

AL-QAIDA AS A POST-MODERN CULT

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Al-Qaida is evolving into a new brand of cult, with Usama bin Laden as his charismatic guru, the transnational community of jihadis (the only « true » Muslims) as his virtual base and Internet as his main medium. Internet is not only crucial in bridging the gaps between the various activist nucleus, it is key to bypass the religious sanction of well-established clerics, whether official or dissident. After years of attacking the “court ulama”, Al-Qaida has less and less “jihadi ulama” to rely upon, so it is increasingly promoting the infallibility of its own leadership.

This cultish process had initially a lot to do with the deepening impact of the takfiri ideology and practice, but it drifts now into a re-actualized version of the “saved sect” (*al-firqa al-nâjiha*) paradigm. A self-proclaimed vanguard pretends to define what is right and wrong in a new religion that is the one and only “legitimate” Islam. Waging Al-Qaida inspired jihad is the unique way to join the chosen ones, while all the others, especially the Muslim “apostates”, are doomed to the worst. This exaltation of jihad for the sake of jihad led to the “neo-khariji” labelling in recent controversies. But Al-Qaida stands away from messianic tendencies, even in their revolutionary agendas.