

hideen Battalions, Jihad Brigades, al Qa'ida Fallujah Branch, JeM, and IAI. Hashim also made copious mention of Zarqawi's group.⁵

One of the salient and well-reported transitions within the insurgency was the rapid decline in the influence of Saddam loyalists over its first two years. Simultaneously, most nationalist groups turned toward salafist interpretations of Islam, factors that gave an increasingly salafist tone to the entire insurgent movement.⁶ Tensions between the groups occasionally surfaced over tactics, the legitimacy of violence against certain targets, and their attitude toward the political process. Nevertheless, as the International Crisis Group report argued,

what is remarkable is that . . . violent friction between groups, far from precipitating the insurgency's implosion, has increased its coherence, at least in rhetoric. . . . Eager for legitimacy and fearful of debilitating internal conflict, the insurgency converged around an Islamic discourse, turning principally to salafi . . . religious scholars for moral and juridical validation of its jihad in general and of specific forms of conduct in particular.⁷

For example, the various insurgent groups disagreed over whether and how violently to oppose voting in the January 2005 elections. When the violence against voters backfired, six of the most active organizations issued a joint communiqué against targeting voters, and the critical seventh organization, AQI, fell in line. The number of attacks on election days in October and December 2005 dropped significantly compared to what took place in the January 2005 elections. Even as late as spring 2006, Sunni jihadists were observed to be essentially unified and held to a common doctrine.⁸

⁵ Ahmed Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006, pp. 170–176.

⁶ ICG (2006, p. 7). The few groups that professed attachment to the former regime quickly vanished.

⁷ ICG (2006, p. 10).

⁸ See, for example, Mathieu Guidère and Peter Harling, "Iraq's Resistance Evolves," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 2006.