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Paper Abstract: "The Religious Dimensions of Al-Qaeda's Ideology"

When talking about Al-Qaeda's ideology, journalists, scholars and politicians usually focus on the political dimensions of Bin Laden's radical worldview. In discussing Bin Laden's aspirations, they mention his desire that U.S. troops be withdrawn from the Arabian peninsula, that U.S. support for Israel be terminated, and that the U.S. government stop exercising its superpower prerogatives. This is because very little is known about the internal religious discourse motivating and legitimizing Al-Qaeda's resort to violence. To this purpose, the paper will focus on guiding the winter school participants through the main ideologues, concepts, and developments that have contributed to the crystallization of Al-Qaeda's radical orientation. In addition, attention will be given to various historical channels of dissemination and methods of transmission that have helped recruit, indoctrinate, and train Muslim youth worldwide. The paper hopes to spark a discussion on the ideational and motivational foundations of non-state violence, especially in the sphere of religiously motivated terrorism.