The recent burst of violence linked with the Saudi-born Islamic militant, Usama Bin Laden, sheds some light on a recent evolution of Islamic radicalism. In the eighties, most of the Western leftist radicals supported by the Khomeini-led Iran were either defeated or is no longer threatening the state apparatus. It is rather being directed at ‘side-targets’ (power tourists in Egypt with yellow-Islamists, or the civilian population in Algeria).

Most of the main-stream Islamist movements also haven’t figured out how to enter the legal political scene (Turkey, Jor- dan, Yemen, Kuwait, Egypt) and largely gave up their supra-national agenda in favor of nationalistic (RefaI, FIS), if not nationalist (Palestinian Hamas, but also – Islamic Iran). But the resignation of some Islamist movements left aside a new kind of radical fringe. The bombing of the World Trade Center in New York (1993) was probably the harbinger of new patterns of radical Islamic violence. The targets are symbolic Western (and more precisely American) buildings or people. There is no longer any strategic goal; more precisely, there is a huge discrepancy between the avowed goals (the departure of Western forces from the region and the real threat they represent for the Western interests. The in-volved networks are made of transnational militants, who often have multiple citizenship (or no citizenship at all, like Bin Laden), and do not link their fight with a precise state or nation. Even if they come from some main-stream Islamist movements (like the Muslim Brothers) they do not identify themselves with the present strategy of these movements. They appeal to uprooted transnational mil-itants, who have already fought in a few or more wars, to fight for them, and identify themselves with a sort of imaginary ummah.

Almost all of these militants shared a common point: they spent some time in Afghan-i stan, in Mujahidin training camps, and they are based between Lahore (Pakistan) and Kandahar (Afghan-istan). This Afghan connection dates back to the early eighties. In response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a joint venture of Pakistani military service (ISI – using dollar Saudi Intelligence [under Prince Turki Bin Faysal]), with the support of the CIA, endeav-oured to send to Afghanistan a kind of ‘Islamic legion’ to help the Afghan Mujahidin. The sponsors had different agendas. The Saudis and the Americans wanted to ‘bleed the So- viet’ and to keep Pakistan after the action. The last operation was the bombing of two US embassies in Eastern Africa. The main suspect, Mohammed Sadiq Odah, is a Palestinian who was trained also in Afghanistan. Most of these militants and networks have kept their ‘Afghan’ connections, and they are still thriving, although they are living in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban. They are also supported in Paki-stan by a cluster of political and religious organizations, loosely coordinated in the framework of the Dawat ul Irshad, established near Lahore. One finds the Islamist Jamaat-e Islami (the more conservative Jamaat-e Islami), which controlled the networks of madrasas from which the Taliban movement originated, and more radical splinter groups like the Sepah-i Saheban, whose main goal is to fight Shi’ism. Some high-level former Pak-i stan officials, like the General Hamid Gul, former Head of the ISI at the end of the Afghan War, are also supporting the movement (Gul protested against the extradition of Ramzi to the USA and the bombing by the US forces of the Mujahidin training camps in August 1998). These groups, which were all involved in sup-porting the Afghan Mujahidin, have openly turned anti-Western. In phase with a huge part of the Pakistani intelligentsia. If the Pakistani government takes its distance from Bin Laden, it openly supports the Taliban movement. How can one assess this kind of radical movement? It is not solely a rear-guard fighting waged by ‘lost soldiers’. On one hand, it is one of the consequences of the conservative re-Islamization waged by states like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (but also Egypt), and in phase with the changes in the world market of thousands of madrasa students. It is also a consequence of the integration of the mainstream Islamist movements into the domestic political scene, as China is living in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban. Violence in Egypt is linked to a precise state or nation. 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