



In This Volume

Volume: 05

February 2021

Taliban Talk: Taqiyyah or Duality of Identity

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Summary

Perhaps some observers and those interested in Afghan affairs were surprised by the hosting of the Arab magazine "Al-Sumoud", which is issued by the Media Center of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, "Taliban", and on more than one occasion, to the Sharia judge of Al-Qaeda in Syria, Abdullah Al-Muhaisni.

While it affirms its commitment to the terms of their agreement with the United States, including preventing any armed radical group from using Afghan lands as a base for planning attacks on the United States and its allies, the reader of the monthly Taliban magazine, which explains the movement's ideas, positions and political, intellectual and legal doctrines since its release in 2006 until today, is well aware of the depth of the common heritage and history that unites the Taliban, Al Qaeda and the rest of the Islamist revolutionary movements in "Kandahar" and outside, in addition to the movement's goals and political ambition, which hinder disengaging it from Al Qaeda and other armed groups.

Al-Sumoud magazine began its first issue in early 2006 with a speech by the leader and founder of the Taliban movement, Mullah Omar, lamenting al-Zarqawi, saying: "We consider the mujahid brother Abu Musab al-Zarqawi a hero of the Islamic nation, as well as a knight from the knights of the Islamic Emirate ... ", and a series of articles by al-Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al-Libi entitled "The Truth of What Happens Behind the Bars," which refers to the period of his detention in the American Bagram prison in 2005, as well as the juristic theorist of Al-Qaeda Yousef Al-Ayiri and other names.

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Today, Al-Sumoud magazine attracts all writers affiliated to Salafi jihadism, leaders of armed radical groups in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Somalia, as well as Egyptian, Algerian, Mauritanian and Gulf radical figures, such as the famous Syrian jihadist theorist Abu Basir Al-Tartousi, the Saudi Al-Sururi Saad Al-Faqih, the Kuwaiti-editor Hakim Al-Mutairi, the Jordanian Salafi jihadist theorist Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, and others.

Here it is necessary to point out that the board of the magazine, which is managed by the leading Shura Council of the Taliban, has chosen Sa'dullah Al Balushi as editor-in-chief since 2016 (one of the movement's fighters who worked as a translator for "Afghan Arab" fighters, soldiers of Al Qaeda and Jihad in Kandahar camps, and an experienced writer for the magazine).

To understand the Taliban movement and its transformations from a national-local movement to an international-revolutionary movement, Al-Arabiya.net monitored all issues of Al-Sumoud magazine from the publication of its first issue to the present day. We tried to contact via e-mail with the editorial board of the magazine to give them the opportunity to comment, but received no reply till the publication of the report, in which we wonder about the identity of the "Taliban" movement today and its project as perceived by its magazine "Al-Sumoud".

Al-Sumoud Magazine

Hamidullah Amin and its editor-in-chief, Ahmed Mukhtar, chaired the magazine's board since its foundation. Mukhtar had appeared in a picture during a meeting of members of the "Taliban" negotiating office in the Qatari capital, Doha.

The editorial team is made up of Ikram Mewendi, Salah al-Din Momand and Irfan Balkhi. All of these names have participated in writing mainly on the pages of the magazine since its birth, and are just kinetic nicknames to hide their true identity.

Since its first issue at the beginning of 2006, Al-Sumoud magazine has maintained its chairman of the board, with some editorial changes. In 2013, the magazine announced the names of the editorial team and its director, Fida' Kandahari. In 2016, changes occurred to the editor-in-chief, whose name was Ahmad Shah "Halim". Sa'dullah Al-Balushi, one of the pillars of the editorial team, was upgraded to the position of managing editor of the magazine, and a new technical director, Jihad Rayan, was appointed.

Amir Khan Muttaqi is responsible for supervising the Arabic version of Al-Sumoud Magazine and the rest of the movement's publications in multiple languages. His name is on the United Nations terrorist lists.

"Mottaqi" was assigned to the position of Minister of Education in the former Taliban regime, and its representative in the United Nations-led talks with the movement prior to the fall of the Taliban regime. He also held the position of Minister of Culture and Information and a member of the Regional Council and the Supreme Council of the Taliban until 2007. He is currently the head of the Political Bureau of the Taliban Movement in the Qatari capital Doha and a member of the negotiating team.

It should be noted that everything that is published in the magazine is presented in advance to the leader of the Taliban movement for approval and permission to be issued.

The magazine defines itself as a "mujahid preacher" magazine, which publishes the official speeches of the emir of the movement, data related to military operations and training camps, pictures of its operations, interviews of leaders of the Taliban and its fighters, and members of Al Qaeda, and articles expressing the ideological, political and legal orientation of the movement.

The aim of the magazine, according to the Minister of Culture and Information, founder of the Media Authority after the fall of the "emirate" and the military official in the state of Nangarhar, Qudrat Allah Jamil, in an interview published by the editor of the magazine, Ahmed Mukhtar in Issue (23) 2008, is to wage the media battle which is between "Islam and disbelief ..." and to prevent "distorting jihad and removing the jihadist idea from the minds of Muslims. Therefore, they call jihad terrorism and they call this religious duty a satanic name ... "

The magazine also aims at: "Defending the truth and supporting the oppressed and exhausted ... It backed the Afghan people in all their suffering and did not lose sight of other Muslim peoples who suffer from occupation and oppressive enemies, such as the

Palestinian people, the Syrian people, Burma Muslims and others ...”, the magazine's issue (May 2005 - June 2013, year 8.)

The Magazine Managing Editor, Sa'dullah Al-Balushi

He was one of the movement fighters and translator of the “Arab” immigrant fighters, and the magazine’s editor-in-chief. He wrote two books, one of them entitled “Screaming of Glory” in the year 2018 in which he compiled his previous articles in the magazine. Upon Al-Balushi's request, Abu Al-Walid Al-Masri (Mustafa Hamed), the son-in-law of Saif al-Adl, (currently both residing in Tehran), a companion of Osama bin Laden and a close associate of Siraj al-Din Haqqani, whom he wrote his biography that was published on the pages of Al-Sumoudm and one of the permanent writers on the pages of the magazine for years, wrote the introduction for the book.

It is noteworthy that, according to what Abu Al-Waleed al-Masri narrated in his introduction, he apologized for accepting the invitation of "Al-Balushi" to join him in Afghanistan to help manage the magazine, saying: I apologize to you for being handicapped by concerns of life, health obstacles and some writing on the other side (meaning Iran) of the land where you stand (Afghanistan) as a knight carrying a rifle in one hand and his pen in the other".

Al Balushi's second book, entitled "Some of the Stars of Islam in the Country of Afghans" (May 2016), was an account of his previous articles in the magazine on a monthly page entitled "Caravans of Martyrs" that dealt with different personalities whom he participated in fighting and carrying out armed operations, and who carried out suicide operations. Among these names is a number of "Al Qaeda and Jihad" members, including Gulf and Arab personalities.

One of his accounts is his story with Abu Azzam Al-Makki, who was also mentioned in the Al-Qaeda magazine “Tala’ Khorasan”. Al-Makki was killed in 2011, and Abu Dujana al-Makki joined the ranks of al-Qaeda in 2016, in Camp “Barafsha”. Al-Makki says that “Al-Balushi” joined with a group of Arab brothers. We received them with warm welcome, and our joy increased when we learned that they were our Arab brothers, issue (88) of Al-Sumoud magazine in 2013.

One of the theorists of Salafi jihadism, Hani Al-Sebaei, wrote the introduction for the book, in which he said: "It is a book of biographies of the righteous mujahideen who were martyred or died in contemporary Afghanistan."

Al-Balushi opened his book with the biography of the leader and founder of the Taliban movement, Mullah Muhammad Omar, followed by the biography of the founder and leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden.

The magazine’s editor-in-chief, Ahmed Mukhtar, wrote in the introduction of Al-Balushi's book about his meeting with Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, before September 11, and what happened between them to conduct an interview with him to be published in the magazine.

Al-Sumoud, The Resistant Media

Al-Balushi, the editor-in-chief of the "Al-Somoud", adopts what he described as the "resistant media" project with the aim of "strengthening the resistance spirit among Muslims" (Resistant media is a description borrowed from the literatures of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, which was adopted by the Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Ansar Allah al-Houthi Movement).

According to its definition, "Resistant media" can be summarized in participation with "Jihadi resistance even when jihad in occupied Islamic countries is not available. When we spread news of the mujahideen in our country and throughout the world in Arabic, English or other languages, we contribute with the media jihad, and we become a living mirror of jihad on the ground. And when we argue and refute those who question the existence and action of the jihadi resistance, we support the mujahideen on the ground ... and when we refuse to recognize the so-called peaceful resistance (the political process) under occupation, we create the best political and media conditions for the continuation of the jihadi resistance, its support and the realization of the aims of jihad'.

In his article, Al-Balushi affirmed that: "There is no way to establish global Islamic unity except through jihad by writing and fighting together, because jihad for the sake of God paves the way for the Islamic media to speak His word. And this media does not exist except in a Muslim society and on a land ruled by Islam".

In another article entitled "Jihad opens its doors to those who knock on it," Al-Balushi stressed that the paths of "jihad are available, and its roads are open to everyone who wants jihad, provided that he casts behind flimsy excuses and depressing interpretations and goes ahead for jihad for the sake of God."

According to Balushi, this comes along by "communicating with the mujahideen existing across the world wide web, and helping them with what they need by providing money if one has money, if he is an expert in a craft or profession, then through that craft or profession, or if he is a writer, he writes for them ... All this is to remove from him the trait of hypocrisy and discord".

Taliban: International Ambitions or National Movement?

After the Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders settled in Iran and Pakistan, or in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and secured safe headquarters away from the coalition strikes, the launch of the Arabic-speaking Taliban magazine "Al-Sumoud" in 2006 came simultaneous with the launch of Al Qaeda's "Tala'a" Khorasan".

On the other hand, al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, opened the year 2006 with a voice message, after a year of absence from the media, and confirmed his, Ayman al-Zawahiri's and Mullah Omar's presence, recalling the war against Islam and the battle between the West and the Islamic world in Chechnya, Somalia, Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq.

This audio message was the beginning of a new era that was more intertwined and linked between Al Qaeda and the Taliban, that fused into one ideological discourse, and

the same goals and policy, summed up by what is called "global Islamic unity", for the sake of which Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, called all through the first-year issues of the magazine till his death, to the general horn of jihad in Afghanistan and to fight the "armies of the cross" wherever they are. In 2010, Mullah Omar said: "Is the ordeal that the peoples of Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine are facing today a problem that concerns only these countries? O our Muslim brothers, just as we share in religion, belief, values, culture and interests, let us share in the pains, hopes, joys, worries, loyalty and hostility, so come and contribute to alleviating the pain of your Muslim brothers with soul and money ...".

Mulla Baradar Abdul Rahman, the deputy of the Islamic Emirate, also considered that jihad in Afghanistan is not the responsibility of the Taliban alone, but rather a duty incumbent upon every Muslim on earth, adding in an interview in the eighth issue of the magazine, in 2007 that: " the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is the trench for every mujahid, whatever his nationality, and protecting this trench is a trust incumbent on every Muslim, and at the same time it is a refuge for Muslims in the world. "

It is in this way that this Arab magazine of the "Taliban" movement contributed to stimulating new migrations of "Arab fighters" to Afghanistan, which remained an important means of promoting what is known as "jihadist globalization" or the international Taliban project in cooperation with Al Qaeda.

This is what "Abu Abd Al-Rahman Sultan Khair," a kinetic name, in an article published in issue (77), September 2012, called "Islamic globalism in the face of global globalization."

This alliance ensured the transform of the Taliban from its feature as a local-national resistance movement to another in the name of "global jihadism", so that the "Islamic emirate" became an umbrella group for all radical political Islamist parties and currents and their armed branches. To strengthen this role, the "Palestinian" issue became one of the movement's priorities that liberation of "Al-Quds" will only take place through Afghanistan, according to what was published in the magazine's pages in its issue (143) January 2018, entitled "From Afghanistan to Jerusalem," and another article by Ikramuddin Meyundi entitled "Jihad for the Liberation of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque is our religious duty and innate duty on certainty", (fourth year, issue (47) May 2010.) "There is no escape for the ship of Islam except through holy jihad, and there are no people gave up jihad but God humiliated them ... There is no doubt that the call of the Rabbani (related to God) scholars and their sermons to liberate Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the rest of the Islamic countries have an impact on the believing hearts ... However, the Muslim rulers today, May God guide them, weighed heavily to earth, and were satisfied with the worldly life, and were satisfied with holding meetings and issuing statements, so there was no hope left for us except in the Victorious Sect", Meyundi wrote in his article.

The discourse of the "Taliban" or "the Islamic emirate" went on addressing only "the Arab and Muslim peoples" and separating the "peoples" off the regimes and governments and tearing the entity of Arab and Muslim states.

What brings the Kandahari and Ghifari hats together?

Today, after more than 15 years since the publication of "Al-Sumoud", the Taliban magazine still maintains its same editorial line and rhetoric, despite what the Movement's negotiating office shows in terms of a pragmatic political discourse.

The magazine does not hesitate to support any radical fundamentalist group that takes up arms to perform what it describes as "holy jihad" from wherever it is and from any nationality it carries, just as it hosted its fighters on the land of the "Islamic Emirate" and without a passport or identity.

Here, we ask a question: Why did the Kandahari dress prevail over armed fundamentalist groups in all parts of the world, regardless of nationalities, languages and nationalities?

From this related-to-appearance-only shot that all radical fundamentalist groups technically agreed upon, the image of the international project that the "Islamic Emirate" pursues, along with the armed radical groups, foremost of which is Al-Qaeda with all of its willayats (provinces), from Yemen to Somalia, Mali, Algeria, Syria, Burma, Kashmir and others, emerges clearly.

"Kandahar", for Arab Islamist radicals in particular, becomes an international revolutionary base as "Havana" for Marxist revolutionaries from Africa, Asia and America, and a station for armed leftist militias.

And let the "Kandahari" and "Ghifari" hat bring together the militant guerrilla struggle and the fanatic internationalist revolutionary, but with the "Taliban Emirate" in an Arab and Islamic image, all at the expense of the local side.

This is clearly crystallized in the article of "Tayseer Muhammad Tarban", a researcher in legal and political affairs, entitled "This is why the Taliban will continue to be the address of Islamic unity," published in Issue (142), January 2018. "The Taliban is living a fierce war against America and its allies, who have attacked Afghanistan to eliminate the flame of jihad emanating from it to the all the parts of the Islamic Ummah, after they realized that Afghanistan is the incubator for jihad for the sake of God, its promising rising power led by the Taliban, as it was the center and meeting point for the mujahideen from all over the world, and the safe haven for public and private meetings that address the concerns of Muslims and expand the scope of Jihad to defend the nation and its religion. Thus, it became like the abode of Al-Arqam ...", Tarban wrote.

In his article, published in issue (33), March 2009, entitled: "The Taliban movement is an Islamic theory with deep roots", Shihab al-Din Ghazni," also confirms the movement expansion from its local borders to be a comprehensive one. "Many believed that it was a local movement, it will abandon its goals by changing circumstances and conditions and will fall from the top that it has reached. But during a full decade since its founding, it became clear that it is not a local movement, rather a global one, the rays of which reached the horizons, its effects reached beyond the river and the towering mountains of Caucasus and the Arab Island, and that it has a responsibility to lead Muslims in the world, and that their jihadist lines are completely connected to it ... and that this sacred

spiritual idea that lives in a corner of the beauty of the era and its adornment, at the same time, leads the other Islamic movements, and that its main motive is to reach the depth of that theory that carries with it the voices of the oppressed and the weakened nations and supports it ... and that the wishes of these peoples are linked to them, and they in turn are the only means to restore their glory and the stability of security in their countries", Ghazni wrote.

In order to achieve the international vision or ambitions of the Afghan radical movement, the emphasis on the philosophy of "jihad and preparation" was one of the mainstays of the Taliban's thought, according to an article published under the name of Abdul Wahhab Al-Kabli, in Issue (49), July 2010, criticizing what he described as the negative stance of Islamic groups from Jihad and fighting, saying: "There are many Islamic groups that claim to work for Islam, but they take a negative stance from jihad and fighting for the sake of God, as they consider it a group of rituals to perform, and supplications to be repeated ... or because of their lack of loyalty to the religion of God or because of a distortion in the understanding of Islam ...".

Al-Kabli added, "There is another type of Islamic groups that praise the mention of jihad for the sake of God, but they are satisfied with it within the framework of the slogan only, and do not wish to make sacrifices and go out to the battlefields ... If their governments reject jihad or fought its people, then they soon abandon the mention of jihad by renewing their loyalty for democratic governments or secular monarchies ...".

Regarding the Taliban's perception of "jihad," Al-Kabli said: "Jihad, according to the Taliban, is not a political struggle or a military act of war carried out to achieve national goals or national gains and worldly goals, nor is it a war to liberate the country from foreign occupation, to be ruled by patriotic tyrants with worldly laws opposing Shari'a. Rather it is the worship of God Almighty ... and not just fighting without a goal ... Armed jihad at this time is not only an individual duty, but rather an innate natural necessity for the oppressed to ward off evil from themselves ... So, returning to jihad against the fighting infidels and their interests in Islamic countries is not an obligation only, but it is the only natural remedy for lifting the injustice inflicted on Muslims ...".

With regard to the Taliban, the desired universality or the international ambition of the emirate will not be achieved except by imposing tutelage on all Arab and Islamic revolutionary organizations and groups, by granting a geographical area in Afghanistan in exchange for pledging allegiances, whether public or private.

This enables the movement, firstly to ensure that groups and organizations obey the orders of the emirate inside Afghanistan and can be employed in Taliban's local battles, and secondly to grant itself the status of the spiritual father of the universal "holy jihad", so every element of these organizations, whether in India, China, Yemen, Syria, Iraq or Somalia has become the "soldier" of the emirate.

Perhaps the movement's policy illustrates what was stated in the letter to one of the Islamic Emirate leaders, Sheikh Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, and his Mujahideen Brothers, which was published by Al-Sumoud magazine in issue (111) July 2015, coinciding with the rise of the Islamic State in Afghanistan.

In this letter, the deputy of the Islamic Emirate and supervisor of the Shura Council, Mulla Akhtar Muhammad Mansour," offered Al-Baghdadi, in order to avoid what he described as "sedition", to give him permission to "jihad" in the ranks of the Islamic Emirate on the grounds that "struggling with any other group than Taliban is an act contrary to the interests of Islam, Jihad and Mujahideen".

In order to confirm the legitimacy of the Islamic emirate, Mulla Akhtar reminded Al-Baghdadi of the legitimate allegiances that he had gained, saying: "The leadership of the Islamic Emirate was appointed by a legitimate election and by pledging allegiance of (1500) scholars (the Shura of the People of the Solution and the Contract), and a number of Scholars and jurists of the Islamic world and leaders of the mujahideen, such as Sheikh Hammoud bin Aqla Al-Shu'aibi, and Sheikh Osama bin Laden, may God Almighty have mercy on them, had pledged allegiance to him ... and that the Islamic Emirate from the standpoint of religious brotherhood does not intend anything but good for you and does not want to interfere in your affairs, and in return it expects you to do the same ...".

He added: "The heroes of contemporary jihad, such as the Imam of the mujahideen, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, the leader of the mujahideen, Sheikh Osama bin Laden, the conqueror of the Crusaders, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and the gladiator of atheists, Khattab, may God Almighty have mercy upon them all, were proud to be students in the Afghanistan Jihadist School".

The Arab Spring from the Perspective of the Afghan Taliban Emirate

In line with the Al-Qaeda leader's interest in the events of the so-called Arab Spring, and the mechanism of the role that some organisational leaders must play, "Al-Sumoud" magazine intensified its articles and writings to support "revolutions" in those countries, in addition to sending Al-Qaeda fighters and armed groups to support the "Islamic revolutionary movement".

Muhammad Yasin Al-Hasani, a nom de guerre, wrote in the magazine's issue (88), September 2013, an article entitled "The Crimes of Democracy Advocates in Egypt," in which he directed Egyptian Islamic groups to revive jihad in Egypt in response to the overthrow of the Brotherhood's rule. "Afghanistan provides us with the model. The people have revived jihad in all its meanings ... Jihad that erases false slogans ... What is happening in Egypt is the wildest attack against Islam. It is the last blow of ignorance to finish off the Islamists. Egypt will not get out of the impasse except by reviving jihad for the sake of God", Al-Hasani wrote.

About Libya, Saifullah Harawi wrote in issue (67), December 2011, an article entitled "Libya from Omar al-Mukhtar, may God have mercy upon him, to the February 17 revolution". The magazine also published articles about Syria and Palestine in what it described "the knives intifada and the necessity of jihad to liberate Jerusalem", in a piece by Saif Allah Al-Harawi, Issue (116), November 2015.

The magazine also published another article by the same writer, "Harawi", about the coup in Turkey, entitled "A plot thwarted by the shouts of Takbeer", issue (156), 2016,

describing the failure of the coup against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a "divine victory."

About Somalia and the Al-Qaeda-affiliated "Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen" movement, Al-Sumoud published many pieces, one of which was one entitled "Somalia is the next target of the global Tyrant of America".

In another article in support of the operation of the Islamic State (ISIS) in France, titled "How Wonderful is the Affair of Our World", issue (117) December 2015, Abdullah Al-Munib (a nom de guerre) wrote: "This young man who is standing in Europe and targeting its people in their very home is a brave Mujahid and a lion of the lions of Islam. Whoever thinks otherwise is disappointed and loser ...".

Finally, through what the Taliban adopts and calls for all through nearly 200 issues of the magazine "Al-Sumood", an important and insistent question is posed: "Is really Taliban capable of building healthy relations with neighboring countries and the world and not turning Afghanistan into a warship to wage wars against others?".



About the Author

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