

# How Muslim Defenders Became “Blood Spilling” Crusaders: Adam Gadahn’s Critique of the “Jihadist” Subversion of Al Qaeda’s Media Warfare Strategy

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*Adam Gadahn’s Abbottabad letter offers a rare opportunity to examine how this Al Qaeda Senior Leadership (AQSL) media operative and spokesman conceptualizes and executes media warfare. In this article, I first introduce, depict, and employ the author’s Terrorist Quadrangle Analysis (TQA) as a useful heuristic for conceptualizing and representing the four interrelated components of the AQSL terrorist enterprise: political objectives, media warfare, terrorist attacks, and strategic objectives. This TQA construct is then employed to conceptualize Gadahn’s media warfare acumen. Gadahn is shown to be an adept communications warfare operative who conscientiously disaggregates and evaluates key target audiences, messengers, messaging, and media. Gadahn’s vehement critique of select “jihadi” groups, in particular Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP), al-Shabaab, and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), is then described. Key here is how and why Gadahn denounces their indiscriminate, murderous terrorist attacks on Muslim non-combatant civilians and other protected persons as effectively subverting his intended AQSL media warfare strategy and undermining AQSL strategic and religio-political objectives. A concluding section briefly summarizes these chief findings, offers select implications for scholarship and counter-AQSL messaging strategy, and identifies study limitations.*

**Keywords** Abbottabad documents, Adam Gadahn, Al Qaeda, counterterrorism, media warfare

## Introduction

On May 3, 2012, 17 declassified Al Qaeda documents captured during the May 2, 2011 raid of Usama bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan were released for public examination. Initially evacuated from the site by United States Special

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Operations Command (USSCOM) operatives, these documents were exploited, stored in the classified Harmony Data Base overseen by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and upon request for purposes of furthering academic analysis and research on Al Qaeda, released to the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC), West Point, New York.<sup>1</sup> The document analyzed in the present article derives from this collection. It is a 21-page single-spaced letter<sup>2</sup> authored by senior communications operative Adam Yahye Gadahn (aka: Azzam al-Amriki)<sup>3</sup>: a secret, candid communiqué directed to Al Qaeda Senior Leadership (AQSL), it offers analysts and strategists a unique inside view of Gadahn's own conception and execution of AQSL media warfare strategy.

Composed late January 2011,<sup>4</sup> about four months before the Abbottabad raid, its focus is twofold. It presents a blistering moral and religio-legal critique of certain affiliates and associates guilty of illicitly shedding Muslim blood.<sup>5</sup> It also responds to specific requests from the highest echelons of AQSL, including then-emir Usama bin Laden, for suggestions on tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to enhance AQSL media warfare advantage during the upcoming November 2010 mid-term U.S. Congressional elections and one year hence, the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attack.<sup>6</sup> This latter focus—Gadahn as media warfare strategist—is the subject of the present article.

To date, Gadahn's Abbottabad letter-based media analysis has received only cursory treatment. Accounts issued soon after its release offer brief asides on Gadahn's views toward various media outlets and personalities but neither analyze nor carefully conceptualize and depict Gadahn's approach as a senior AQSL media operative charged with assisting in the attainment of AQSL's proximate and ultimate strategic and religio-political objectives.<sup>7</sup> The present article seeks to address this lacuna and present a more comprehensive account of Gadahn's media warfare acumen as evidenced in this unique data source. It is also an exercise in document exploitation (DOCEX). Though conducted by a civilian academic, published in the open source domain, and not immediately relevant to current kinetic operations, it is hoped that a careful analysis of this unique letter to his AQSL superiors contributes to ongoing United States Government (USG) efforts to more effectively counter AQSL media warfare strategies and TTPs.

Gadahn's emergent status as a high-visibility official AQSL spokesperson charged with inspiring, inciting, and mobilizing English-speaking *and* Arabic-fluent audiences<sup>8</sup> further recommends a sustained focus on his Abbottabad letter. Gadahn has appeared this past decade in over 42 videos produced by AQSL's official media site *al-Sahab* (The Clouds). His sharia-based arguments and agitational propaganda have been prominently displayed in five of twelve issues of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) English-language online magazine *Inspire*. Gadahn's article, "Besiege Them: Practical Steps Toward the Liberation of Palestine and the Restoration of the Caliphate," is the featured cover story in the Fall 2014 inaugural issue of *Resurgence*—AQSL's brand new English-language publication targeting the Indian Sub-continent.<sup>9</sup>

The presentation is organized as follows. I first introduce, depict, and employ the author's Terrorist Quadrangle Analysis (TQA) as a useful heuristic for conceptualizing and representing the four interrelated components of the AQSL terrorist enterprise: political objectives, media warfare, terrorist attacks, and strategic objectives. This TQA construct is then employed to conceptualize Gadahn's media warfare acumen. Gadahn is shown to be an adept communications warfare operative who conscientiously disaggregates and evaluates key target audiences, messengers, messaging, and media. Gadahn's vehement critique of select "jihadi" groups, in

particular *Tehrik-i-Taliban* (TTP), *al-Shabaab*, and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), is then described. Key here is how and why Gadhafi denounces their indiscriminate, murderous terrorist attacks on Muslim non-combatant civilians and other protected persons as effectively subverting his intended AQSL media warfare strategy and undermining AQSL strategic and religio-political objectives. A concluding section briefly summarizes these chief findings, offers select implications for scholarship and counter-AQSL messaging strategy, and identifies study limitations.

### Terrorist Quadrangle Analysis (TQA)

Terrorist Quadrangle Analysis (TQA) is proposed by the present author as a useful construct for analyzing AQSL media warfare strategy as one of four intrinsically related elements that collectively considered enable AQSL's terrorist enterprise.<sup>10</sup> A brief discussion of each element and their interrelation is key to appreciating the full force of Gadhafi's media warfare strategy and media-based critique of rogue "jihadi" terrorist organizations (see Figure 1 below).

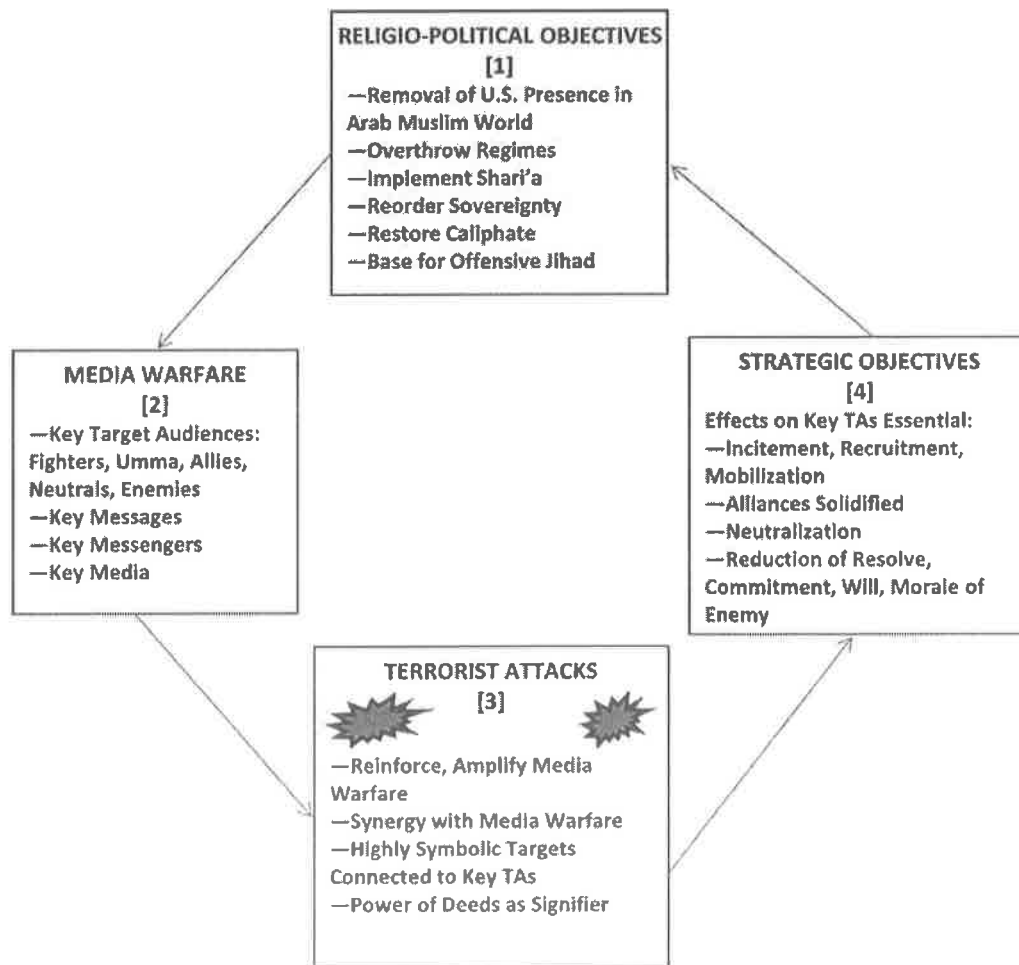


Figure 1. AQSL's terrorist quadrangle: Relations of religio-political objectives, media warfare, terror attacks, and strategic objectives.

### ***The Ends Sought: AQSL Religio-Political Objectives***

AQSL's ongoing transnational insurgent terrorist<sup>11</sup> campaign is directed at attaining ultimate *religio-political* objectives: Islamic supremacy, the global worship of Allah, and the eventual reign of an Islamic super-state ruled by a rightly-guided Caliph. This ultimate end-state requires the attainment of proximate religio-political objects that are to be traversed in phased stages.<sup>12</sup>

The United States and its principal allies must first be territorially and militarily removed from the Arab Muslim world, thus undermining U.S. military presence, power projection, access to energy reserves, and support for so-called apostate pro-Western regimes. Denied and starved of Western support, these regimes are then to be violently overthrown and replaced with orthodox shari'a-compliant Sunni Muslim states. Third, these Muslim states are to be united in a supra-state Muslim religio-political caliphate that shall serve as a base for further amassing Islamic power to facilitate the eventual declaring and conducting of offensive jihads against the remaining world of infidelity (*dar al-Kufr*). Until that ultimate religio-political end is attained, for AQSL a permanent, inescapably violent clash of civilizational orders is destined. A corollary follows: this supra-state caliphal Sovereign is envisioned as an alternative international order that eschews, denies, and is at war with the present United Nations-based system of territorially independent, equal, citizen-based sovereign nation-states.

### ***The Instruments Used: Media Warfare, Terrorist Attacks, and Strategic Objectives***

*Media warfare* is viewed by AQSL as an essential instrument of war strictly subordinate to AQSL's religio-political objectives.<sup>13</sup> The paramount religio-political objectives for the present (see Figure 1 above) are the removal of the United States and its principal allies territorially and militarily from the Arab Muslim world (stage one), and consequent overthrowing of so-called apostate pro-Western regimes and installing of strictly orthodox Sunni Muslim governments (stage two). During these initial stages, AQSL media warfare must focus on four vital target audiences (TAs) essential for attaining key strategic objectives: the fighters and Muslim *Umma*, potential allies, neutrals, and enemies.

To mobilize animosity/hatred of the enemy by the *Muslim nation (Umma)* and potential fighters, AQSL seeks to crystallize and reinforce an essential Manichaeic dichotomy between the hated, exploitative, unjust "US Crusader" and the oppressed, violated, persecuted, innocent "Muslim umma." This process of "satanization" of one's declared enemy has since Laswell's early study been well documented as a key strategic dimension of wartime propaganda.<sup>14</sup> If one is to galvanize, incite, and morally outrage, it is vital that "the Crusader" be portrayed as the Satanic Other and personified evil, a veritable mortal foe mobilized to vanquish God's chosen. This essential dichotomy is complemented by three additional media warfare tasks that correlate with three vital strategic objectives vis-à-vis key TAs: securing and preserving the friendship of *allies*; preserving and if possible securing the cooperation of *neutrals*, or even arousing neutrals' opposition to one's own enemies; and, demoralizing and disintegrating the *enemy's* will to persevere.<sup>15</sup>

AQSL planned, endorsed, and executed *terrorist attacks* are strictly subordinate to the attainment of the proximate religio-political object: and, the rationale and subsequent justification for these terrorist attacks is provided in AQSL media warfare.

They aim, again, at specific target audiences whose function is deemed essential at this stage. Inciting, catalyzing, and galvanizing “the *Umma*” is key. “Crusader” determination, resolve, and willingness to pay the price of military power projection and support of regional allies (“apostate puppets”) must be undermined. To legitimate itself as “the vanguard Defender” of this besieged “Umma,” AQSL must carefully select and successfully attack highly symbolic targets, while meticulously avoiding inflicting intentional violence on potential AQSL allies and neutrals.

Finally, AQSL’s *key strategic objectives* directly correlate with and are in dynamic interrelation to its media warfare and terrorist attacks. Given its current focus on removing the U.S. presence in the Arab Muslim world and installing strictly adherent Sunni Muslim states, four strategic objectives are key: further galvanizing “the vanguard AQSL Defender” and broadening their support base within the “Muslim Umma”; further undermining “Crusader” enemy motivation, means, and opportunity to remain militarily, economically, and politically engaged in the Arab Muslim world; further expanding AQSL’s terrorist enterprise, base of support, and unity among potential allies; and finally, securing neutrality or even cooperation among neutrals.

### **Adam Gadahn as AQSL Media Warrior: Intended TAs, Messages, Media, Messengers**

Gadahn’s vociferous media critique of murderous “jihadis” (see below) was prompted by the frustrated intentions of a senior communications operative. These unanticipated, non-endorsed, highly counter-productive terrorist attacks were launched as Gadahn himself was in the process of carefully identifying select target audiences, crafting themes, and carefully focusing on both media and messenger credibility essential to AQSL’s current religio-political and strategic objectives. To fully appreciate his visceral critique, we must first examine as prelude, Gadahn’s intended media warfare plan.

#### ***Key TAs and Messages***

##### *Undermining Resolve: Demoralizing “The Crusader”*

Relative to other vital TAs, Gadahn’s letter pays little attention to the “Crusader” enemy. It is obvious why this is the case. The mid-term Congressional elections had run their course three months earlier (November 2010) and any advice he would now offer was irrelevant. His only discussion centers on trying to re-orient post-election media focus toward the fiscal costs of America’s military campaigns. Gadahn is frustrated, however, since “all of the political talk in America is about the economy, forgetting or ignoring the war and its role in weakening the economy and . . . not one of the journalists dared to embarrass Obama by questioning him about the influence on the American budget and the national economy of spending billions yearly on the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.”<sup>16</sup> Gadahn briefly suggests that to weaken U.S. citizen support for U.S. military involvement, burdensome military spending should be emphasized; however, other key TAs receive far greater attention.

##### *Exploiting Divisions Among and Appeals to Kufr: “Europeans in Particular” and “The Irish”*

Gadahn explores options for taking full advantage of global media attention that will be given to the upcoming tenth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack: referred

to by him as "the tenth anniversary of the Manhattan raid."<sup>17</sup> Assuming the letter's composition sometime in late January 2011, his media warfare analysis is prepared nearly nine months in advance of September 11, 2011. Belief in "the justness of our case" he thinks is far more probable among "Europeans in particular" and could follow on "previous messages and statements" by Usama bin Laden also directed to the European context.<sup>18</sup>

Gadahn hints at this broader European context but mostly focuses on messaging Ireland and the Irish. Why target the Irish? He asserts that the Irish exhibit sympathy for the plight of Palestinians; have relatively lenient treatment of terrorists in their criminal justice system; despite participating in the European Union (EU) military mission in Somalia are not participants in "Bush's Crusade wars"; are reeling from an economic crisis which has "affected Ireland a lot, thus forcing its youth to look for sources of living in the outside"; and, are angry at the recently exposed sex scandals that implicated the Catholic Church. Gadahn even questions whether Ireland, after having been "the most religious of atheist Europe," should not also be met by a focused Call to Islam (*da'wa*). "Why do we not," he wonders, "face them with Islam?"<sup>19</sup>

*Fortifying Neutrality or Potential Cooperation With Catholic Christians of the Arab Muslim World*

Gadahn provides an illuminating discussion of the strategic importance of messaging Christians residing in the Arab Muslim world. His analysis offers convincing evidence for AQSL's long-term strategic focus and near-term goal of neutralizing Catholic Christians, or in his words, "preparing an Arabic message to the Christians of the Arab region, calling them to Islam and to caution them from cooperating with invader enemies of Islam who oppose the Islamic State."<sup>20</sup> Gadahn identifies the following reasons as key: a climate of receptivity given the Catholic public's present revulsion over the Church's implication in widespread sexual improprieties; the Catholic Church's refusal to support Jewish biblical claims to occupied Palestine; that among Christians, Catholic Christians exhibit the greatest enmity toward Jews; that Catholic laypersons in general are more sympathetic to Muslims than Protestants and Orthodox Christians; and finally, according to Gadahn, the Muslims' "original enemies [were] . . . the Evangelical Protestants . . . the vanguard of the Crusades."<sup>21</sup>

Gadahn understands that this strategic recommendation will likely be met by AQSL resistance yet supplies what he believes are realistic and pragmatic reasons for opening a dialogue with Catholic Christianity despite certain risks. Yes, given the chance Catholics would fight Muslims and the Pope is committed to preventing Islam from expanding to threaten his power and the Christian attempt to missionize and tempt Muslims to apostasy. But Gadahn implores that Catholic Christian animosity and missionizing is relatively benign compared especially to "Evangelist Protestants or the efforts of the Coptic Church and other spiteful Orthodox. Even in Bosnia." Moreover, witnesses have reported "Catholic Croats standing next to the Muslims against the Orthodox Serb" and he cites a recent report of "[Catholic] Venezuela. [with] a picture of a wall with 'Islam is the heritage of all' written on it."<sup>22</sup>

The reasons Gadahn provides above for carefully messaging Catholic Christians evidence AQSL's strategic awareness of its immediate geopolitical context. In this internal communication, his central task is to convince other key AQSL voices, for whom Catholic Christians are merely to be fought, subdued, and humiliated, that instead neutralization or even genuine advances may be made. Remarkable here, despite this inclination to seek neutrality or even alliance, is Gadahn's inaccurate

account of historical Christianity. His earlier assertion that Protestants were the vanguard of the Crusades led him to more positively apprise Catholicism. Here, another mistaken belief likely maintained as an article of faith is on display: that Catholics experienced the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem as a truly liberating event. "They [Catholics] should welcome the [current] Islamic advance," he states, "as did their forefathers when the Muslims liberated Jerusalem during the time of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab—May God be satisfied with him."<sup>23</sup>

*Inciting, Inspiring, Galvanizing, and Mobilizing the Umma and Its Vanguard*

AQSL messaging must target, finally, potential Muslim recruits and supporters, but also those "mujahidin" on the front lines currently deployed by AQSL in various theatres. Instead of targeting "the Americans and Europeans, who do not listen to or evaluate what is being said," Gadahn recommends emphasis be placed on "millions of admirers of the Shaykh in the Islamic world, who are eager for his appearance to ensure his health and that he is well."<sup>24</sup> It is evident, Gadahn reminds the AQSL senior leadership, that the present juncture (c. late January 2011) also demands extraordinary emphasis be placed on shoring up the fighting spirit of "the Mujahidin brothers in the fronts who are passing through crucial times and facing disaster after disaster . . . His [bin Laden's] appearance will raise their morale . . . I would think that it is suitable for the Shaykh to address a video speech to the Mujahidin in all the arenas, consoling, urging them to endure, confirming their steps and guiding them."<sup>25</sup>

*The "Shaykh" as Messenger: Enhancing Prestige and Credibility (Aristotelian "Ethos")*

In the above section we observed Gadahn's attempt to strategically disaggregate, analyze, and direct vital *messages* to key TAs. Gadahn's letter also evidences concern with *messenger* credibility, chief among them, bin Laden himself. Should bin Laden suffer reputational damage, the AQSL message and brand itself could be tainted by association. Gadahn's opinion was solicited in reference to the timing and substance of bin Laden's proposed media messages to determine how each of these may affect (positively, or negatively) bin Laden's prestige. Let's examine each in turn.

*Ethos and Timing*

The timing-related concerns are two: Does it make sense for bin Laden to deliver a message *now* despite the passage of the November 2010 mid-term Congressional election cycle? Gadahn thinks it does and suggests that while it is true the election cycle has passed, bin Laden can take advantage of the journalistic focus being placed on the American economic crisis and redirect attention to the relationship between it and "spending billions yearly on the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq." Secondly, to the question, Is bin Laden vulnerable to over-exposure, i.e., his mystique and scarcity value being deflated if he should appear both now and also eight months hence for the 10th anniversary of 9/11?, Gadahn answers in the negative. This exposure is "by itself something that attracts attention" and repetition is desirable as long as it avoids something approaching a "daily or semi-weekly" pace.<sup>26</sup>

*Ethos and Substance*

Gadahn, careful to uphold bin Laden's prestige, questions two assertions placed in the draft of bin Laden's prospective speech. The first is an assertion that refers to

Benjamin Franklin as "President of the US" rather than as a statesman and founding father. Gadahn fears that "such a mistake may be used to slander the Shaykh, and accuse him of talking about something he does not master (politics) . . . This mistake is not usually committed by those talking in politics, analyzing and discussing," he continues, though it "is a common mistake among general people and not between specialists." Gadahn places responsibility for this mistake on then deputy-emir Ayman al-Zawahiri:

If what is meant is what was referred to "Benjamin Franklin," who was mentioned by Shaykh Ayman in one of his statements, we should remind [him] that "Benjamin Franklin" was not a president, but a "statesman" and one of the founders of the United States and its Constitution. *I have not heard about what is quoted from him . . . [except] from Shaykh Ayman. I do not know the source of the story, or its popularity among the Americans [emphasis added].*<sup>27</sup>

The second problematic assertion is cryptically referred to in the above quote (italized text). Gadahn's suspicions here were well warranted. The "quote" to which Gadahn refers is a well-documented forgery alleging that American statesman Benjamin Franklin, speaking at the Constitutional Convention held in Philadelphia, condemned the Jews as a usurious people and counseled that the original decision to permit them to migrate to and later remain in the United States would lead to its ruin. Traced back to a 1934 publication by white supremacist and mystic William Dudley Pelly, its scholarly refutation proved easy given Franklin's publically avowed stance, corroborated by all known records maintained of the Convention, and of Franklin's Papers, in *defense* of Jews and Judaism.<sup>28</sup> Apparently unknown to Gadahn, however, is that bin Laden nearly eight years earlier (October 26, 2002) in his "Letter to the American People" had (or caused to have) written:

You [the USA] are the nation who allows riba (interest on money), even though all of the religions, including Christianity, have forbidden partaking in riba (interest on money). Yet you build your economy and investments on riba (interest in money). As a result of this, the Jews controlled your economy and then your media and now control all aspects of your life, making you their servants and achieving their aims at your expense, *which is what Binyameen ( Benjamin ) Franklin warned you against [emphasis added].*<sup>29</sup>

Bin Laden's demise four months after Gadahn's letter prevents us from having seen whether his proposed "message" would have excised these allegations and forgeries, as recommended by Gadahn, or whether other internal forces (i.e., Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden) would have prevailed.

### *Key Strategic TAs and the Media*

Key TAs, messages, and messengers require a sympathetic media, and therefore Gadahn spends a great deal of time analyzing the media landscape. He carefully sorts and evaluates various media and proposes various tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for maximizing the probability of receiving favorable media treatment. The immediate context, again, is the focused worldwide attention that



Gadahh surmises will exist around the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack. A sub-heading he supplies in his letter clarifies this challenge: “The issue of preparing for the Tenth Anniversary [of 9/11], and how it will be marketed to the Media, and How to Exploit the Media in General.”<sup>30</sup> Gadahn is writing eight months prior to this anticipated media spectacle and delineates three tasks—the preparation needed, selecting media outlets, and exploiting media interest. Gadahn’s task is here analogous to that of a senior communications specialist working for an organization seeking to influence (“exploit”) spectacular media coverage to maximize public relations advantage.

He carefully examines three distinct approaches for recruiting sympathetic media. The first is to carefully select known media outlets and journalists whom he believes will not willfully distort AQSL’s motives and message. CNN’s Arabic affiliates are highly ranked since they generally provide detailed reference to “*al-Sahab* releases [AQSL’s official media operation, ‘The Clouds’], with a lot of quotations from the original text. That means they copy directly from the releases or its gist. It is not like other channels and sites do, copying from news agencies like Reuters, AP, and others.”<sup>31</sup> A second cable outlet, MSNBC, “may be good and neutral a bit” though their recent firing of a journalist may call this into question.<sup>32</sup> Mass media television networks ABC and CBS are highly regarded by Gadahn, and also Bin Laden. CBS “was mentioned by the Shaykh [bin Laden],” and Gadahn identifies CBS’s famous program “60 Minutes” as being popular and possessing “a good reputation for its long broadcasting time,” though Gadahn seems never to have watched it, stating, “Only God knows the reality, as I am not really in a position to do so.” The television network ABC is very highly regarded by Gadahn and “actually could be one of the best, as far as we are concerned,” owing to the fact that the network is “interested in al-Qa’ida issues.” Singling out journalist Brian Ross, whom he claims is “specialized in terrorism,” Gadahn also cites as evidence the fact that ABC “is still proud for its interview with the Shaykh.”<sup>33</sup> ABC is noteworthy also since it “also broadcasted excerpts from a speech of mine [Gadahh] on the fourth anniversary [of 9/11], . . . [and] also published most of that text on its site on the internet.”<sup>34</sup> Held in lowest regard is the FOX cable channel, for Gadahn claims it “falls into the abyss as you know, and lacks neutrality too.”<sup>35</sup>

Gadahh also considers a variety of TTPs to increase the likelihood of successfully recruiting highly sympathetic media. For example, AQSL can try to tantalize the media with the prospects of a “special exclusive interview with the Shaykh,” which also has the added benefit owing to the “scarcity of his appearance during the last nine years” of refuting conspiratorial claims that bin Laden is deceased. Gadahn suggests that if no agreement can be reached with a specific news outlet, that AQSL should attempt to generate a competitive dynamic by “distribut[ing] it to more than one channel, so that there will be healthy competition between the channels in broadcasting the material,” again citing “ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN” and this time also suggesting “maybe PBS and VOA.”<sup>36</sup> Another strategy involves Gadahn attempting to recruit specific individuals in Europe, the Arab world, and South Asia deemed by him “a group of writers and professional or independent journalists, who have shown interest in al-Qa’ida issues, from different countries.”<sup>37</sup> Gadahn also suggests directly targeting 30 to 50 journalists with an offer of a privileged interview with bin Laden, projecting that if one-third responded, “possibly ten or so may display our mission in the newspapers and channels.”<sup>38</sup>

Gadahh finally negatively evaluates two outlets—Al Jazeera and the “Jihadi forums.” Al Jazeera, early-on a virtual conduit for official AQSL communiqués, should

not be pursued since it is now unsympathetic in its coverage. "As for the Jihadi forums," he claims, they are:

repulsive to most of the Muslims, or closed to them. It also distorts the face of al Qa'ida, due to what you know of [their] bigotry, [and] the sharp tone that characterizes most of the participants in these forums. It is also biased toward "Salafists" and not any Salafist, but the Jihadi Salafist, which is just one trend of the Muslim trends. The Jihad Salafist is a small trend within a small trend.<sup>39</sup>

It is worth observing here how Gadahn's critique of "jihadi forums" is anchored in AQSL's conception of its status as a militant transnational Sunni insurgent terrorist vanguard in pursuit of fundamental strategic and religio-political objectives. Gadahn here criticizes those who would reduce the Muslim umma to Salafism, and Salafism to so-called Jihadi Salafism: in essence, the splintering of a splinter in relation to the broader Muslim umma. Also evident is AQSL's disinterest in fomenting sectarian division by focusing on syncretic accretions and non-orthodox means of seeking salvation relying on various prohibited intercessory means. Gadahn, for example, generally agrees with Muhammad al-Misra'ri's forum but disagrees with his "exaggerated stiffness [inflexibility, harshness] with the Shia, and those adhering to the buried, rejuvenators of myths and pagan appearances [tomb worship, shrine worship, and the magical use of amulets and talisman]." In short, AQSL errs on the side of "lumping" and not "splitting" the Muslim umma and generally avoids criticizing lay Muslims over their supposed failure to exhibit a purified "Muslimness."

### **How Murderous Muslims Subverted Gadahn's Intended Media Warfare Strategy**

For Gadahn, media warfare is in dynamic interrelation to AQSL-organized, executed, and endorsed terrorist attacks (see Figure 1 above). These attacks must always amplify and reinforce specific messages directed at strategically essential TAs. This synergy of media warfare and terrorist attack propels the realization of AQSL's core strategic objectives, and proximate and ultimate political objectives.

The previous section depicts Gadahn's intended media warfare plan crafted for core TAs. Its messages, messengers, media, and TTPs are intended to enhance sympathetic media coverage. Its chief strategic objectives correlate with each of the four key TAs: to satanize, demoralize, and dissuade the U.S. government and populace; incite and galvanize the "Umma" and its fighting "vanguard"; and neutralize or possibly move toward at least passive acquiescence select infidel European powers and peoples, and Arab Christians.

This did not occur, however. A devastating series of non-AQSL planned, executed, and endorsed "jihadi" terrorist attacks subverted key elements of Gadahn's calculated media warfare plan. How so? AQSL's proximate political objectives—removal of the United States from the Arab Muslim world, removal of pro-U.S. "apostate" regimes, and installation of orthodox Sunni Muslim governments—*demand*s prioritizing highly symbolic U.S. and U.S.-supported regime targets. AQSL's unique signature, its distinct brand as militant transnational Sunni insurgent terrorist organization, is based in pioneering a unique "Far Enemy" strategy centered

on mass casualty terrorist attacks directed against Americans, civilian and military, anywhere they may be found; and, terrorist attacks carefully directed at regime and security-apparatus related targets that “expose” American occupation and “apostate” corruption.

It should now be possible to appreciate Gadahn’s vehement media-based critique of how these “jihadi” terrorist attacks have subverted AQSL’s ability to amplify and reinforce key messages directed at core TAs.

***Murdering Arab Christians in Iraq Versus Appealing to “People of the Book” (Ahl Al-Kitab) in Iraq and the Arab Muslim Middle East***

On Sunday, October 31, 2010 with approximately 100 persons inside the Our Lady of Salvation Catholic church to celebrate the evening Mass, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) carried out what then-Pope Benedict II referred to as “this absurd violence, made more ferocious because it was directed against unarmed people gathered in the house of God.”<sup>40</sup> Armed gunmen with the intent of terrifying parishioners, taking hostages, and broadcasting their own demands launched a murderous rampage involving random shooting, lobbing grenades in a barricaded room, and exploding shrapnel-filled “suicide” vests. This massacre, described by *New York Times* reporter Anthony Shadid as “the worst massacre of Iraqi Christians since the war began here [Iraq] in 2003,” culminated in the murder of 58 persons, and wounding “between 56 and 62—many of them women.”

Gadahn’s letter includes an extensive verbatim excerpt from British journalist Robert Fisk, earlier cited for his independence and willingness to present an “objective” account of AQSL’s case to the world, in which Fisk’s moral revulsion fuses with his indictment of AQSL’s apparently bloodthirsty strategic vision.<sup>41</sup> Gadahn’s letter introduces this extensive quotation by stating he has “read a new article by Robert Fisk expressing his reaction—and other people’s reaction—to the attack on the church in Baghdad.” Requesting he be allowed “to translate to you [AQSL] the most important parts and gist of the rest,”<sup>42</sup> Fisk’s damning commentary is then reported:

The speed with which the Baghdad church massacre by al-Qa’ida has frightened the peoples of the Middle East is a sign of just how fragile the earth is beneath their [i.e., people of the Middle East] feet. Unlike our western television news, Al Jazeera and al-Arabiya show the whole horror of such carnage. Arms, legs, beheaded torsos, leave no doubt of what they mean. Every Christian in the region understood what this attack meant. Indeed, given the sectarian nature of the assaults on Shia Iraqis, I am beginning to wonder whether al-Qa’ida itself—far from being the center<sup>43</sup> of world terror, as we imagine—must be one of the most sectarian organizations ever invented . . . . Now, as for al-Qa’ida, it is “All Christians” in the Middle East who are to be targets as well, scattering those threats like cluster bombs around the region, up to two million of Egypt’s Coptic community have to be protected at the two week religious festival.<sup>44</sup>

Horrific in itself, this attack has caused enormous damage to Gadahn’s own intended carefully calculated messaging designed to strategically neutralize this very

significant target audience. After this attack by the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), which Gadahn states "like it or not [is] . . . known to people as 'al-Qa'ida in Iraq,'" he was led to halt his crafting of "my two project[ed] messages [to Arab Christians]." Since "actions are more effective than words," Gadahn continues, "their act and the contacts they carried during the attack, and the statement they issued later, do not help to gain the people's sympathy."<sup>45</sup> Gadahn repeats his condemnation of ISI's bloodletting on account of its message-subverting qualities: "The attacks on the Christians in Iraq, like the Baghdad attack and what took place earlier in Mosul and others," he asserts, "does not help us convey the message." Regardless of whether these Catholics are at odds with their "mother church," he concludes, "they [the Arab Christian world] will not grasp in general the targeting of their public, women, children and men in their church during Mass."<sup>46</sup>

Gadahn then launches into a multi-pronged criticism of the ISI's murderous attack. First, the ISI declared that in addition to seeking the freeing of imprisoned ISI members, the murder of Catholics in Iraq was necessary as revenge for the fact that two women (Wafa Qastantin and Kamelia Shihata) were allegedly held captive by Orthodox Coptic Christians in Egypt. Gadahn is livid at the illogic of such reasoning. Murdering Catholics for the alleged sins of the Orthodox is analogous, he asserts, to targeting Sunnis because of the refusal of the Shi'a to release captive Sunni prisoners. "Does this satisfy any sane person?," he asks. Given this illogic, he wonders how is one "going to understand the motives [of] that armed group, or who is behind it, or who is allying with it?"<sup>47</sup>

Second, citing former President George W. Bush's highly publicized post-9/11 ultimatum that all nations must make a choice, i.e., "you are either with us, or against us," Gadahn criticizes ISI's strategic failure to offer *neutrality* as an option.<sup>48</sup> Bush "did not leave a space for neutrality" and the ISI, like Bush, "is telling the Christians 'Either [you are] with us or with [the] al-Maliki government.'" The ISI therefore provides "no space for neutrality . . . Either you pay the 'Jizya' . . . to our fictitious state that cannot defend itself, and has no chance of defending you, or we will destroy your goods." He continues:

Is this the justice that we [AQSL] are talking about, and that the Shaykh [bin Laden] talks about in his statements and messages? Where is the proof that the Christians of Iraq have stood with the government or the Americans as a sect? In my opinion—and I could be mistaken—the issue has no relation to the cooperation between the weak and marginalized Christian groups with the government or the Americans. But it has a relation to the "state" [ISI] group who believes in the authenticity of their fictitious State and are biased to what was stated by [their emir] Umar al-Baghdadi. He claims that the Iraqi Christians should sign another contract according to the rules of the Islamic State and pay the "Jizya" . . . Against what? Nothing.<sup>49</sup>

Third, the ISI fails to contextualize its Islamic demands taking into account, for example, whether Islam is in a state of weakness or strength vis-à-vis its opponents—unlike bin Laden, who in a recent speech stated that "the strong statements . . . mentioned by the [pious] ancestors were said during days of dignity and control [i.e., definite territorial control and authoritative governance], and therefore . . . [are] not fitting to the [present] era of vulnerability" and also other scholars' rulings on

jihad which “were released when Islam was strong, mighty and defensible. So it cannot be implemented on the days of weakness like our present days.”

Fourth, the ISI’s policies radically deviate from explicit AQSL statements, strategy, and policies. Gadahn here cites four key shaykhs—Usama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, ‘Abdallah Azzam, and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi—whose orthodox Sunni flexibility, pragmatism, and ecumenicalism are described as diametrically opposed to that taken by the “Fictitious Iraqi Caliphate.” Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Gadahn states, even “refuses the idea of detonating the churches . . . even if it was empty, [let alone] . . . if it is full of people?” Gadahn concludes, emphatically: “Strange—I swear—the conflict between the statements of our leaders and scholars, and the acts of those [i.e., ISI] allied with them . . . or . . . those claiming to follow them!”<sup>50</sup>

Finally, Gadahn strongly urges that AQSL formally denounce and disassociate from the ISI’s murderous methods, and from the organization itself. There is perhaps no more explicit evidence of the difference between AQSL’s overall strategic vision and that of its supposed “affiliate”:

I do not see any obstacle or bad act if al-Qa’ida organization declares its discontent with this behavior and other behaviors being carried out by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq, without an order from al-Qa’ida and without consultation. I see that this is done immediately or lately, favorably sooner. I see that the organization should declare the cutoff of its organizational ties with that organization . . . . The relations between al-Qa’ida organization and “the State” have been practically cut off for a number of years. The decision to declare the State was taken without consultation from al-Qa’ida leadership. Their improvised decision has caused a split in the Mujahidin ranks and their supporters inside and outside Iraq. What is left between al-Qa’ida organization and “the State,” but the link of faith and Islam, which urges us to submit advice and apply the rule of propagating virtue and preventing vice, and the support of good deeds . . . . This is the only solution facing al-Qa’ida organization, otherwise its reputation will be damaged more and more as a result of the acts and statements of this group, which is labeled under our organization.<sup>51</sup>

*Despising AQSL Because It Endorses Murder Versus Galvanizing the Muslim Umma, Religious Leaders, and Mujahidin*

Whereas the ISI’s murderous terrorist attack on Christians during Sunday evening Mass subverted Gadahn’s intended messaging to Christians in the Arab Muslim World, other organizations, especially the Pakistani Taliban (*Tehrik i-Taliban*) and *al-Shabaab*, launched dozens of terrorist attacks whose primary victims were innocent Muslim passersby and civilians. Gadahn prefaces his remarks here by stating that his evidence, reported and corroborated by reliable sources, is a mere “drop from a flood” and does not even count other forbidden acts such as “robbery, kidnapping and other crimes.”<sup>52</sup> All in all, fourteen bombings are cited as responsible for the murder of hundreds, and maiming of thousands, of innocent Muslims. Designed to kill regime targets or tribal foes, these attacks were conducted in playgrounds, marketplaces, mosques, public thoroughfares, the University of Islamabad, a graduation ceremony for new medical doctors in Somalia, checkpoints, restaurants, and many places “crowded

with pedestrians, residents, and shoppers." As a direct consequence, these murderous Muslims turned everyday life into nightmarish scenarios, shattering lives and families, and supplanting Muslim security and sanctity with horrific carnage.<sup>53</sup> Gadahn concludes by urgently requesting that AQSL openly and unequivocally denounce these sinful acts, and formally disassociate from these perpetrators.<sup>54</sup>

## Discussion

Adam Gadahn's Abbottabad letter offers a privileged insider view of how this senior AQSL media operative and spokesman conceptualizes and executes media warfare. A TQA-based content analysis of this unique document reveals several findings of potential interest for scholars and strategists. First, TQA is a useful heuristic for conceptualizing and representing the four chief interrelated dimensions of the AQSL insurgent terrorist enterprise: political objectives, media warfare, terrorist attacks, and strategic objectives (see Figure 1 above). TQA facilitates clear comprehension of ends, means, and their instrumental relationship, and further clarifies the relation of AQSL anti-American mass casualty terrorist attacks to its proximate and ultimate religio-political objectives.

Second, Gadahn is revealed to be an adept media warrior whose template is quite similar to that of a senior communications specialist seeking to defend AQSL's brand and expand AQSL's growth potential by attaining a decisive public relations advantage. Gadahn carefully disaggregates strategically relevant target audiences, and is keen to identify key messages, messengers and media, tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that increase the likelihood of achieving strategic effects. Gadahn carefully considers the potential deleterious consequences for AQSL should messenger credibility and organizational prestige be impaired or spoiled due to misinformed, inaccurate communication. Gadahn is also revealed to be concerned with message resonance, keeping abreast of current events and contemporary news cycles, and identifies concerns he believes are potentially salient to various TAs at any given point in time. The Abbottabad letter further reveals that Gadahn is several months ahead of the news cycle and is carefully planning media products for media-saturated high-impact events, such as mid-term U.S. Congressional elections, and the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attack.

Third, Gadahn is shown to be a vociferous critic of various AQSL-associated groups—Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban, TTP), al-Shabaab, and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)—whose murderous attacks subverted his intended strategic messaging. Attacks on two key TAs in particular—potentially neutral Arab Christians<sup>55</sup> and Muslim civilians—reveal the huge gulf that separates AQSL from the above organizations. This latter point is of particular relevance given the recent reincarnation of the ISI, one of Gadahn's chief targets, into the recently self-declared Islamic State (IS),<sup>56</sup> and AQSL's February 2014 formal disavowal of and renunciation of ties with IS's predecessor, the self-declared Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).<sup>57</sup> Gadahn's urgent request in the Abbottabad letter for a formal declaration of disassociation from the so-called ISI (see above) predates the February 2014 official disavowal by nearly *three* years, and its phraseology bears certain resemblance to that of Gadahn's cited above:

1. Firstly, Qae'dat al-Jihad (AQ) declares that it has no links to the ISIS group. We were not informed about its creation, nor counseled.

2. Nor were we satisfied with it rather we ordered it to stop. ISIS is not a branch of AQ & we have no organizational relationship with it.
3. Nor is al-Qaeda responsible for its actions and behaviors.<sup>58</sup>

Gadahn's vehement critique of the TTP's murderous carnage also predates the most recent vehement denunciation recently issued by AQSL's newest affiliate (al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent; AQIS) of the TTP's terrorist attack on a public school for children of Pakistani military personnel. In his Abbottabad letter, Gadahn writes:

Qa'idat al-Jihad Organization has denounced more than once, and on the tongue of its Emirs and scholars and symbols and those who speak in favor, any armed operation that targets the Muslims in the places of their gathering, and any operation that does not account for the sanctity of their blood, souls, bodies, belongings or money. This acquittal includes the explosive operations that take place in the center of markets, streets, restaurants, hotels that are packed with Muslims. It also includes, as a first principal, the detonation of mosques on the heads of the innocent praying public, shattering their bodies. Associated with that is exposing the Qur'an and the religious books to indignation and destruction. The acquittal of the organization was not just an empty media-driven step.<sup>59</sup>

Consider now the language used in an official declaration released by AQIS to condemn the recent horrific attack in Peshawar, Pakistan that involved the intentional killing of over 140 children:

Those who kill innocent Muslim women and children, whatever name they wanted to give it, we consider it against the Islamic Shariah. We in front of Allah and in front of our nation distance ourselves from this act . . . . There isn't any doubt we suffered heavy losses at the hands of the Pakistani security forces but it doesn't mean we will seek revenge from innocent Muslims in the country. The arms we took up against the US and its puppet rulers should never be used against innocent women, children and other Muslims.<sup>60</sup>

AQSL's proximate and ultimate religio-political objectives require that it function as a revolutionary transnational Sunni vanguard whose primary proximate targets, and religiously sanctioned methods, do not in general permit the murder of Muslim civilians, nor declarations of *takfir* directed at other Muslims, including the Shia laity. While short-term benefits may accrue to conflating in the broader public's mind AQSL and the present-day IS or TTP, it is dishonest and will backfire in the longer run. USG strategists charged with counterterrorist messaging designed to undermine radicalization and recruitment to AQSL should fully consider the implications of this fact.

It is important to note in closing four limitations to the present analysis. First, the Abbottabad letter here examined is one of tens of thousands recovered at the Abbottabad compound and therefore does not represent a scientific sample. Further, the decision to make available 17 documents from the tens of thousands recovered was based on criteria presumably unrelated to representativeness and likely involved

the perceived utility to the USG of making available this specific cache of documents.<sup>61</sup> Second, the present author was reliant on the officially furnished English translation of the Arabic original of Gadahn's letter. As noted by CTC itself, the quality of translations varies from document to document and therefore it is highly advisable that any definite inferences be based on the Arabic originals.<sup>62</sup> Third, the author's proposed construct, Terrorist Quadrangle Analysis (TQA), is novel and further validation of its analytic power is required. Finally, to date the author has restricted TQA to the analysis of AQSL's terrorist modus operandi. The author is at present extending this construct to comparatively analyze AQSL and the so-called Islamic State. It is hoped the fruits of this research shall eventually assist in assessing the utility of TQA as means of analyzing and countering the media warfare strategies of other variants of militant Sunni Islamist insurgent terrorist organizations.<sup>63</sup>

## Notes

1. See, Will McCants, "Abbottabad Documents," May 3, 2012, <http://www.jihadica.com/abbottabad-documents/>, for all 17 documents made available in easy to access format, in Arabic and English; See also especially, Nelly Lahoud, Stuart Caudill, Liam Collins, Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, Don Rassler, and Muhammad al-'Ubaydi, *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?*, Harmony Program, The Combating Terrorism Center (West Point, NY: U.S. Military Academy, 2012), May 3, 2012, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu>, who describe these as consisting of electronic letters or drafts, totaling 175 pages in the original Arabic and 197 pages in the English translation, dating from between September 2006 and April 2011. See also their Appendix (pp. 54–59) for a brief summary of the facts surrounding and an interpretation of each letter.

2. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, at <http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/SOCOM-2012-0000004-Trans.pdf>; Arabic pagination referenced (21 pp. single-spaced in Arabic text, 28 pp. in English translation). Also available at: <http://intelwire.egoplex.com/CTC-Adam-Gadahn-Letter.pdf>.

3. For biographical background on Gadahn, see the present author's "Has Adam Gadahn Forsaken the Lawful Jihad for Anti-Americanism? A Case Study of Ideological Contradictions," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 6 (2014): 54, n. 6; Adam Yahye Gadahn, "Becoming a Muslim," 1995, <http://www.haventoday.org/becomingamuslim.php>; Raffi Khatchadourian, "Azzam the American," *The New Yorker*, January 22, 2007, 50; Academic OneFile, <http://go.galegroup.com>; CNN Library, "Adam Gadahn Fast Facts," August 23, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/23/us/adam-gadahn-fast-facts/>; Anti-Defamation League, "Adam Gadahn: Al Qaeda's American Voice," 2008, [http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/profiles/Adam\\_Gadahn/background.asp?m\\_flipmode=4](http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/profiles/Adam_Gadahn/background.asp?m_flipmode=4).

4. Lahoud et al., *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?* (see note 1 above), 15, n. 50, infer this date from internal evidence provided by Gadahn. Gadahn refers (SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 2) to the firing of MSNBC journalist Keith Olbermann, which occurred January 21, 2011.

5. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 11–21.

6. See, SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 1–11, which furnishes these specifics in response to requests by Usama bin Laden to "brother Azzam" in his letter to Sheikh Atiyya (October 20, 2010; SOCOM-2012-0000015), esp. 7–8.

7. For brief selective insights, see: J. M. Berger, "Abbottabad Documents Shed Light on Al Qaeda's Use of Internet," 2012, <http://news.intelwire.com/2012/05/abbottabad-documents-shed-light-on-al.html>; David Ignatius, "How Al Qaeda Tried to Control the Media," March 20, 2012, <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-03-20/opinions/35449263>; Michael Kelley, "The 10 Most Compelling Insights From Bin Laden's Secret Documents," May 8, 2012, <http://www.businessinsider.com>; Joshua Keating, "Adam Gadahn on the Media and More Highlights from the bin Laden Docs," May 3, 2012, <http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/03>.



8. Gadahn's letter and one from Usama bin Laden to Shaykh Mahmud Aytiiyah (SOCOM-2012-0000015-HT, October 20, 2010), led to questions over whether Gadahn's influence extended beyond senior media advisor and sometime English-language propagandist to one whose considered opinions and judgments actually influenced AQSL policy and strategy. See: Brian Dodwell, "The Abbottabad Documents: The Quiet Ascent of Adam Gadahn," *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 5 (May 2012): 19–22; Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Did Adam Gadahn Play a Significant Role in bin Laden's al Qaeda?" May 30, 2012, <http://gunpowderandlead.org/2012/05>; Wes Bruer, "Expanded Role for American Mouthpiece of al Qaeda," September 25, 2012, <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/09/25>.

9. For Gadahn's appearance in at least 42 al-Sahab videos, see Waterman's citation of evidence furnished by IntelCenter covering Gadahn from 2004 to July 10, 2013; Shaun Waterman, "American al Qaeda Member Gadahn Calls for Syrian Jihad in Video," *The Washington Times*, July 10, 2013, [www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/10/american-al-qaeda](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/10/american-al-qaeda).

For Gadahn's statements in *Inspire*, see: Adam Gadahn, "Know that Jihad is Your Duty," *Inspire*, Winter 2010, Issue #4, 17; "The Arab Intifada: Hopes, Concerns & Dangers: An Exclusive Interview with Adam Yahye Gadahn (Azzam al-Amriki)," *Inspire*, Fall 2011, Special Issue #7, 4, advertised as "coming soon"; *Inspire*, Fall 2011, Issue #8, 4; *Inspire*, Spring 2013, Issue #10: the front cover announces "*Inspire* Exclusive: From Adam Gadahn," which is followed by featured placement in the table of contents—"Exclusive: An Extract from the Promised Interview 'The Arab *intifada*.' Brother Adam sends three messages to the world"—and finally page 36 exclusively dedicated to Gadahn's photo and excerpts with bold subtitles: ("To the Mujahideen around the World"; "... To Those Calling to Islam and Jihad in General, and Those Working in Jihadi Media on the Internet in Particular"; *Inspire*, Spring 2014, Issue #12, 6: in the section "@heartthteworld: A Collection of quotes from friend and foe," Gadahn is listed as "Al-Qaeda Mujahid (As-Sahab Media)" and quoted, "Stand, revenge on America the enemy of Islam and Muslims. Remind us of the glories of Nairobi, Dar-es-Salam, Aden, New York, Washington, Fort Hood, Benghazi and Boston...[etc.]." See finally, Adam Gadahn, "Beseige Them!" *Resurgence*, Fall 2014, Issue #1, 47–55, for Gadahn's article (advertised as cover story) for AQSL's latest English-language endeavor to incite, galvanize, and mobilize on behalf of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

10. A fuller exposition of the TQA rationale and concept is available in Paul Kamolnick, *Countering Radicalization and Recruitment to Al Qaeda: Fighting the War of Deeds*, Letort Papers (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 2014), 67–69.

11. For the definition of terrorism presumed throughout this article, see Alex P. Schmid, "The Revised Academic Consensus Definition of Terrorism," in Alex P. Schmid, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (New York and London: Routledge, [2011] 2013), 86–87. AQSL's sub-state use or threatened use of terror and fear-generating actions, words, and symbols directed at civilian non-combatants to attain specific religio-political objectives is fully captured in Schmid's more comprehensive conception.

12. AQSL's religio-political objectives are based in the following documents: "Al Qaeda Founding Minutes," "TAREEKHOSAMA/50 Tareekh Osama 122–123," August 11, 1988, <http://intelfiles.egoplex.com/1988-08-11-founding-of-al-qaeda.pdf>; "Al Qaeda Founding Minutes," "TAREEKHOSAMA/50 Tareekh Osama 127 – 127a," August 20, 1988, <http://intelfiles.egoplex.com/1988-08-11-founding-of-al-qaeda.pdf>; "Al-Qaida Bylaws (English Translation)," AFGP-2002-600048, Full translation of this document, April 18, 2002, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaida-bylaws-english-translation> (Original is 19 pages in Arabic); "Al-Qa'ida Constitutional Charter (English Translation)," [www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaida-constitutional-charter-english-translation](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaida-constitutional-charter-english-translation). AFGT-2002-600175/CRRQ AQ-PMMPR-D-000-105 (date translation completed August 11, 2002; captured from Abu Haf's house in Khandahar AFG), <http://crre.dodlive.mil/files/2015/02/AQAM-collection-summary-and-index.pdf>. A more accurate title than that provided by this Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) interpreter is given in another version of this same document—AQ-PMMPR-D-072, "An Employment Contract that Describes Al Qaeda Beliefs, Objectives, and Sphere of Activities, including requirements for joining, regulations, and instructions"—Conflict Records Research Center, Washington, DC; SOCOM-2012-0000003. "Letter from Usama bin Ladin to Shaykh Mahmud ('Atiyya Abdul Rahman), August 27, 2010. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined>: SOCOM-2012-0000017 (presumably Usama bin Ladin to Shaykh Mahmud Attiyya Abdul Rahman), n.d., [www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/socom-2012-0000017-english](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/socom-2012-0000017-english); *United States of*

*America v. Enaam M. Arnaout*, United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, No. 02 CR 892, "Governments Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility of Coconspirator Statements [Captured Documents]," esp. 19–20, 28–34, 2003, <http://fl.findlaw.com/news.findlaw.com/wsj/docs/bif/usarnaout10603prof.pdf>.

13. See, for example: "Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi (English Translation)," July 9, 2005, 10, [www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zaraqawi-english-translation](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zaraqawi-english-translation); SOCOM-2012-0000016-HT, "Usama bin Laden to Abu Basir (Nasr al-Wuhayshi), c. post-October 2010, 18; SOCOM-2012-0000015-HT, "Zamarai [Usama bin Laden] to Shaykh Mahmud [Atiyya]," October 20, 2010, 5; Cole Bunzel, "Al Qaeda Advises the Syrian Revolution: Shumukh al-Islam's 'Comprehensive Strategy' for Syria," February 25, 2013, [www.jihadica.com/al-qaeda-advises-the-syrian-revolution-shumukh-al-islams-%E2%80%9Ccomprehensive-strategy%E2%80%9D-for-syria](http://www.jihadica.com/al-qaeda-advises-the-syrian-revolution-shumukh-al-islams-%E2%80%9Ccomprehensive-strategy%E2%80%9D-for-syria); AFGP-2002-600321/also, CRRC AQ-SHPD-D-000-055, "A Two-Page Typed Letter from Osama bin Laden to Mullah 'Omar. Discussing the situation in Afghanistan, continuation of Jihad in the Islamic Republics, and the situation in the Arabian Peninsula" [undated; but post-1996 Taliban conquest], [www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letter-to-mullah-mohammed-omar-from-bin-laden-english-translation](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letter-to-mullah-mohammed-omar-from-bin-laden-english-translation).

14. Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Peter Smith, 1938 [1927]), Chapter 4.

15. See, *Ibid.*, esp. 10, 17, and 195 for a summary of these four key strategic objectives—targeting enemies, allies, neutrals, and one's own population. Though conceived within the context of nation-state warfare, they remain valid for present purposes.

16. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 1.

17. *Ibid.*, 5.

18. *Ibid.*, 5.

19. *Ibid.*, 5–6.

20. *Ibid.*, 6.

21. *Ibid.* Gadahn's erroneous assertion that a Protestant vanguard led the Crusades, given the centrality of the Crusades and "Crusaders" to AQSL, is a telling and potentially exploitable factual lapse. Protestantism, whether in its Lutheran, Calvinist, or other forms, emerges doctrinally in the early 16th century—over *three centuries after* the end of the final Crusade (c. 1291). See, e.g., Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); John D. Hannah, *Church History: Charts of the Reformation and Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

22. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 6.

23. *Ibid.* Gadahn's reference to the 638 A.D. conquest of Jerusalem by caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab as a "liberating" event for Catholics is curious, to say the least. It is true that at that time Jerusalem (then called by its Roman name, "Aelia") was under the rule of the Eastern Orthodox patriarchate of Sophronius, a representative of the Byzantine government, and that Latin Christianity was dis-privileged and at times barred from maintaining a church presence. However, until Umar's conquest, it was the *Jews* that had been completely removed and prohibited by Orthodox Christians from residing in Jerusalem. Further, the ancient Temple Mount had been rendered a trash heap. Umar's conquest of Jerusalem led eventually to the re-admission of Jews into Jerusalem, and freedom of cult granted to Jews, and also Latin Christians, though each still suffered second-class citizenship. Had Gadahn been attempting to illustrate why *Jews* should welcome Muslim rule because of Umar's conquest of Sophronius, this would make much more sense. But in Gadahn's account Jews are generally demonized beyond recognition, and his understanding of Christian history—i.e., the relation of Protestants and Catholics, and the relation of 7th-century Jerusalemite Christians to Islam, contrary to historic fact. See: "The Muslim Period," <http://www1.gurukul.ucc.american.edu/ted/hpages/Jerusalem/muslim.htm>; "Jerusalem and Umar Ibn al-Khattab (RA)." April 10, 2013, <http://islam.ru/en/content/story/jerusalem-and-umar-ibn-al-khattab-ra>; "Islam: The Arrival in Jerusalem," <http://www.gojerusalem.com/article/215/Islam-The-Arrival-in-Jerusalem>; Teddy Kollek and Moshe Pearlman, *Jerusalem: Sacred City of Mankind: A History of Forty Centuries* (Jerusalem: Steimatsky's Agency Ltd., 1974 [1968]), 162, 165.

24. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 2.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 1.

27. *Ibid.*, 1.

28. For the original forgery, see William Dudley Pelley, ed., "Did Benjamin Franklin Say this About the Hebrews?" *Liberation* 5, no. 24 (February 3, 1934). For scholarly refutation, see: Charles A. Beard, "Exposing the Anti-Semitic Forgery about Franklin," *Jewish Frontier* (New York, March 1935), 1–13; Henry Butler Allen, "Franklin and the Jews," *The Franklin Institute News* III, no. 4 (August 1938): 1–2; American Jewish Congress, "Benjamin Franklin Vindicated: An Exposure of the Franklin 'Prophecy' by American Scholars," [http://archive.org/stream/306346/306346\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/306346/306346_djvu.txt); Michael Choukas, *Propaganda Comes of Age* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs, 1965), 109–110; Karen S. Johnson-Cartee and Gary A. Copeland, *Strategic Political Communication: Rethinking Social Influence, Persuasion, and Propaganda* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 154–155.

29. Osama bin Laden, "Letter from Usama Bin Muhammad Bin Ladin to the American People," in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *FBIS Report: Compilation of Usama Bin Ladin Statements 1994 – January 2004*, 217, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ubl-fbis.pdf>. According to the Anti-Defamation League (see, Anti-Defamation League, "The Franklin 'Prophecy': American Anti-Semitic Myth Finds Acceptance in Arab World," March 20, 2002, [http://archive.adl.org/anti\\_semitism/arab/anti\\_sem\\_myth.html](http://archive.adl.org/anti_semitism/arab/anti_sem_myth.html)), this libel had been resurrected and republished February 18, 1998 by Shakher Habash (aka: Abu Nazir) in the Arabic-language Palestinian Authority publication *Al-Hayah Al-Jadida*, in an article entitled "American Hegemony; The End of the Future." This Anti-Defamation League article quotes Nazir to have said: "This spells doom for the US itself, as was exhorted by the American President Benjamin Franklin who... claimed that if the Jews were permitted entry into the US, they would take over the country."

30. SOCOM-0000004-HT, 2.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.* See note 4 above.

33. Presumably in reference to the May 1998 in-person interview conducted in Afghanistan by ABC's John Miller with Usama bin Laden.

34. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 3.

35. *Ibid.*, 2. See also, 3: "As for Fox News, let her die in her anger."

36. *Ibid.*, 3.

37. *Ibid.*, 4.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. The present discussion is based on the following sources: "Baghdad Church Hostage Drama Ends in Bloodbath," *BBC News*, November 1, 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11463544](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11463544); Anthony Shadid, "Church Attack Seen as Strike at Iraq's Core," *New York Times*, November 1, 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/11/02/world/middleeast](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/02/world/middleeast); Robert Fisk, "The West Makes it Easier for Al Qaeda to Attack," November 6, 2011, <http://dawn.com/news/815803/the-west-makes-it-easier-for-Al-Qaeda-to-attack>.

41. Gadahn quotes the Pakistani-based English-language version in *Dawn* of Fisk's commentary (see, Fisk, "The West Makes it Easier for Al Qaeda to Attack" [note 40 above]), which appears verbatim originally in *The Independent* (see Robert Fisk, "Only Justice Can Bring Peace to This Benighted Region," *The Independent*, November 6, 2010, [www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-only-justice-can-bring-peace-to-this-benighted-region](http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-only-justice-can-bring-peace-to-this-benighted-region)).

42. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 9. The Arabic original—SOCOM-2012-0000004—contains Gadahn's own underlining of passages for emphasis, which are unfortunately *not* reproduced in the English translation made available to the CTC by those charged with translating this document.

43. Fisk's original commentary in *The Independent*, and the dawn.com version use three words here—"centre/kernel/fount"—and not just "centre" found in the English translation of the Arabic original.

44. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 9–10.

45. *Ibid.*, 6.

46. *Ibid.*, 7.

47. *Ibid.* Fisk remarks, sarcastically: "That this may have originated with a decision by the women to divorce their husbands—and thus by conversion to end their marriages since the church in Egypt does not allow divorce—is merely incidental" (see: Fisk, "Only Justice Can Bring Peace to This Benighted Region" [note 41 above]).

48. In President Bush's September 20, 2001 speech to a joint session of Congress, he declared: "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." (See "Transcript of President Bush's address," *CNN*, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>).

49. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 7.

50. *Ibid.*, 8.

51. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

52. *Ibid.*, 15.

53. *Ibid.*, 12–14.

54. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 18. The focus of the present article is Gadahn's media-based critique as AQLS media warfare functionary. However, Gadahn's Islamic shari'a-based critique is also essential for fully understanding his vehement denunciations. They are forbidden acts (*haram*) and major sins, regardless of their media effects. For a comprehensive examination of his shari'a-based critique, see Kamolnick, "Has Adam Gadahn Forsaken the Lawful *Jihad* for Anti-Americanism?" (see note 3 above), 49–53.

55. The strategic logic for not attacking Christians was also revealed by al-Zawahiri, who in messaging directed at the current (c. January 2014) Egyptian context, states in an audio message posted to militant Islamist websites: "We have to be busy confronting the Americanized coup of el-Sissi and establish an Islamic government instead." And again: "We must not seek war with the [Egyptian] Christians and thus give the West an excuse to blame Muslims, as has happened before." See *Associated Press*, "Al-Qaida Leader Opposes Fighting Christians," January 25, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2014/01/25/world/middleeast/ap-ml-egypt-al-qaida.html>.

56. Abu Mohammed Adnani (official IS spokesman), "This is the Promise of Allah," June 28, 2014, [http://myreader.toile-libre.org/uploads/My\\_53b039f00cb03.pdf](http://myreader.toile-libre.org/uploads/My_53b039f00cb03.pdf); [Self-proclaimed Caliph and Commander of the Faithful] Amir ul-Mu'minin Abu Bakr Al-Husayni al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi (aka: Abu Dua; Dr. Ibrahim bin Awad bin Ibrahim al-Badri ar Radawi al Husseini as-Samara), "A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Umma in the Month of Ramadan," July 2, 2014, [http://1a902501.us.archive.org/2/items/hym3\\_22\\_aw/english.pdf](http://1a902501.us.archive.org/2/items/hym3_22_aw/english.pdf).

57. See, for example: *VOA News*, "Al-Qaida Disavows Syria Militant Group," February 3, 2014, [www.voanews.com/articleprintview/1843042.html](http://www.voanews.com/articleprintview/1843042.html); Thomas Joscelyn, "Al Qaeda's General Command Disowns the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham," February 3, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/al\\_qaedas\\_general\\_co-print.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/al_qaedas_general_co-print.php).

58. Qae'dat al-Jihad (AQ) General Command, "Acknowledging ISIS Officially Isn't Part of AQ," February 2, 2014, English translation of al-Qaeda Statement, original, <http://justpaste.it/ea9k>; Translated by @IraqiWitness on Twitter; Posted by Casey Britton on February 4, 2013, <http://worldanalysis.net/modules/news/article.php?storyid=2235>.

59. SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, 18.

60. *The News National*, "Pakistan: Al-Qaeda in Subcontinent Condemns Peshawar School Attack," December 22, 2014, [www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_0\\_43/](http://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_0_43/); also, Thomas Joscelyn, "Al Qaeda Condemns Pakistani Taliban's Attack on Peshawar," December 20, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/al\\_qaeda\\_condemns](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/12/al_qaeda_condemns).

61. See Lahoud et al., *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?* (see note 1 above), Foreword, and pp. 6–9 for an excellent discussion of the limitations attending the analysis of these captured (and later declassified) battlefield documents.

62. See "A Note on Translation" which appears in: *CTC Sentinel*, "Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?" [www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined).

63. Paul Kamolnick, *Al Qaedaism versus the Islamic State Organization: Essential Differences and Strategic Implications for Countering Anti-American Terrorism in the Name of Islam*, U.S. Department of the Army, U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, Contract No. W911S0-14-P-0134.