

Sayyid Qutb's Ties to Extremists



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Key Points



Qutb was a chief ideologue of the Muslim

Brotherhood in Egypt who was also widely popular on the Egyptian street. The Egyptian government executed him in 1966 for promoting the overthrow of the state.



Qutb popularized the concepts of *takfir*—

excommunication of Muslim apostates—and *jahiliyya*—the deplorable state of ignorance prior to the revelation of the Quran that has enveloped the secular Muslim community as well as non-Muslims. Qutb wrote that only the creation of an Islamic state ruled by sharia (Islamic law) could end the state of jahiliyya.



Qutb is widely considered the progenitor of the modern jihadist movement

as his writings directly inspired the Muslim Brotherhood and notorious extremists who passed through the organization, including Osama bin Laden of al-Qaeda, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of ISIS, and the founders of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Often referred to as the father of modern Islamism, Egyptian author [Sayyid Qutb](#) was a lead theologian of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) in the mid-20th century. Qutb's hardline interpretations of the Quran and his excoriation of the failures of Western society inspired the modern jihadist movement and led the Egyptian government to execute him in 1966. His influence can be seen in violent groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban, and among such notable extremists such as Osama bin Laden, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Terrorism expert Paul Berman at one point dubbed Qutb "the intellectual hero of every one of the groups that eventually went into Al Qaeda, their Karl Marx (to put it that way), their guide."¹

Qutb's writings helped inform the Islamist ideology known as [Qutbism](#), which advocates violent jihad—including the killing of secular Muslims—in order to implement sharia (Islamic law). Qutb argued that Muslim societies living under secular Muslim governments existed in a state of *jahiliyya*, the state of ignorance that existed prior to the revelation of the divine message of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. According to Qutb, this affliction could only be corrected by the implementation of sharia, brought about by offensive jihad and the killing of secular state officials.²

While imprisoned in Egypt in the early 1960s, Qutb wrote his book *Milestones*, a condemnation of the United States, Western society, and Western values. In the book, Qutb described all Jews and Christians as living in a state of jahiliyya because they rejected God. Secular Muslim societies also live in a state of jahiliyya because they do

¹ Paul Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," *New York Times*, March 23, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/the-philosopher-of-islamic-terror.html>.

² Dale C. Eikmeier, "Qutbism: An Ideology of Islamic-Fascism," *Parameters: The US Army War College Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 89, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a485995.pdf>.

not live in total submission to God.³ Qutb condemns these societies as un-Islamic⁴ while jahiliyya itself is “evil and corrupt.”⁵ Prosecutors would later use the book at Qutb’s trial as evidence of his intention to subvert the Egyptian government.⁶

Qutb’s writings speak directly to violent jihadists, but Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser recognized the extent of Qutb’s influence in Egypt. Though Nasser ultimately oversaw Qutb’s arrest and execution, he unsuccessfully tried to have Qutb released and even offered him a government position. Prior to Qutb’s execution by Egyptian authorities, he told his sister, “My words will be stronger if they kill me.”⁷ Indeed, Qutb’s words have far outlived him and influenced many of the world’s most violent terrorists. While studying at university in Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s, a young Osama bin Laden read *Milestones* and other works by Qutb, which helped inspire bin Laden on a path to becoming the world’s most notorious terrorist.⁸ Other top al-Qaeda figures such as Ayman al-Zawahiri and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed also devoured Qutb’s writings and credited him with creating their passions for violent jihad. According to Zawahiri, “Sayyid Qutub’s call for loyalty to God’s oneness and to acknowledge God’s sole authority and sovereignty was the spark that ignited the Islamic revolution against the enemies of Islam at home and abroad.”⁹ According to a founding member of the Egyptian jihadist

³ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service), 81-82.

⁴ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service), 83-84.

⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service), 132.

⁶ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Random House, 2011), 34-36; Paul Berman, “The Philosopher of Islamic Terror,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/the-philosopher-of-islamic-terror.html>.

⁷ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Random House, 2011), 36-37.

⁸ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Random House, 2011), 91.

⁹ Thomas R. Mockaitis, *The “New” Terrorism: Myths and Reality* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 64.

group al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, "Qutb has influenced all those interested in jihad throughout the Islamic world."¹⁰ *Milestones* remains in print and available online and through Islamic booksellers. It was one of five radicalizing books found in British prisons in a 2016 report by CEP advisory board member Ian Acheson.¹¹

CEP has documented

37

extremists
entities linked to
or influenced by
Qutb

27

Individuals

10

Organizations

¹⁰ Robert S. Leikin and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *New York Times*, April 23, 2007, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/world/20070301faessay_v86n2_leiken_brooke.html.

¹¹ Sajid Iqbal and Noel Titheradge, "'Extremist' books remained in prisons despite warning," BBC News, July 28, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36774358>.

Individuals



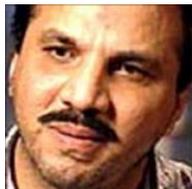
Abd al-Aziz Awda

(Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [FBI](#), [Encyclopedia of Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups](#), p. 239)

Preacher and professor of Islamic law in the Gaza Strip who cofounded Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) alongside Fathi Shaqaqi. Awda attracted many to the PIJ cause through his sermons at one of Gaza's largest mosques. Designated a global terrorist by the United States and wanted by the FBI for conspiracy to conduct the affairs of the designated international terrorist organization through a pattern of racketeering activities such as bombings, murders, extortions, and money laundering.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

PIJ is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Shaqaqi and Awda drew initial inspiration from the Brotherhood but left the group in the late 1970s because they felt it had become too moderate and did not focus enough on the plight of the Palestinians.



Abdul Rahman Yasin

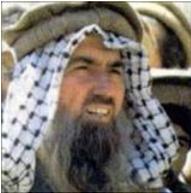
(Sources: [FBI](#), [FBI](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [60 Minutes](#), [CBS News](#), [ABC News](#))

U.S. citizen and conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and wounded more than 1,000 others. Helped Ramzi Yousef purchase chemicals and build the bomb they later left in a parked vehicle into the basement garage of the World Trade Center's north tower. Arrested by the FBI days after the bombing but released after

providing information on his fellow conspirators. Fled to Iraq. Arrested in 1994 in Iraq but disappeared after the 2003 U.S. invasion. Remains at large.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Acolyte of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdel Rahman, who was in turn heavily influenced by Qutb’s writings.



Abdullah Azzam

(Sources: *The Looming Tower*, p. 111, 149, [9/11 Commission Report](#), p. 55, [Slate](#), [Daily Beast](#))

Palestinian Islamist preacher who helped found al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Lashkar-e-Taiba. He is often referred to as the father of global jihad, and was instrumental in recruiting foreign fighters to Afghanistan in the 1980s. Azzam theorized that Muslims should fight a single, global jihad against their enemies as opposed to smaller, separate national fights.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Azzam was a disciple of Qutb’s who shared Qutb’s belief that Islam struggled against modern incarnations of jahiliyya, the world of disbelief before the advent of Islam. Echoing Qutb’s writings in 1988, Azzam wrote about the need for a “pioneering vanguard”—al-Qaeda—to constitute “the solid base for the hoped-for society.”



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

(Sources: [Site Institute](#), [Week](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Brookings Institute](#), [Hindu](#), [New York Times](#))

Founder and former leader of ISIS. Baghdadi declared himself caliph of all Muslims after ISIS captured parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014. Killed in a U.S. raid in Syria on October 26, 2019.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Baghdadi read the works of Brotherhood leaders, including Qutb, while in graduate school in Iraq in the 1990s. He was reportedly more attracted to Qutb's writings calling for direct action and grew impatient with the Brotherhood. He later joined al-Qaeda, whose leaders were themselves influenced by Qutb's works.



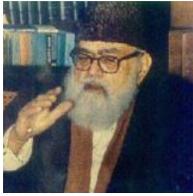
Abu Muhammad al-Adnani

(Sources: [New Age Islam](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#))

A.k.a. Taha Sobhi Fahla. Deceased Syrian national who served as ISIS's spokesman and emir in Syria. Announced the creation of ISIS's caliphate in 2014 and declared Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi its caliph. Called on Muslims worldwide to launch a holy war against Russia and the United States in 2015. Killed in a U.S. airstrike in Syria in August 2016.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Allegedly considered Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* to be among his favorite books.



Abul Ala Maududi

(Sources: Great Muslims of Undivided India, p. 141-142, Vying for Allah's Vote, p. 78-80, The Looming Tower, p. 34-35, [Dawn](#), [U.S. Army War College](#), [World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization](#))

Islamic theologian, a prolific author from British India who founded the political Islamist group Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI). Wrote in the 1940s that sharia would eradicate what he referred to as modern jahiliyya, the state of ignorance afflicting the world's Muslims, as the only way to defend against jahiliyya was to Islamize society, first by introducing Islamic regulation to politics and economy, and eventually the entire state. Founded JEI in 1941 in the hope of creating a group of pious and learned Muslims that would eventually take total political power. Died in 1979.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Maududi was a primary influence on Qutb, who expanded on Maududi's writings about jahiliyya and the need for a sharia-ruled state to combat it. Maududi's theories helped form the tenets of Qutbism as Qutb went on to popularize these notions in the 1960s.



Ahmed Ajaj

(Sources: [FBI](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [CBS News](#))

Palestinian conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and wounded more than 1,000 others. Arrested in 1992 for trying to enter the United States with a forged Swedish passport. Also

found in possession of instructions on how to build the type of bomb used in the 1993 bombing. Released from prison shortly after the WTC bombing but soon arrested again for participation in the plot from prison. Sentenced to 240 years in prison in 1994.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Acolyte of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdel Rahman, who was in turn heavily influenced by Qutb’s writings.



Ali Khamenei

(Sources: Khamenei.ir, [European Eye on Radicalization](#), [Journal of Islamic Muslim Studies](#), [Comparative Strategy](#))

Supreme leader of Iran. Assumed the role in 1989 following his term as Iran’s president from 1981 to 1989 and the death of Iran’s previous supreme leader, Ali Khomeini. Believes Islam is in a “righteous” fight against the United States, “the Great Satan,” which controls “the avaricious arrogant policies of the satans of the world.”

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb influenced Iranian religious leader Navvab Safavi to model his *Fedayeen-e-Islam* organization on *Nizam al-Khaas*, the secret apparatus of the Muslim Brotherhood. Khamenei heard Safavi speak at his school as a teenager and credited Safavi with engaging him in politics as he began supporting the ideology of Fedayeen-e-Islam. Khamenei went on to translate two of Qutb’s books into Persian.



Anwar al-Awlaki

(Sources: [New York Times](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [White House](#), [USA Today](#), [New York Times](#))

U.S.-Yemeni dual citizen and longtime cleric, propagandist, and operative for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Directed a number of terrorist plots against the United States, and disseminated English- and Arabic-language videos, audio recordings, and articles online. Killed in a U.S. drone strike on September 30, 2011, in Yemen. Awlaki's lectures and writings continue to inspire acts of terrorism after his death.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Awlaki considered Qutb one of his chief influences and claimed he would read 100 to 150 pages a day of Qutb's writings while in prison in 2006 in Yemen. He wrote that he so immersed himself in Qutb's works that he felt Qutb "was with me in my cell speaking to me directly."



Ayman al-Zawahiri

(Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Knights Under the Prophet's Banner – Meditations on the Jihadist Movement](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [Guardian](#), [His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri](#), p. 48, [The Looming Tower](#), p. 44)

U.S.-designated co-founder and the current leader of al-Qaeda who succeeded Osama bin Laden after his 2011 death. Arrested in 1981 as a conspirator in the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Released in 1985. Cofounded al-Qaeda with bin Laden in 1988. Maintains that al-Qaeda's primary target is the United States and its ally

Israel, followed by its local allies that rule Muslim countries. In hiding since the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Zawahiri joined the Brotherhood as a teenager. After Qutb's 1966 execution, Zawahiri formed an Islamist cell in Egypt and vowed to turn Qutb's ideas into action. In 2001, Zawahiri published *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, which linked al-Qaeda's goal with the Qutbist strategy of offensive jihad. Zawahiri declared that Muslims worldwide are responsible for waging jihad.



Fathi Shaqaqi

(Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [New York Times](#))

Cofounder of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) alongside Abd al-Aziz Awda. Served as PIJ's first secretary-general until his death in Malta on October 26, 1995. Israel's Mossad is suspected of assassinating Shaqaqi.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

PIJ is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Shaqaqi and Awda drew initial inspiration from the Brotherhood but left the group in the late 1970s because they felt it had become too moderate and did not focus enough on the plight of the Palestinians.



Eyad Ismoil

(Sources: [FBI](#), [New York Times](#), [CBS News](#))

Conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and wounded more than 1,000 others. Drove the explosives-packed truck into the World Trade Center garage. Sentenced to 240 years in prison in 1997. Also fined \$250,000 and ordered to pay restitution of \$10 million.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Acolyte of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdel Rahman, who was in turn heavily influenced by Qutb’s writings.



Hassan al-Banna

(Sources: [Ikhwanweb](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Harvard Divinity School](#), [BBC News](#))

Egyptian schoolteacher who became the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and its underground military wing, the secret apparatus. The Brotherhood grew under Banna’s leadership to operate approximately 2,000 branches throughout Egypt. Killed in February 1949 by Egyptian secret police in response to the secret apparatus’s assassination of Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud an-Nuqrashi.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Banna was a contemporary of Qutb’s, as well as of Abul Ala Maududi’s. Theories promoted by the three helped form the ideology of Qutbism.



Khalid Sheikh Mohammed

(Sources: [New Yorker](#), [New York Times](#))

Al-Qaeda operative and the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. He is incarcerated at the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cub, awaiting trial.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Mohammed began studying Qutb at age 16 under the influence of his older brother in the Muslim Brotherhood. He reportedly became enamored with Qutb's anti-Western and jihadist teachings.



Mahfouz Azzam

(Sources: *The Looming Tower*, p. 43, [Kashmir Herald](#))

Muslim Brotherhood member and uncle of Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Azzam was an Arabic student of Qutb's in 1936 and 1937. He reportedly formed a lifelong bond with Qutb, who visited the family regularly. Azzam later wrote for the Brotherhood's magazine, *Al-Ikwan al-Muslimoun*, which Qutb published. Azzam became Qutb's personal lawyer. Azzam praised Qutb to his family, including his nephew Ayman al-Zawahiri.



Mahmoud Abouhalima

(Sources: [FBI](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [CBS News](#))

Conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and wounded more than 1,000 others. Sentenced to 240 years in prison in 1994.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Acolyte of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdel Rahman, who was in turn heavily influenced by Qutb’s writings.



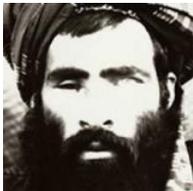
Muhammad Qutb

(Sources: [The Looming Tower](#), p. 91, [Madhyamam](#), [Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch](#))

Egyptian Islamist author, scholar, and lecturer who died in 2014.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb was the younger brother of Sayyid Qutb. He lectured weekly at King Abdul Aziz University about his brother’s writings. Qutb boasted about how his lectures attracted a young Osama bin Laden, among other students.



Mohammad Omar

(Sources: [Guardian](#), [France 24](#), [The Looming Tower](#), p. 259, [Telegraph](#))

A.k.a. Mullah Omar. Founder and former leader of the Taliban. Appointed himself Emir-ul Momineen (Leader of the Faithful) in 1996 after the Taliban seized large swaths of Afghanistan. Welcomes Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan in 1996. Bin Laden subsequently sets up training camps for al-Qaeda. Refused to turn over bin Laden to the United States after the 9/11 attacks, which spurred the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Killed in approximately 2013 and replaced by his deputy, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb's writings about the necessity of an Islamic state ruled by sharia influenced Omar and the formation of the Taliban. According to British journalist Robert Irwin, Qutb had a "formative influence" on the Taliban.



Mohammed A. Salameh

(Sources: [FBI](#), [CNN](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [New York Times](#), [CBS News](#))

Conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and wounded more than 1,000 others. Sentenced to 240 years in prison in 1994. Suspected but never charged in the 1990 assassination of Jewish Defense League founder Rabbi Meir Kahane.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Acolyte of "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdel Rahman, who was in turn heavily influenced by Qutb's writings.



Navvab Safavi

(Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [TRAC](#), [Jewish Chronicle](#))

A.k.a. Mojtaba Mir-Lohi. Safavi was an Iranian theology student who created the *Fedayeen-e-Islam*, “Organization of Islamic Society,” which sought to purify Iran by eliminating what it considered impure individuals. Safavi was executed in 1956, but the Fedayeen-e-Islam later supported Khomeini’s vision of an Islamic republic in Iran during the 1970s. Its members became foot soldiers for the government after the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Safavi met with Qutb in the 1950s and reportedly modeled Fedayeen-e-Islam on *Nizam al-Khaas* (“secret apparatus”), the Brotherhood’s underground armed faction in Egypt. Qutb invited Safavi to visit Egypt and Jordan and introduced him to other Brotherhood leaders. Safavi later introduced Ruhollah Khomeini to the Muslim Brotherhood.



Nidal A. Ayyad

(Sources: [FBI](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [CBS News](#))

Conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and wounded more than 1,000 others. Sentenced to 240 years in prison in 1994.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Acolyte of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdel Rahman, who was in turn heavily influenced by Qutb’s writings.



Omar Abdel-Rahman

(Sources: [9/11 Commission Report](#), pp. 51, 72, [Reuters](#))

A.k.a. the “Blind Sheikh.” Abdel-Rahman was an influential religious leader who rallied members of al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, and other jihadist groups. He was arrested in 1993, tried, and ultimately convicted in 1995 on dozens of charges, including conspiracy in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Abdel-Rahman died in February 2017 while serving a life sentence in U.S. prison.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb’s *Milestones* reportedly influenced Rahman’s preaching. Rahman relayed Qutb’s messages casting the United States as an oppressor of Muslims worldwide and calling on Muslims to unite against the enemies of God.



Osama bin Laden

(Sources: *The Looming Tower*, p. 90-91, [9/11 Commission Report](#), p. 51, 56, [New York Times](#))

Co-founder and leader of al-Qaeda, notorious for orchestrating the September 11, 2001, attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people. He was killed on May 2, 2011, in a shootout with U.S. Navy SEALs at a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Bin Laden joined the Muslim Brotherhood while attending King Abdul Azziz University in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s. He read *Milestones* and attended public lectures by Qutb's younger brother Mohammad while a student. A friend of Bin Laden's at the time, Jamal Khalifa, later said that Qutb "was the one who most affected [his and bin Laden's] generation." Bin Laden relied heavily on Qutb's writings in forming al-Qaeda's ideology. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, Qutb was a particularly "strong intellectual influence" on bin Laden, who shared "Qutb's stark view, permitting him and his followers to rationalize even unprovoked mass murder as righteous defense of an embattled faith." Like Qutb, bin Laden framed his objection to the United States in terms of the U.S. role in dividing and supposedly subjugating the Muslim world. Bin Laden used this interpretation to justify al-Qaeda's attacks.



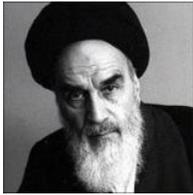
Ramzi Yousef

(Sources: [9/11 Commission Report](#), p. 73, [Los Angeles Times](#), [New York Daily News](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#))

Convicted terrorist and nephew of notorious 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohamed (KSM) responsible for the bomb used in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and wounded more than 1,000 others. Also responsible for plotting to bomb American passenger planes in the Far East and the bombing of Philippines Flight 343, which killed one and injured 10. Convicted in 1997 and sentenced to life in prison plus 240 years.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Acolyte of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdel Rahman, who was in turn heavily influenced by Qutb’s writings.



Ruhollah Khomeini

(Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [TRAC](#), [Jewish Chronicle](#), [Colnect](#), [New York Times](#))

Former supreme leader of Iran. Founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and leader of the Iranian Revolution. Reinterpreted the ninth-century Shiite concept of *vilayat-e faqih*, or guardianship of the Islamic jurist, to call for a single cleric oversee to Iran’s religious, military, and governmental sectors in order to ensure compliance with “divine law. Inspired the philosophy of Khomeinism, centered on Khomeini’s interpretation of vilayat-e faqih. Died on June 3, 1989.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Khomeini was introduced to the Muslim Brotherhood by Navvab Safavi, who met with Qutb in the 1950s and modeled his *Fedayeen-e-Islam* on *Nizam al-Khaas* (“secret apparatus”), the Brotherhood’s underground armed faction in Egypt. After the start of Iran’s 1979 revolution, members of Fedayeen-e-Islam joined the nascent Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Khomeini’s Iran issued a postage stamp in 1984 commemorating Qutb’s 1966 execution.



Salah Abdel-Fatah Al-Khalidi

(Source: [Combating Terrorism Center](#))

Arab scholar who has written more than 40 books on Islamism and envisioning a clash of civilizations between the United States and the Islamic community. According to Khalidi, the United States seeks to divide the Islamic community, redefine the Middle East map, promote a Jewish agenda in the region, and steal Muslim resources. Blames the United States for the Iran-Iraq War, the 1990 Gulf War, and the 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent war. Praised the 9/11 attacks on the United States, which he has also claimed is beholden to a global Jewish conspiracy.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Khalidi has written at least eight books on Qutbist theory, including *Al-Harb Al-Amriki bee Manather Sayid Qutb* (“The American War from the Perspective of Sayid Qutb”), in which he claims the Islamic community is under assault by Zionists, the United States, and Muslim apostates. Khalidi’s books include Qutbist theories such as jahiliyya and takfir. Scholars at the Combating Terrorism Center credit Khalidi with reintroducing Qutb to the Arab Street.



Yusuf al-Qaradawi

(Sources: [Egypt Today](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Guardian](#), [Fox News](#), [Associated Press](#), “Terrorist Threats to the United States: Congressional Hearing,” [Guardian](#), [Ikhwanweb](#))

Qatar-based Islamist theologian and the unofficial chief ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qaradawi has called on followers to financially

support the mujahideen and justified suicide bombings. Qaradawi has been banned from entering the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Tunisia. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates have designated Qaradawi as a terrorist.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qaradawi follows a Qutbist ideology, though he has denigrated Qutb's *takfirist* philosophy and claimed the Brotherhood does not hold by the concept of excommunication. Qaradawi has also claimed that the Brotherhood has abandoned Qutb's teachings.

Organizations



Al-Qaeda

(Sources: [New York Times](#), [Spiegel International](#), [Long War Journal](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Global terrorist organization co-founded by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri after the Afghan jihad of the 1980s. Responsible for the 9/11 attacks on the United States, the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2002 Bali bombing, the 2003 Saudi Arabia bombings, the 2004 Madrid bombing, and the 2005 London bombing. Al-Qaeda spawned affiliate groups that have spread throughout North Africa and the Sahel, East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia. Bin Laden's 2011 death, compounded with the deaths or arrests of other al-Qaeda leaders, degraded the group's operations and support networks, but al-Qaeda's core remains a source of inspiration for its affiliate groups.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Al-Qaeda founders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri were both acolytes of Qutb and modeled their jihadist philosophies on Qutb's writings.



Hamas

(Sources: [Avalon Project](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [Haaretz](#), [Guardian](#))

Hamas (an acronym for the “Islamic Resistance Movement”) formed in the Gaza Strip during the first intifada against Israel in the late 1980s. It has since claimed responsibility for hundreds of suicide bombings and other attacks that have killed American and Israeli civilians. Hamas violently seized control of the Gaza Strip from the Palestinian Authority in 2007 and continues to oversee the territory.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Hamas is an offshoot of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The terror group is suspected of conspiring with the Brotherhood to assassinate Egypt’s chief prosecutor, Hisham Barakat, in 2015. Hamas claimed to sever all ties with the Brotherhood in 2016 and released a new guiding political document in 2017 that made no mention of the Brotherhood. Nonetheless, Hamas leaders stated that Hamas’s original charter remained in effect.



ISIS

(Sources: [Seventh Day](#), [MEMRI](#), [New Age Islam](#), [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [Guardian](#))

ISIS is an extremist group formed from al-Qaeda offshoots in Iraq and Syria that seeks to unite the Muslim world under a single Islamic caliphate. The group announced its Islamic State in 2014 after capturing parts of Syria and Iraq. ISIS has since lost its territorial caliphate and switched its tactics to that of a more traditional insurgency.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb wrote that an Islamic caliphate was necessary to unite the Muslim world and exercise total religious and political authority. ISIS created its

caliphate in line with this Qutbist ideology. ISIS also follows a takfirist ideology as espoused by Qutb, which allows the group to excommunicate and wage violence against Muslims who protest its strict interpretations of Islam. Violent extremist groups such as ISIS serve as an extension of core Brotherhood ideology, according to Egyptian Minister of Religious Endowments Mohamed Mokhtar Gomaa. Deceased ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani allegedly considered Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* to be among his favorite books.



Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

(Sources: [Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies](#))

Iranian government agency tasked with defending the regime against internal and external threats. Espousing a radical ideology and a paranoid worldview, the IRGC uses secret police methods against its opponents within Iran, and terrorist tactics against its enemies abroad.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb was widely read by those who would go on to build and support Khomeini's revolution, including the IRGC. Writing in the *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, Yusuf Unal called Qutb an "influential figure" among Iranian revolutionaries. Qutb's writings played "an instrumental role in shaping the discourse of Islamism in pre-revolutionary Iran." Qutb directly influenced Navvab Safavi, who created *Fedayeen-e-Islam*, modeled on the Brotherhood's secret apparatus. The Fedayeen-e-Islam later supported Khomeini's vision of an Islamic republic in Iran during the 1970s, and its members became foot soldiers for the government after the 1979 Iranian Revolution.



Jamaat e-Islami

(Sources: [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#), [Great Muslims of Undivided India](#), p. 141-142, [Vying for Allah's Vote](#), p. 78-80, [ThePrint.In](#), [New Statesmen](#))

Abul ala Maududi founded Jel in 1941, hoping to organize a group of pious and learned Muslims that would eventually take total political power. These Muslims, Maududi envisioned, would bring sharia to the Indian subcontinent and erect an Islamic state. After the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent, Maududi moved to Pakistan and remodeled Jel as a political opposition party in that country.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Jel follows the discourses of Maududi, Qutb, and Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna. Indian media have likened Jel to the South Asian version of the Muslim Brotherhood.



Muslim Brotherhood

(Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Parameters: The US Army War College Quarterly](#), [New York Times](#), [The Looming Tower](#), p. 34-35)

Transnational Sunni Islamist movement that seeks to implement sharia under a global caliphate. The Brotherhood is Egypt's oldest Islamist group and inspired the creation of al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hamas, and other groups.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb was a leading Brotherhood ideologue in the 1950s and 1960s. Qutb promoted jihad as an offensive force to be used against secular Arab governments, whose Muslim populations, he wrote, existed in a state of jahiliyya. Qutb became a leading spokesman for the Brotherhood before his 1966 death. Egypt arrested Qutb for belonging to the Brotherhood's secret apparatus and involvement in an assassination attempt on Gamal Abdel Nasser. Qutb wrote *Milestones* while in an Egyptian prison in the 1960s. Qutb's writings prompted further Brotherhood growth across the Arabian Peninsula.



Al-Nusra Front (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham)

(Sources: [Long War Journal](#), [Long War Journal](#), [Long War Journal](#))

Internationally sanctioned terrorist group and a formerly open al-Qaeda affiliate that seeks to replace the Assad regime in Syria with an Islamic state. Founded by deceased ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Al-Nusra has operated as part of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) coalition since January 2017.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

As an offshoot of al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra follows a Qutbist ideology. Al-Qaeda founders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, as well as Nusra Front founder Baghdadi, all at one point belonged to the Brotherhood.



Palestinian Islamic Jihad

(Sources: Council on Foreign Relations, New York Times, Jerusalem Post, Times of Israel)

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) is a Palestinian Islamist terrorist group sponsored by Iran. Founded in 1979 as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, PIJ is the second-largest terrorist group in Gaza after Hamas. PIJ seeks to create a state based on sharia in all the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River—including Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. It is responsible for suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and other acts of terrorism that have killed U.S. and Israeli civilians.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

PIJ is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Its founders, Fathi Shaqaqi and Abd al-Aziz Awda, drew initial inspiration from the Brotherhood but left the group in the late 1970s because they felt it had become too moderate and did not focus enough on the plight of the Palestinians.



The Taliban

(Sources: [Guardian](#), [Washington Post](#), [NBC News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Long War Journal](#))

The Taliban (Pashto for “students”) are the predominant umbrella group for the Afghan insurgency, including the semi-autonomous Haqqani network. The Taliban seized control of Afghanistan between 1994 and 1996, and provided refuge for Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan in the late 1990s. The United States launched an invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 after the Taliban refused to turn over bin

Laden following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Taliban have continued to carry out a violent insurgency against the Afghan government and U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

Qutb's writings about the necessity of an Islamic state ruled by sharia influenced Taliban founder Mohammed Omar and the formation of the Taliban, which reportedly revered Qutb. According to British journalist Robert Irwin, Qutb had a "formative influence" on the Taliban.



World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)

(Sources: [New York Times](#), [Pew Research Center](#), [Washington Post](#), [WAMY UK](#), [Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs](#), [Philadelphia Inquirer](#), [National Post](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

WAMY was founded in Saudi Arabia in 1972 as the youth wing of the Muslim World League. While neither MWL or WAMY follow Muslim Brotherhood ideology, both groups have at times partnered with the Brotherhood and Brotherhood-affiliated organizations. U.S. authorities raided WAMY's U.S. headquarters in Virginia in 2004. WAMY seeks to "introduce Islam in its purest form as a comprehensive system and way of life." WAMY has been linked to the bin Laden family, al-Qaeda, and Hamas. In 2012, WAMY lost its charitable status in Canada due to its ties to extremist elements, including the al-Qaeda-linked Benevolence International Fund in Canada (BIF-Canada).

Connection to Sayyid Qutb

In the 1970s, WAMY published volumes of *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, Qutb's multi-volume commentary on the Quran.