of his accidental death in 1968, his personal fortune exceeded $11 billion. Today, the business's emblem is often the first thing passengers see plastered all over billboards when they land at a Middle Eastern airport.[19]

The bin Laden children were raised and educated from babyhood with Saudi princes, in spite of their father's modest Yemeni origins. Mohammed made up for his lowly birth by lavish expenditure on religious good works; he kept open house throughout the pilgrimage season, just like the royal family, entertaining ulemas and dignitaries from all over the Muslim world, as well as the leaders of Islamist movements in every part of the Umma. Thus, as a youth Osama was in regular contact with all those who were very much in favor with the Wahhabite circles of power. He studied engineering at Abd-al-Aziz University in Jeddah, where his course in Islamic studies (compulsory in Saudi Arabia) was taught by Muhammad Qutb, brother of the famous Sayyid Qutb. Abdallah Azzam, the future herald of the Afghan jihad, was another of Osama's teachers. Bin Laden reached adulthood as a young billionaire whose worldview was deeply colored by the ideas and doctrine of the Muslim Brothers and Saudi-style salafism.

After the Red Army entered Kabul in December 1979, Osama traveled to Peshawar with the blessing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, where he again encountered the leaders of the Afghan mujahedeen Islamist parties, whom he had last seen at the family table. Soon he was inquiring about the condition of the Afghan refugees and what kind of help he could provide for them. For the next few years he occupied himself in raising funds for the mujahedeen cause, becoming one of its most fervent partisans in Saudi Arabia. In 1982 he moved his base of operations to Afghanistan, taking with him a substantial infrastructure, and two years after that he established the first guest house for Arab jihadists in Peshawar, in collaboration with his former teacher, Abdallah Azzam, who ran the Bureau of Services providing jihadists with the help they needed. Between them, the two men did much to attract and organize thousands of volunteers. These included many sons of wealthy Saudi families for whom the jihad in Afghanistan was a kind of summer camp; also present were revolutionary Islamist militants released that year from Egyptian jails, Algerian Bouyalists from the bush on the run from their government, later a smattering of young men from the French *banlieues* who would take part in the 1994–95 terrorist campaign in France, and many others.

At that time, all volunteers were viewed favorably: in the eyes of the Saudi establishment, to which bin Laden and Azzam were at this time still close, the sacred cause of the Afghan jihad offered a chance to enroll potential troublemakers, divert them from the struggle against the powers that be in the Muslim world and their American allies, and above all keep them away from the subversive influence of Iran. In the eyes of the United States, the goal of the Afghan jihad was more straightforward still: the jihadists would do battle against the Soviet Union, sparing American GIs, while the oil monarchies of the Gulf would foot the bill, sparing American taxpayers. But at this very early stage, Saudi intelligence services attempted to keep militant Egyptian and Algerian radicals at arm's length from the well-born young men of the Arabian peninsula. This did not, however, prevent them from making contacts that would come to fruition in the decade that followed.

In 1986 Osama established several camps of his own within Afghanistan. His wealth and generosity, the simplicity of his behavior, his personal charm, and his bravery in battle soon became legendary. In 1988 he established a database of all the jihadists and other volunteers who had passed through his camps, and this gave birth to an organizational structure built around a computer file whose Arabic title Al Qaeda (The [Data]base) became famous only ten years later when it was portrayed by the American Justice Department as the key to an ultra-secret terrorist network; this led to bin Laden's indictment for conspiracy. According to some sources, by 1988 Osama had broken with Azzam for reasons that are still unclear; in the following year Azzam was mysteriously assassinated.[40] The Saudi regime had begun to have serious doubts about this loose cannon in Afghanistan, whose declared intent was the propagation of jihad all over the world; and in the same year that Azzam was murdered, the Saudis detained Osama during a visit to his homeland and stripped him of his passport.

In the months preceding Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in June 1990, the posturing of Saddam Hussein—who was still despised by the jihadist-salafist faction as an apostate—worried Osama sufficiently for him to offer the kingdom the services of his jihadist corps for the defense of the Saudi frontier.[41] But when King Fahd, the Custodian of the Two Holy Places, called in the troops of an international coalition led by the United States, bin Laden joined Sheiks Auda and Hawali and their circle in adamantly opposing the presence of infidel armies on Arabian soil. Thereafter Osama was harassed by the regime until, with the assistance of family contacts, he contrived to escape in April 1991. He first went to Pakistan and Afghanistan, and finally, at the end of the year, installed himself in Hassan al-Turabi's Sudan.

A major turning point had now been reached in the life of the man who was to become the most sought-after outlaw in recent history. Like many other Islamist militants coddled by the Saudi system during the 1980s, bin Laden broke radically with the monarchy and its American protectors over the Gulf War. In the Sudan, which shortly afterward found itself playing host to thousands of other jihadists from Afghanistan looking for sanctuary, he joined the motley coalition built by Turabi at the four Popular Islamic and Arab Conferences held from 1991 onward in Khartoum. It brought together the pan-Arabists, Muslim Brothers, radical Islamists, and—for a short period—PLO leaders, all of whom were united in their resentment of Operation Desert Storm and America's military triumph. Turabi's ambition was to create a focus of opposition to the conservative Saudi view of worldwide Islamism, thus taking advantage of the splits and realignments that followed the war. At the same time, bin Laden set about evacuating jihadists from Pakistan, where they were no longer welcome, facilitating their movements around the globe, and in many cases finding work for them in his building concerns throughout the Middle East. In addition to the Sudan, a number of these militants ended up in Yemen—the country of origin of Osama's family—which was well placed to provide a springboard on the peninsula for destabilizing its vast neighbor, Saudi Arabia. A powerful Islamist movement had long been present in Yemen, although by and large it remained aloof from bin Laden's objectives.[42]

Against this background, the first front against the United States was opened up on the Horn of Africa. In response to the civil war that was ravaging Somalia, a U.S.-led international force landed there in 1992 as part of the United Nations' Operation Restore Hope. The Islamists were quick to condemn it as an act of aggression aimed at threatening nearby Sudan and strengthening the West's grip on a region very close to the Middle East.[43] As a result, veteran jihadists from Afghanistan took part in military operations which ended in the massacre of 18 U.S. Marines in Mogadishu on October 3–4, 1993. The coalition forces departed from this fiasco ignominiously, taking with them the corpses of American fighting men in body bags. The retreat was celebrated as a triumph by America's enemies. The United States blamed bin Laden's organization for the loss of life, even though Osama himself, delighted as he was at the outcome, never claimed direct responsibility.[44]

In the wake of this event, bin Laden made major investments in Sudanese agriculture and the country's road network, turning himself into a pivotal figure in anti-Saudi Islamist circles—so much so that he was stripped of his Saudi citizenship in April 1994.[45] But when Khartoum came under heavy international pressure following the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June 1995, bin Laden changed from a welcome guest into a real liability. A year later, he was expelled from the Sudan.

In the summer of 1996, Osama returned to Afghanistan. In June, an attack on the American military camp at Khobar in Saudi Arabia that took 19 lives was imputed to him. Again, he did not claim responsibility, but on August 23 he released a *Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places*. This eleven-page tract, best known by its subtitle *Expel the Polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula*, is crammed with quotations from the Koran, *hadiths* (sayings and stories) of the Prophet, and references to Ibn Taymiyya.[46] It is similar in form to the productions of the jihadist-salafist movement published in the GIA's *Al-Ansar* bulletin, notwithstanding the geopolitical vision it adopts. After recalling the sufferings visited by the "Zionist-Crusader" alliance upon Muslims in various countries around the world, it describes the "occupation of the Land of the Two Holy

Places" as "the greatest of all these aggressions." Thanks to the "awakening" of Islam, the aggression can be successfully repelled, "under the guidance of ulemas and preachers"—as were the crusaders and the Mongols in their time, when Muslims were guided by Ibn Taymiyya.

The five ulemas cited as references (Abdallah Azzam, Ahmad Yassin of the Palestinian Hamas, the Egyptian Omar Abdel Rahman, and the two Saudis Auda and Hawali) all stood at the intersection between the jihadist-salafist movement and the Muslim Brothers. For his own part, Osama positions himself squarely in their doctrinal camp and describes himself—since his flight to the mountains of the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan—as the point of departure for the reconquest. Bin Laden invites the reader to see a parallel with the Prophet's flight to Medina in Year One of the Hegira, prior to recovering Mecca and revealing Islam to the world.

Osama's declaration then goes on to stigmatize the deep injustice in Saudi Arabia. Above all he champions the claims of the higher social strata of the kingdom (his own class), referring to them as the "great merchants" to which the state is "indebted," who are suffering from the "devaluation of the *rial*," and so on.[47] Mainly he addresses himself to the devout midle class (and to some of the princes), in the hope of detaching them from the ruling dynasty. Then, in a reference to the "memorandum of admonition" of July 1992, he presents himself as the voluntary executor of all the demands and criticisms contained in the document.

Driving out the Americans, he claims, is the condition for reestablishing Islam in the peninsula. Invoking the words of his former teacher, Abdallah Azzam—for whom "jihad is every man's duty" *(fard ayn)* wherever Muslim lands are occupied by foreigners (as was Afghanistan by the Soviets)—bin Laden calls on all Muslims to join the jihad to expel the American occupant from the Land of the Two Holy Places. Making lengthy reference to Ibn Taymiyya, he invites the faithful to forgo their differences and unite against the Al-Saud family, who have "collaborated with the Zionist-Crusader alliance." His appeal is specifically addressed to the kingdom's armed forces, whom he exhorts to mutiny, and to Saudi consumers, whom he urges to boycott all American products.

The declaration of jihad goes on to praise the attack on the American barracks at Khobar in June 1996 and the October 1993 "victory" in Somalia.[48] After invoking the "sons of Arabia" who fought in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Chechnya, it announces that the battle will continue until the Islamic state is established throughout the peninsula. A series of warlike poems and invocations to Allah conclude the document's blend of strident anathema and dubious strategy.

In this first manifesto, bin Laden appears to be venturing into the field of theory, whereas his early reputation was won as a master organizer, financier, and combatant. He brings together two powerful political currents: Saudi Islamist dissidence, whose proclamations were encompassed by the Wahhabite code of civility, and the call for jihad to liberate the land of Islam from foreign occupation, modeled on the preachings of Abdallah Azzam in Peshawar. He sets out to radicalize Saudi dissidence, by extending it to cover armed struggle; at the same time he seeks to turn those who are already jihadists against their former patrons, the United States and Saudi Arabia. In the 1990s, he claims, these two nations have assumed the roles of the Soviet Union and Communist Afghanistan in the 1980s—as godless invaders of the dar el-Islam and apostate collaborators.

But in this new struggle he mentions no strategic support comparable to that which the volunteers of the previous decade found in the United States and in several of the oil monarchies of the peninsula. The only two rogue states that had ever been able to offer him any semblance of support—Turabi's Sudan and the Taliban's Afghanistan—were impoverished and dependent. Within the worldwide Islamic fundamentalist movement at the end of the twentieth century, the enthusiasm of the young urban poor mobilized by the Pakistani religious parties and a few others around the figure of bin Laden himself seemed unlikely to turn into a powerful infrastructure. As for the contributions of his wealthy sympathizers, they had never obscured the general distaste of the devout bourgeoisie for a faction that attacks Riyadh and Washington head-on and threatens a wide range of vested interests.

In February 1998, bin Laden created the International Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders, whose founding charter was co-signed by the leader of the Egyptian Al-Jihad Group, Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of his Gamaa Islamiya compatriots, and a few leaders of tiny Islamist cells in the Indian subcontinent. This short text, which contains abundant quotations from the Koran and the inevitable Ibn Taymiyya, repeats the customary tirades against the "Zionist-Crusader alliance" and raises the confrontational stakes to a new level by issuing a fatwa stipulating that "every Muslim who is capable of doing so has the personal duty to kill Americans and their allies, whether civilians or military personnel, in every country where this is possible."[49]

On August 7 of the same year, on the anniversary of the arrival of American troops in Saudi Arabia at the request of King Fahd, two huge explosions simultaneously destroyed the United States embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania). The first left 213 dead (among them 13 Americans) and over 4,500 injured; the second left 11 dead and 85 injured (none of them American). The U.S. authorities immediately laid the blame on bin Laden. After American cruise missile attacks obliterated a chemical factory in Khartoum and leveled several training camps inside Afghanistan on August 20, Osama was indicted for conspiracy and a price of $5 million was placed on his head.[50] In a series of interviews given to the press from his Afghan hideout, bin Laden attempted to cast doubt on his direct implication in the African bombings, although he made clear his satisfaction that they had taken place.[51]

The killings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam followed the same logic as those in Luxor in November 1997 and in Algeria at roughly the same time. Cut off from its roots within society, the extremist Islamist faction had resorted to a brand of terrorism that was more or less covered by religious justifications, and most of whose victims had nothing whatever to do with the designated enemy of the jihadists. Spectacular terrorism, because of the inevitable worldwide media attention it attracts, made it possible for extremists to pose as champions of the cause, and perhaps to regain popular favor by way of television, in the absence of any effective work at the grassroots level.

But resorting to spectacular terrorism was a high-risk gamble which, apart from emotional and momentary demonstrations of sympathy or solidarity, was bound to engender also a far greater, far deeper *angst* among the devout middle class, who feared that such explosions of violence might threaten its vital interests in the long run. But despite the bad odds, bin Laden seemed determined to follow that path. On October 12, 2000, a daring attack on *U.S.S. Cole*, which was refueling in Aden, Yemen, left 17 sailors dead.[52] Never had an American warship been inflicted such damage by a terrorist organization. Though many hints led to bin Laden, and a number of arrests were made, the criminal investigation proved frustrating—as if Al Qaeda had become a kind of brand name for anything anti-American in the area, as if a wide network of would-be accomplices took care to make proofs disappear and activists vanish. A number of questions remained unanswered: who was actually involved in that ring of attacks, from Khobar in June 1996 to Aden via the embassy bombings of August 1998, and also what was its purpose? If terrorism is a system of signs and signals sent to an adversary, what was the meaning embedded in that language? It could not be that the mere fact of U.S. world hegemony was at issue. Was it America's Middle East policy, and if so, what aspect of it? What did the terrorists, or the people behind them, want? What kind of trade-off, what kind of deal were they after, as they exercised such severe pressure on America? Maybe, at that point, the world should have taken bin Laden's words seriously. In his 1996 *Declaration*, he had voiced his hostility to the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia and lambasted the Saudi royals, or at least some of them. He was adamant about the fact that, in his view, the kingdom had become an American protectorate. And it was known that, in some segments of the Saudi public, he had networks of friends who shared his vision. Was it thinkable that, whatever bin Laden's extremism, some wider groups willing to reshuffle the U.S.-Saudi relationship would discreetly push him forward, so as to send well-calculated advance warnings—warnings, perhaps, that oil money should go through different channels, that the great deal that had been brokered on board the *U.S.S. Quincy* in the aftermath of Yalta between Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud should be revised? And what had all this to do with the still largely mysterious bombing of the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993?

The gruesome attack that finally destroyed the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, together with the crash of an airliner on the Pentagon the same day, was in line with this series of blows against American interests tracing back to 1993, though the unprecedented level of violence has changed its dimension altogether. As of early January 2002, we still do not know whether the apocalyptic destruction that resulted had been foreseen by the perpetrators of this crime against humankind, or whether they were taken aback by a cataclysm that exceeded even their expectations. That last hypothesis could be drawn, with all required caution, from the videotape that was seized by U.S. intelligence in Jalalabad after the flight of the Arab fighters in early December 2001 and subsequently aired worldwide. In a meeting with accomplices, bin Laden acknowledged that the toll of September 11 was much heavier than even he had hoped for.

Whatever the intent might have been, the attack on America meant that Al Qaeda and anyone suspected to be in touch with its network—which still remained fairly obscure—would be hunted down. Its infrastructure in Afghanistan, to the extent it was known, was destroyed within a few months. Whether these search-and-destroy tactics will prove sufficient in the long run against a rather fluid network, whose very name refers to a worldwide database of operatives, remains to be seen. Brick-and-mortar compounds and caches can be flattened by carpet-bombing, but websites and e-terrorism may prove far less difficult to delete.

CHAPTER 14

Hamas, Israel, Arafat, and Jordan

The crushing of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War had direct consequences for the Arab-Israeli conflict. It forced the political elites of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization to engage in a peace process, which eventually broadened to include most of the Arab states. Thus, at the very moment when radical Islamist groups in Algeria and Egypt—stimulated by the homecoming of militants from Afghanistan in 1992—were resorting to jihad in order to establish Islamic regimes, the Palestinian Islamists were confronted with a major political challenge: the prospect of peace with Israel. If peace were achieved, the PLO would emerge at the head of a state recognized by the international community, after a half-century of nationalist struggle, and Islamist groups in Palestine, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, would be severely handicapped.

The outbreak of the intifada in December 1987 had heralded a rapid growth in the influence of Hamas and, to a lesser extent, Islamic Jihad, both at the expense of the PLO, whose nationalist rhetoric had previously dominated the Palestinian discourse. The victory of the United States at the head of a coalition against Iraq in 1990–91 radically changed the complexion of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In a world where the Soviet Union no longer existed, the sole triumphant superpower found itself in a position to impose on the two adversaries a peace process that conformed to its interests. Israel, whose territory had been violated by a few Iraqi Scud missiles during the war, had left its military defense to Washington in order to avoid provoking Arab states by