

From the Gulf War to the Taliban Jihad

On the morning of August 2, 1990, the foreign ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, assembled in Cairo, learned that Saddam Hussein had just invaded Kuwait.¹ A Muslim state, which had hosted the preceding OIC summit and had supplied the OIC's current president, had just been wiped off the map by a fellow member of the organization. The Iraqi army, having seized control of the emirate almost without firing a shot, advanced to the Saudi frontier and threatened to make incursions toward the province of Hasa, where the kingdom's richest oil wells were located. In just three days Saddam might conquer the whole of Saudi Arabia.

On August 7, King Fahd, the Custodian of the Two Holy Places (Mecca and Medina), appealed to the United States for military assistance. In Operation Desert Shield, several hundred thousand non-Muslim soldiers, all of them part of an international coalition with a mandate from the United Nations, landed in Saudi Arabia. They saved the monarchy, but in the process they ruined the entire edifice the Al-Saud family had so patiently erected since the 1960s to dominate the Islamic world.

The Saudi system had survived the repeated attacks of Ayatollah Khomeini during the preceding decade, and by financing the Afghan jihad it had preserved its credibility with even the most radical Sunni militants. Thanks to the Islamic financial and banking network, Saudi Arabia had maintained contact with the devout middle class of the wider Muslim world, and through the OIC its diplomacy had achieved

a degree of consensus among the Muslim states. The Muslim World League and other transnational organizations working along the same lines spread the Wahhabite message to the beneficiaries of Saudi largesse: few opponents other than Shiites were prepared to act on the anathemas hurled at Riyadh by Tehran. Though there had been ups and downs, in general the Sunni Islamist movements had managed to bridge the gulf between the young, poor urban extremists and the devout bourgeoisie moderates. Medical students and engineers predicted to all who would listen the coming reign of the sharia, which would be built upon the ashes of socialism and of a Western world completely devoid of moral standards.

The person responsible for destroying the social consensus the Saudi state had built around these Islamist values was a figure who was anything but a shining example of piety. In 1980 Saddam Hussein had sent to the gallows, among thousands of others, Baqir as-Sadr, one of the foremost Islamist thinkers of the late twentieth century. In contrast to Khomeini, the Iraqi president had no claim to religious legitimacy: the Baathist party that had brought him to power was doctrinally secular and had been consigned to hell in many a mosque. During the war against Iran (1980-1988) it had begun using religious formulas to counter the charges of apostasy leveled at it by Tehran, but lying just beneath the party's fiery Islamic vocabulary was an ever-present Arabism. Iraq's war was being waged against Persians in the name of Islam, because Arabs had been the first to recognize the Prophet's revelations.

After the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein appropriated to himself all the grievances against the Saudis formerly trumpeted by his Iranian enemies. He called the kingdom an American protectorate unworthy of governing the Holy Places, and the presence of over 500,000 American soldiers on Saudi territory during the conflict seemed to bear out this argument. Saddam's condemnation was all the more telling in that it did not come from a Shiite Persian but from a Sunni Arab—from the very heart of the Islamic zone that Riyadh had marked out with such painstaking effort and expense. By giving a populist dimension to his calls for jihad (thus compensating for the weakness of his doctrinal justification), Saddam Hussein wrecked the inner equilibrium of the Islamist movement, to the lasting detriment of the bourgeoisie and the conservatives. The cumulative effect of the 1980s had been to force the Islamists to bring together their various contem-

porants and mask their divergences behind a shared ideology; this process began to reverse in the early 1990s, when mere doctrine could no longer hide the social rifts within the movement. The radically different trajectories of the middle classes and the disinherited young became more and more painfully obvious—and as a result the former became vulnerable to attempts by established governments to win them over, while the latter drifted in the direction of violence and terrorism. The consensus built around a conservative Wahhabism, which had attracted allegiances in every quarter thanks to its religious rigor and financial generosity, and which had added an international dimension to the alliance between the devout bourgeoisie and the young urban poor, would never be the same again after the Gulf War.

The record of the last ten years of the twentieth century might at first glance give the appearance that the power of political Islam was growing in all areas, from secular Turkey, where the head of the Refah Islamist party became prime minister in 1996, to post-communist Bosnia, where power fell to the Islamist Alija Izetbegovic, who had to compromise with a highly secularized society. Among radicals, the Algerian civil war echoed the terrorism in the Nile Valley, which temporarily wrecked the Egyptian tourist industry; the Taliban took power in Kabul in 1996, two years after their first appearance on the scene; Islamist guerrillas in Chechnya had been defying the might of Moscow since 1995; in the same year a series of violent attacks had been launched in France; in August 1998 there were simultaneous bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; and finally, on September 11, 2001, the bloody attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon shocked the world. But despite this appearance of growing influence worldwide, the deeper reality was that the two opposing camps within the Islamist movement were no longer able to provoke social upheaval on a scale that could lead to a lasting success like that of the Iranian revolution. The recurrent violence of the decade was above all a reflection of the movement's structural weakness, not its growing strength. No ideology worthy of the name had come forward to take the place of Mawdudi, Qutb, and Khomeini, and their imitators were unable to offer an overall vision that transcended social antagonisms.

The extremist groups published their own manifestos, in which the struggle against "deviant" fellow Muslims took up as much space as at-

tacks on the "ungodly." As for intellectuals linked to the devout middle class, they were obliged to take a stance in favor of democracy, the rights of man (and woman, too), and freedom of expression, the ones on which the founding fathers of Islamism had been ambiguous, not to say downright hostile. This stance allowed them to forge alliances with their secular counterparts against authoritarian regimes, but it also forced them into revisions of doctrine that tarnished their Islamist credentials and made them vulnerable to dogmatic zealots. This crisis within the movement, which continued throughout the 1990s, was revealed for all the world to see in the yawning chasm opened up by the Gulf War and by Saddam Hussein's ideological offensive against Saudi hegemony.

The Aftershocks of the Gulf War

The war had lasting effects on two levels. Internationally, it shattered the aura of religious legitimacy that had been so painstakingly acquired by Saudi Arabia, and the Saudis were to feel the effects of this loss for years after Iraq had been crushed on the battlefield. In every other Muslim country, the war backed Islamists into a corner, focusing attention on their squabbles, forcing them to choose sides between the two Muslim antagonists, and eventually provoking the emergence of an alternative Islamism within Saudi territory, which was directed against the Saudi royal family.

During the war that Iraq had initiated against Iran, a Popular Islamic Conference had convened in Baghdad in 1983 with a view to hammering out a religious argument to counter Tehran's fulminations against Saddam's regime of Baathist apostasy. The participants were Islamic personalities of the Saudi persuasion. Following the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the Iraqi government, having lost the support of the Popular Islamic Conference (PIC), set about detaching from Riyadh the Sunni Islamist movements originating with the Muslim Brothers and their affiliates. To this end, Saddam Hussein—whose flags had suddenly been struck with the words "Allah Akbar" and who had taken care that footage of himself praying on the shore of conquered Kuwait City was broadcast on international TV—sought to make of the rape of Kuwait a kind of moral and social jihad. He claimed that the royal family of the emirate, the Al Sabahs, reigned over an artificial

state created by the British; they were no more than pawns of the West, using their oil revenues to enrich themselves rather than their people. By annexing Kuwait, the argument ran, Iraq was recovering a "natural" province stolen from it in the nineteenth century and broadening its access to the sea. Saddam maintained that he was working for the unity of Arabs and Muslims, and he swore to place at the disposal of the "disinherited" the revenues that the emirs would otherwise have squandered on palaces and casinos. He stripped Islamic dogma of its subtleties, appealed directly to the yearning for justice that has always inspired Islam (in common with most other religions), and blended it with Third World ideology and Arab nationalism. Thanks to Kuwait's black gold, Iraq would, according to Saddam, become a great Arab power and the shining defender of the poor nations of earth against the new American world order.

To justify the annexation of the emirate, the Iraqi propaganda machine pieced together a composite discourse. The idea was to concentrate the anti-Western sentiment that was simmering all over the Muslim world quite independently of the ideological conflicts between nationalists and Islamists and to use it to strengthen a single populist cause. At the same time, however, the war divided the Islamists, setting them at one another's throat because of the attacks against Saudi Arabia, which Baghdad intended to strip of its religious legitimacy. For Riyadh, which had succeeded in containing a similar onslaught from Iran for a period of ten years by playing on Shiite marginality and the Persian-ness of Khomeini and by financing a diversionary jihad in Afghanistan, this new challenge was much more serious. It came from the Sunni Arab world, and from a neighboring state whose troops were massed on its frontiers—at the same time that Saudi Arabia itself was hosting more than half a million "infidel" soldiers. Accompanied by their Christian chaplains and Jewish rabbis, this foreign army had been called to the assistance of a country that the Wahhabites prided themselves on having made sacred to Islam, and within whose borders the open practice of any other religion was forbidden.

All the international organizations on the Saudi payroll that had struggled in the past to defeat Nasserism and contain Iran were now mobilized against Saddam Hussein. Nonetheless, a certain number of habitual Saudi clients did not answer the call, or did so reluctantly, making clear their discomfort in combating a populist cause that held

certain attractions for ordinary Muslims everywhere. For the first time since the war of October 1973, petro-dollars were not sufficient to secure allegiances, because the reputations of the ulemas and Islamist intellectuals might now be tarnished by fulsome praise of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government had to go begging for the support of institutions like Al Azhar in Cairo, which for two decades Riyadh had believed it could browbeat with its financial clout but whose prestige had remained unphased. Al Azhar's official opinions seemed less questionable than the fatwas of Sheik Abdelaziz bin Baz, the principal Wahhabite ideologist.

The OIC, which was in session at the moment of the invasion of Kuwait, voted to express its solidarity with the emirate and to condemn the Iraqi annexation. But five of its members, in addition to Iraq, did not approve the resolution—among them were the PLO, Jordan, and the Sudan—while two others, one of which was Libya, abstained. In September, the Muslim World League convened a conference in Mecca, chaired by the leader of the Afghan Jamiat party. Over two hundred participants, many of whom had benefited handsomely from Saudi largesse, condemned the invasion and justified in the name of Islam the appeal for help from non-Muslim armies. But most of the more important Islamist movements refused to compromise themselves, seeking instead a middle ground between their base support, which favored Iraq, and the always-welcome financial aid provided by the Gulf monarchies. Immediately after the Mecca conference, their leaders reassembled in Amman at the invitation of the Jordanian Muslim Brothers. They sent a delegation to the capitals concerned by the conflict, and to Tehran. Their final communiqué appeased both parties by acknowledging their grievances, but mostly criticized the American and Western military presence around the Holy Places of Islam. This was a direct reproach to Saudi Arabia.

As the clock ran down on the January 15 United Nations ultimatum to Iraq and the launching of Operation Desert Storm became imminent, the two adversaries scheduled for that date two separate meetings of the Popular Islamic Conference. The conference that took place in Baghdad called for a jihad against the West, whose soldiers were accused of sacrilege against Mecca and Medina. The participants reflected the popular support that Saddam Hussein had managed to rally to his cause: in addition to the Islamists, these included a number of

ulemas who were sensitive to the enthusiasms of their constituencies (such as the heads of the Grand Mosque in Marseille and Paris) and a sprinkling of Arab nationalists. The rival conference, which was held at Mecca, was attended by the sheik of Al Azhar and Mohammed al-Ghazali, one of the most respected figures among Islamic conservatives, along with the Saudis' most loyal clients. These participants denounced the "wayward" ulemas who supported Saddam Hussein—demonstrating in the process that Saddam had succeeded in dividing Islam to his advantage, whereas Riyadh had formerly held it together under its umbrella of religiosity and generosity.

After the cessation of hostilities and the defeat of Iraq, the "war of the conferences" continued in other venues. On April 25 it was Cairo's and Khartoum's turn to receive, simultaneously, the representatives of the two camps determined to dominate the political expression of Islam. In Cairo, the home of Al Azhar, whose sheik had supported his colleagues in Mecca when they were in trouble, the lords of Arabia showed their gratitude. Various Islamic institutions in Egypt suddenly found that their projects had been deemed worthy of funding. The crushing of Iraq by the American, European, and Arab allies had left a feeling of bitterness at the grassroots, and the ulemas who had given the war the stamp of legitimacy had suffered deep ideological wounds. It was a matter of urgency that the Saudi aid which had been siphoned off by the war should be reactivated and the flow of social goods restored.

In Khartoum, at the invitation of Hassan al-Turabi (the *éminence* of a regime that had supported Iraq), an Arab and Islamic People's Conference brought together Muslim Brothers and similar movements from all over the world, along with Yasir Arafat and other Arab nationalists who had come out in favor of Baghdad. By borrowing the name of the Iraqi People's Islamic Conference, which had broken up in January, it aimed to capitalize on the groundswell of sympathy for Saddam Hussein in the Muslim world, and to add to that what remained of Arab nationalism—notably among intellectuals, who in general had more finesse and discretion in handling people than their Islamic militant colleagues. The goal, of course, was to blend all these ingredients into an international Islamism with a much more radical program—colored by populism and Third World ideology—than the one offered by the Wahhabites. It saw itself as a durable alternative

to such puppets of Saudi control and influence as the OIC and the Muslim World League, and it called other meetings in 1993 and 1995. But in the long term, Khartoum was unable to compete with these well-oiled, liberally financed organizations. Nevertheless, Turabi's initiatives testified to a continuing split within the Islamic world, which in itself reflected the social and ideological divisions operating within the movement in each Muslim nation.

Saudi Arabia Entraps Itself

The split within the Arab Islamist movement initiated by the Gulf War extended well into Saudi Arabia itself, where dissent began to run rife. Without question, the dynasty held an overwhelming advantage over a new opposition movement that was claiming to act in the name of Allah and of Wahhabism. All the same, this opposition was to contribute significantly to the shattering of the government's religious legitimacy, exposing at home the fragility of the balance on which Saudi Arabia's primacy in the Muslim world was based.

The massive presence of allied armies in the country between 1990 and 1991 aroused two kinds of reaction to the monarchy. The first gave voice to the expectations of the liberal middle class, which hoped to nudge the regime toward greater political openness. The second, which viewed demands like these as highly dangerous and subversive, denounced the Westernization of the kingdom that had come as a direct consequence of its complete dependence on American military support and called for a return to the founding puritanical spirit that the corrupt princes of the royal family had betrayed. There was nothing new in these charges: first Khormeini, then Saddam Hussein, had repeated them over and over. On the other hand, they were now being voiced for the first time by organized Saudi nationals, more than ten years after the foiled assault on the Great Mosque in Mecca by the ultra-Wahhabite Juhayman al-Utaybi in November 1979. As opposed to Juhayman's initiative, the new opposition had its own support and network within the religious establishment that had provided the government with its claim to Islamic legitimacy.

The liberal movement had two defining moments. One was on November 6, when seventy Saudi women drove their own cars into the center of Riyadh in protest against the law forbidding women to drive.

Although they were careful to proclaim their allegiance to Islam—pointing out that Aisha, the wife of the Prophet, had ridden her own camel—and announced that they were acting in the best interests of the monarchy whose legitimacy they did not question, the women nonetheless had broken a taboo. And in doing so, they had justified themselves with a precedent from Holy Writ, while Sheik bin Baz, the principal Wahhabite ideologist, had pronounced the exact opposite interpretation; thus, they were deemed to have contravened religious authority in addition to disturbing the peace.

Even though substantial numbers of princes, businessmen, and university professors supported the women's demands, the general furor against these "communist whores" engulfed all liberal expressions of solidarity. The women were shrilly denounced by reactionary elements of Saudi society, who seized on this pretext to vent their frustration over the evil influence of the foreign military presence within the kingdom. Consequently, the lady drivers were fired from their jobs and thoroughly repressed by the regime. The last thing the Saudi rulers wanted was a confrontation with the ulemas over the issue of women's rights, at a moment when it urgently needed fatwas approving its recourse to American forces during the war against Iraq.

In February 1991, while the coalition offensive was at its height, the Saudi liberals presented a fresh petition to King Fahd, calling for a constitution and the appointment of a consultative council. In the face of this pressure from liberals, the Islamists were quick to react with a petition and criticisms of their own.¹ Two preachers, whose sermons were distributed in cassette form, stood out as the most violent critics of the Western military presence in Saudi Arabia, whose soldiers they viewed as a new wave of crusaders. The first of the two, Salman al-Auda, was the imam of a mosque in the agricultural town of Burayda, near Riyadh in the province of Qasim, a region that had been more or less bypassed by the oil boom: he was 36 years old. The second, Safar al-Hawali, was five years older and a promising graduate of the Saudi religious establishment who had been trained first at the Muslim Brothers' Islamic University at Medina and then in Mecca. He belonged to a family that was among the dominant clans of the kingdom. In company with seven other preachers and Islamist university professors, the pair signed a letter of petition (*kitāb al-matlib*) which was approved by Sheik bin Baz and presented to King Fahd in May 1991. It

called for the appointment of a *majlis al-shura* (consultative council) that would be made up of ulemas, to temper arbitrary decisions by the monarchy; it would make sure that the kingdom remained true to Wahhabite norms, resisting the pernicious influence of Jews and Christians. In veiled terms, the signatories criticized both the Al Saud family's monopoly of power and the monarchy's loss of Islamic credibility after it was bailed out by impious foreign armies. Like the petition of the liberals, this letter demanded that the regime include in the decision-making process the educated middle class who did not belong to the royal family. With this demand, it called into question the dynasty's authority, while claiming the mantle of impeccable Wahhabite and Islamist rectitude.

King Fahd was obliged to take these demands into consideration in order to consolidate the religious base of his government, which had been severely shaken by the Gulf War. As a face-saving measure, he had the two young preachers taken to task by the Council of Ulemas for having made their epistle public, to the greater delight of Saudi Arabia's enemies, rather than keeping it discreet. The king took issue with its form, too, though not its content, which had, after all, been approved by Sheikh bin Baz. Later, in November, he announced the nomination of a consultative council and the codification of the fundamental laws of the realm, which was completed in March 1992. The sixty members of the council were chosen by the king, who was not bound by any of their opinions; most of them belonged to the principal tribal families. The Nejd region around Riyadh, the homeland of the Al Saud, was much more heavily represented than other parts of the kingdom, while nearly 70 percent of the councilors had studied in the West, most of them at American universities. In fact, the composition of this assembly was much more satisfactory to the liberals than to the Islamists—with the result that the Islamists counterattacked the following September by making public a memorandum of admonition (*mudhakirat al-nasihat*), as a basis for the demands of the religious opposition.

This latest detailed assault on the regime was immediately condemned by the Council of Ulemas and by Sheikh bin Baz himself.²³ The memorandum set out a list of grievances against Saudi rule and suggested reforms to improve it by making it more Islamic—thus placing it squarely in the tradition of the *nasihat* (admonition) which the

ulemas were traditionally permitted to offer princes to make them align what they did with the injunctions of the holy texts. The memorandum's principal demand was for real independence to be accorded to Muslim clerics in their dealings with the government, in recognition of their preeminence. Next, it called for the complete Islamization of laws and regulations (noting that Arabia, which had promoted interest-free banking in all other Muslim countries, had yet to practice it at home). Total Islamization was recommended as the only means of stamping out corruption, waste, violations of Muslims' rights, and other anomalies. A harsh assessment of the inadequacies of the Saudi armed forces during the Gulf War led to a recommendation that they be reconstituted along the same lines as the Israeli conscript army (1) and that all military alliances with non-Muslim powers should be terminated forthwith. In foreign politics, the criticism was focused on relations with the United States, on Saudi support for the Israeli-Arab peace process, and on Saudi friendship with states like Algeria whose governments were locked in combat with the Islamist movement.

All in all, the memorandum painted a picture of a kingdom ruled by an arbitrary regime, which only resorted to religion when it needed to cover up the turpitudes of its leaders. The document's clear aim was to wreck the Al Saud claim to any kind of moral leadership in the wider sphere of Islam. The authorities were much disconcerted, and they showed it, and this further encouraged the dissident factions. On May 3, 1993, six clerics (four of whom had signed the memorandum of admonition) created an organization to pass on the views of the Islamist opposition that was rapidly developing in the universities and mosques of the nation. Known in English as the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), it claimed—in Arabic—the defense of the rules laid out in the sharia. Its shrewd use of the rhetoric of human rights won the approval of the Western press, while it followed a much stricter Islamist line in its dealings with its supporters in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi authorities reacted vigorously to this direct challenge when the official spokesman of the CDLR, Mohammed al-Masari, a physician trained in the United States, gave a spectacular interview, in English, to the BBC and obtained a rendezvous at the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh. The signatories and their sympathizers promptly lost their jobs and were thrown into jail, whereupon Amnesty International adopted Masari as a "prisoner of conscience." This forced the Saudi government

to release him, and he left for London, where he revived the CDLR in April 1994.

For two years, Masari applied himself to superficially blackening the reputation of the regime through manipulation of the international media, without raising any groundswell of support within the kingdom itself. Unlike Sheikhs Hawali and Auda, who belonged to powerful families, Masari was viewed in the upper echelons of society as a pariah and was not taken seriously.⁶ Moreover, in doctrinal terms he was sadly lacking in ballast, as became evident when he was confronted by the barrage of fatwas issued by the regime's ulema supporters. In July 1993 Sheikh bin Baz was promoted to the long-vacant position of Grand Mufti; meanwhile the government undertook a reorganization of its Ministry of Religious Affairs by an energetic cleric, Abdullah Turki. All the same, Masari was a gifted communicator; having been quickly propelled into the limelight by the Islamists in London, he supplied the newspapers with a steady stream of revelations (many of them hearsay) about the public and private vices of the Al Saud princess. He made lavish use of the fax machine to circumvent Saudi press censorship, just as Khomeini, fifteen years earlier, had short-circuited the shah's radio monopoly with his ubiquitous audiocassettes. Finally, Masari opened an Internet site, on which he published, in both English and Arabic, a steady stream of virtual communiqués and periodicals.

The media were delighted by this maverick who could make the Saudi monarchy tremble with nothing more than a fax machine and a modem; they cast him as a bearded postmodernist dissident inveighing against the Kingdom of Oil. Nevertheless, Masari's fame was based on a deep ambiguity. When he used the language of Shakespeare, Amnesty International, and Microsoft, he concentrated on human rights violations, corruption, and so on, endearing himself to the Western media. But when he spoke in the language of the Koran, he sought to give "definitive proofs of the Saudi state's contravention of sharia" (this was the title of a pamphlet he published in 1995). He even ventured to pronounce takfir (ex-communication) against all Muslims who obeyed the laws of Riyadh—an extremist posture that aligned him fairly closely with the Algerian GIA and its London representatives. In Saudi Arabia, this attitude destroyed much of his support among dissidents who wanted to win over the nation's leading ulemas, not to insult and vilify them.

Furthermore, the government had turned the screw of repression by arresting Hawali and Auda in September 1994, along with several hundred demonstrators assembled by them in Burayda. Other demonstrations organized the following year attracted only a small number of people, in a climate of repression rendered even more menacing by the public beheading of an Islamist militant who had assaulted a policeman. In November 1995 five Americans were killed in Riyadh. The fax and Internet had been supplanted by bombs, and dissidence had succumbed to violence. In February 1996 the CDLR was irrevocably split, and Masari gradually abandoned the front pages of the world's media to Osama bin Laden. Masari had proved unable to transform his virtual successes into solid backing on the ground or, in the last analysis, to unite the devout bourgeoisie of Saudi Arabia behind him and thus mount a serious threat to the power of the reigning dynasty.

The Proliferation of the Afghan Jihad

The Saudi monarchy, already weakened from within, was dealt another blow in the aftermath of the Gulf War. This time the perpetrators were the prodigals of the 1980s, the combatants of the Afghan jihad. Having been armed and funded by the kingdom, these *wanderkinder* of the Saudi Islamist movement now turned against it: and the most prominent among them was the billionaire Osama bin Laden, whose family held a position of hegemony over public works and construction in the peninsula, thanks to its close connections with the royal family.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan on February 15, 1989, disagreements had begun to surface among the jihadists, who felt that their promised triumph had been thwarted. Mohammed Najibullah, the communist leader, was still in power in Kabul (where he was to remain until April 1992), and, with the withdrawal of the Red Army, the American ally had begun to pay attention to the voices that depicted some of the erstwhile freedom fighters as dangerous fanatics and heroin dealers. Hekmatyar and Sayyaf, the heads of the two most prominent Wahhabite factions in the resistance, were viewed by Washington as extremists as bad as Najibullah himself; all aid to them was quickly terminated. In Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, who had been elected prime minister following General Zia's assassination in August 1988, had little sympathy with the Islamists who had been co-opted into power by

the former dictator and executioner of her father, Ali Bhutto, in 1979. She set about weakening their stronghold, the Jamaat-e-Islami (the party founded by Mawdudi), which had thrown its weight behind Hekmatyar's Fiezb-e-Islami in Afghanistan. In these circles the martyred Zia, the *chahid* as he was called, was greatly revered; even though the American ambassador had been killed along with him, his death was attributed to an American plot whose purpose was to bring the assistance into line following the Soviet defeat, in order to check the advance of the Islamist movement.

Anti-Americanism was on the rise within the Jamaat-e-Islami, even though one of the objectives of the jihad, from Saudi Arabia's point of view, had been to turn the ire of the militants against the Soviet Union and away from the American protector—despite Khomeini's exhortations against the "Great Satan." In this light, the November 1989 assassination of Abdallah Azzam—the Palestinian Muslim Brother who had founded the Bureau of Services for the Arab jihadis in Peshawar and had acted as the intermediary between the Saudi system and the most virulent activists—was a coup that favored the militants' emancipation from their patrons. Anti-Western sentiment, momentarily suspended while the CIA's weapons and dollars were flowing in, now returned with a vengeance. It was quickly translated into attacks on European and American humanitarian agencies in Peshawar, who were trying to help the Afghan refugees.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, most of the Islamist movements of the region initially condemned the annexation of one Muslim country by another. Among the Afghans, Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Jamiat party, and Hekmatyar, the Fiezb chief, took part in the Mecca conference organized in September to oppose the invasion. In Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Association of Ulemas of Islam, or JUI) and the Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan (Association of Ulemas of Pakistan, or JUP) called on Saddam Hussein to draw his troops, on the grounds that he was handing the West a pretext for a military intervention.⁷ Before long this became the principal talking point of the conflict: from November onward, the entire Pakistani Islamist movement, seeing the war as an American-Israeli plot to dominate the Middle East, began to turn decisively against the Saudi monarchy. Particularly striking was the virulence of the head of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Qazi Hussein Ahmed, a Peshawar who owed his political rise to

the Afghan jihad and to Hekmatyar; both organizations had been the main beneficiaries of Saudi and Kuwaiti financial aid for the entire decade of the 1980s. This about-face showed the degree of anger provoked in the region by Washington's abandonment of the jihad and, to a lesser extent, by Riyadh's betrayal. For the United States and Saudi Arabia, the Afghan and Pakistani causes had lost much of their strategic importance following the rout of the Soviets, the enfeeblement of Iran, and the death of Khomeini. Thereafter, all the Arab jihadis who were still on the spot adopted the same attitude as the local Islamist parties, freeing themselves from Saudi tutelage and then rising up against it.

The international brigade of jihad veterans, being outside the control of any state, was suddenly available to serve radical Islamist causes anywhere in the world. Since they were no longer bound by local political contingencies, they had no responsibilities to any social group either. They reflected neither the interests of the devout bourgeoisie nor those of the young urban poor, even though their militants were drawn from both classes. They became the free electrons of jihad, professional Islamists trained to fight and to train others to do likewise; they were based in Pakistani tribal zones, in smugglers' fiefdoms over which Islamabad exercised next to no authority, and in Afghan mujahedeen encampments. Around the most heavily involved militants gathered clouds of sympathizers, many of whom were in trouble in their own countries and unable to obtain visas to Western nations; they were stuck in Pakistan and obliged to survive in the direst circumstances. Young Islamists from all over the world came to join these men and learn the terrorist trade from them; some emerged later as the perpetrators of a series of attacks in France in 1995. Above and beyond the cause they claimed to serve, they constituted a pool of manpower that could be used by the secret services of a number of states who might find it opportune to manipulate unattached extremist militants.

This milieu was cut off from social reality; its inhabitants perceived the world in the light of religious doctrine and armed violence. It bred a new, hybrid Islamist ideology whose first doctrinal principle was to rationalize the existence and behavior of militants. This was jihadism.⁸ In academic parlance, the term *salafism* denotes a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas. It advocated a return to the traditions of the devout ancestors (*salaf* in Arabic). Exemplified by the

Persian Afghani, the Egyptian Abdub, and the Syrian Rida, it sought to expose the roots of modernity within Muslim civilization—and in the process resorted to a somewhat free-wheeling interpretation of the sacred texts.¹⁷ In the eyes of the militants, the definition of the term was quite different: salafists were those who understood the injunctions of the sacred texts in their most literal, traditional sense. Their most notable exponent was the great fourteenth-century ulema Ibn Taymiyya, whose work served as a primary reference for the Wahhabites. The salafists were the real fundamentalists of Islam; they were hostile to any and all innovation, which they condemned as mere human interpretation.

According to the militants, there were, however, two kinds of salafists, as they defined them. The "sheikists" had replaced the adoration of Allah with the idolatry of the oil sheiks of the Arabian peninsula, with the Al Saud family at their head. Their theorist was Abdelaziz bin Baz, Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia since 1993 and the archetypal court ulema (*ulama al-balat*). Their ostentatious salafism was no more than the badge of their hypocrisy, their submission to the non-Muslim United States, and their public and private vices, in the view of the militants. They had to be striven against and eliminated. Confronted by the "sheikist" traitors, the jihadist-salafists had a similarly supercilious respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form, but they combined it with an absolute commitment to jihad, whose number-one target had to be America, perceived as the greatest enemy of the faith. The dissident Saudi preachers Hawali and Auda were held in high esteem by this school, whose thinking was enlarged upon by a number of other theorists whose names and pseudonyms cropped up frequently in the London bulletins of the Algerian GIA. Among these were the Palestinian Abu Qatada and the (naturalized Spanish) Syrian Abu Musab, as well as the (naturalized British) Egyptian Mustapha Kamel, known as Abu Hamza. All three were veterans of the jihad in Afghanistan.

Hostile as they were to the "sheikists," the jihadist-salafists were even angrier with the Muslim Brothers, whose excessive moderation they denounced on the grounds that it led the Brothers to take liberties with the letter of the holy texts. Even Sayyid Qutb, the spiritual father of the radical element among the Brothers, was held in suspicion; in particular the jihadist-salafists condemned Qutb's reading of the Koran in his

book *Fi-zilal al-Quran* (Under the Aegis of the Koran), which was seen as a collection of personal interpretations (*tawilat*) on the part of an author who had no training in theology, rather than a canonical commentary (*tafsir*) with real authority. As to the moderate Brothers who participated in the political games of the impious states, created parties, and stood at elections, they were branded as deceivers of the faithful because they gave bogus religious legitimacy to regimes that only deserved to be annihilated.¹⁸

These extreme views paralleled those prevailing in one of the early Egyptian groups of extremists, Al Takfir wa-l Hijra (Excommunication and Hegira), whose leader, the agronomist Shukri Mustafa, was hanged in 1978 (see Chapter 3). But Shukri, who declared impious (*kaafir*) all Muslims who did not belong to his sect, was not so much a salafist as a visionary who interpreted the sacred texts as it suited him, without remotely adhering to the tradition defined by Ibn Taymiyya. Furthermore, he advocated withdrawal from godless society, at a time when the position of his adepts vis-à-vis the state was dire, to say the least; and he did not directly confront the Egyptian government until he was forced to do so, in circumstances that ultimately proved fatal to him. The jihadist-salafists, by contrast, took the view that the Muslim world was ready to go on the offensive and wage the great jihad that would ultimately lead to the proclamation of the Islamic state.

In this sense, they were the heirs of Abdallah Azam and of the Egyptian group known as Lanzim al-Jihad (Organization of the Jihad), which had carried out the assassination of Sadat. Many of the militants who had gravitated toward the assassins after their arrest and trial in Egypt appeared in the Peshawar encampments in 1985-86, around the time that those who had received the lighter sentences began to be released from prison. One of the most prominent figures among these Afghan Arabs, the physician Ayman al-Zawahiri, was a case in point. There was an intellectual as well as a personal link: unlike Shukri, the murderers of Sadat had been careful to find grounds for their acts in Muslim tradition, citing Ibn Taymiyya to justify the execution of the "pharaoh." But they could not for all that be qualified as salafists. Their Islamic culture was rudimentary, made up of bits and pieces only, as illustrated in a short work authored by the group's chief theorist, an electrical engineer named Faraj. Later on, this intellectual weakness made them easy marks for the ulemas linked to the state, who scolded

them in avuncular fashion and then brought them to heel like wayward youngsters.

The *Tanzim al-Jihad* had emerged from Egypt's impoverished underclass; it had no international dimension whatever. It was thanks only to the work of Abdullah Azzam that a local experience of this kind gave inspiration to a jihad that later spread all over the world. Azzam himself had remained a strict Muslim Brother, with close links to the Saudi establishment—for whose benefit he channeled the passion of the Islamist militants of the world. During the 1980s, when the struggle of the Afghan mujahideen was at its height, his writings served to justify a clearly defined jihad, attracting to it a host of volunteers who might otherwise have chosen the way of revolutionary Iran. Later they re-emerged as a part of a far wider, indeed planetary, scheme for the future.

After 1989, the year of the Soviet withdrawal and Azzam's own assassination, this new dimension was unmistakable. In addition to Afghanistan, Azzam wrote, all other Muslim countries "usurped" by the ungodly had the duty to wage a holy war to recover their lost Islamic identity. At issue, first and foremost, were Azzam's native Palestine, Andalusia (which had been seized from the *dar al-Islam* by the Reconquista—an old refrain of the Islamist movement), the Philippines of the Moro Liberation Front, the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union bordering on Afghanistan, and finally South Yemen (which at the time was still communist and an abomination to *U-yaftb*). Along with these came a series of states whose rulers either were non-Muslims or were bad ones, a formula that made the list of potential victims virtually infinite. It was expanded in the early 1990s to countries on which Azzam was probably ill-informed, or where he had not foreseen that they might become fronts in the general global jihad that he envisaged. These were Bosnia, from 1992 onward; Chechnya, from 1995; Algeria (the homeland of his son-in-law), from the beginning of its civil war; and finally Kashmir, under Indian rule.¹¹ Azzam's disciples adopted on these nations' behalf the terms he had employed to rally foreign volunteers to the Afghan jihad.

Apart from a clear doctrinal affiliation, the jihadist-salafists had affinities with another movement that appeared at the same time, in the same region and Islamic context—the Taliban. They had in common an attachment to the literal aspect of the holy texts and the use of

jihad to attain their objectives. But the Taliban, who belonged to the Hanafi Deobandi school, did not have the same doctrinal training as the Arab salafists; moreover, they came exclusively from the traditional madrassas, unlike the salafists. Their jihad was primarily directed against their own society, on which they sought to impose a rigorous moral code: they had no taste for the state or for international politics. The cross-fertilization between the two movements, their simultaneous emergence, the hospitality offered by the Taliban within Afghanistan to the principal jihadists, the fact that some of the latter spoke in their name—all these factors begged the question of whether the one had some kind of ascendancy over the other.

Both, then, were among the unexpected progeny of the Afghan jihad and the result of its hybridization with the Deobandi tradition, for which jihad had never been a priority since its birth in 1867. The Deobandi school had been created to permit the Muslims of India, who had yielded their power to the British in 1857 and immediately found themselves a minority within a population of Hindus, to survive as a community under difficult circumstances. The Deobandi ulemas had issued fatwa after fatwa whereby their disciples were enabled to follow the prescriptions of the sharia meticulously, within a state that would not apply them. They developed the guidelines for a *modus vivendi* within a non-Muslim society, in which neither jihad nor emigration to a Muslim nation was possible. At the creation of Pakistan, the Deobandi ulemas who were already resident in the territory of the new state or who chose to come there from India had created a political party, the Association of Ulemas of Islam (UI), intended to protect their sacred way of life within the then highly secularized Muslim Pakistan and to negotiate for funds to support their madrassas.¹² Within the field of Islam proper, this allowed them to defend their specific identity against the Jamaat-e-Islami founded by Mawduudi—whose modernism and tendency to confuse religion and politics they roundly condemned—and against their rivals, the Bareilwi ulemas, who had created the Association of Ulemas of Pakistan (UIP). By the sheer weight of the pressure group they formed, which included tens of thousands of pupils and graduates of their madrassas, they were now able to intervene directly in political life and to contest everything that appeared to compromise their view of the Islamic world order.

Their first victims were the Ahmadis, a sect whose disciples they

denounced as apostates; several members occupied key government posts. Later, under Zia's 1977-1988 presidency, the dictator's determination to impose Sunni Hanafi Islam as the national norm, the levying of alms (*zakaat*) directly on bank accounts, and the subsequent revolt of the 15-20 percent of Pakistanis who happened to be Shiites in July 1980 gave a new vocation to Deobandi militantism—the struggle against Shiism. This conflict was encouraged by the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

In the context of the war between Iraq and Iran and the jihad in Afghanistan, Pakistan was bound to constitute a second front in the Sunni-Shiite conflict.¹⁵ In 1980 a Shiite party had been set up to preserve the identity of the Shiite community against Sunni omnipotence, as a direct result of the intrinsic threat of the zakat. Entitled *Tehrik-e Nifaz-e Fiqh-e jama'i* (Movement for the Application of *Jama'ite* [Shiite] Jurisprudence) and organized by a group of younger clerics, this party was much enthused by the Iranian revolution from 1984 onward. It received substantial aid from Tehran, which caused alarm among the various Sunni pressure groups. Saudi Arabia, which viewed this movement as the Achilles' heel of the jihad it was subsidizing within Afghanistan, immediately began giving substantial funds to organizations that were prepared to fight the Shiites. The Deobandis benefited on several counts. Funds to its madrassas were stepped up, allowing an increase in the number of children from poorer rural and urban backgrounds who could receive free board and instruction and be turned into potential anti-Shiite zealots.

In 1985 a Deobandi paramilitary youth movement was founded by a leader of the JUI in the Punjab, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who in 1990 would be assassinated at age 32. Entitled *Sipah-e Sahaba-e Pakistan* (Soldiers of the Companions of the Prophet in Pakistan), this movement's goal was to have all Shiites pronounced infidels (*kaafir*), and it did not hesitate to resort to violence against them.¹⁶ In the same spirit, two even more violent Deobandi movements surfaced in the mid-1990s: the *Lashkar-e Jhangvi* (Army of Jhangvi) in 1994, which specialized in assassinating Shiites, and the *Harakat al-Ansar* (Partisan Movement) in 1993, whose militants went off to wage jihad in Indian Kashmir, earning a grisly reputation for beheading captured Hindu soldiers as infidels.¹⁷ This surge of fanaticism elicited a Shiite backlash, in the form of the *Sipah-e Mohammed Pakistan* (Soldiers of the Prophet

Mohammed in Pakistan, or SMP), which was created in 1994 and carried out a number of killings of Sunnis.¹⁸

This paroxysm of violence in the name of religion was not due simply to the regional and international context of the time, even though the military and financial manna that had fallen to the Afghan jihad had suddenly made funds and heavy weaponry available to extremist movements that effectively enabled them to exist outside the law. It was also the product of a deep social crisis specific to Pakistan and in particular to the southern Punjab, where the offspring of impoverished and ruined Sunni peasants, amid a continuing population explosion, found themselves confronted by mostly Shiite landowners and urban establishments dominated by the descendants of the refugees from India who had arrived in 1947 (the *mohajirs*).¹⁹ Unlike the *jamaat-e-Islami* founded by Mawdudi, which in general remained an elitist party of devout middle-class people with no grassroots support, the Deobandis embraced impoverished young people with no hope of climbing the social ladder, for whom violence was the main form of expression within a society that was profoundly non-egalitarian and obstructionist. The madrassas sheltered their pupils—their Taliban—from all these tensions for as long as their education lasted; they were also able to rationalize their charges' potential for violence by transforming it into a jihad against anyone designated *kaafir* by the master—whether he was a Shiite neighbor, an "impious" Indian soldier, or anyone else—even a Sunni Muslim who was held to be a "miscreant." The Taliban became extremely devoted to their ulemas, after many years of education by them under conditions of intense intimacy. They had little or no contact with the outside world; much of their time was spent mummbling texts that they were taught to revere and apply even though they did not understand their meaning, and this experience left them with an esprit de corps that extinguished even the smallest expression of free thought or individual will. In the doctrinaire madrassas, it was a simple matter to turn pupils conditioned in this way into full-blown fanatics.

After the Gulf War, the radicalized Deobandi movement profited from two coincidences that allowed it to increase its influence and, when added to the violence in the Punjab and Kashmir, opened the way to the final victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Saudi Wahhabism had been badly damaged by the decision of the Pakistani

Jamaat-e-Islami and the Afghan Hezb-e-Islami to support Iraq, despite the fact that both had been heavily funded by the kingdom for a half decade. The Deobandi party (the JUI) had also demonstrated against the presence of impious soldiers in Arabia but had shown much less enmity to the Riyadh monarchy. Furthermore, the Deobandi ulemas were the sworn enemies of the *pirs*, or guides, of the Bareilwi brotherhoods, who belonged to the other religious party, the JLP. The patron saint of these brotherhoods was buried close to Baghdad, and they were traditional recipients of aid from Iraq. During the war, their leader attended meetings of support for Iraq, at which he declared his "love" for Saddam; he also set up recruiting centers for volunteers to serve the Iraqi cause, which, according to him, enrolled upwards of 110,000 men.¹⁴

Riyadh, which had to maintain some kind of contact with religious developments in Pakistan, chose the lesser of two evils and switched its support from the now-mistrusted Jamaat-e-Islami to the JUI. In the JUI's favor were these facts: that it was not linked to the international networks of the Muslim Brothers; that it hated Shiites, Iraq, and the brotherhoods; and that its strict religious orthodoxy had many affinities with Wahhabite practice. Likewise, in Afghanistan, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb, which had declared for Iraq, was steadily losing ground to Ahmed Shah Massoud and was unpopular in Riyadh. The way was now open for Saudi backing of the Afghan pupils of the Deobandi madrassas, the Taliban.

The other coincidence that helped the JUI and the Taliban, which came as more of a surprise to Western observers, was the advent of a second government headed by Benazir Bhutto—a Harvard-educated lady whose face had graced the covers of countless women's magazines in the West but who nevertheless encouraged a movement that was to imprison Afghan women behind their veils (*chadri*). Political maneuvering within Pakistan was behind this reactionary attitude, which could be traced to the efforts of Bhutto's Pakistani People's Party to break the coalition of the three religious parties (JI, JUI, and JUP). This coalition had thrown its weight behind her rival, Nawaz Sharif, the leader of the Muslim League and the spiritual heir of General Zia. In 1990 Benazir Bhutto was driven from power by the army, which supported Sharif's coalition, only to return in triumph in the 1993 elections. She had succeeded in detaching most of the Deobandis from her

and she now appointed the JUI faction that had backed her to position of great power, with its leader, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, taking the post of chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee.¹⁵ At the same time, her government was preoccupied with the anarchy in Afghanistan, which had worsened since April 1992 when Kabul fell into the hands of a shaky coalition of mujahedeen commanders and former supporters of the communist regime. Bhutto had scant confidence in the policies of the army secret intelligence service (ISI), a bastion of Zia and Sharif supporters that her interior minister, General Babar, dispatched a convoy of trucks across southwestern Afghanistan to Turkmenistan in early November 1994. A mujahedeen commander, hoping to hold the trucks for ransom, intercepted them, but then severed thousand heavily armed Afghan Taliban, who arrived in the nick of time from madrassas just across the Pakistani frontier, liberated the convoy. The next day, the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan's southern capital, Kandahar. Kabul fell into their hands in September 1996, and by the fall of 1998 they had forced their remaining adversary, Massoud, to withdraw to his own fief in the Panshir valley on the Tadjik frontier and had won control of 85 percent of Afghan territory.

The successes of the Taliban have been attributed to a combination of external and internal factors, but these take only partial account of the dynamic of this new brand of Islamist extremist, which appeared in the mid-1990s as a result of the breakup of the jihad in Afghanistan. The Taliban had several powerful protectors in their early years: for example, through Benazir Bhutto's alliance with the Deobandi leader Maulana Fazlur Rahman they were able to win the support of most of the Pakistani political establishment, even after Nawaz Sharif's return to power in November 1996. For Islamabad, an Afghanistan under Taliban control offered a number of initial advantages. Successive governments there, in their brief struggle to survive under highly volatile conditions, were unlikely to entertain long-term political solutions that might have negative effects. Pakistan's regional environment was fraught with dangers. Tense relations with India were kept at the boiling point by border clashes and by the "jihad of attrition" being waged by paramilitary Islamist groups in Kashmir, and this was made worse by the nuclear rivalry between Pakistan and India and by visceral hatred of the Iranian Shiites, who were linked with substantial minori-

ties of their co-religionists in the subcontinent. As if these tensions were not enough, Moscow was deeply suspicious of Pakistan because it feared the destabilization of its own former Muslim republics (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kirghistan) by Islamists from the south.

Rabbani, the head of the Afghan Jamiat party that controlled the coalitions of mujahedeen which ruled Kabul between 1992 and 1996, was able to find common ground along this Indo-Iranian-Russian axis, whereas Hekmatyar, Islamabad's protégé, was unable to do so. The collapse of the Soviet empire reopened the old trade routes between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean that had been blocked by the Chinese since czarist times. Oil and gas from Turkmenistan, badly needed by overpopulated, energy-starved Pakistan, had to cross Afghanistan along the same road on which General Babar's provocative convoy had been liberated by the Taliban in November 1994.²¹ If these roads were to be kept open, the country needed to be united under a single authority guaranteeing its security.

Since the start of the jihad, Afghanistan had been broken into dozens of fiefdoms ruled by mujahedeen commanders who held up travelers and merchandise for ransom whenever they chose. From 1994 onward, the Taliban slowly emerged in the eyes of the Pakistani political establishment as the only power capable of unifying Afghanistan and maintaining its vital links with Islamabad. In addition to their Deobandi theories, which made them the bitter foes of "ungodly" Shiite Iran, India, and Russia, most of the Taliban belonged to the Pashun ethnic group, which was strong on the Pakistani northwest frontier around Peshawar and staffed the Pakistani officer corps and special services. This ethnic affinity allowed many to conjecture that an eventual Taliban state could be solidly aligned with Pakistan and would give Pakistan the strategic depth it needed to stand up to its three enemies in the region.

Outside help for the Taliban came in the form of logistical and military support. Internal factors also contributed to their success, especially the exhaustion of the Afghan people with their own chronic state of neglect, corruption, and insecurity. These reached unparalleled heights after Kabul fell into mujahedeen hands in 1992. Order completely broke down as the warring factions bombarded one another's quarters of the city. In the Pashun areas, at least, the Taliban had been able to take control of district after district without firing a shot: their

reputation for moral integrity had preceded them, and in the rural areas their ultra-strict attitudes toward women and society were perfectly acceptable to a population that adhered to the roughly similar tribal traditions of *pashunwali*. On the other hand, they met stiff resistance when they reached Kabul and were foiled in their first attempt to seize the city, an objective they finally achieved in September 1996. The same happened in the predominantly Shiite regions of Western Afghanistan, where they devoutly massacred the "ungodly," notably at Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998. Yet it was religious ardor that impelled them to march forth on their jihad and give their lives for the cause in the conviction that as martyrs for God they would see the gates of heaven flung wide before them.

Once the Taliban had taken control of the capital, order was established and insecurity no longer stalked the ruins left by four years of internecine struggle among the mujahedeen. The new rulers immediately applied the Deobandi concepts taught to them in their madrassas not only to their own community of disciples but to the whole of Afghan society.²² Pashun-speaking, country-bred people as they were, the Taliban saw the Dari-speaking Kabulis, who had been accustomed to a modern urban lifestyle since the 1950s, as a corrupt mob who must be subjugated to the rules of sharia. Women were compelled to wear burqas in public and were forbidden to take jobs, with the result that many of those women who had lost their husbands, fathers, and brothers in the war were forced to beg in the streets surrounded by their starving children.²³

In front of the government ministries, whose functionaries had been sent away to camps for religious re-education, the weeds grew unchecked. The Deobandi culture opposed ordinary public services, being traditionally focused on organizing the community in the meticulous respect for dogma without regard to the state, which it had firmly dismissed as "godless" ever since the conquest of India by the British. In Kabul, the Taliban did not so much take control of Afghan institutions as completely eviscerate them, erecting in their stead only three functions: morality, commerce, and war.

Morality, which is no more than the strict imposition of Deobandi norms on all citizens, was implemented by their "organization" for the commanding of good and the hunting down of evil,²⁴ shortened in English to the "vice/virtue police." Its operatives bore the same name as

their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, the infamous *mutawia*, and like them were bearded young men from poor backgrounds who went around with truncheons enforcing the hours of prayer, the wearing of the veil, and Wahhabite rules of behavior in general.²⁰ Prior to September 2001, Afghanistan had extended the notion of hounding down all manner of evil to include whipping clean-shaven men, or even men with short beards. Televisions, video recorders, and music were also forbidden. The mental environment of a madrassa was re-created in the villages and cities of Afghanistan. Road blocks set up by the Taliban always included a pole around which were wrapped, like trophies, the tapes ripped from audiotapes that had been seized from motorists. The only public spectacles that could be viewed were those the Taliban considered edifying: on Fridays, the enormous stadium built by the Soviet Union to celebrate the triumph of proletarian internationalism was entwined by the flagellation of drinkers, the amputation of the limbs of thieves, and the execution of murderers by the families of their victims, who were lent machine guns for the purpose. The state took no responsibility for the punishment of miscreants, a fact that reflected its own virtual nonexistence; instead, it consigned the task to the moral community of the faithful, urged on by a populace that had been steadily migrating to the outskirts of the capital since 1996 and which was gradually "Pashtunizing" it at the expense of those wretched remnants of the middle class (educated in Persian) who had been unable to escape.

In addition to morality, the second function that survived in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was commerce. The Taliban had initially reaped the benefits of Saudi financial aid at a time when the princes of the peninsula were all flying to Kandahar in their private planes to hunt wild game in the mountains. On their departure, they would leave behind their all-terrain four-wheel-drive vehicles as gifts for the locals.²¹ After the Taliban took control of most of the country, commerce between Central Asia and Pakistan expanded considerably, as did trade in contraband goods brought from the free port of Dubai and traffic in heroin destined for American, Russian, and European markets. This commerce in turn allowed the Taliban to levy tolls on goods and vehicles in transit, which made them financially independent of their former paymasters abroad and thus able to stand up to them politically. In the medieval atmosphere of the Kabul bazaars,

where bearded, traditionally garbed shopkeepers and customers met in silence, the stalls groaned with goods. Dealers and transporters clearly benefited from a regime in which the near absence of state power allowed them to prosper untrammelled by taxes and regulations.

The last of the three functions of the Islamic Emirate was war, and this was the only one that required a semblance of centralization. The ongoing struggle was waged from Kandahar, where the Commander of the Faithful, Mullah Omar Akhund, who has never been seen by any "infidel," resided. A former mujahideen who lost an eye fighting the Soviets, he presided over his *choura* (council) at all times, deciding on offensives to be undertaken against the rebels, making known his responses to pressures from abroad, and, most notably, reiterating the conditions under which Osama bin Laden and the jihadist-salafists who surrounded him were allowed to remain in Afghanistan, despite the protests of the Saudis and the Americans.

The summary exercise of these three functions did not make the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan anything like a modern state: in fact it was more a community organized according to Deobandi norms but merely "swollen" to the dimensions of a country subjected to moral coercion on the inside and jihad on the edges. It was entirely financed by tolls levied on the flow of the (largely illegal) commerce that transited across its territory. In this sense the Afghanistan of the Taliban was not comparable to the Islamic Republic of Iran or to Hassan al-Furabi's Sudan. Iran and the Sudan relied on efficient administrative machines, managed in a rational way the authoritarian Islamism of their societies, and became prominent participants in the wider sphere of Islam as well as in the international system. This was far from the case with the Taliban: their effect on the world was not made through a state, and they had no diplomatic relations with any country except their Pakistani sponsor and their principal commercial partner, the United Arab Emirates, since breaking with their former benefactor, Saudi Arabia. They were completely indifferent to politics, which for all the other Islamist movements affiliated with the Muslim Brothers, whether moderate or radical, was always a key aspect of their obsession with winning power. In Deobandi ideology there was no edifice of virtue; only the community itself, the sum of the faithful, duly constrained by a body of *fatwas* that allowed each to live in conformity with the sharia, could claim to be moral. The absence of state or political legitimacy ne-

gated any notion of citizenship and freedom, concepts that were entirely supplanted by belief and obedience.

The extension of the jihad beyond Afghanistan was also under way in Kashmir, being implemented by the paramilitary Deobandi movement *Harakat al-Ansar*, founded in 1993, and renamed *Harakat al-Mujahideen* in 1998, after its classification as a terrorist organization by the American State Department. Here again the Pakistani political and military establishment actively encouraged groups of this type, which found their recruits among the impoverished youth of the Punjab and effectively waged a proxy war against India. Such short-term logic, whereby the social tensions of an unstable province are projected onto a foreign "enemy," threatened to rebound upon the fundamental equilibrium of Pakistani society itself. What would happen to the *mujahideen* who returned from Kashmir? Would they transform the jihad they have waged outside Pakistan into a domestic struggle which, after the anti-Shiite terrorism of *Lashkar-e Jhangvi*, might turn directly against the state, opening the way for a "Talibanization" of Pakistan? This was the outcome dreaded by many Pakistani intellectuals.

Nevertheless, the influence of the religious parties was in general not very great at election time, even though the JUI and the SSP benefited from a crossover of votes during their paradoxical alliance with Benazir Bhutto in 1993.⁵⁵ The activism of the most extreme groups, which recruited from the ranks of the "displaced" underclass, terrified the devout middle class. These found a champion in Nawaz Sharif, the leader of the Muslim League and prime minister in 1999. To gratify them, he initiated a project for the complete Islamization of the law, which was reactivated on a regular basis and just as regularly killed by a combination of practical difficulties in its application and the bitter hostility of the bulk of the legal profession. The young people from disintegrated backgrounds who were the basic recruiting material for the madrasas and the activist movements linked to them were not for the moment likely to become autonomous political agents expressing precise social interests, who might successfully join forces with bourgeois Islamist groups aggrieved at the lack of any meaningful access to the system. The latter had been broadly integrated into government and did not appear to be motivated by revolutionary longings. In fact, with their connivance, the impoverished young were channeled through the madrasa network into religious parties and their paramilitary organiza-

tions, toward objectives that locked them into a culture of antagonism to Shiites, Christians, Ahmadis, and Indians. This effectively turned them in on themselves, absorbing their potential for social violence and unrest. And the state hierarchy remained unaffected, despite the sound and fury generated by the radical Islamists of Pakistan.

The downside was the terrible effect of all this endemic violence on the nation's image abroad. Pakistan began to be described as an out-and-out rogue state; and by the end of 1999 Nawaz Sharif was ousted by his chief-of-staff, General Pervez Musharraf, who boldly declared himself ready to follow the example of Ataturk. This was a sign that people in the higher echelons of the Pakistani government were beginning to have second thoughts about the policy of benign neglect toward the jihad.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the Soviet Union, hastened by the debacle of the Red Army in Afghanistan, opened new potential fronts to the radical Islamist movement, and in particular to the jihadist-salafists. In neighboring Tajikistan, the newly independent state run by former communist cadres was challenged by armed opponents based in the south of the country, with Islamists playing a significant part.⁵⁶ In the autonomous Caucasian republic of Chechnya, on the margin of the Russian Federation but within its borders, an independent movement started by a former Soviet general was turned into something very like a jihad in 1995 by Shamil Bassayev, a young warlord. He was supported by a group of "professional Islamists" trained in the Peshawar camps and commanded by Ibn al-Khattab, a jihadist who had fought earlier in Tajikistan and Afghanistan.⁵⁷ But these confrontations took place in areas that were little known to the rest of the world, and unlikely to arouse much enthusiasm. Their symbolic value was minimal, and above all no outside power was disposed to intervene because the shadow of Russia still lay heavy over these remote territories.

All the events that took place in the former Soviet republics were overshadowed anyway by the final year of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the effects of which were to be felt from Central Asia to the Caucasus. In early 2001, a number of related developments signaled an increased level of radicalization among the Taliban—a phenomenon that seemed difficult to understand if related to domestic politics only. The first bizarre sign was the destruction of two-centuries-old gigantic statues of Buddha that were carved off the cliffs at Bamyan, a predominantly Hazara—or Shiite—location in central Afghanistan. Enemies of

paganism as they were, the Taliban had nevertheless been careful not to spoil their relations with the heterogeneous populations that lived in northern front in the hope of fighting a decisive battle against the mandant Massoud. The statues were part of the Shiite popular religious folklore, and their demolition was bound to raise very strong anti-Taliban feelings in a population where the embers of sedition and insurgency were never entirely extinguished.

On the international level, there was an outcry of fury worldwide. In Europe and America, the Buddhas were seen as works of art, and their destruction reinforced the feeling that the Taliban were a bunch of iconoclastic barbarians. But in Hindu and Buddhist Asia, the statues were perceived as religious symbols, and their destruction further alienated the Taliban regime. In the Muslim world, and in Islamist circles more precisely, there was great uneasiness. In Muslim circles, a delegation of ulama and conservative intellectuals headed by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi—the most influential of Sunni preachers and the host of an Al-Jazeera Islamic talk-show—tried to persuade the Taliban to leave the statues in peace, giving as an example the way Muslim Egypt dealt with pharaonic temples. But to no avail; the statues were finally blasted.

Another bizarre occurrence during the final year of Taliban rule was the persecution of foreigners on Afghan soil. As we saw earlier, the Deobandi-trained "students of religion" had no interest in state machinery. Outside of war, commerce, and religion, they couldn't care less about what happened under their rule. In particular, they were uninterested in social works and unable to implement any social policy. But they needed a minimal flow of goods and services to stave off hunger riots and other demonstrations of unrest that might overthrow their pious rule. These social fractions were left to foreign Islamist humanitarian organizations, which the Taliban welcomed. But these agencies could not deliver all that was needed. Hence, Western nongovernmental organizations were very much present in Kabul and provided the population with additional food, sanitary services, medical assistance, and so on.

Suddenly, in 2001, one of those NGOs came under fire: it was accused of Christian proselytism—a major crime under the sharia, since Muslims who convert to another faith are dubbed apostates and con-

demned to death. A number of Afghans, as well as foreign relief workers, were jailed, pending trial under "Islamic justice." That was of course a source of major concern abroad, and it annihilated the last sympathies the Taliban could mobilize within influential American circles which, up to that point, had protected them for sundry geopolitical reasons.

Why would the Taliban regime take such steps? Was this all merely fanaticism? Then why were such measures not taken earlier? Precise evidence is still lacking as of December 2001, though in retrospect it seems clear that the Buddha and NGO affairs were but a forerunner of the events that led to the cataclysmic attacks in autumn of that year: the Taliban regime had come increasingly under the influence of Osama bin Laden. The wealthy Arab jihadist networks surrounding him now had such clout that they were able to impose their own global ideological agenda on any attempt at local realpolitik the Taliban may have made.

Another sign reinforces this interpretation. In early 2001, British authorities had finally taken some steps to restrain "Londonistan" activists. As a result, the British capital was no longer the major hub for radical Islamist international activities that it had formerly been. Militants and their networks reverted to Kandahar, which was then perceived by many observers as an important "relocation" venue for jihad. Inc.'s mammoth business ventures. It looked as though Mullah Omar was becoming a puppet in bin Laden's theater—as though Afghanistan, on the international scene, was now no more than Al Qaeda's sanctuary and base of operations. The malevolent mission of those operations would become clear in the bright morning sunlight of September 11.

After the attack on America, the Taliban regime was doomed to head-on confrontation with the U.S. superpower, it could count on none of the benign neglect it had enjoyed in years past. On October 7, the U.S. Air Force began carpet-bombing selected sites in Afghanistan. In spite of bin Laden's declaration broadcast that same day on Al-Jazeera television to rouse the emotions and solidarity of the Muslims worldwide for Afghan brothers under threat, there was little hope left for the Taliban regime—that oxymoron of an Islamist state. On November 9, the forces of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, trained and equipped by the United States, took Mazar-e-Sharif, a major city close to the Uzbek border. A swift military offensive wiped away the Taliban

regime in a few days. Kabul fell on November 13, among demonstrations of widespread joy by city dwellers, who turned on the music, flew kites from rooftops, played soccer, and rushed to barber shops for their first shave in five years. On November 25, the Taliban stronghold of Kunduz fell, while Arab, Pakistani, and other foreign fighters faced retaliation from a furious populace. And, finally, on December 6, Kandahar, the historic capital of the Taliban, surrendered. Though Mullah Omar was able to escape, on that day the bell tolled for this strange ultra-radical Islamist regime—once the beneficiary of American indulgence, now the victim of its wrath.

CHAPTER

10

The Failure to Graft Jihad on Bosnia's Civil War

The breakup of the former communist state of Yugoslavia, due to the nationalist tensions between its various components, reminded the world of the existence of Muslim Slavs in the heart of Europe. These were the forgotten descendants of converts made by the Ottoman Empire at the time of its Balkan expansion in the fourteenth century.¹ In March 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina, where most of the Muslims lived side by side with Serbs and Croats, declared its independence, which was swiftly followed by an attack on Sarajevo, the capital of the new state, by Serb militias.² The war that ensued lasted for three years; 150,000 people were killed and "ethnic cleansing" forced two million to leave their homes and become refugees.³

In the Western press, this atrocity was repeatedly compared to those of the Second World War—especially when the first images emerged of skeleton-thin prisoners in concentration camps. Mass graves were also uncovered, showing evidence of a deliberate intent to carry out genocide.⁴ In Islamic countries, which had hitherto been just as ignorant as the West about the existence of Bosnia, there was general enthusiasm about the creation of a new Muslim state in the heart of Europe. The Serbian aggression was viewed entirely in terms of Christian versus Muslim; it was perceived as a kind of crusade, a holocaust perpetrated for religious reasons. A wave of solidarity with their newfound Balkan co-religionists swept over the Muslim world. Having emerged deeply split from the Gulf War of 1991, the Umma had spread symbolically into Europe at the time of the fatwa against