

Nationalist traits within Al-Qaeda: debunking the motivations
behind religious terrorism

by

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Submitted to

Central European University

Nationalism Studies Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2014

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Abstract

Throughout my thesis I argued that the *Ummah*, a conscious and interconnected body of Muslims can possess a certain type of national consciousness that enables them to act defensively to the oppressive nature of foreign occupation and meddling with internal policies in the Middle East. In order to investigate the topic I used several thematic clusters to bolster up the argument. First of all, I cross referenced those ideas in the vast literature of nationalism that can resonate with my assumption, namely that nationalism as a sense of loyalty and emotion doesn't necessarily require a state – in the modern sense – in order to be applicable. Then I moved on to the issue of Arab nationalism and the reasoning that corroborates the validity of the *Ummah* seen as a nation and a source of loyalty and belonging.

To round up the other end of the proposition, I scrutinized the main theories of terrorism studies that examine the motivations of terrorists in order to be able to decide upon the alleged discrepancy according to which, nor poverty, nor social inequalities nor any other assumed root cause can verify entirely the deeds of terrorist organization other than the ones with political grievances and a wounded sense of dignity either by oppressive governments or occupying foreign troops.

As a conclusion, we can propose that this line of thinking may open up a different approach to interpret and explain the motivation and root causes of Al-Qaeda terrorism.

Introduction

Research topic and research question

Terrorism is one of the most elusive terms of contemporary academia. Concerning its sub-categories - in our case for instance religious terrorism, Jihadi terrorism, Islamic terrorism, Arab terrorism, etc.¹ - the veil that covers the core of each of these terms seems to thicken even more. Therefore, clarifying and categorizing these layered qualifiers can easily prove to be a major step towards a more complex understanding of motivations, goals and the main incentives of such terrorist groups.

Although almost all of the cases in scholarly literature Al-Qaeda is identified as a "religiously motivated" terrorist group or is categorized as a movement built around religious motifs and patterns, fueled by mostly religious grievances, there is more to Al-Qaeda than this rather one-dimensional perspective. That is why, in order to be able to identify their main impulses and intents, one must abandon this mindset of thinking about al-Qaeda as a "religious terrorist organization".

In my thesis I will argue that there is a subtle but firm and retraceable nationalistic undercurrent in the Al-Qaeda ideology that is only being sugarcoated with this vast surge of religious grounds and claims. Connecting this issue with the topic of religious nationalism, there is a need to revisit the already existing categories because, as of now, it fails to grasp al-Qaeda's unique nature among terrorist groups, as well as among nationalist movements. The inability of policy and decision makers as well as politicians to understand this organization's

¹ The terms mentioned here are highly controversial and somewhat inadequate, concerning statistical data and the very fact that throughout history terrorist groups weren't referred to as "Christian terrorism" or "Hindu terrorism" therefore, it would taint a religion and offend circa 1.5 billion people worldwide. That is why, later on I would like to go more into details on this matter in order to falsify this set of invalid though petrified notions about terrorists.

main incentives manifests in a slew of ineffective counter-terrorism measures, failed and disproved policy papers and highly inept and, in cases, even subversive steps in foreign policy measures.

My line of research aims to unfold the layers to this phenomenon, therefore the main questions can be formulated as the following: why are they doing what they do? Why is it important to take a whole different approach on the subject matter, redefine the knowledge on al-Qaeda and to acknowledge these nationalistic traits over religious dominance in terms of motivation? And, if it can be defined alongside nationalistic qualifiers then, what type of nationalism is this and what does it entail concerning policy making and political actions?

Background

It is undeniable that there's something unique to Islam's special nature, to the way it is intertwined with almost every facet of social, political and individual field of everyday-life and reality. The politicization of the religion and its institutionalization goes back to the very beginning of the phenomenon, to the rise of Islam in the 7th century. One of the specialities is that Islam has resulted in a multi-faceted and diverse power that produced a wide range of possible identities including political, religious, and national among many other, just to mention a few.

Under the scope of Islam, al-Qaeda followed a highly significant evolutionary pattern. Concerning the primarily "Jihadi-Salafist" worldview, with which it is almost always identified in the first place, there are several other factors at play that resulted in its versatile profile. The group members' multiple affiliations – to the tribal system, to their "nation-state", to religion, their social reality or individual issues – converge with the socio-political situation

in the respective time-frame: national grievances connect to individual-level hardship or influences and create an explosive response to certain events.

Terrorism, as a "group act" or a sense of "groupism" through belonging to such a powerful organization provides us with a variety of individual-level motivations, but that could be misleading concerning the whole picture. Al-Qaeda's leading figures operate under their individually framed assumptions on what the organization's deeds and motifs are. They might take advantage of their operatives' various intentions, but the ultimate goal and the establishing ideology cannot be based on anything else but its leaders' motivations that will eventually shape their actions.

The literature gap

Academic literature on terrorism and counterterrorism studies shows a notable range of shortcomings, in terms of a non-religious aspect, when it comes to the motivations and root causes of terrorism and terrorist activity concerning Al-Qaeda. There is a wide variety of approaches concerning this topic but it is never connoted with any type of nationalistic attitude though the distinction could leave us with a little more open and wide aspect of how we look at the contemporary stance of terrorism research and terrorism in general.

Methodology

I would like to embed this case study into three major argumentative points, within which the third is going to be relatively smaller, given that is is out of the timeframe I aim to work inside, in order to be able to successfully prove my point. A theoretical overview should come first to cover all my bases and to pose as secure footing concerning the type of theories that might be applicable in this case in terms of nationalism studies and terrorism studies as well.

The second block of my argument is built around the examination of primary data on the most important figures of Al-Qaeda leadership in order to study their statements and, possibly, derive and detect a nationalistic undercurrent as well as to determine whether these statements were/are aligned with their actions or not. The third cluster of my argument, relatively the smallest of the three, dives into another core facet of Al-Qaeda to reveal some of the hypothesized nationalistic traits, namely the unique and sporadic structure of this organization. More in detail, I will focus on the AQAMs' – Al-Qaeda Associated Movements – activity, goals, network and motivations.

Within the first thematic cluster clarifying the theoretical basis of my thesis I will be relying on the following key argumentativ points. First of all, social and economic grievances and resentment will be my first topic to focus on in terms of repression, occupation, humiliation via foreign powers and troops; foreign policy decisions that tend to aid "traitor leaders" and "puppet-governments"; the occupation of the holy Muslim territory mixed with colonial grievances and the US's constant support for Israel coupled with the exploitation of natural resources – oil in particularly – that at the end of the day causes poverty and a blemished sense of (national) dignity. These arguments follow suits with the phenomenon of terrorism manifesting as a tactic against homegrown authoritarianism and government repression. "Religion as a mobilizing force" will serve as another argument to follow up with the logic of the research because religion as a motivation or a root cause of terrorism in itself is ambiguous. It is the mixture of grievances and psychological needs and/or fixations that appear as religious on the surface.

Within the theoretical part of my thesis, the focal point of my inquiries is to find mainstream theories in the nationalism studies literature on "what constitutes a nation" that are not centered around a specific nation claiming a specific piece of land or territory, namely, the

theories that function and understand nationalism without the predicament of the "state". Religious nationalism, Anderson's "imagined communities" theory, the "new nationalism" by Mary Kaldor, the strength and importance of interpersonal networks and cultural intimacy – a theory by Herzfeld-, Geertz's shared destiny theory coupled by the power of "contrasting", the fact that memories of violence facilitate mobilization and nationalism, the sacralization of politics, the idea that religion is an axis of separation without any linkage to territorial borders, religion as institutional duplication or a parallel social reality will be another set of arguments to build upon within the first part of the thesis. These particular, ambiguous types of nationalisms coupled by cases such as the question and validity of tribal systems in creating loyalties can shed a whole different light upon the problem at hand.

In order to touch upon the core facets of Al-Qaeda ideology, one's focus ought to be on the movement's motivations, leading thinkers and figures because following their threads of logic and reasoning might actually lead us to detect pure nationalistic intentions, stripped from the outer layers of a religious mask and without complicated by the complexity of the individuals' motivation matrix. This will constitute the second major pillar of my argument. To do so, I would like to take a closer look at the basic ideas of terrorism studies that can be applied here, then the framework of the motivations of terrorists, then to the leadership via primary data – interviews conducted with Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and other pivotal figures of the Al-Qaeda leadership; transcripts of Osama bin-Laden's speeches and *fatwas*, contemporaries' and witnesses' statements about them -, rather than analyzing a dizzying array of media coverage on the issue that is not particularly adequate, fair, unbiased or grounded by actual data and academic findings. Everything will be conducted via content analysis – no empirical research is feasible, concerning the limitations caused by the security

issues the topic suggests - based on the structured argumentative points enumerated here and unfolded in detail in the next section.

To round up my argument with the third thematic cluster, the shortest of the three – the examination of the AQAMs - I will be reviewing terrorism studies and political violence related databases and core information about the movements and local groups at hand and will try to come to a conclusion or assessment about the nature, motivation and possible goals of these groups alongside with Jihadi geopolitics and the scrutinization of the Ummah concept.

Literature review

With this section I would like to clarify and list my arguments I intend to use in order to build a solid foundation to my hypothesis. By delving into each of these points I would like to include a preliminary list of sources I rely on and the very essence and validity of those ideas concerning my research goals.

1. To introduce the main theories, definitions and key concepts, first of all I will be inspecting the question of nationalism in the context of Islam, Muslims and Arabs; the general framework of how religion and nationalism is connected and the fitting manifestations of nationalism paying special attention to the role of "state" in terms of defining nationalism. To make my point I aim to rely on the works of Guibernau, Hayes, Deutsch, Jaffrelot, Kaldor, Anderson, Smith, Hutchinson, Brubaker, Jurgensmeyer, Derrick, Saunders, Knight, Penrose, Nuseibeh, Haddad and many others.

Brubaker proposes a whole new approach on thinking about religious nationalism in his 2012 article.² He aims to unfold the variations and the discrepancies between different categories that can be allocated into four types. The possibilities are nationalism and religion

² Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches," *Nations & Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (January 2012): 2–20, doi:10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x.

as analogous phenomena; religion as a cause or explanation to nationalism; religion as an imbricated, inner factor of nationalism and religion as a distinctive phenomenon, a new type of nationalism entirely. In my research, a comprehensive way of thinking about religious nationalism is pivotal, so I aim to put these types of use and ponder upon their applicability when it comes to the matter of Al-Qaeda.

Juergensmeyer on the other hand ponders further on the topic of religious nationalism and assesses that religious nationalism cannot be viewed as a parallel phenomenon to any kind of secular nationalisms because it would then forfeit the unique manifestations of a "renewed sense of morality" and, ultimately, it fails to grasp the authenticity of an Islamic Ummah compared to other state-based/nation-state-based nationalisms. It will be of tremendous help for me to be able to underpin the theoretical framework of my research concerning the question of the Ummah and its *raison d'être*.³

To follow up on the question of the Ummah, Derrick's 2013 article gives a perfect example of the recent conundrum signifying the problem of how to interpret the Islamic Ummah. He argues, through the example of the 2010 Arab Spring, that the notion of sovereign nation-state borders and the political-territorial aspect of modernity fails to appear applicable in case of the Ummah, which is going to be more than useful for my research in order to be able to conclude with the idea of a changing territorial criteria in case of nationalism, loyalty or acting upon a certain set of beliefs.⁴

To follow in his footsteps, with the example of the 2006 Cartoons Affair, Saunders reflects on the Islamic Ummah as an entity that goes far beyond religious affiliations and indeed creates an Ummah-based identity in which the profession of faith is only one of the many

³ Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Global Rise of Religious Nationalism," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 3 (June 2010): 262–73, doi:10.1080/10357711003736436.

⁴ Matthew Derrick, "Containing the Umma?: Islam and the Territorial Question," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 9 (January 2013): 1–30.

elements. Via using his line of thoughts I will be able to argue that an Ummah-based sense of loyalty can be just as profound and ready to action as any other extant nationalisms.⁵

To view the geographical aspect of the topic more in detail, with a perfect mixture of geographically and culturally defined categorization, Knight challenges the idea and the primacy of distinct territorially based identities in terms of defining nationhood and nationalism. With his argument I would like to reinforce the need to find different ways of looking at entities that might form a "nation" or a "postnational nation" which are without the signifier of territory or borders of a nation-state.⁶

Penrose reviews the other side of the coin in assessing the importance of territory and territoriality in nationalism. He accredits nationalism as the shift to modernity which, in his understanding, necessarily transformed the general significance of territories. I wanted to include his arguments made on the profoundly territorial quality of nationalism to pinpoint his line of logic and the points he makes in order to compare them to the others writing about this topic listed above.⁷

Arab Nationalism is going to be another significant facet in my argument, that is why Nuseibeh's book and Haddad's essay are absolute musts to look into. Nuseibeh's book was one of the first bridging books to tend to the gap in scholarly literature on studying the phenomenon of Arab Nationalism and its emerging power and significance. He bears the traits of the Western sociological approach in assessing the elements of Arab Nationalism and he often scolds his contemporaries among Arab thinkers for overtly leaning on the

⁵ Robert A Saunders and the Prophet Muḥammad, "The Ummah as Nation: A Reappraisal in the Wake of the 'Cartoons Affair,'" *Nations and Nationalism* 14, no. ii (2008): 303–21.

⁶ David B. Knight, "Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72, no. 4 (December 1982): 514–31.

⁷ Jan Penrose, "Nations, States and Homelands: Territory and Territoriality in Nationalist Thought," *Nations & Nationalism* 8, no. 3 (July 2002): 277–97.

humanities instead of the terms of social sciences. Because of this attitude and the relative novelty of his style in writing about Arab Nationalism, I will use him as the foundation upon which all the other thinkers' ideas on Arab Nationalism can be built and compared to.⁸ Haddad's essay gives a neat emphasis to the root causes of the birth of Arab Nationalism. Instead of looking into the activity and working of Lebanese Christian Arabs as the triggering factor of the phenomenon he derives it directly from Islamic modernism. This differentiation gives me the opportunity to look at Arab Nationalism from a different point of view and detect the elements that can line up with some of the steps and motifs of Al-Qaeda and the way they create their system of loyalty.⁹

2. To establish the second big cluster of thematization I would like to dive into the matter of terrorism in general in terms of likely root causes, motivation and some general theory relying on the works of Martha Crenshaw, Louise Richardson, Jessica Stern, Jerrald Post, David Rapoport, Rick Coolsaet, Alex Peter Schmid, Juergensmeyer, Robert Pape and Christina Hellmich among others to begin with. My aim is to reveal and enlist all the possible basic elements of why terrorists do what they do in terms of motivation and influence in a more general sense. This will give me the opportunity to focus on leaders and key figures of the Al-Qaeda later on.

Jason Franks reveals one of the most revolutionary ways of thinking about terrorism as it is today by challenging the orthodox terrorism theory via comparative analyses and by setting the path of a non state-centric and non-positivist approach toward the topic. One of the most important observations of the book is that he describes the predominantly prevailing

⁸ Don Peretz and Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, "The Ideas of Arab Nationalism," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 47, no. iv (1957): 378–81.

⁹ Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 2 (1994): 201, doi:10.2307/164733.

orthodox terrorism theory as a way for the incumbent power centre to legitimise its actions while simultaneously delegitimising the "terrorist-designated" group's moves.¹⁰

Crenshaw¹¹ and Bjørge¹² offer the foundations of how the root causes of terrorist groups and organizations can be described and perceived whilst maintaining the middle ground in regarding the legitimacy of terrorism.

Louise Richardson¹³ and Jessica Stern¹⁴, on the other hand, set a remarkable example of how to approach the issue of terrorism with a fresh and even deeper understanding. Stern had been travelling to meet and conduct interviews with ex-terrorists, militant leaders, officers and other allegedly dangerous people to find out about the causes of terrorism creating highly valuable primary literature for the study of terrorism and political violence.

Post's most recognizable message is highlighting the fact that psychologically speaking, terrorists are no different from "normal" people in their ways of deciding, acting and thinking. Post's proposal is centered on his more than 20 years of first-hand experience with terrorists while working for the CIA analyzing their personality and political behavior.¹⁵

David Rapoport presents us with the detailed history of the rebel terrorism of the last 135 years in terms of means and motivation and therefore, argues that terrorism is deeply implanted into the body of modern culture and modern history, more than we would be comfortable with. He describes four distinctive waves of terrorist activity, namely and in a

¹⁰ Jason Franks, "Rethinking the Roots of Terrorism: Beyond Orthodox Terrorism Theory—A Critical Research Agenda," *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations* 23, no. 2 (April 2009): 153–76, doi:10.1080/13600820902766219.

¹¹ Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism : Causes, Processes, and Consequences* / Martha Crenshaw, Routledge Series on Political Violence (London : Routledge, 2011., 2011).

¹² Tore Bjørge, *Root Causes of Terrorism : Myths, Reality, and Ways Forward* / Edited by Tore Bjørge (London : Routledge, 2005, n.d.).

¹³ Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want : Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* / Louise Richardson (New York : Random HouseTrade Paperbacks, 2007., n.d.).

¹⁴ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God : Why Religious Militants Kill* / Jessica Stern. (New York : Ecco, c2003, 2003).

¹⁵ Jerrold M Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

cronological order, the anarchists, the anti-colonialists, the "New-Left" wave and the religious wave. His assessment will present me with the possibility to dwell upon the signifiers of each of these groups and allocate Al-Qaeda accordingly, but not necessarily following Rapoport's judgement on its place.¹⁶

De la Corte sets up three different ways to look at terrorism and analyze it as a distinct discipline: macrosociological, psychological and psychosocial. He goes into detail with the last one, aiding to a vast literature gap in this manner. He investigates the possible factors of one's personality traits and the social environment that presents the individual with a set of choices and the interaction between these which provides us with a deeper sense of perception on why people become involved with terrorism and terrorist organizations.¹⁷

Gilbert on the other hand evaluates the study of terrorism in terms of its relation to nationality and the sense of belonging via using the concepts and methods of political philosophy with a strong emphasis on ethnicity, national identity and its consequential relation to terrorism. His line of thinking will allow me to take a closer look at the issue of how terrorism and national belonging can be interpreted under the same auspices and whether or not, al-Qaeda fits into the pattern this creates. His notion on the limits of democratic change, the right to self-determination, and the link between ethnicity, nationality and the likelihood of becoming interested in fundamentalist, revolutionary and terrorist ideas will be my main cornerstones.¹⁸

Piazza aims to demonstrate one of the negligent misunderstandings of general thinking about terrorism, namely, that "Islamist terrorism" demands more casualties than any other forms of terrorist activities. He does this by looking into the goal structure of several

¹⁶ David Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11," *Anthropoetics: The Journal of Generative Anthropology*, no. 1 (2002).

¹⁷ Luis de la Corte, "Explaining Terrorism: A Psychosocial Approach," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 1, no. 2 (November 17, 2010), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/8>.

¹⁸ Paul Gilbert, *Terrorism, Security, and Nationality : An Introductory Study in Applied Political Philosophy* / Paul Gilbert (London : Routledge, c1994, n.d.).

organizations and groups which he allocates into two groups: strategic groups and abstract/universal groups, like Al-Qaeda by providing us with a neat example of how Al-Qaeda and its motivations can be interpreted in a different, rather strategic way.¹⁹

Robert Pape is going to play a significant role in the research given his groundbreaking approach in studying the acts of suicide terrorists. He completely debunks the myths and unwarranted assumptions that surround the question of why do terrorists do what they do.

3. To narrow down my focus, thirdly I will assess all the related specifics of Al-Qaeda to link them to the first two theoretical and introductory sections. Bakker, Jason Burke, Rik Coolset, Christina Hellmich, etc. will be the sources I will be mostly relying upon.

As one of the most outstanding, strictly scholarly assessments of the activity, ways, motivations and structure of the Al-Qaeda Bakker and Leen seek to provide us with an in-depth analysis of how this organization became the force that reshaped the contemporary notion of terrorism in general. I aim to use this piece of work as a fundamental ground to look into some other possible interpretations on Al-Qaeda and be able to assess the merit of the critiques I'll encounter along the way. It is essential to note that Bakker and Leen admits to the fact that there's no single motivator behind the set of actions Al-Qaeda has so far produced. There is a wide variety of causes and contributing factors that complement to one another from which the religious factor is only one single element as the vehicle as well as the source of inspiration for the members of the group. Another important fact to their investigation is the part where the question and the influence of leadership is being discussed: they conclude that the ideology behind Al-Qaeda's actions is highly functional and allows a certain organizational flexibility. This supports me with my research aiming

¹⁹ Ja Piazza, "Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous?: An Empirical Study of Group Ideology, Organization, and Goal Structure," *TERRORISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE* 21, no. 1 (2009): 62–88.

mostly to examine the actions and motivations of Al-Qaeda leadership which might reveal a nationalistic undercurrent to their deeds.²⁰

A significantly different approach to the organization, Jason Burke recalls the personal experiences and encounters of the award-winning reporter, Jason Burke with Al-Qaeda. His profound focus on the political, historical and sociological roots of the phenomenon stands out in the sense that he points at the organization's disorganized and global features. He challenges the contemporary legitimization of the "War on Terror" and therefore grants me the possibility to find other motivational factors than religion and/or cultural differences which are more than overrepresented as pivotal causes in the media and in the utterances of public and political figures.²¹

Coolsaet elaborates further on the possibility that Al-Qaeda is the blueprint and manifestation of a wide sociological and political discontent with a rapidly changing international environment and with the implications of this on smaller, if not, marginalised nations worldwide. His main idea in this book is centered around the ways of extinguishing these triggering factors from the facets of these societies in order to find a closure to the energy that feeds terrorism and especially Al-Qaeda. This writing will be an extraordinary opportunity for me to elaborate further on the possible root causes of terrorism other than cultural and especially, religious motivation.²²

Christina Hellmich pinpoints one of the most important notions I aim to look into more in depth, in particular, the idea of including the question of the Ummah and the context of a pan-Islamic, political explanation regarding the causes and motivations of Al-Qaeda.

Hellmich also elaborates further on the implications of how and why is Al-Qaeda this

²⁰ Edwin Bakker, "The Evolution of Al-Qaedaism: Ideology, Terrorists, and Appeal," 2007, http://works.bepress.com/edwin_bakker/5.

²¹ Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda : The True Story of Radical Islam / Jason Burke* (London : Penguin, 2004., n.d.).

²² R. Coolsaet, *Al-Qaeda, the Myth : The Root Causes of International Terrorism and How to Tackle Them / Rik Coolsaet ; Translated by Erika Peeters* (Gent : Academia Press, 2005., 2005).

puzzled and disorganized in terms of the nationality, ethnicity and loyalty of the participating members and entities which I would like to take more into consideration when trying to draw the attention of a potential nationalist undercurrent prevalent in Al-Qaeda.²³

To be able to justly come to the conclusion that the individual level is overridden in terms of shaping the organization's motivations, I would like to analyze interviews with former terrorists and still active terrorists now being incarcerated and court hearing transcripts as well to cover the potential source of individual-level motivations and then move on to the level of Al-Qaeda's public leading figures and theorists such as Sayyid Qutb, Osama bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, etc. At this point I will look at their monographies and other writings, interviews conducted with them, if any or available, fellow leaders' and members' recollections on their actions and deeds and all the available primary sources while trying to separate them from the widespread, dangerously manipulated and directed media-coverage on those very same events and actions.

Kepel's, Milelli's²⁴ and Bruce Lawrence's²⁵ works are of utmost importance because of their neat and precise presentation of statements, interviews and various appearances of several Al-Qaeda leaders and key figures via transcribing all of these actions. I aim to utilize these as the core methodological foundation to my research because of the gravity of primary sources and first hand information lacking every type of connotation and misinterpretation in the scholarly field of terrorism studies.

Sayyid Qutb is the theoretical and ideological founding father of Al-Qaeda ideology in the sense that he was the first to go on with his personal experiences gathered while studying in

²³ Christina Hellmich, *Al-Qaeda : From Global Network to Local Franchise* / Christina Hellmich, Rebels (Halifax : Fernwood ; New York : Zed Books, 2011., 2011).

²⁴ Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words* / Edited by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli ; Translated by Pascale Ghazaleh (Cambridge, Mass. : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008., n.d.).

²⁵ Osama Bin Laden and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Messages to the World : The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* / Edited and Introduced by Bruce Lawrence ; Translated by James Howarth (London ; New York : Verso, 2005., n.d.).

the US and take it to the next level of political activism and normative creative force. He shaped the thinking of his generation in Egypt and then his impact reached even further due to the political events triggered by his proposed norms and then eventually by his martyrdom. I aim to thoroughly examine the root causes of his aversion – cultural, habitual or religious – toward the "West" in order to be able to recognize the similarities with the thoughts of any Al-Qaeda leaders that might resonate with the ideology of Arab Nationalism, a strictly secular form of nationalism. This will hopefully give me a deeper understanding on how and in what extent is the ideology of Al-Qaeda secular and politics-oriented.²⁶ To round up my argument with the mentioning of the AQAMs, I would briefly like to turn to international research databases that enlist and categorize the movements and locally inspired cells of the post-9/11 Al-Qaeda. Then, by very shortly invoking the findings in the publications of Lawrence, Celso, Fishman and Mendelsohn I will argue that Al-Qaeda is far from being dead and that its nationalistic undercurrent is now being displayed and reinforced by the workings of the Middle Eastern, locally inspired AQAMs. On the other hand, Al-Qaeda cannot be seen as it used to be before the 9/11 attacks, because now it is proven that Al-Qaeda is not the worldwide organization the US wanted it to be, but rather a franchise of displaying locally expressed grievances and hardship experienced by the community.

²⁶ Sayyid Quthb, *Milestones* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2005).

Theories of nationalism studies and the case of Arab nationalism

Within this chapter I aim to accomplish three things. First of all, to enumerate and identify the sporadic, though not scarce, manifestations of nationalism understood by principles that are not necessarily centered around the prerequisite of a state in order to word a definition. Secondly, to look into culture and religion as powerful factors working in the background when one looks at defining nationalism. And thirdly, I would like to dive into the case of Arab Nationalism, the *Ummah* concept and all the other possible signifiers that can lead us to bridging the theories on nationalism studies and the specific case of Al-Qaeda. By following through with these theoretical avenues I intend to set the preconditional theoretical framework I am about to implement in the upcoming chapters that discuss the focal points of the argument on whether or not Al-Qaeda's ideology has nationalistic characteristics at its core permeating the organization's motivations, causes and overall goals.

Theories of nationalism – the question of the state vs. nationalism

In this sub-chapter I would like to investigate the qualifiers that establish and explain nationalism as a sentiment and not necessarily as an all secular state and territory centered plainly political idea; and nationalism as an ideology and sentiment separate from and not even codependent on the nation and nationality. After these initial findings I plan to look into some other sporadically discussed ideas on what constitutes nationalism. Then I aim to delve into some other lucrative theories that ideally will let us take a closer look at the relationship of religion and nationalism.

There is a whole cult among scholars working with nationalism studies around the state interpreted as the principle object of loyalty and as an unavoidable element in th definition of

nationalism. We can observe its most mature manifestation in Kohn's work, where he advances a psychological definition of nationalism claiming that it is a specific state of mind of every individual that urges them to pledge the highest loyalty into the existence of the nation-state.²⁷ This narrow type of interpretation on nationalism though lacks and ignores a whole slew of highly legit evidence and alternatives as to how nationalism can manifest in other ways. In order to investigate the special nationalistic undercurrent that one can detect in the Al-Qaeda ideology, we need to broaden our theoretical horizon.

But before embarking on investigating the above mentioned alternative areas of nationalism, one needs to consider a notion of particular importance: as many a highly esteemed scholars have noted before, nationalism can and should never be simplified to only one set of concepts and conditions. As Snyder once recited, nationalism and its theoretical building elements are not unlike history, are chaotic, always in flux and change following no foreseeable patterns.²⁸ Or as Schafer criticizes Marx and Spengler's suggestion on nationalism be viewed as a clear-cut phenomenon – like a "*polished apple*" - of which discrepancies and complexities can be explained and categorized by using only one grande and unifying hypothesis.²⁹ Nationalism "... can never be reduced to a simplistic formula for it has shades and nuances and it encourages improvisation." – as is noted aptly by Leo Snyder while unfolding the enigma of nationalism in his influential book *The New Nationalism* from 1968.³⁰ John Hall also

²⁷ M. Montserrat Guibernau i Berdún, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 48.

²⁸ Louis Leo Snyder, *The New Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1968), 2–3.

²⁹ Boyd C. Shafer, *Nationalism: Myth and Reality* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955), 7–8.

³⁰ Snyder, *The New Nationalism*.

reinforces this basic theoretical viewpoint according to which *"... no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible."*³¹

*"... territory as a bounded space, a container, under the control of a group of people, nowadays usually a state...must be conceived as a historically and geographically specific form of political and social organization."*³² As Penrose and many other nationalist scholars also addressed the relationship between nationalism and territory, they concluded that the nation-state is the commonly and most widely accepted fundamental basis for every group-related identifications.³³ But there is an emerging phenomenon and understanding about a challenged state-centric nature that needs to be overcome in order to be able to grasp newly developed phenomena.³⁴ Although it has been overtly highlighted that the nation-state is a natural, ultimate and perennial entity it is a relatively modern phenomenon with its birth dated only back to the Westphalian Peace, therefore making it an "unnatural" construction compared to the seemingly ever-present nature of the sense of belonging to a certain group.³⁵ Hutchinson also reiterates this by stating that the desire to be a community is much bigger of a keystone for a nation than territory.³⁶

Academics arguing for the utmost importance of the territorial criterion in describing nationalism are often adamant about its necessity claiming that no national movements can

³¹ Alain Dieckhoff and Christophe Jaffrelot, eds., *Revisiting Nationalism: Theories and Processes*, 1st ed, CERi Series in Comparative Politics and International Studies (New York, N.Y: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 10.

³² Derrick, "Containing the Umma?," 7.

³³ Penrose, "Nations, States and Homelands."

³⁴ Fiona B. Adamson and Madeleine Demetriou, "Remapping the Boundaries of 'State' and 'National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing," *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 4 (December 2007): 489–526.

³⁵ Barney Warf, "Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Geographical Imaginations," *Geographical Review* 102, no. 3 (July 2012): 289.

³⁶ Saunders and Muḥ ammad, "The Ummah as Nation," 306.

gain legitimacy without surrendering to the need to possess a certain territory.³⁷ These type of arguments however can easily be confuted because there is an always articulated element in their line of logic which is rather challengable and narrow-sighted, namely that the power that nationalists seek is necessarily political and territorial. This is more than categorical and exclusionist especially if one is aiming to apply this logic to the case of Arab nationalism and its various manifestations. This can be further amplified by the fact that even Penrose delineated in one of his articles that nationalism, as part of the shift to modernity was one of the first and most powerful factors to change the general way to look at the significance of territoriality.

In order to embed the framework of the discussion of the place and importance of the state in relation to nationalism, I would like to open with examining a new and, unfortunately, under-researched and under-estimated branch of nationalism studies, the so-called *new nationalism* theory. Outlined during the 60s by Snyder, later on this line of thinking about interpreting nationalism from a fresh and inspiring perspective gradually found its way to be included in the mainstream literature on nationalism. Mary Kaldor is one of the most recognizable scholars perpetuating its development. She interprets new nationalisms as a specific genre among contemporary nationalisms within which we can identify the group of "spectacle contemporary nationalisms" versus the group of new nationalisms. New nationalism is bred and developed in conditions of insecurity, violence and pent up grievances coupled by the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism along the way. New nationalism is about passion, as she puts it, while the contemporary kind of spectacle nationalisms only aims to further the political agenda and causes of an already existing state and its bureaucratic framework as an

³⁷ John Etherington, "Nationalism, Territoriality and National Territorial Belonging," *Nacionalismo, Territorialidad Y Pertenencia Nacional Territorial.*, no. 95 (May 2010): 336.

official ideology in order to legitimize and serve the given state's authority over its citizens.³⁸

Earlier nationalisms were said to be shaped by modernity; the ideological force, on the other hand, that constitutes the foundations of new nationalisms is a mixture of postmodernity globalization and late modernity. According to Kaldor, a new variant of new nationalisms emerged during the late 1990s: the ideology of global Islam, perpetuated chiefly by the Al-Qaeda, an Islamic nation that revolves around a common culture and a sacred language struggling to get the hold of a specific territory occupied by another force. Not unlike the other manifestations of new nationalisms, these movements often create parallel structures in authority in order to fill the void by a declining state provision. The situations in which these occur are of pervasive insecurity that creates hatred, passion and prejudice which eventually dominate political choices. Grievances leave a legacy of fear and hatred that power a grass-root type of nationalism. The living memories of atrocities provide a fertile source for contemporary nationalism via insecurity and frustration coupled by the effects of a multi-cultural volatile environment that make people more vulnerable to exclusive ideologies. Under these circumstances, political leaders tend to use nationalistic voice as an alternate tool of political mobilization – as Smith also argues – which is especially successful if it appeals to some popular sentiments derived from memories of violence that facilitates mobilization on an even greater scale. As she later puts it, terrorism is a manifestation of this process connected not to the past but to contemporary structural conditions serving as a reflection coupled by the failures of Arab nationalism and the fall of its facilitators, that consequently led leaders to turn to religious identity and the conflict with Islam as the engine of

³⁸ M. Montserrat Guibernau i Berdún and John Hutchinson, eds., *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and Its Critics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 167.

mobilization. Therefore, the appeal of the nation state and the state in general has changed and was reformed in the narrative of new nationalisms.³⁹

This leads us to begin with the examination of the state as a foundational element in defining nationalism. But it also leaves us with the need to clarify another complex and noteworthy observation first, namely the need to draw a clear, distinctive and well-recognizable line between "nation" and "nationalism". As Jaffrelot so neatly puts it, the idea and definition of a "nation" is necessarily and traditionally state-centered, whereas "nationalism" presents itself as an independent ideology that *can* relate to a nation – at the same time has got nothing to do with the state as a definitional element -, but first and foremost, nationalism steps up as a claim of a particular identity. So, in order to paraphrase this, the sense of belonging to a nation-state does not necessarily coincide with nationalism *per se*.⁴⁰ As Snyder points it out, the earlier manifestations of nationalism, West-centered and stemming from modernity, were concerned solely with the principle of the state and sovereignty as a consequential factor derived from it. The basic theories of new nationalism move away from this narrow interpretation of what constitutes nationalism.⁴¹

It can also be detected in Brubaker's work where he claims that "*Nationalism can and should be understood without invoking "nations" as substantial entities...*" and that nationalism is not engendered by nations necessarily.⁴² Besides Brubaker, also Breuilly and Paul Brass note that nationalism can be interpreted as a form of politics, a dressing in which various groups

³⁹ **Ibid., 161–178.**

⁴⁰ **Dieckhoff and Jaffrelot, *Revisiting Nationalism*, 2–3, 11.**

⁴¹ **Snyder, *The New Nationalism*, 6.**

⁴² **Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7, 17, 21.**

can claim and present their political aspirations and seek the advantage of cultural symbols that were put to use in a nationalist disguise in order to gain political and popular support.⁴³

Let us now revisit then the principle and priority of the idea of the state as the nucleus of nationalism.

Territoriality and the idea of states do not necessarily share a common trait. Due to the increasing porousness of state borders nowadays, a legitimate trend seems to arise that signals the end of the state's sole monopoly over its inhabitants' political, economic, social or even cultural framework of daily life. The idea of state is gradually turning into a more tentative territorial formation or space for people to reinvent and even strengthen their fluctuating identities. Territory as a sacred and symbolic space also denotes and marks a more emotional approach toward geographical locations – a space containing special historical memories of a community, sacred or even holy places or even battlefields.⁴⁴

This particular line of thought leads us to the question of *homeland* and the sentiments derived from it, whether they can be compared or categorized by the same common denominators as they can in the case of state and territory. According to Walker Connor, because of the emotional attachment toward a specific piece of land, homelands mean much more than territory, let alone a state, which is, in his understanding, an artificial formation that only caters to the need that an unorganized and uncaptured political authority needs to be seized in order to legitimize its past and future decisions. This, mixed with the colonial experience and the policy and causes of drawing new borders for communities that had been living there for ages before the colonial time, is exceptionally accurate to Africa and Asia. To

⁴³ Dieckhoff and Jaffrelot, *Revisiting Nationalism*, 24.

⁴⁴ M. Montserrat Guibernau i Berdún, *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 6–7.

stick with Connor's examples, he mentions surveys within African and Arab population that aimed to map the respondents' psychological attachments regarding state vs. community. He criticizes Fouad Ajami's famous 1978 proclamation that suggested pan-Arabism and the will to reunite over artificially demarcated "state borders" were moribund and somewhat obsolete. According to a number of repeated studies and surveys conducted among more than 6000 participants from ten Arab countries, numbers suggest that an overwhelming majority of people pledge their alliance with a unified "Arabdom".⁴⁵ And, as Anthony Smith also expresses, the power of specific locales joining bigger and not necessarily closely unified territories tells us that the events and memories attached to those territories can create a highly influential web of emotions that he calls the "territorialization of memory" that delineates homelands and stresses their potential over states or other artificially drawn lines of demarcation.

But let us stick with the question of state and its necessity to define nationalism: as Guibernau aptly points it out, there are two types of nationalisms from which we need to choose in order to get closer to the core of the issue at hand. Nationalism can mean the overall policies instilled by the rulers of an already existing state to homogenize the population, but on the other hand, nationalism can also describe the ideology of well-defined communities without a state as counter-strategies to reject the "alien-state" that incorporates, invades or otherwise bothers them. He also coins a definition for nationalism that has got nothing to do with states or territoriality: "... nationalism ... is the sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and a way of life and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Guibernau i Berdún and Hutchinson, *History and National Destiny*, 53, 70–71.

⁴⁶ Guibernau i Berdún, *Nationalisms*, 46–48.

But from where does the need to demarcate a territory as a state originally stem from? We can start by looking at the early acts of "state-making" as it is referred to by Charles Tilly, who implies that waging wars was the trigger that pushed monarchs and kings to territorialize their administration in order to be able to collect the funds from their subject that was necessary to engage in wars. Though this only laid the ground for state-making activities. The first conscious moves taken in this particular direction were "Census, Map, Museum" as Benedict Anderson puts it. In the additional tenth chapter of the second edition of his famous book *Imagined Communities*, where he corrects himself by acknowledging that defining nations can never be complete without "changing apprehensions of space" as well and not just of time.⁴⁷

As Craig Calhoun also pointed out, these modern acts of artificially carving out a community's "geo-body" by demarcating physical boundaries and enumerating its inhabitants is a European practice in its entirety.⁴⁸ After and during the colonial times this activity was introduced to non-European territories as well, but not as a natural order of things and certainly not as an inherent and well-grounded process accepted and coveted by the native communities residing there. Winichakul also indicates while examining the bogus activities surrounding the creation of Siam as a nation-state that the policy to devise a nation-state is alien to non-European communities and completely oblivious and unattentive to the multiply overlapping territorial borders and their structural and innate consequences to the communities occupying those lands. On the other hand he also calls the attention to the fact that though these processes are alien and rather ineffective in these areas in terms of forging a

⁴⁷ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed., 2nd ed (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴⁸ Craig J. Calhoun, *Nationalism, Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), 13–17.

cohesive and united nation, in that particular case when the predeceasing traditional kingdoms and loosely joined territories of various overlords are considered fully while demarcating future borders can point toward an understanding of a state.⁴⁹ Therefore, when popular veneration and territorial attachment are viewed to be important to be transferred to the newly determined territorial space then the appeal of the state is appropriate and is able to generate loyalty, though we cannot really see these ideas pervading the decision making processes while shaping out the states of the Middle East during and after colonial times. That is why it cannot strike as a surprise if scholars of the Middle East still definitively talk about the untarnished appeal of the "Pan" movements, especially in an era that is more often regarded as a supranational one where the advances of modern communication and transportation shrink the vast expanse of various states rumped into a relatively much smaller and concentrated one. And as Snyder also explains it, pan movements are often the direct consequence of a particularly potent and aggressive nationalism with a spill-over effect seeking for a wider and more powerful validation among kindred language, culture or grievances.⁵⁰

And here one has the absolute need to mention the idea about the "*paradox of the nation-state*".⁵¹ It dates back to John Locke, John Milton and even to Jefferson himself, where according to the principle of their aggregated thoughts, the one and only entity fit for broad popular support that is necessary for the political leadership to remain unquestioned and in place is the nation state and the state in general. Though, at the same time, this very system is unable to effectively defend the lives and/or the interest of its peoples if and when the government decides upon waging wars or engages in any other activities that are necessary for its own prolonged existence and flourishing but at the same time affect its population harmfully and destructively. In these cases, states via and because of the actions and decisions

⁴⁹ **Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chap. 6.**

⁵⁰ **Snyder, *The New Nationalism*, 323–325.**

⁵¹ **Karl Wolfgang Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 171–172.**

of their anointed mediators, their governments lose the allegiance of the population. After this being said, one needs to consider that this, among many other arguments, creates a palpable conundrum in accepting the states as receivers of loyalty and primary attachment.

An approach developed by Anthony Smith can lay out another similar way of interpretation: the concept of the "Scientific State". Here he focuses mainly on the three possible outcomes – traditionalist, assimilationists and reformists - of that ambivalent situation where the principles of the modern Western-based state are forcibly implemented in societies ingrained with indigenous traditions by their Western-educated elite. But from our point of view, the takeaway is the fact that the "scientific state" is alien to these societies and based on the sole will to homogenize a population within a set geographical space for administrative purposes that has got nothing to do with nationalism or a connected sense of belonging.⁵²

There has always been a manifestation to localized loyalty that predates the age of nationalism. As it had been to Sparta, Athen, Florence or to the greater Hellenic nationalism, as Snyder also demonstrates this, it was also the case when these hubs of connectedness were extrapolated into bigger entities.⁵³ The core of the axis, on which they all revolved has always rested upon common language, tradition, culture, religion, etc. and not on some artificially drawn set of border lines limiting a diverse commotion of people because of the administrative or political needs of the ruling elite. To further elucidate the topic, there's Hayes' theory on the interplay of several loyalties result in one aggregated mixture of feelings: a "feline" loyalty to familiar places and a "canine" loyalty to familiar persons that creates the bases of patriotism that can point to anything or anyone until these criteria are met.

⁵² Dieckhoff and Jaffrelot, *Revisiting Nationalism*, 28–29.

⁵³ Snyder, *The New Nationalism*, 17.

He concludes that nationalism is a paramount, a supreme loyalty that commands the first two and only occurs in its most genuine form when fused with religious emotion.⁵⁴

So, now we can be a bit more confident in accepting that the ideal of the state as the nucleus in understanding nationalism is not necessarily true. As Henry Steele Commager also put it, the "critical stigmata of nationalism" is the interplay of four things: language, culture, tradition and heroes.

Theories of nationalism – Arab nationalism and the *Ummah* concept

In this subchapter I would like to argue for the legitimacy of the *Ummah* concept and for the importance of looking into Arab nationalism in this matter given that the founding ideologies of the Al-Qaeda can be traced back to the emergence of Arab nationalism via Hassan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb or even via Ayman al-Zawahiri. The *Ummah* concept on the other hand, is going to help me argue for the idea that there's no direct need for a state, let alone for a nation-state, in defining nationalism and therefore, proving that no matter how sporadic Al-Qaeda is geographically, it still possesses the ability to create and instill loyalty and comes from a political background that builds upon and draws patterns from a variety of nationalisms as an aggregated, collective melting pot of different nationalistic grievances.

"*Islam din wa-dawla* – Islam is religion and state" – as goes the famous maxim of Islam articulated by the Prophet Muhammad. Arab nationalism is one of the most contested and obscure concepts of recent scholarly literature on nationalism, political theory and even international relations. Its scope, focus and conceptual boundaries are rather ambiguous due to

⁵⁴ Carlton Joseph Huntley Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 9.

the fact that what most of the "traditional", canonized nationalism literature suggests in terms of terminology and conceptual elements on what constitutes a nation, and nationalism, is not always applicable when it comes to Arab nationalism.

The aim of this subchapter is to investigate and test one of the key concepts of what constitutes nationalism within the premises of Arab nationalism: the criterion of a territorially limited and confined space, traditionally referred to as "the state". In order to do so, I would like to mention some of the relating controversies surrounding Arab nationalism and its interpretations on the role of territory and state – the variety of manifestations, the differences from and connections with Islam fundamentalism, pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism, tribalism, regionalism or transnationalism. After investigating this topic I would like to briefly look into the already existing literature to find the best applicable theory and conceptual framework on how is the existence of a state determines the kind of nationalism it delineates. After taking all this into consideration, I aim to look concisely into the possibility of interpreting "the *Ummah* as a nation" for the sake of looking for an alternative unifying framework as well as for a tentative substitute of territorial bounding.

My major goal with this line of thinking would be to find some viable counter arguments against such reasonings that instigate a minimal, loose, or even non-existent, national character in the case of Arab nationalism or other manifestations of transnational Islamic or Muslim networks and initiatives such as terrorism and Al-Qaeda *per se*. Arab nationalism and its manifestations are often disregarded in terms of not being "full-fledged nationalisms" or nationalisms in the traditional sense because of the assumed lack of some canonized key

elements.⁵⁵ I would like to argue that even if there is no territorial premise, there are other key elements that could pose as alternative and definitive pillars constituting a type of nationalism as clear-cut and conclusive as if we were looking at any other type of classic and long-established nationalisms.

Due to the confines of this thesis, I do not like to delve too much into the historical events and their significance since that topic would be worth an entire book, so instead, I am focusing on the manifestations and the theoretical and ideological components of Arab nationalism so I will be able to detect the role and importance of territory within the discourse.

First of all, before looking into some of the factors triggering the emergence of Arabism and Arab nationalism and the determinative elements (political and institutional structure, language, modernity and the Islamic Reformation), one must delineate the confines of the concept: what constitutes Arab nationalism and how can it be differentiated from other types of affiliations among Muslim and/or Arab people.

As Khalidi aptly observed, one of the most primal problems concerning the study of Arab nationalism is that it has been denied that scholarly and academic observance that frames other aspects of the study of nationalism.⁵⁶ This is exactly the reason why extricating Arab nationalism from locally initiated patriotic movements or from Arabism or from pan-Arabism had remained a discrepancy up until recently. In order to remain close to the very source, let us examine the variations of the term in Arabic: nationalism as in reflecting to tribe and ethnic nationality - *qawmiyya* – or as in meaning homeland or native country - *wataniyya*. To explore this even further one can vet other terms that are in use in order to talk about the

⁵⁵ Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism.”

⁵⁶ Rashid I. Khalidi, “Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature,” *American Historical Review* 96 (1991): 1363–73.

bonds that tie various Arabic populations together striving for the same purpose: *al-qawmiyya* *al-'Arabiya* (Arab Nationalism), *al-'Uruba* (Arabism), *al-Wuhda al-'Arabiya* (Arab unity), *al-Ittihad al-'Arabi* (Arab Union), *al-Iqlimiya* (regionalism) and *al-Wataniya* (state patriotism). This brings us to the need to observe the variety and manifestations of Arab nationalism in other, non-Arabic sense in order to avoid overlooking conceptual and substantive differences and connections. It is rather widespread among authors not to articulate the pluralist quality in Arab nationalism enough so it resulted an attitude of handling Arabic nationalisms as one entity. But there is no one, single and unified Arab nationalism. There are only Arab nationalisms- localized subnationalisms, regional or communal variants, etc.⁵⁷ - led not only by classes of urban elites but by a wider social collaboration even from a bottom up approach as grassroot movements do.

The most important facet among all these differentiations is the ability to academically distinguish between a sense of cultural oneness (that can encompass religion at a certain extent) and a state of principle that had the addendum of a political struggle for recognition or any other type of political aspirations that are attached to that sense of oneness.⁵⁸ As Dawisha further explicates, there are variations even on the level of what non-Arabic scholars would and do call Arab nationalism: there are internal categories that delineate local or national versions of patriotism (for example the Egyptian manifestation of Arab nationalism that is ultimately secular and built upon a distinct and long-nurtured national heritage) and types of affiliations that have got nothing to do with local national feeling or attachment but based on

⁵⁷ James P. Jankowski and I. Gershoni, eds., *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 18–24.

⁵⁸ A. I. Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003), 8.

national intellectual elites under the name of "new-Arabism" with *"...the sense that they transcended state boundaries, and were independent of state governments."*⁵⁹

In addition to all the aforementioned facts, I would like to end this rather limited enumeration of how one can interpret versions of Arab nationalism with briefly explaining the phenomenon of pan-Arabism. Pan-Arabism has emerged initially alongside with the struggle for uniting all Arab peoples into one Caliphate as a symptom of the waning power of the Ottoman Empire articulated by Arab elites throughout the entire Empire during the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Its later manifestations throughout the 20th century manifested in the course of such conferences like the Bloudan or the Jerusalem conference in the 1930s where the concept was transformed because of the shift in terms of who acted as the "Other" or as the opponent.⁶⁰ Due to the confines of this thesis I will not go into further details concerning the pan-Arab manifestation of the topic that I am currently investigating other than reflecting to some territorial aspects of it later on.⁶¹

In Choueiri's understanding there have already been three closed phases in the history of Arab nationalism, namely, a cultural from circa 1800-1900, then a political from 1900-1945 and then a social one from 1945-1973. As an attempt, he tried to grasp the core qualities of a fourth phase that is still about to come where the new wave of globalization and democracy act together to form a completely new and modern form of nationalism.⁶²

⁵⁹ **Ibid., 9.**

⁶⁰ **After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, European colonialist forces took over that role, then the more diversified threat of the emerging Jewish state and Zionism appeared, not to mention the US interventions in Middle Eastern politics that continue to this very day.**

⁶¹ **There would be a great need to address all the misrepresentations and denigrating aspects in scholarly literature regarding Arab nationalism so that we could gain a more thorough understanding (Corry, R.M.(2005): *The demonisation of pan-Arab nationalism* In: *Race & Class*, Vol.46, Issue 1, pp.1-19.) but that would exceed the limits of this thesis.**

⁶² **Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History: Nation and State in the Arab World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), VIII–X.**

Concerning the factors triggering the emergence of Arab nationalism and the basic qualities and elements that it confines I would like to delve a bit more into the role of Islamic Reformation and modernity, the unifying nature of the Arabic language, and a short *detour* concerning the political and institutional undercurrent of the term.

To detect the core argument here, one should go back in history and observe the early twentieth century when it became realized that the Arab World was carrying a major backlog compared to Europe or other parts of the 'West'. As Gellner aptly noticed – unlike other notable scholars dealing with nationalism –, the Islamic answer was very similar to the Eastern European in a way in responding to this phenomenon. Everyone – except for those who decided to go with the so-called 'westernizing' tendency - threw themselves into a search for something distinctively competitive in order to reenter the path of development and to find their own way to modernization. These paths have turned out to be very different, though. While Eastern European countries turned to people-driven populist tendencies, the Arabic World has forged its own method to react properly to past events. This tool was the Protestant-type Islamic Reformation.⁶³ Furthermore, the difference between the Christian Reformation and the Islamic version of it can be outlined as well in connection with the emergence of modernity: in Europe, it preceded and therefore enforced modernity at the same time and came from the religious periphery and fragmented Christianity, while in the case of Islam it was the other way around. It acted upon external forces, which came later, and stemmed from the very center of the religious establishment creating an overpowering unification factor.⁶⁴ His admiration of the impact of Islam is remarkable and well-argued, although, he almost matches Islamic Reformation with Arab nationalism which seems to be a bit exaggerated and reducing in terms of not concerning other powerful factors. Additionally,

⁶³ Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), 80–82.

⁶⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 2–8.

he overlooks the proven fact that patriotic feeling, as a precondition or as a variety submerged in tribalism, had already existed in the pre-Islamic period as well.⁶⁵

As for the modernity in political structures in Islam that paved the way for a specific type of nationalism, Gellner claims that Islam is modern; however, it fails when it comes to an effective way of centralizing power. The influence of the tribes has never really vanished⁶⁶ and this also has left its markings on the general set of political life in these societies (no real motion towards pluralism nor towards a functional, legitimized, accountable government; all of this invigorated even further by being extremely prone to clientism and rapacious politics).⁶⁷ As we can see, the overall distribution of power-factors between these units were rather distinct. Only the ever-changing course of circumstances was able to alter these distributed functions. As modernism and especially, as a reaction to that, the age of Islam Reformation has come, the holder of culture and religion proved to be the dominant one.

I would like to recant some of Gellner's indications about the importance of Arabic as a language due to the fact that he is one of the most prominent scholars of the field of nationalism who dedicated a rather significant portion to the issue. Based on the few appearances of the aspect of Arabic language in his book 'Muslim Society' we can derive the fact that he recognizes its creative power in the formation of these societies' distinguishable identity, however, would pass its further explanation and analysis on to theo-linguistics.⁶⁸ Unlike Choueiri, who describes every Arabic nations via a renewed Arabic language and the Islamic faith itself,⁶⁹ he appraises language for its converging quality in these societies for it

⁶⁵ Choueiri paraphrasing the ideas of Jalal al-Sayyid – a member of the Syrian Ba'ath Party – (Choueiri 2000: p.23-25)

⁶⁶ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 57.

⁶⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 180.

⁶⁸ He also remains skeptic on the topic of the existence of one proto-language – *Ur-Sprache* as he puts it – that, and that alone, would be able to convey the one divine truth.

⁶⁹ Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism*, 23.

creates the scripturalist layer – represented by the *Qur'an* and other sacral texts - that links the believer to a circle of beliefs that are strong enough to act as a culture with all its layers encompassed. The limits of openness and the restrictive nature, however, are apparent to him as well: while European Protestantism recognized the importance of allowing the transformation of the 'sacred language' into vernaculars in order to gain a larger and more committed circle of believers, Muslims did not use the opportunity presented by the Muslim Reformation to follow this practice.⁷⁰

There is another insightful, however also ambiguous, observation given by him on this topic that is closely linked to the unique social organizational system of the Muslim societies. In this observation he accents that the Islamic faith itself can be receptive to modernism as a national ideology that accommodates all Muslims in a specific area as one undividable nation. This power, however, only unfolds under the auspices of scripturalist faith, represented by the High Culture, by the literate elites, therefore, disqualifying the tribal and the saintly form of this religion. Though, one can detect a hint of obscurity in the logic of this statement: he overlooks the fact that the conveying factors of nationalism and self-description are in a constant change and development. In this case the paramountcy of the written word has been faded and/or enriched by the spoken Arabic (*'amiyya*) that can easily be conducted through channels such as radio TV, cartoons, etc.⁷¹ Gellner also does not assign enough attention to thoroughly acknowledge the phenomenon of this linguistic revival, however, its importance is of paramount importance in terms of creating a brand new vocabulary and terminology that

⁷⁰ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 3–4.

⁷¹ Jankowski and Gershoni, *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, XXV.; Samir Abu-Absi, "The Modernization of Arabic: Problems and Prospects," *Anthropological Linguistics* 28, no. 3 (October 1, 1986): 337–48.

could express the phrases of the modern European civilization. Via this linguistic transformation came an even greater one: the rediscovery of communal Arabic ethnicity.⁷²

Arab Nationalism – may it be whichever category or manifestation that we’ve discussed formerly - has always claimed that an Arab state’s authority is not derived directly from its citizens “...but from the larger Arab nation that envelopes its borders;...”.⁷³ This is best explained and bolstered by the fact that the dynamics of this type of nationalism pose as a perfect example of Benedict Anderson’s theory about “imagined communities”: if we just look at basic Islamic principles such as the great “*haddj*”, the holy pilgrimage to Mecca or the synchronized ritual of praying five times a day; or the special unifying sense of speaking Arabic, the holy language conveying the will of God as an act of cultural-semiotic unison. Anderson in his theory of imagined communities does not confine these entities into a limited space linked to political boundaries, though its has “...finite if elastic boundaries beyond which lie other nations” that does not exclude the logic here.⁷⁴

Deterritorialized national projects have become more and more common in the course of recent historical events (see the works of Appadurai 1996, Croucher 2003, Mills 2002)⁷⁵ which events allow us to see the *Ummah* as a deterritorialized new nation which is embedded into the ideology of *ummahism*, a newly emerged hallmark of nationalism sanctified by its religious origins. Representatives of the functionalist school – for example Hobsbawm and his theory of “invented traditions” or Hroch as well - consolidate this by dismissing the idea of a nation being ahistorical and rely on a variety of shared attributes that can be changed over

⁷²It also paved the way to Pan-Arabism.

⁷³ Michael N. Barnett, “Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 480.

⁷⁴ Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 6.

⁷⁵ Saunders and Muḥ ammad, “The Ummah as Nation,” 304.

time in order to suit the current state of every national projects.⁷⁶ Deterritorialized nationalism can be equated with transnational projects in which actors create a space of acting together that transgresses bounded state territory with the help of the achievements of modern mass communications, internet and supranational ways of conveying messages. This type of power cannot be considered condescendingly just because it follows a different path of logical explanation. Another contributing factor in strengthening the nature of this type of nationalism is the existence of the notion of the *Ummah*, which I would like to examine next.

*"Culture and social organization are universal and perennial".*⁷⁷ Or as he further puts it, any type or form of human organization should be built upon a group with a shared culture in order to become functional, which therefore can pave the way to modernity and nationalism. The basic assumption he makes on the organizational structure of the Muslim societies is attributing the Umma the possession of an all-encompassing social unit, a sacral community, which is, however, no ethnic group. As he refers to Durkheim, the religious was the expressed display of the social.⁷⁸ Beyond this⁷⁹ he interprets Muslim societies as a perpetually swinging pendulum with the poles being the tribal communities and the literate, urban bourgeoisie. The relationship between these units has always been loaded with multifaceted tension as it was insightfully depicted by Ibn Khaldun's dilemma on social life: from its early periods on in Muslim societies tribal life has been the bearer of political, social, civic virtues, and on the other hand, as the other side of the coin, urban life has functioned as the medium to the virtues of civilization and refinement.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ibid., 305.

⁷⁷ Gellner, *Nationalism*, 5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 80.

⁷⁹ As an additional subdivision of the society he also distinguish between the classes of urban scholarly elite and the members of the saint-based brotherhoods (mainly mysticist Sufists).

⁸⁰ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 17.

As Gellner rephrases it: "*You could have communal, civic spirit or you could have civilization – but not both.*" So following this line of logic we can detect the originaive sense in his further notions on Ibn Khaldun's theory on Muslim societies which says that in a way the state is a tribe "...that moved from the desert to the citadel..." constituting governance as a "...gift of the tribe to the city." ⁸¹ This division of communities carries the burden of being overly schematized and prone to rely on European patterns,⁸² which makes them not particularly eligible to constitute the genesis of nationalism through them.⁸³ However, the so far even swing of the pendulum was unhinged as soon as modernism reached the minds of people and the region itself which put further challenges to identify the *Ummah* as a determined and/or politicized entity.

To reinforce the power of communities such as the *Ummah*, there is another highly applicable theory that needs to be mentioned here, namely the "*spatial socialization*" by Anssi Paasi according to which territories and identities are constructed through borders that separate "us" from "them" - as in the concept of "Othering" - and permeate everyday life and social space, therefore, state-borders cannot be viewed as actual "*edges of states*" any longer.⁸⁴

For the sake of being thorough, I would like to brush upon another factor here, because among these points one cannot forget about the importance of tribalism that is long submerged in these societies and carries a major driving force when it comes to mobilizing people or defining loyalties. Tribalism, as Hayes puts it "... *a primitive, small-scale, and usually intensive type of nationalism*" and therefore, its power cannot remain unnoticed in this matter.

⁸¹ Ibid., 25.

⁸² Jankowski and Gershoni, *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, 171.

⁸³ Ibid., XI.

⁸⁴ Derrick, "Containing the Umma?," 12.

We can conclude with this subchapter by acknowledging that the manifestations of nationalism in Middle Eastern countries and areas derive from Europe yet differ in terms of source and motivational and mobilizing force.

Theories of nationalism – the question of religion and nationalism

In this subchapter I aim to unfold the loaded relationship and linkage between religion and nationalism from a specific point of view that will, hopefully, allow me to dig deeper into the interconnectedness of Islam and nationalism and then into the case of Al-Qaeda.

As Hayes has also presented it, there's a difference between cultural and political nationalism. They may interfere and even merge at times though we need to be able to separate them in terms of their root causes and forging elements.⁸⁵ In the case of the Middle East one can argue that the cultural aspect of nationalism came first with the bases of historical traditions and language. These had built up a framework to the forthcoming political nationalism giving it its most existential features that have got nothing to do with states or nationality. They built on a sense of belonging manifesting in culture, especially coupled by the forces and practices of religion, specifically, of Islam.

The question of how religion and nationalism can be connected is not an easy one to answer.

As Hayes has also mentioned it, *"...nationalism, like any religion, calls into play not simply the will, but the intellect, the imagination, and the emotions."*⁸⁶

First of all, I would like to start with classification and categorization based on Brubaker's work on the four approaches toward nationalism and religion. He proposes that we need to separate the ways in which we've examined the relationship between nationalism and religion

⁸⁵ Hayes, *Nationalism*, 3–5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

this far. The four approaches he concedes are religion and nationalism as analogous phenomena; religion as a cause or explanation of nationalism; religion as a part of the nationalistic agenda and then religious nationalism as a distinctive type of nationalism.⁸⁷

What we have gathered so far on the topic of nationalism and its Muslim and/or Arab-Islamic manifestations suggest that it is not such a clear-cut decision to render them into the fourth category and dismissing all the other features that fall into the first three. For example, we cannot possibly say that these instances of nationalism cannot be understood as a mode of social organization, a way of framing, channeling and organizing social relations which are features and qualifiers of the first category. By looking into the second category, we also can see the familiarity of such ideas that say: religious symbols are transported into the political domain; religion can be viewed a new mode of the "imagined communities"; religion as a force that introduces a new understanding of nation – *Ummah* concept, *Ummah* consciousness, etc. – a fusion of politics and religion. Brubaker does not agree with these features being present in the Arabic, Muslim or Islam related types and manifestations of nationalism in the Middle East, not even when it comes to the very description of his third category: religion is not external variable but part of nationalism. Based on the previous two subchapters one cannot possibly discard the potential in these neglected qualifiers.

Even if we go back to the basic models according to which nationalism can be categorized, one needs to look into Kedourie's work that suggest that there is more than two ways to think about nationalism. Other than the modernist and the perennial one, there is a third option explored by Kedourie that can shed a different light on this issue. He noted that the most complex of the three ways is the one where nationalism is understood as a heterodox religion that retain and build upon many religious symbols and features – rituals, messianistic fervor, a

⁸⁷ Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism."

sense of mission, etc. - in order to extend its scope of effect and appeal while marking a nationalistic agenda. As Smith evaluates this particular part of Kedourie's overall ideological framework on nationalism, *"... religion is vital to both the origins and the continuing appeal of both nations and nationalisms in the modern world."* Dürkheim also addressed this phenomenon when describing rites and ceremonies as mobilizing tools to unite the members of a community and, at the same time, to create a distance from other, alien communities – the very same thing that politicians and other type of leaders do while forging nations and nationalistic bonds.⁸⁸

As he further scrutinizes this, religion must be seen as an ally and symbiotic partner with nationalism, a type of *"political 'religion surrogate'"* that commands loyalty on the same scale as any nationalism would. As Smith so aptly puts it, - by referring to Apter and Binder - this fusion between religion and nationalism was best to be observed in the Middle East after decolonization where the Western educated elites using the framework of *"modern, Western type of"* nationalism leveled up and channelled the already existing pathways of religion to create and assert loyalties and mobilize the population in the name of something else as their genuine goal.⁸⁹ There is another pathway to utilize the mixed fervor of nationalism and religion in this area, namely the power of tribalism and ethnic traditions, two major factors in play that I have already addressed in the chapters before in great detail.

The idea to use religion in order to mobilize a community is nothing new and cannot be seen as a novelty when talking about current events for example in the Middle East. Smith provides us with a great example from the Book of Numbers where Korah and his followers

⁸⁸ Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 13–15, 27.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

erupted the uprising against Moses clothing their 'political'-like dissatisfaction and striving to leadership into a religious argument.⁹⁰

Among many other scholars, Snyder has also highlighted that the sociopolitical entanglement of religion and nationalism is at its highest degree in those parts of the world where Islam and Judaism are in play. But as he also mentioned, this exceedingly complex relationship is no single creed but rather a combination and aggregation of different types of nationalisms. This idea supports immensely my initial goal to look at the Al-Qaeda as a collection of various kinds of locally fueled nationalisms.

⁹⁰ **Ibid., 34.**

Theories of terrorism studies

Within this chapter I would like to skim through the related literature in terrorism studies very briefly in order to put my finger on the general motivations and incentives of terrorists. Here I would like to note, that because of the confines of this thesis, I am not going into a detailed and descriptive examination on terrorism studies in general but will stick with a brief introductory section on some definitional problems and then will focus on what terrorists want and what is behind the Al-Qaeda leaders' motivation. This brief and general investigation aims to prepare the grounds for the next chapter, within which I examine the specific case of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin-Laden and then later on the AQAMs in terms of triggering factors, goals and motivations that can be viewed as a consequence of several nationalism-related grievances.

Leading theories in the field of terrorism studies – an introduction

In the course of this rather brief introductory subchapter I would like to look into the fleeting definition of terrorism and into some of the leading theories that can point toward the question of motivation and the root causes of terrorism.

The word *definition* is derived from the Latin verb *definire*, that also means *to bound*. To find the bond, and the borderline at the same, time between the action and its parallel metaphysical correspondent is key, so a definition is always needed because of a number of reasons. With terrorism, finding a proper definition is almost impossible. As academics have already noted on several occasions, terrorism is a state of mind, therefore, utterly subjective. This and its politicized, changing and highly complex nature make it extremely difficult to grasp the gist of the term. Because of the unfrequent nature of the attacks and their relatively small numbers academics are thwarted and curbed concerning coming up with tendencies and solid statistics.

Secrecy and its obscure nature character leave researchers without the general tools to examine the phenomenon: interviewing, social research, participant observation are completely off the table and even if someone would be able to get even in the relative vicinity of these organizations and people there are a slew of other obstructive problems to throw off the data. Ethical problems in cooperating with them, the reliability and validity of the contingent interviews, if any at all, the difficulty in accessing archives, files and strategies might fall under the definition of sensitive, therefore unaccessible, operation information.

We don't even have to begin with the necessities of the academic field in terms of the need for a definition; there are different contexts within which a definition is of unparalleled importance in the case of terrorism: legal, strategic, political, military fields of research, etc. Let us now look into some examples concerning the areas I've mentioned here. A definition is highly needed in order to build the common grounds for international cooperation, for instance, in terms of developing shared and joint strategies in counter-terrorism, international mobilization or even enforcing international agreements, let alone solidifying effective extradition procedures. There is also a risk of abuse when it comes to human rights as well: the absence of a definition invites abuse and can leave the convicted in a horribly vulnerable position – a terrorist is not entitled to possess the same number and types of rights as any other perpetrator, and certainly has no Miranda rights – that is cloaked into the disguise of counter-terrorism measures.⁹¹ Though, the other side of the coin is also applicable here in legal terms as well: without a definition as for what constitutes terrorism and makes someone a terrorist the persecution of those who are involved are rather limited – *nullum crimen sine lege*. And to top this list, international legal experts and the very literature tend to overtly highlight the individual character of the crimes, forgetting the immense power and influence

⁹¹ Alex Peter Schmid, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011); David C. Rapoport, ed., *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

of group dynamics in terrorist organization and in the process of radicalization; and just as well, goals and the motivation are of little or medium importance when it comes to legal issues with terrorism.

As for the highly wanted academic definition of terrorism, the work of Schmid and Jongman needs to be recited here for their, so far, unprecedented prominence in this field. During the 1980s they've conducted a thorough and extremely comprehensive search for a consolidated definition for terrorism. They drafted the 16 most common elements from the research communities respective work and publications and analyzed 73 definitions that had appeared in major academic journals. They have updated the list and their overall findings in the course of 2004 and 2005 and continue their work in synthesizing data ever since. As a result they have come up with an "aggregated" definition for terrorism based on the lowest common denominator: *"Terrorism is a politically motivated tactic, involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role."*⁹² But if we would like to be extra careful with the details and qualifiers here, we need to notice that even this definition leaves much out that is at the core of terrorism: double victimization, the fact that their apparent direct targets are not the main targets, their strategic undercurrent will for us to overreact the power and scope of their attack and leverage; that the nature of their goals doesn't necessarily have to be political, etc.

After addressing the issue of the definitional conundrum with terrorism, I would like to discuss briefly the disciplines and approaches from which terrorism can be studied in order to create a minimal theoretical basis to go on with.

Political science, military and strategic studies, international relations, communication studies and social psychology are just the beginning of the list on which the fields and areas

⁹² Schmid, *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*.

concerned with terrorism are enumerated. In terms of the approach within these particular fields the scope and focus has always varied from the individual approach up until finding the bigger picture in terrorism, though three main pathways have been developed: the rational or instrumental by Martha Crenshaw; the socio-psychological one by Post and the so-called "multicausal-approach".⁹³ To go into detail beyond the sheer mentioning of these ideas though would be the topic of a completely different research so I am going to steer my focus toward the more focal problems in terrorism studies concerning the goal of this thesis, namely the case of goals, motivations and root causes of terrorism.

The root causes of terrorism – motivations and goals

There is a shared understanding among academic scholars on the fact that there is a grave demand to identify the root causes of terrorism, and since we've failed to do so the probability to come up with successful counterterrorism policies is limited and rather unlikely.⁹⁴ "The goal is not many dead but many afraid." stated Brian Jenkins in the 70s; but what about the root causes and the motivations that got these people into the bedlam of martyrdom and terrorism in the first place?

This question is a particularly loaded one due to the fact that there is not enough data to support any of the possible answers. Regardless to that, there is a slew of hypotheses and explanations hoping to answer this question, though one needs to handle them cautiously and test their validity in every specific case before deciding about their applicability. There are also different voices in interpretation if we are approaching the topic from the point of the US – terrorists are evil, underdeveloped, poor and envious of our grace and wealth, if I may put this so bluntly – or from the point of the EU – terrorism's breeding ground is the Arab-Israeli

⁹³ Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism*; Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*.

⁹⁴ Edward Newman, "Exploring the 'Root Causes' of Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (December 2006): 755, doi:10.1080/10576100600704069.

conflict, we need to focus entirely on that – or regarding the Arab regimes affected by terrorism – terrorism is due to the Western occupancy of "our land" desecrating the holy soil of Muslims by interfering with local political judgement and decisions.⁹⁵ One needs to keep these voices in mind just as well the scientific approach which can vary from the rational choice theory to a socio-psychological or even to a multi-layered and multi-disciple approach. It is also crucial to highlight that there is a substantial debate going on about the morality of even looking into the causes given that it is frequently seen and equated with the justification of terrorism.⁹⁶

In this subchapter I would like to skim through the already existing literature on the causes of terrorism highlighting the most important theories concerning the root causes of terrorism bearing in mind the emphasis on a possible nationalism related overtone.

I would like to look briefly into several assumptions and platitude-like themes on what can cause terrorism: terrorists are mentally ill, terrorism is caused by poverty, democracy is a cure for terrorism, terrorism is caused by grievances, by enabling structural factors – governments, rampant corruption, institutional failures etc -, by political issues, by certain socio-demographic factors – rapid urbanization for instance, by inequalities by declining traditional authority and many more to come. In order to get started with discussing this topic, one needs to keep in mind the difference between academic findings and media coverage because there are considerable discrepancies when looking into facts and figures. First, I am going to assess the validity of the factors in causes and motivations that are likely to be applicable in the case of the Al-Qaeda and especially with Osama bin-Laden and the other significant leaders of the

⁹⁵ H Behr and L Berger, "The Challenge of Talking about Terrorism: The EU and the Arab Debate on the Causes of Islamist Terrorism," *TERRORISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE* 21, no. 4 (2009): 539–57.

⁹⁶ Joseph F. Pilat, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Journal of Organisational Transformation & Social Change* 6, no. 2 (June 2009): 171–82, doi:10.1386/jots.6.2.171_1.

organization. Then I aim to conclude with the amount of data and the validity of the findings from this point of view.

To understand and dig deeper into the motivations and root causes of terrorism one has to step outside of the purview of the already existing knowledge and research due to the fact that they are tainted and distorted by a rather obsolete discourse on the topic which is still stuck with a Cold War state-centric, realist and positivist approach. As Franks duely noted, the paradigm within which terrorism has been discussed is contained in the state-discourse and because of that based on the legitimacy vs illegitimcay duality in terms of state-based violence and non-state violence that prevents us to even engage in a search for root causes, given that it then would legitimize non-state violence in a certain extent. Franks also concludes that in order to understand the causes of terrorism, one needs to get rid of the state-centric attitude in political violence.⁹⁷

It is necessary for us to see that there is a need to organize these factors in some manner that will help us pick and choose from the surge of likely explanations. That is why I would like to highlight the logical pattern of Edward Newman's theory in the first place who categorized the root causes of terrorism as *permissive structural factors* and *underlying grievances* as sub-categories.⁹⁸ It is a refreshingly new and well structured evaluation because of the layers and levels it incorporates and is completely indispensable considering the so far limited understanding we gained from uni-levelled interpretations. He introduces his systematic thinking on the topic by clarifying these denominators. Permissive structural factors are the components of a situation that allow and facilitate an enviroment where certain occurences can happen but have no explanatory value if left alone. Underlying grievances are those undercurrent factors that, if triggered and surrounded by the enabling permissive structural

⁹⁷ Franks, "Rethinking the Roots of Terrorism," 3–5.

⁹⁸ Newman, "Exploring the 'Root Causes' of Terrorism."

factors' atmosphere, can and will most likely ignite a situation. Permissive structural factors are poverty, demographic factors – rapid population growth, uneven population shifts in ethnic, religious or social sense – urbanization, exclusion and social inequality, alienation and human rights abuse and the clash of values. Underlying grievances can vary from military, cultural to economic and political factors which I am going to address more in depth.⁹⁹ What we need to gather from this line of thinking is that we always have to look for factors from both of these definitional groups in order to have the big picture that can eventually lead to a full understanding. If we only look at one factor at a time and try to pin the *modus operandi* of an entire organization on that specific factor then all we'll end up with is a partial understanding and a limited evaluation of an organization.

I would like to support this argument further by looking at other systems and authors of evaluating the root causes of terrorism and showing how insufficiently they were able to explain the phenomenon. After doing so I will select the factors that most likely are applicable to the case of Al-Qaeda and Osama bin-Laden.

Michael Freeman used a four variable explanation by selecting and looking only into the grievances of Middle Eastern people to explain the Al-Qaeda motivational arsenal. He discusses the question of whether democracy can be viewed as a viable solution or *cure* to terrorism and concludes that given the power of the global Salafi Jihad ideology is based on grievances that cannot be solved by democracy or by any of its institutional or governmental factors, democracy is an unlikely solution to reducing terrorism in the Middle East. He enlists the pathways that lead to the appeal of the global Salafi Jihad ideology as grievances based on the military occupation of the Middle East, the cultural threat to the Islamic identity by Western democratic ideologies, the economic failures to keep up with modernization and

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 751–53.

finally the disappointment stemming from the authoritarian governments acting as gullible puppets to Western forces. He concludes by saying that these pathways to terrorism cannot be affected by democracy therefore there is a need to look for better strategies in understanding the engine of the terrorist appeal, given that these factors were proved to be ineffectual.¹⁰⁰

Krieger and Meierrieks take this issue one step further by suggesting that it is utterly useless to stick with these broad areas of grievances. They go more into the various facets of economic, political, institutional and economic grievances in order to gain a better understanding of why terrorist do what they do. They developed a rather complex matrix of the possible global hypotheses and matching possible indicators though after a lengthy analysis they were only able to conclude that terrorism is too complex of a phenomenon to be reduced to only one root cause and that the cobweb model they implemented possesses only a limited competency in understanding terrorists.¹⁰¹

If we would like to look closely at the poverty factor, as one of the causes that was given far too much credit, we need to note that none of the research that investigated the causal link between poverty and terrorism has resulted in the conformation of the suggested link. Based on multiple regression analyses evaluating the effects of overall poverty, malnutrition, income inequalities, unemployment, inflation or poor economic growth researchers could not corroborate any type of strong or direct linkage to terrorist activity.¹⁰² On the other hand, it has to be noted that there were findings and opinions that showed a weak and associative-type of linkage between economic deprivation and terrorism, though always in the context of

¹⁰⁰ Michael Freeman, "Democracy, Al Qaeda, and the Causes of Terrorism: A Strategic Analysis of U.S. Policy," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 1 (January 2008): 40–59, doi:10.1080/10576100701759996.

¹⁰¹ Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierrieks, "What Causes Terrorism?," *Public Choice* 147, no. 1/2 (April 2011): 3–27, doi:10.1007/s11127-010-9601-1.

¹⁰² Piazza, "Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous?"; Krieger and Meierrieks, "What Causes Terrorism?"; Bjørgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 107.

politics where it was detectable for the individuals that economic deprivation is caused by faulty governmental policies and decisions.¹⁰³

We can also evaluate the "madman" hypothesis easily by following the data of such researches that were trying to determine whether there is a terrorist personality and whether we are able to conclude that they are mentally ill. The socio-psychological approach suggests that based on the existing and available data, terrorists cannot be seen as "crazy people". They are fanatics, yes indeed, though rational at the same time, whether we like it or not; which obviously does not mean that there aren't terrorists out there that are psychotic or just simply crazy. This should remain understandable and condemnable at the same time.¹⁰⁴ It is also necessary to categorize them as mentally ill or healthy because if that could be proven that there is little counterterrorist measures and policies can do, based on the fact that there is no rationale to look for a cause or motivation when it comes to crazy people.

Religion as a cause for terrorism is also something that we need to scrutinize in this case in order to cover all our bases. As Juergensmeyer would put it: *"Is religion the problem or the victim?"*¹⁰⁵ This one is a particularly loaded topic that would require more than just a short section, though concerning the limits of this thesis I will try to stick with the most important findings that can shed a different light to the rather banal voices, mostly stemming from extensive media coverage, that preach religion is the one and only fanatic root cause and engine of these organizations. Firstly we need to deconstruct the almost decades-long prominence and primacy of neo-orientalist scholars – Daniel Pipes, Bernard Lewis, Raphael Israeli, etc. - who build the whole discourse around the notion that Islam is somehow *inherently* violent and military. They entirely discard conclusions and findings that point to

¹⁰³ Bjørge, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 105.

¹⁰⁴ Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*; Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*.

¹⁰⁵ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 133.

the fact that almost every fanatical group – including Christians, Jews and Hindus – reacts with the same level of aggression and intensity to its antagonistic opponent. Beyond this, there's the perennial pattern of thinking that just refuses to deviate from the views of Western scholars assessing the teachings of Islam and its practical manifestations.¹⁰⁶ All in all, religion needs to be accounted for as a powerful source of legitimacy, meaning and authority and a divine validation for assorted grievances.¹⁰⁷

Though in the case of Islam there has to be punctuated that the emergence of its politicized form, *political Islam*, religion acted as the alternative successor of various failed nationalistic movements and projects from the early 1950s on. At the same time, this process coincided with the more widespread phenomenon – though manifested the most prominently in the Middle East in the midst of authoritarian governments and oppressive regimes – of religion, and particularly Islam, reemerging as an alternative religio-political force to act as a substitute for failed secular nationalisms. As a regional specificity to the Middle East, there was the phenomenon of the materialization of the mosque-mullah networks. They emerged as the by-products of repressive governmental policies that smothered even the smallest act of gathering or meetings.¹⁰⁸ This line of thought brings us to acknowledge the role of religion as a cloak or disguise for something entirely different: a hidden political agenda masked as cultural and religious grievances, a medium via which these grievances find their way to the open.¹⁰⁹

As an assessment we can conclude with this part of the analysis that almost all of the likely causes of terrorism can and maybe have already been debunked: there were literally no links

¹⁰⁶ Bjørge, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 106.

¹⁰⁷ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 155.

¹⁰⁸ Esposito in *Ibid.*, 146–147.

¹⁰⁹ Juergensmeyer in *Ibid.*, 141.

between poverty and terrorism;¹¹⁰ there is no supporting evidence proving the existence of a "terrorist mind" or a "terrorist personality" or any other psychological factors that could be directly linked to the acts of terrorists;¹¹¹ socio-demographic factors show a weak or, in cases, an almost non-existent link to terrorism;¹¹² etc. It is also of high importance to consider the fact that if social, economic or religious grievances were the prominent causes of Al-Qaeda being radicalized then they should have been targeting more enemies at the same time with the same amount of effort with little regard for the target states' military policies: the United States, Europe and Israel at least. And since I am only focusing on the era preceding the 9/11 attacks, in which the salience and centralized power of bin-Laden's leadership were obvious and unchallenged and the focus and structure of the organization were built around a specifically clear cut objective, the attacks carried out in Europe and the scattered nature and uncentralized structure of Al-Qaeda hadn't already been applicable. After 2001 the nature of the organization was seriously compromised in a sense that an uncentralized authority with a loose chain of command with self-appointed "leaders"¹¹³ cannot assert the same type of ideological solidarity and salience as the pre-9/11 Al-Qaeda used to be able to. In addition to this, there is evidence in form of an Al-Qaeda „strategic planning document" that surfaced on one of the Al-Qaeda operated radical Islamic websites in September 2003 that discusses in length how a possible series of attacks targeting European cities could coerce the US to

¹¹⁰ Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism*; Olivier. Roy, "Al Qaeda in the West as a Youth Movement: The Power of Narrative. CEPS Policy Briefs No. 168, 28 August 2008," 2008; Piazza, "Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous?"

¹¹¹ Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*; Piazza, "Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous?"

¹¹² Krieger and Meierrieks, "What Causes Terrorism?"; Max Abrahms, "Are Terrorists Really Rational? The Palestinian Example," *Orbis* 48, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 533–49; Erica Chenoweth et al., "What Makes Terrorists Tick," *International Security*, no. 4 (2009): 180; Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security*, no. 4 (2008): 78.

¹¹³ Here one can easily think of the self-appointed Iraqi Al-Qaeda "leader", Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, or of any other locally inspired radical groups that finally found a framework, in this case within Al-Qaeda, with which they can enable their otherwise selfish actions committed "in the name of Osama bin-Laden and the Jihad."

rethink its military strategies.¹¹⁴ Based on this line of thoughts, even the Madrid and London attacks were part of a generally US-based strategy using these events as collaterals and coercive elements along the way. The logic behind this angle was justified by Osama bin-Laden's *fatwa* from the April of 2004 in which he announced truce to the states that withdrew their forces from Iraq and Afghanistan.¹¹⁵

There is one set of principles that stand out: the factors of a failing political and institutional order carry almost always at least a weak or in cases even a medium-level importance in explaining the causes of terrorism. It can be seen most comprehensively in the summarizing tables at the end of the paper Krieger and Meierrieks published in 2011 where they assessed all the papers and publications that have dealt with the investigation of terrorist motivations so far. The only common denominator that popped up in each and every column was the one which delineated the political conditions, institutions and domestic affairs – troubled or controversial - in the given country or territory.¹¹⁶

There is another account that cannot be left out when speaking about politics and political grievances in terrorists' motivations to which I would like to ascribe a relatively longer section: Robert Pape's strictly objective and impartial assessment on suicide terrorists debunking the purpose of the act of ultimate martyrdom. His most important finding while studying the subject matter was that religion plays a little, if not even no role at all in the decision making process when these people are recruited, trained and then subsequently made to execute suicide bombings. He states that there is always specifically secular and strategic in each of these acts, even on the level of the individual, let alone the leadership of the

¹¹⁴ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House Publishing Group, 2005), 42.

¹¹⁵ Based on an audiotape distributed by al-Jazeera and other channels with Osama bin-Laden's "conditional reconciliation with Europe." "Full Text: 'Bin Laden Tape,'" *BBC*, April 15, 2004, sec. Middle East, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3628069.stm.

¹¹⁶ Krieger and Meierrieks, "What Causes Terrorism?," 20–22.

organization at hand. He concludes that above 90% of these incidents are part of a larger political or military campaign, opposite to the common assumption according to which these are isolated, random and irrational attacks carried out by psychopathic madmen crazed by poverty and fundamentalist rage. He specifically stresses the point that in the vast majority of these events the perpetrators were pursuing legitimate nationalist goals, among which *liberation from foreign occupation* is highly accented.¹¹⁷ He is very specific about mentioning Al-Qaeda in this matter and declaring that *"The most important goal that a community can have is the independence of its homeland (population, property, and way of life) from foreign influence or control."*¹¹⁸ To accentuate his argument of listing Al-Qaeda here he relies on hard data that indicate 95% of the Saudi society agrees with bin-Laden in this specific aspiration – *even if* ¹¹⁹ they, in general, oppose terrorism as a way of expressing this. According to Pape, the leadership of the organization almost always reflects to nationalist, self-determinatory claims of the community and in this case, the emergence of Al-Qaeda even strengthened the already existing triple bond of nationalism omnipresent in the region – the overlapping Arabian identity, pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic identity out of which the later two were significantly weaker than the first one and they showed a major and significantly bigger leap in creating loyalties via the gathering powers of Al-Qaeda than the first one, namely the Arabian or Saudi identity.¹²⁰

He also gives us the parallel with Hamas – an organization that has always been categorized as a religious-nationalist alignment - of which ultimate goal is to create an Islamic state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean – not alien or very different from the set goals of Al-

¹¹⁷ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 19.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹⁹ Italics from the author in order to stress the importance that despite the negation of terrorism they still agree with the core incentive of Osama bin-Laden that is purely nationalistic when stripped from the mask of religion and terrorism as a strategy to fight for it.

¹²⁰ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 70.

Qaeda and the *Caliphate* – in their case the core incentive was the Arabian Peninsula, then Afghanistan and Iraq as the focal points of their aspirations has shifted due to the expanding foreign occupation –; still, the nationalistic undercurrent of this organization is almost always downplayed compared to Hamas no matter how similar their core objectives,¹²¹ methods and even their ideologies are stemming both from the tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood requiring the expulsion of foreigners from the holy land and the work toward the establishment of an Islamic regime.

According to the data Pape has organized and analyzed based on the research of the Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism we can conclude that contrary to the general assumption facilitated heavily by popularized media coverage often bent to the will of policy makers and politicians *"Al-Qaeda is less a transnational network of like-minded ideologues brought together from across the globe via the Internet than a cross-national military alliance of national liberation movements working together against what they as a common imperial threat. For Al-Qaeda, religion matters, but mainly in the context of national resistance to foreign occupation."* And what is shockingly akin to these ideas expressed by Pape are the arguments and statements of Al-Qaeda leaders' – in contrast with the rampant media coverage heralding the apocalyptic clash of civilizations where Islam is the evil and Muslims are from the devil to ruin the West - that actually resonate with the core findings in his book: religion is being exploited by the leadership of the organization in order to justify and facilitate national liberation.

Although, suicide terrorism does not cover the entirety of an organization, it sure is a certain sign of the core intensity and claims of the organization's emotional and strategic structure that can be extrapolated to be understood as telltale signs of the mission and motivation of the

¹²¹ Hellmich, *Al-Qaeda*, chap. 2.

alignment as a whole. And since the secrecy and the unknown real number of terrorist organizations can compromise the research and the fact that we cannot really know how biased the sample is, it is crucial to focus on the salience and integrity of the hereby presented data instead of estimating the flaws of the research.¹²²

It is further denoted in almost every comprehensive study that is willing to embrace the so-called *objective literal* approach by Noam Chomsky over the *propagandistic* approach that does not necessarily involve statistics or any extensive data analysis but rather focuses on the issue from an ideological point of view and as a validation process for Western interests and policies.¹²³ And interestingly enough, the majority of the papers and publications investigating this issue before 9/11 stresses the point that the most likely cause of developing terrorist tendencies specifically in the Middle East shows a strong connection to the oppressive political agenda implemented by autocratic governments collaborating with the US which regimes effectively prevent and suppress certain opposition groups from expressing themselves while showing little or no respect for democratic values.¹²⁴

As to sum up the scattered features of these various kinds of motivations, it can be stated with absolute certainty that the major energizing factor here is the aggregated pack of political grievances fused with territorial and internal debates. These factors are most likely to ignite an already troubled situation, in our case by affecting various areas of the Middle East huddling and incorporating all those disappointed people who can, as a result of this *status quo*, easily be mobilized and animated by religious voices and claims. On the other hand, it is more of a common statement concerning the origins of nationalism and patriotic loyalty that conflict and threat – and especially territorial and political grievances coupled with a lost

¹²² Pape, *Dying to Win*, 76.

¹²³ Bjørge, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, 104.

¹²⁴ Bjørge, *Root Causes of Terrorism*; Ami Pedahzur, ed., *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: Globalization of Martyrdom*, Cass Series on Political Violence (New York: Routledge, 2006).

sense of belonging threatened by mischievous and untrustworthy governance to say the least - create the perfect environment within which nationalism can develop and reach its full-blown potential. In this case, the threat is not only from within but stems from external sources as well. These people are not just deluded and deceived by internal authorities, by their very governments and state officials – let there be royal family offsprings, military dictators or prime ministers - but are being stalled and bullied and intimidated by external ones too. And as a logical upcoming step, the political and authoritative vacuum that has been created needs to be filled by the next successor. And in the heydays of the Al-Qaeda, during the 90s, it was believed that Osama bin-Laden will be able to act as a unifying motivational and charismatic leader uniting Muslims throughout the Middle East regardless to their countries or citizenships.

These findings got us closer to the realization that the value of the homeland in nationalistic terms cannot possibly be overlooked in the case of the emergent Al-Qaeda, and specifically not in the case of the pre-9/11 Al-Qaeda. Occupation by a foreign entity has always been the breeding ground for resistance that facilitated the provoked nationalist sentiment of the occupied who is no longer able to decide freely and fully upon its own fate and future actions. The presence of the occupier threatens the very ability of the local community to be able to practice its daily habits and perpetuate those special characteristics that give them the basis of their national or regional identity. Religious differences between the alien occupier and the subordinate occupied are just another token of the aforementioned fears and do not create the establishment of the grievances in particular.¹²⁵ And based on his research, religious views only influence the already recruited individual but can never be seen as the basis of the radicalization process, nor of the person's motivations.

¹²⁵ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 60–69.

The specific case of Al-Qaeda – ideology and leaders’ motivations

In this chapter I would like extensively test the hypothesis whether Osama bin-Ladana and his aspirations could be or could not be seen and understood as the acts and strivings of a political leader uniting a specific bunch of people carrying the same sort of grievances, hopes and fears; speaking the very same language and are being inspired by the same God.

First of all, I would like to take a minor detour to revisit the significance of *Wahhabism*, a form of the Islamic religion specific to Saudi Arabia only to have it stood related to Osama bin-Laden’s background on religion and its particular appeal to him. Then I would like to delve a little bit into the facts about the origins of Al-Qaeda and into the initial motivational pattern of Osama bin-Laden that formed the framework of his reasoning and at the same time gave Al-Qaeda its ideological foundations. After doing so, I will turn to several of his statements and publications – and additionally to other proven primary sources such as former collaborators, counsellors or even body guards’ recollections on the acts and deeds of bin-Laden - in order to test them for trace evidence of using of a particularly nationalistic voice, assertions or even straightforward intentions.

According to a broad and extensive public opinion survey-based research conducted by the University of Maryland, the overwhelming majority (62-87% of overall population) of Muslims think that the US military presence in the Middle East is a telltale sign of their governments being corrupt and unable and needs to be ceased immediately, unless the US wants the likelihood of terrorist attacks carried out on US soil to increase rapidly. When asked, also the majority of Muslims in the Middle East said that they agree with almost every goal of Al-Qaeda in terms of rejecting US military presence, promoting a true Islamist

governance instead of the rampantly corrupt and disappointing autocracies now incumbent; though the approach toward the use of terrorism remains ambivalent and rather negative.¹²⁶

As for the geographic cauldron of the emergence of Al-Qaeda, one needs to look at Saudi Arabia¹²⁷ and the Afghani¹²⁸-Pakistani¹²⁹ border region.¹³⁰ These countries, based on the figures and research conducted by the Freedom House, were never above the level of 6 or even 7, which indicates a status of "not free" or "partially free" on a scale from 1-7 in terms of how free the given country is concerning civil liberties, press, political and human rights. This gives us the statistical evidence of the repressive nature of the governments from which Al-Qaeda emerged building on the common grievances of the populations at hand.

Before embarking the investigation of Al-Qaeda and Osama bin-Laden, there is another crucial thing to look into: *wahhabism* and *salafism* in order to understand the theoretical background and the ideological underpinnings of the organization. Following in the footsteps of Ibn Taymiyya, Abd al-Wahhab facilitated the basics of the movement that claims that Islam needs to be purified in order to be able to break free from the centuries-old backlog compared to the West. Purifying Islam can only happen in one way: by the adherence to the *Quran* and the *Hadith* as the sole source of legitimacy and by discarding all the other speculative philosophies that are trying to get a better hold on the holy scriptures and their

¹²⁶ Available at: <file:///D:/Dokumentumok/CEU/THESIS/World%20Public%20Opinion%20-%20Al-Qaeda%20and%20the%20people.pdf> (Accessed: May 2014)

¹²⁷ Saudi Arabia before 2001 – Country report and assessment from 1999 - available at: http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/1999/saudi-arabia#.U4sO8_1_tec (Accessed: May 2014)

¹²⁸ Afghanistan before 2001 – Country report and assessment from 1998 and 1999: available at: http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/1998/afghanistan#.U4sPcPl_tec and at http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/1999/afghanistan#.U4sQ1fl_tec (Accessed: May 2014)

¹²⁹ Pakistan before 2001 – Country report and assessment from 1999 – available at: http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/1999/pakistan#.U4sPk_1_tec (Accessed: May 2014)

¹³⁰ Mussarat Jabeen, Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, and Naheed S. Goraya, "US Afghan Relations: A Historical Perspective of Events of 9/11," *South Asian Studies (1026-678X)* 25, no. 1 (January 2010): 143–73.

interpretations, let alone the innovations (*bida'*) that were brought about by the West and the achievements of modernism.¹³¹

Saudi Arabia is the key center for Wahhabi Muslims with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates,¹³² and is often called the foundation of every radical Islamic movements with its ultraconservative, orthodox and fundamentalistic puritanism. *Wahhabism* and *salafism* on the other hand cannot be used interchangeably though the fundamental idea behind them is similar: purify Islam, gain back the greatness that was stripped of Muslims because of the tainted religious movements inclining away from the original teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The best way to describe the relationship between these two would be to understand *wahhabism* as a specific, minor branch in the *salafi* ideology, given that *salafism* is a more general term to speak about puritanical Islamic movements and aspirations.¹³³

And what the takeaway from the perspective of Al-Qaeda and Osama bin-Laden is, is the role *wahhabism* played in the political development and history of Saudi Arabia, given the fact that after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Saudi Arabia was built on the foundational preachings of *wahhabism*.

And what brings us to Osama bin-Laden, is the political and, at the same time, theoretical split, in which his role was of utmost importance, that happened around the end of the 1990s when *salafist jihadists* proclaimed their distance from that particular branch of the *wahhabi-salafist* movement who still pledged their alliance to the House of Saud. The *salafi-jihadist* inclination in Saudi Arabia dates way back then just the emergence of Al-Qaeda; it is a rather significant teaching of the *wahhabist-salafist* movement to expel every alien form of authority from the land of the holy places and therefore stands as a vital politico-religious part of the

¹³¹ Hellmich, *Al-Qaeda*, chap. 2.

¹³² Religion Composition of the Persian Gulf Region - available at: http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/GulfReligionGeneral_lg.png (Accessed: May 2014)

¹³³ Hellmich, *Al-Qaeda*, chap. 2.

movement.¹³⁴ The *salafi jihadist* movement has another important aspect to it that we need to address, namely the official goal of the movement is to reestablish the past glory of Muslims and reunite them in a great Islamic state, which carries a significant nationalistic voice – pride, culture, territory in the forefront - that we need to notice here.

Because of these controversies, stemming partially from the first Gulf War, the Afghan situation following the Soviet fallback and the constant and ever-increasing US military presence in the Middle East, Osama bin-Laden had to leave Saudi Arabia after which he found refuge in Sudan and then later on, after his revoked Saudi citizenship and the Sudanese government being urged to expel him, in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban.¹³⁵

A brief history of Al-Qaeda and Osama bin-Laden

In this subchapter, I would like to highlight the elements of the Al-Qaeda history and Osama bin-Laden's personal development into the leadership of the organization that can underpin the reasoning behind a possible nationalistic undercurrent. Concerning the length of this thesis I do not wish to investigate the topic in its entirety due to the fact that it would draw the attention away from the issue at hand, namely the possible nationalistic traits throughout the development of the organization's basic ideology stemming from its theoretical founding father, Osama bin-Laden. Concerning the timeframe of my inquiries, I would like to stick with the period before the 9/11 attacks given that the era preceeding the event was the real escalation and strengthening pathway of Al-Qaeda – the "historical Al-Qaeda", a top-down organization with a strong and centralized leadership controlling each and every aspect

¹³⁴ Steven Brooke, "Jihadist Strategic Debates before 9/11," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 3 (March 2008): 201–26, doi:10.1080/10576100701879612.

¹³⁵ Shavit, Uriya. "Al-Qaeda's Saudi Origins." *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1, 2006.
<http://www.meforum.org/999/al-qaedas-saudi-origins>. (Accessed: May 2014)

starting from the group's daily life up until the organization and planning of the attacks and operations - and because after 2001 the organization was scattered geographically and ideologically as well.¹³⁶ I would like to focus on the *fatwas*, statements and life events that happened between Afghanistan's Soviet invasion – signifying one of the first steps of bin-Laden's history as well as the history of Al-Qaeda as well – and the 9/11 attacks.

Osama bin-Laden: early life and the way of radicalization

Osama bin-Muhammad bin-Awad bin-Laden was born in 1957 into one of the wealthiest families of our times, into a Yemeni-Saudi family with close ties to the royal ruling elite - the House of Saud- of the country, as the 17th son of billionaire construction tycoon, Mohammad bin-Awad bin-Laden. His studies and education have always been a place of controversial data, but most definitely he engaged in studies in engineering, business administration, civil engineering and public administration at King Abdulaziz University and at the Al-Thager Model School. Some are eager to report that he led extensive studies in the field of Islamic studies, but this had been challenged many times and then was successfully disproved¹³⁷ given that the only thing we can know with absolute certainty is that he had one single course in religious studies where he met his early mentor, Muhammad Qutb (brother of the late Sayyid Qutb) and Abdul Assam, a Palestinian radical and member of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³⁸

The escalation of those years then had finally reached its peak in 1979 – the year is marked as the beginning of a new century in the Muslim calendar, which is traditionally a time for big change and the herald of a new era in Islam – with the Iranian revolution, the aftermath of the

¹³⁶ Coolsaet, *Al-Qaeda, the Myth*, 54.

¹³⁷ Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

¹³⁸ Though, it is noteworthy that the influence of these men on bin-Laden's ideological development cannot and should not be overestimated. As Bergen puts it "... – it's as if Ronald Reagan and Milton Friedman's brother had taught him about capitalism." Ibid., 52.

Jom Kippur war and the Camp David negotiations, the assassination of Sadat and finally, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan marking the year of 1979 when Osama bin-Laden started on the journey that established Al-Qaeda and his personal cadre of leadership in the coming decade.¹³⁹

Driven by the changes and the power of the aforementioned events, bin-Laden drops out of college and goes to the Aghani-Pakistani border and starts to get deeply involved into the Afghan war, for which he moved Saudi money and established founding bases in the US, in the Uk in Saudi Arabia with Afghanistan as the center of his personal network and the ending point of the money trail. The base they set up in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan was named "The Register of the Base", *Sijill Al-Qaeda*, a safe haven for all the Jihadi fighters who came to join the freedom fighters and *mujahidiin* in Afghanistan.

After successfully driving out the Soviet troops from the country, bin-Laden went home to Saudi Arabia only to realize that because Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, had seized Kuwait and had brought about the first Gulf War, US troops were to be stationed in Saudi Arabia in the name of protecting the royal family of Saud. It is necessary to hint here that the US abandoning Afghanistan and the Muslim fighters after the victory against the Soviet Union in 1988 left him with a grudge he held against the US for letting the country sink back into chaos once its own selfish expectations were met.

Osama bin-Laden had offered his help and his veteran troops to pledge their alliance with the royal family and their protection should the government expel the US troops from the country. His offering was rejected and he ended up in jail for his outraged, patriotic zeal after which he was ousted from Saudi Arabia and had to set up his basecamp in Sudan from where he was expelled later on with his Saudi citizenship revoked due to the, by then, infamous

¹³⁹ **Hiro in Ibid., 52.**

activities of the Al-Qaeda. After this line of prosecutory acts he finally settled down in the war-torn Afghanistan under the protection and cooperation of the Taliban.

The *wahhabist* background in bin-Laden's ideological stance is of substantial significance, due to the fact that the legitimized use of violence against those who hold differing views is one of the cornerstone ideas in *Wahhabism* based on the uncompromising conflict with Sufis and Shiites. Though, it is necessary to note here that bin-Laden has rather embraced the more tolerant pan-Islamic version of this by saying that the territory of the *Ummah* needs to be reclaimed regardless of religious or sectarian differences within Islam.¹⁴⁰ It is important to point out here that *wahhabism* condemned suicide bombings and labelled them as un-Islamic, which only shows us and reinforces my original line of thought regarding the motivations of Al-Qaeda or Osama bin-Laden: the religious foundations of the organization are not clear-cut nor in line entirely with either *wahhabism*, *salafism* or with the teachings of the *Quran* which Osama bin-Laden uses rather selectively in order to forge a tool to mobilize people for his cause.

This is also true to the interpretation of the meaning of *jihad*: based on the Quranic understanding of the phrase, *jihad* marks the struggle and the inner development of the individuals who strive to find the way Allah has marked for them. In this interpretation, *jihad* is the so-called "major *jihad*"; the lesser *jihad* is the one that needs to be waged physically in order to defend the holy land, the religion, one's possession, etc. *Jihad* in the Quranic sense is never offensive, though bin-Laden prefers to depict it this way in order to exploit its mobilizing force via mashing it into the command of "proselytize the heathen" the *kafir*, and the traitorous apostates – including the Muslim leaders of Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Pakistan, the Gulf states and first and foremost, of Saudi Arabia.

¹⁴⁰ Hellmich, *Al-Qaeda*, chap. 2.

He, himself liked to address himself as the modern-day Saladdin, though according to contemporaries and individuals who met the Al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin-Laden appeared as a rather shy, very self-effacing, sparse in his words and generally a do-gooder¹⁴¹ and as Lawrence has noted: *"A dissident from his homeland, a renegade in his faith community, a terrorist in the eyes of his enemies, he became an anti-imperial polemicist intent on seeking his fortune through religious ardor and rhetorical deftness."*¹⁴²

Osama bin-Laden, the wily, shrewd, complex and still humble figure may now be dead but inseparable from his personal existence, bin-Laden the ideologue is and still remains an extraordinary force in today's Al-Qaeda with an even increasing zeal. And without truly knowing him and debunking his motivations, counter-terrorist measures will never be able to aptly address the problem of Al-Qaeda terrorism.

With this section I wanted to emphasize the likelihood of a nationalistic interpretation on why Osama bin-Laden did what he did and though the way he thought based on the array of non-proven – or at least not entirely demonstrable - motivational factors and given the famous aphorism, according to which, most nationalists do not call themselves nationalists, though have the nationalistic zeal commanding each of their moves may it be unconscious on their part.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ A documentary by Ahmad Zaidan, Al-Jazeera's Islamabad correspondent on Osama bin-Laden via addressing people who knew the Al-Qaeda leader - available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm4DMg1vQ7s> (Accessed: May 2014)

¹⁴² Lawrence, Bruce B., Usāma Bin Lādin, and Usāma bin Lādin. "The Late Shaikh Osama Bin Laden: A Religious Profile of Al-Qaeda's Deceased Poster Child." *Muslim World: A Journal Devoted to the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 101, no. iii (2011): 374–89. p. 374.

¹⁴³ Liah Greenfeld, "Nationalism and Terrorism," *Project Syndicate*, September 10, 2012, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/nationalism-and-terrorism-by-liah-greenfeld/english>.

Al-Qaeda: theories, structure and historical background

Al-Qaeda is one of the most contested organization in a dire need for a definition. Al-Qaeda as an organization; as a terrorist organization; as a political movement that happened to use terrorism as its strategic weapon; or even Al-Qaeda as the "network of networks"? Due to its secretive nature, the first mentioning of the organization in a CIA report surfaced only in 1996 and was only able to sum it up as an "... *Islamic Salvation Front, or al-Qaeda, to support muhajideen in Afghanistan.*" and Osama bin-Laden as an Islamic Extremist Financier without any specific goal or driving force.¹⁴⁴

To even be able to begin with the untangling of those assorted meanings and understandings, first of all, I would like to state that I'll limit my research to the so-called "historical Al-Qaeda", the one existing before the 9/11 attacks with a strong, central leadership limited mostly to the Middle East concerning its origins, or as Burke has categorized the phases of the "Al-Qaeda-metamorphosis", the first two phases: Al-Qaeda as a "vanguard" from 1989-1996 and the second one, Al-Qaeda as a "base" from 1996-2001.¹⁴⁵ Especially because of the surge of violent events – truck bombs exploded in 1998 at two US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the USS Cole incident, etc. - and the subsequent War on Terror, Al-Qaeda can no longer be compared to any other "regular" terrorist organizations such as Hamas, IRA, Pkk, etc. As Bakker puts it, the best fitting description to Al-Qaeda as it is today would be a "network of networks and affiliates".¹⁴⁶ Within this sub-section, given the limited space of the thesis, I would like to limit myself to only reporting those features and characteristics of the organization that can be linked to the proposed nationalistic undercurrent of Al-Qaeda and are able to reinforce that.

¹⁴⁴ Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, n.d., 22.

¹⁴⁵ Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda : Casting the Shadow of Terror / Jason Burke* (London ; New York : I.B. Tauris, 2003, n.d.), 290.

¹⁴⁶ Bakker, "The Evolution of Al-Qaedaism."

Al-Qaeda as an ideological force dates back to the emergence of Arab nationalism, which I have discussed in length before in the second chapter of my thesis, and to the ideals of its theoretical founding father, Sayyid Qutb. His views, most concisely addressed in his book, *Milestones*,¹⁴⁷ accentuate the baseline of Osama bin-Laden's understanding of the West as an oppressive occupier though he always used Qutb's statements filled with hatred and blinded condemnation with a specifically moderate and political overtone that diverts the attention from the "hatred against the West" as the central cause to the more secular political and strategic underpinnings voiced by Osama bin-Laden.

Al-Qaeda, even in its initial form as the "vanguard", had predecessors, namely the often under-cited and unmentioned organization, *Maktab al-Khadamat* (MAK) "Office of Order" led by Osama bin-Laden's teacher, the Palestinian Abdullah Azzam with the financial help of bin-Laden. It is also known as the Afghan Services Bureau, founded in 1984, that helped orienting, funding and structuring the arrival and training of *jihadi* fighters arriving into Afghanistan. After the death of Azzam in 1989, the organization was merged within Al-Qaeda. In this first phase of development, Al-Qaeda was moved from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia, then to Sudan and finally back to Afghanistan where the second, strongest and most centrally focused phase could begin from 1996. During this period the core Al-Qaeda had already reached out to and allied with various groups fighting against oppression, apostate rulers and even for the sake of establishing their own Islamic state – Palestine, Chechnya, Dagestan and even Mindanao. This shows us that even from this particular angle, we can perceive the slight nationalist inclination of the organization.¹⁴⁸

Now I would like to turn to the leadership of the organization, in order to link the previous chapter on Osama bin-Laden to these findings by giving it some contextual knowledge. The

¹⁴⁷ Qutb, *Milestones*.

¹⁴⁸ Bakker, "The Evolution of Al-Qaedaism," 11–12.

internal organization of the pre-9/11 Al-Qaeda leadership was rather sophisticated, consisting a *majlis al shura*, a central committee of sort, and a consultative council of which membership was always in rotation and consisted of experienced members of the cadre of Osama bin-Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri.

It's worth to take a closer look at the direct affiliates of Al-Qaeda given that their goals are almost always include locally inspired and openly nationalistic aspirations such as the establishment of an Islamic state and the will to expel foreigners from their homelands. The fusion between these groups with Al-Qaeda has been and still is changing but the basic incentive of pledging loyalty with the core Al-Qaeda remained strong and unchanging. Among many other organizations I would like to highlight the Iraqi *Jamaat al-Tawhid wal Jihad* – Monotheism and Holy War Movement led by the "Prince of Jihad", the infamous Abu Musab al-Zarqawi; the Algerian GSPC – The Salafist Group for Call and Combat; and the Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan movement under the command of the Egyptian Mustafa Ahmed Muhammad Uthman Abu al-Yazid; all of which are operating with the clear-cut and openly voiced incentive of overthrowing apostate Muslim governments, expelling foreign forces from their homeland and the will to establish an Islamic state.

Leaders and ideology: motivations and goals – a short analysis of statements

Within this sub-chapter I aim to briefly enumerate and highlight the instances of Osama bin-Laden's statements, media interviews and the transcripts of secretly released audio tapes where he outwardly and directly uses a nationalist voice and mentions nationalistic grievances and aspirations.

I am looking into several of his statements from 1994 up until 2009 but only focusing on the ones that may shed more light on the proposed nationalistic undercurrent of his intentions and root motivations.¹⁴⁹ The ones that are worth focusing on are the 1996 and the 1998 *fatwas* and other short appearances before 2001, due to the fact that after the 9/11 attacks bin-Laden only appeared sporadically on video and his original statements were released in great secrecy and therefore in smaller numbers. In addition to this, the statements after the 9/11 attacks mainly focus on recent events and broadcast the Al-Qaeda leader's opinion about those with only reciting and repeating the core values and causes upon which Al-Qaeda was built.

The first officially issued statement of Osama bin-Laden is the "Betrayal of Palestine" from his Sudanese exile - December 29 1994 - which was partially motivated by his expressed pain and humiliation over his revoked Saudi citizenship, a legit act of wounded patriotic and nationalistic pride.¹⁵⁰ In this open letter he refers to several theologians from the 7th century whose acts he describes patriotic and as a duty to their people. Here he reinforces Islam's, as a religion, close relationship to politics as a second, inherent nature of religion that inflicts certain duties to the individual that is owed to "its people".¹⁵¹

Later on, he points out that the juridical decree that allowed US troops to be stationed in Saudi Arabia has "*insulted the pride of our umma and sullied its honor, as well as polluting its holy places.*" Pride, honor and territorial grievances – clear markings of nationalistic sentiments.¹⁵² By mentioning and condemning the ordeals of two Islamic scholars – Salman al-Auda and Safar al-Hawali - imprisoned in Saudi Arabia he closes the ties between radical *wahhabism* and the ideologies of the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Qutb, subsequently adverting to

¹⁴⁹ FBIS Report – Compilation of Usama Bin Ladin Statements 1994 – January 2004 – available at: <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ubl-fbis.pdf> (Accessed: May 2014)

¹⁵⁰ Bin Laden and Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, 3–14.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

principles of Arab nationalism. When he mentions the issued decree justifying peace with the Jews he titles it as a disaster for Muslims, which conflict is based upon territorial grievances and the invasion of an assumed homeland of the *Ummah*.

Then he describes the *jihad* to liberate Palestine as an act of returning "*Islamic sovereignty*" legitimacy and authority over Muslims – secular, nationalist and political in tone and meaning to address a seemingly religious conflict.

In another early statement of his, from around 1995 or 1996, he discusses the abhorrent principal and decision of letting the US troops being stationed in the Arabian peninsula.¹⁵³ He speaks about the homeland in third person singular, feminine, - "... *the defilement of her holy places, occupation of her land, and violation and plundering of her sanctuaries ...*" - as someone whose existence was being desecrated by allowing foreign troops to gain foothold. The adherence to the homeland and the wish for its integrity to be reinstated coupled with the patriotic fervor displayed in this statement can also point toward the manifestation of particularly nationalistic sentiments.

The so-called *Ladenise Epistle* from 1996, or the "Declaration of *Jihad* against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries"¹⁵⁴ also includes the aforementioned grievances stressed and highlighted even more than in the earlier statements.¹⁵⁵ Now the scope of the grievances is expanded a bit further to encompass the entirety of the Islamic *Ummah* by invoking the sufferings of the Middle East, North Africa and the Balkans for example, under the "... *blatant imperial arrogance of the United States ...*"¹⁵⁶ When addressing the oppression, injustice and hostility inflicted upon Muslims by the Americans, he

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14–19.

¹⁵⁴ Also available online at: http://information-retrieval.info/docs/1996_declaration.html (Accessed: May 2014)

¹⁵⁵ Bin Laden and Lawrence, *Messages to the World*, chap. 3.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

voices his concerns not from a religious point of view but from the viewpoint of an offended patriot whose "blood, property and wealth" were discarded by the occupying force.

Just as it is obvious from his 1998 fatwa, the *World Islamic Front*,¹⁵⁷ where he relies on the same structural reasoning: religious examples, religious quotations, religious style in wording, though when it comes to reasons, causes and actual igniting points, the tone and the arguments switch to political and nationalistic with the symbols and the subject of grievances.

¹⁵⁷ **Ibid., 58–62.**

The Al-Qaeda Associated Movements in the Middle East – motivations

According to Bakker, there are four ways to describe Al-Qaeda groups: the Al-Qaeda leadership, recognized affiliates, self-proclaimed affiliates and groups solely inspired by Al-Qaeda without any direct or detectable link to the organization.¹⁵⁸ AQAMs can be listed under the self-proclaimed groups and the "inspired by Al-Qaeda" section. From jihadi terrorists in Europe up until the virtually inspired and bred lone-wolf terrorist the principal grievances they acted upon were toppling oppressive regimes, local and personal political issues, and the establishment of an Islamic state.¹⁵⁹

In this very short chapter I would like to briefly refer to the changed nature of Al-Qaeda, now more of a movement of "network of networks and affiliates" or a franchise organization that reflects in the majority of the cases mostly to the nationalistic and strategic grievances-oriented undercurrent of the original, historical Al-Qaeda. These locally inspired groups react to their very surroundings, political grievances against oppression by the West or by apostate Muslim governments.¹⁶⁰

AQAMs now cannot possibly be disregarded as a non-important political factor and after a decade of the 9/11 attacks the US has declared that counterterrorist policies need to be adjusted - based on challenging academic questioning and on an "outside of the box" thinking - according to the increasingly local grievances expressed by these movements.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Bakker, "The Evolution of Al-Qaedaism," 16–24.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 71; Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* / Fawaz A. Gerges (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, c2011., 2011).

¹⁶⁰ Bakker, "The Evolution of Al-Qaedaism," 65–74.

¹⁶¹ "Ten Years Later: Insights on Al-Qaeda's Past & Future through Captured Records: A Conference Report," 2012.

Scholars have also warned politicians and decision makers that Al-Qaeda is not dead, on the contrary: its scattered cells can pose just as big and grave of a threat to the US and the Western forces as did the centralized version of them, the late, historical-Al-Qaeda. The cells' goals and root causes are overwhelmingly territory and politics based which underpins the arguments of a possible nationalistic undercurrent omnipresent in the entirety of the organization.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Seth G. Jones, "Think Again: Al Qaeda," *Foreign Policy*, no. 193 (June 5, 2012): 1; Abdulrahman al-Masri et al., "Al-Qaeda Influence Spreads Unchecked," *USA Today*, accessed February 24, 2014, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=J0E105455164914&site=eds-live>.

Conclusion and summary

”Nationalism is a temporal vision (and thus secular, even when using religion in its rhetoric) ...” as Greenfeld assesses the topic. ”As a result, those who possess national consciousness become committed to and defensive of the dignity of the nation ... Being blind to the connection between nationalism and dignity ... may cost the US even more.” ¹⁶³

Throughout my thesis I argued that the *Ummah*, a conscious and interconnected body of Muslims can possess a certain type of national consciousness that enables them to act defensively to the oppressive nature of foreign occupation and meddling with internal policies in the Middle East. In order to investigate the topic I used several thematic clusters to bolster up the argument. First of all, I cross referenced those ideas in the vast literature of nationalism that can resonate with my assumption, namely that nationalism as a sense of loyalty and emotion doesn’t necessarily require a state – in the modern sense – in order to be applicable. Then I moved on to the issue of Arab nationalism and the reasoning that corroborates the validity of the *Ummah* seen as a nation and a source of loyalty and belonging.

To round up the other end of the proposition, I scrutinized the main theories of terrorism studies that examine the motivations of terrorists in order to be able to decide upon the alleged discrepancy according to which, nor poverty, nor social inequalities nor any other assumed root cause can verify entirely the deeds of terrorist organization other than the ones with political grievances and a wounded sense of dignity either by oppressive governments or occupying foreign troops.

As a conclusion, we can propose that this line of thinking may open up a different approach to interpret and explain the motivation and root causes of Al-Qaeda terrorism.

¹⁶³ Greenfeld, “Nationalism and Terrorism.”

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