

State of Mankind

How much do you know?

Excerpts from *How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World*

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Qutb's writings influenced many young Arabs, including the Palestinian scholar and later one of the founders of Al-Qaeda, Abdullah Yusuf Azzam. The 9/11 Commission Report outlined Qutb's influence on bin Laden's worldview, and also referred to Azzam directly as "a disciple of Qutb."

Muhammad Qutb, Sayyid Qutb's younger brother, was also one of the primary transmitters of Qutb's views. Muhammad Qutb later went to Saudi Arabia and became a professor who conducted research on Islam, and at the same time, was also responsible for editing, publishing, and promoting his late brother's theories.

Bin Laden read Qutb's books when he was a student, and he was familiar with Muhammad Qutb, regularly attending the latter's weekly public lectures. The former CIA official who oversaw the group in charge of bin Laden, Michael Scheuer, also senior researcher at The Jamestown Foundation, described Muhammad Qutb as bin Laden's mentor.

The aforementioned Al-Qaeda second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is also a fanatical disciple of Sayyid Qutb. When he was a youth,

Zawahiri repeatedly heard from his uncle about Qutb's character and how great he was to suffer in prison. After Qutb's death, Zawahiri wrote in his memoirs: "The Nasserite regime thought that the Islamic movement received a deadly blow with the execution of Sayyid Qutb and his comrades, but the apparent surface calm concealed an immediate interaction with Sayyid Qutb's ideas and the formation of the nucleus of the modern Islamic jihad movement in Egypt."

In the year that Qutb was hanged, Zawahiri, then 15, helped form an underground militant cell determined to "put Qutb's vision into action." After that, Zawahiri joined the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and later became bin Laden's mentor and an important member of Al-Qaeda. After bin Laden was killed, Zawahiri became the leader of Al-Qaeda.

Glenn E. Robinson, the Middle East expert quoted above, said that in the Sunni Muslim world, Qutb is the most important thinker who emphasized violent jihad. Virtually all the concepts and innovations of the Sunni jihad groups can be found in Qutb's books. Although the various jihadi groups may differ in form, they all share one point in common, namely, the use of violence under the banner of Islam to realize their political aims.

The 1981 assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and the Egyptian terrorist group al-Gamma al-Islamiyah's attacks against government officials, secular intellectuals, Egyptian Christians, and tourists in the 1990s are all steps in the campaign to bring about Qutb's vision.

The radical jihadi groups that pursue Qutb's ideology are categorized as Salafi jihadi terrorists. Robert Manne, professor of politics at La Trobe University, in Melbourne, Australia, called Qutb the "father of Salafi jihadism" and the "forerunner of the Islamic State." In his book *The Mind of the Islamic State: ISIS and the Ideology of the Caliphate*, he wrote: "Fifty years after Sayyid Qutb's execution, this is what the tradition of Salafi jihadism, the mind of the Islamic State, has become. There are no more milestones to pass. We have finally reached the gates of hell."

The report *A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qaeda and Other Salafi Jihadists* by the Rand Corporation in America outlined Qutb's influence on Salafi jihadis, and at the same time listed more than 40 Salafi jihadi groups. They are active across almost all continents.

Looking at the various extremist Islamic organizations in existence, although they lack a united vision and are given to ideological infighting, there is one trait common to the overwhelming majority of them: Qutb's aggressive form of jihad. They have essentially inherited Qutb's work, which is communist revolution in a different form.