The convergence of peoples and markets in ‘real-world’ cosmopolitanism is significantly challenged and indeed fractured in emerging apparent differences as to the ontological status of inner worlds. On the one hand, the Western secular, liberal, post-Christian capitalist ideology and world view ‘see’ inner worlds, usually, as reflective but not primarily constitutive or generative of outer world dynamics. The Freudian notion of the personal unconscious is emblematic of such a paradigm. The Western psychoanalytical paradigm, however, is radically different from that of many societies studied by social anthropologists, notably shamanic cultures. Strongly religious cultures share a differing and variant paradigm as to the nature of the unconscious; the numinous is, or rather can be, the locus of spiritual generativity within the outer world. These abstractions find real-world political, economic and social significance today, particularly, in the ideological world view of the growing militant jihadist variant of Islam.

As well as their critique of Western imperialist aggression and secularism, part of Islamic militant jihadist inspiration is apparently derived from reported experience of true night dreams from Allah, within the Islamic tradition of prophetic revelation through ‘true dreams’, Al-ru’ya. This chapter presents many such night dream examples from the Al-Qaeda leadership and followers, to the Taliban and ex-Guantanamo Bay
inmates. Some examples, particularly the case example of the reported inspirational dreams of Mullah Omar, have been gained through recent fieldwork in the Middle East, particularly Pakistan. We develop anthropological reflections upon the phenomena of the political usage of such reported imaginary data. Following recent debates discussing cosmopolitanism as a mechanism for the transcendence of communitarian, national, local and ‘cultural’ limits, or as a way of connecting people across particular boundaries (Rapport 2007; Theodossopoulos, this volume), we argue that the partly dream-inspired, militant, Islamic jihadist ideology is a transnational politico-religious movement of discontent and a particular variant of counter-cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2007), rather than Western, hegemonic international cosmopolitanism.

The Dream in Islam

Islam is probably the largest night dream culture in the world today. In Islam, the night dream is thought to offer a way to metaphysical and divinatory knowledge, to be a practical, alternative and potentially accessible source of imaginative inspiration and guidance and to offer ethical clarity concerning action in this world. Islam was both born in and gave birth to spiritual dreamtime. The Prophet Muhammad is said to have received ru‘an (the plural of ru‘ya)2 or ‘true dreams’ from God for six months before the beginning of the revelation of the Koran. Bukhari (1979: 91), compiler of the best-known Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) reports the words of Muhammad’s wife, Aisha, that the ‘commencement of the divine inspiration was in the form of good righteous [true] dreams in his sleep. He never had a dream but that it came true like bright day of light.’ Indeed, there it is said that one-forty-sixth of the Koran was given to Muhammad in dreams (Bukhari 1979: 196).

Sviri sets out the consequences of this for the role of dreaming in medieval Islam: ‘While prophecy has ceased, Muhammad being the seal of the Prophets, messages of divine origin can still be communicated through dreams, albeit on a smaller scale than prophecy’ (Sviri 1999: 252). The same point is made in a hadith included in Bukhari: ‘Nothing is left of prophetism except Al-Mubashshirat,’ which the Prophet explained as being ‘the true good dreams that convey glad tidings’ (Bukhari 1979: 99). In mainstream Islam, then, there is no future revelation to come other than through the oneirocratic vehicle of true dreams. This gives such dreams a special charisma, power and authority, and means that – for all Muslims, and particularly for those followers of Islam with a mystical facility – the dream is a potential pathway to the divine. In sleep or in deep contemplation, the mystically attuned have access to the noumenal, not just the surreal.
Three kinds of dreams are recognized, first by the Prophet and then by later dream writers, such as Ibn Sireen (2000), the eight-century dream interpreter from Basra, whose book *Dreams and Interpretations* remains the most popular dream interpretation manual in many Islamic countries today. First come true spiritual dreams, *ru’an*, inspired by God; second come dreams inspired by the devil; third come dreams from the *nafs*, or ego, which are considered unimportant.

True dreams are most likely to be experienced by the pious and the righteous, those who have already stripped away some of the veils of materialism from their hearts. However, from West Africa to the Philippines, the tripartite schematization of dreams explained above is part of the world view of the majority of Muslims, not just the especially pious. Edgar’s fieldwork[^3] in the UK, Turkey, Northern Cyprus, and Pakistan between 2004 and 2005 confirmed this, using extensive and random, serendipitous, interviewing of people from all walks of life. Ask a Muslim about dreams, and usually you will be told of a significant dream that has influenced their life through focusing their attention on a possibility not previously recognized by their conscious mind. Sufis, followers of the mystical branch of Islam, are especially steeped in the power and extraordinary value of dreaming. Several Sufis in Sheffield, UK, spoke about dreams they had had of their Sheikh, in which they received valuable teachings about their spiritual development or about their core life issues. These Sufis regarded dreams of their Sheikh as true dreams. A Muslim dry-cleaner in the UK told of his mother, who had dreams in which the Prophet advised her about how to pray. A textile seller in Peshawar, Pakistan, told how the Prophet had appeared in a dream and shown him the way to slake the continual thirst he had experienced in his dream, through praying five times a day. Thereafter he had been happy. A fifteen-year-old boy from Birmingham, UK, whom Edgar met in a madrasah in Peshawar, told how he had moved to Pakistan to study to become an imam partly through a dream. Muhammad Amanullah (2005) came to similar conclusions after studying twelve staff in the religious studies department of a Malaysian university: the majority reported true dreams, and 50 per cent believed they had seen the Prophet in a dream.

The appearance of the Prophet Muhammad in a dream is of particular importance. The Hadiths say that, if the Prophet appears in a dream, then it is a true dream. Bukhari writes, ‘Whoever has seen me in a dream, then no doubt he has seen me, for Satan cannot imitate my shape’ (1979: 106). Many people spoke to confirm this. For non-Muslims, the conviction that to dream of the Prophet is to have received a true guidance from God could be seen as opening a Pandora’s box, but there are safeguards. The Prophet must be complete in his shape (Bukhari 1979: 104), and no true
dream can advocate behaviour contrary to the teachings of the Koran and the Hadiths. An imam in Peshawar gave two examples of this from his own experience. The first involved a lawyer who went to him for help in interpreting a dream of the Prophet rolled up in a carpet. The imam responded by saying ‘You are a corrupt lawyer,’ presumably because the body and energy of the Prophet were circumscribed. The second example was of a man who had a dream in which the Prophet had said he could drink alcohol. The imam asked him if he was a drinker and the man said, ‘Yes,’ to which the Imam replied that it was not the Prophet he had seen, but a self-justification for his drinking alcohol.

Dream interpretation in Islam, even given the apparently simple classificatory system, is extremely sophisticated, and takes into account factors that include the piety and spiritual rank of the dreamer, their social position, the time of night of the dream and the time of year. Islamic dream dictionaries, unlike their Western counterparts, may contain many interpretations for the same symbol (Lamoreux 2002). For example, if a poor person dreams of honey, this can be a sign of illness as only then will poor people buy honey, whereas for a rich person to dream of honey is a favourable sign. Religious scholars say that only a prophet can definitively distinguish a true from a false dream; even spiritual leaders such as sheikhs may disagree about interpretations. Anyone, then, may have a true dream, though it is more likely to be experienced by a pious person, or by one who is perhaps going to become more pious on account of the dream. In this sense, Islamic dream theory and practice enshrine the possibility of every believer having true dreams, and indeed in Islamic eschatology all believers will receive true dreams prior to the end time.

Dreams can facilitate conversions, either into Islam or into militant jihadism. An example of the first type of conversion is a Chilean man encountered in Islamabad, who had previously been a TV shop owner in Chile. He said he became a Muslim following a dream in which he saw the first words of the Koran written in the skies. He moved to Pakistan with his family and was studying Islam in a Karachi madrasah. His mother had married a Muslim preacher, and his son had trained as a hafiz (one who can recite all the Koran). An example of the second type of conversion is the dream of the sister of Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, the former leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which is said to have been one of two reasons why he converted to jihadism. This dream is discussed later in the chapter.
The Patterns and Analytical Threads Running Through Jihadist Dream Interpretation

Certain patterns inform jihadist dream interpretative narratives. First, jihadists are reported to receive divine inspiration, guidance and divinatory ‘news’ of future events in this world and the world of the hereafter. Secondly, dream narratives in part legitimate jihadist actions for the dreamers themselves, for their followers and for the Islamic nation, the Ummah. Thirdly, dream visions connect the dreamers with the mythically real past of the revelatory time of the Prophet Mohammed and his companions, the golden age of Islam. As well as this, dreams actually introduce this glorious past into the present: the visionary and revelatory world of Islam is reborn today, as dreamers base their inspired jihad upon the ‘glad tidings’ that Muhammad said would come through true dreams. Fourthly, there is often a marked reliance on the manifest content of the dream symbolism: sacred figures from the visionary history of Islam (particularly the Prophet, his companions and Hasan and Husain) communicate, usually through the spoken word, directly to the dreamer as in a revelation, announcing and instructing the dreamer. Dreams of heavenly spaces and the glorious reception of the martyrs are reported; dead friends appear with metaphysical information.

As in all dream cultures, jihadists both dream and interpret their dreams within their own culturally specific world view, in this case that of Islam, according to which this material world is not our final destination, but rather a series of lessons and tests and a preparation for the hereafter and the time of judgement at death. The more real world of the hereafter does, however, occasionally intersect with this material world through night dreams, and more rarely through waking visions. Such hyper-lucid experiences can define action and events in this world. This interrelationship between dreams and events positions dreaming as potentially related to the future rather than (as is the case in most Western psychoanalytic theories of dreaming, such as that of Freud) to the past; moreover, it shows how dreaming as a work of imagination is interrelated with social practice. Unlike in the West, in Islam dreams and future events in this world can be clearly related. The Joseph sura in the Koran makes this especially clear as Joseph, through his interpretation of the seven fat and thin cows dream of the Egyptian Pharaoh, enables the Pharaoh to plan ahead for a succession of bad harvests. Specifically, through the prophetic example of Muhammad, dreams can be related to success in warfare. Muhammad dreams before the battle of Badr that the enemy forces are smaller than they actually are, so giving him and his army confidence in victory (Koran 1956: 8.43–8.46).
The Dreams of Al-Qaeda Members

There are many reports of the power and significance of true dreams for many of the best known jihadist commanders and followers, some of which now follow. These accounts come from secondary sources, such as websites and newspaper articles. However, the data concerning Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, were gathered directly. Overall, it is suggested that – whatever veracity issues there may be concerning particular individual dream narratives – there are definitely thematic patterns, as outlined above, in these dream narratives and in their legitimacy claims which are fully consistent with Islamic night dream teachings and practices.

Osama bin Laden

Osama bin Laden, the well-known leader of Al-Qaeda, seems to relate to night dreams. Following the 11 September attack in New York, many newspapers (e.g. Mirror 14 December 2001) reported a transcript of a video apparently showing bin Laden referring to the anticipatory dreams of some of his followers. These followers apparently did not know of the planned attacks, and bin Laden speaks of his concern that ‘the secret [of the attacks] would be revealed if everyone starts seeing it in their dreams.’

Early in the video bin Laden says,

Abu’l-Hassan al-Masri told me a year ago: ‘I saw in a dream, we were playing a soccer game against the Americans. When our team showed up in the field, they were all pilots!’ He [Al-Masri] didn’t know anything about the operation until he heard it on the radio. He said the game went on and we defeated them. That was a good omen for us.

The use of the term ‘omen’ indicates a belief that dreams are a potential source of divination, especially for pious and spiritually oriented Muslims. Moreover, whilst the military contest is disguised as a football match, the victory over the Americans by the jihadist ‘pilots’ is made manifest in the dream symbolism. Future victory is clearly symbolized.

Yosri Fouda⁵ (2003: 109) wrote about the role of dreaming for the 11 September attackers:

Dreams and visions and their interpretations are also an integral part of these spiritual beliefs. They mean that the Mujahideen are close to the Prophet, for whatever the Prophet dreams will come true. In a videotape recorded shortly after 11 September, al-Qaeda spokesman Sulaiman Abu
Ghaith is seen and heard speaking in the company of bin Laden, who was playing host to a visitor from Mecca: ‘I saw in my dreams that I was sitting in a room with the Sheikh [bin Laden], and all of a sudden there was breaking news on TV. It showed an Egyptian family going about its business and a rotating strap that said: ‘In revenge for the sons of Al-Aqsa [that is, the Palestinians], Osama bin Laden executes strikes against the Americans.’ That was before the event.

Bin Laden then interprets: ‘The Egyptian family symbolises Mohammed Atta, may Allah have mercy on his soul. He was in charge of the group.’

Ramzi Binalshibh would later tell Fouda long stories about the many dreams and visions of the ‘brothers’ in the run-up to 11 September. He would speak of the Prophet and his close companions as if he had actually met them ... Atta ... also told Ramzi a little anecdote about ‘brother’ Marwan (al-Shehdi) that he knew would please him. ‘Mohammed (Atta) told me that Marwan had a beautiful dream that he was [physically] flying high in the sky surrounded by green birds not from our world, and that he was crashing into things, and that he felt so happy.’

‘What things?’ Fouda asked.
‘Just things,’ answered Ramzi.

Green birds are often given significance in these dreams.

Whilst Ramzi is shy about explaining this dream, it would be likely that the ‘green birds not from our world’ would be interpreted as a heavenly symbol: green is a spiritual colour in Islam, and flying birds are a common symbol of heaven. Marwan reporting that he was flying high in a symbolically constituted heavenly realm and also crashing into things could easily be interpreted as another ‘good’ omen for the 11 September jihadists. Whilst the rotating strap that speaks is surreal, its message is plain: that the basic political cause fuelling the jihad is the continual oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel, the USA and its allies. Revenge is indeed in the air, and success against the Americans is foretold through the medium of the television, a medium that later presented the 11 September attack so graphically.

By defining the meaning of the dream in relating the Egyptian family image to the person of Atta, bin Laden is taking on part of the traditional spiritually authoritative role of a sheikh, a spiritual master, as an interpreter of dreams. Bin al-Shibh speaks of the Prophet and his companions as if he had actually met them in his visions and dreams, thereby showing his apparent familiarity with and connection to the first days of Islam. His mindset is tuned into an eternally enduring hyper–reality, in which linear temporality is confounded and the glorious Islamist past is evoked with an ongoing intimacy and immediacy. The days of revelation are indeed present today.
Robert Fisk, the Middle East correspondent for the *Independent*, reports (2005: 34) that during one of his three meetings with bin Laden, bin Laden said: ‘Mr Robert … one of our brothers had a dream. He dreamt that you came to us one day on a horse, that you had a beard and that you were a spiritual person. You wore a robe like us. This means you are a true Moslem.’ This terrifies Fisk, who fears he is meant to ‘accept this “dream” as a prophecy and a divine instruction’. Fisk says ‘I am not a Moslem, I am a journalist.’ Osama replies, ‘If you tell the truth, that means you are a good Moslem.’ The moment passes.

One view of this could be that bin Laden is using the dream trope as a way of challenging Fisk, or as a device to influence his followers. However, since it is considered wrong to lie about a dream in the Islamic tradition, it is more likely that this provides further evidence that bin Laden considers that dreams are a potentially divinatory form of communication. The beard is a sign of a devout Muslim and the horse is traditionally interpreted in Islamic dream dictionaries as symbolizing a ‘person’s status, rank, honour, dignity, power and glory’ (Sirin 2000: 99). Again, we see bin Laden acting as a spiritual master, defining the meaning of this dream and reframing Fisk’s reply to confirm his, bin Laden’s, interpretation of the dream. Bin Laden utilizes his companion’s dream as a source of spiritual certainty in the prophetic tradition.

**Zacarias Moussaoui**

Zacarias Moussaoui has often been described as the twentieth member of the 11 September New York attacks. He is a French citizen of Moroccan origins. He was an Al-Qaeda member who had given allegiance to his sheikh, Osama bin Laden, and had attended flight training school in the USA before 11 September. He was tried in the USA in 2006 and was found guilty of conspiring to kill Americans in the 11 September New York attack. He is currently serving a life sentence in the USA. The death sentence was also considered as a verdict. Moussaoui’s reported night dream of flying a plane into a tall building was a significant issue in his trial in the USA. There was debate in the trial as to whether such a dream was evidence of schizophrenia or was an aspect of his fundamentalist Islamic belief. Prosecutors argue that ‘Mousaoui’s fervent belief in his dream is consistent with religious beliefs of Muslims – especially fundamentalist Muslims – and is no more crazy than Christians believing in the resurrection’ (USA Today, April 2006).

According to his trial, Moussaoui’s night dreams appear to have led him to make his mind up to become a *shahid*, a martyr. Donahue, an anthropology professor who has written a book about Moussaoui, his life
and trial (Donahue 2007: 80–81), quotes from the trial transcript, with Moussaoui saying,

Basically, I had, I had a dream, and I had more later, but I had a dream, and I went to see Sheikh Usama bin Laden, and I told him about my dream. He told me, ‘Good.’ Maybe, I don’t know, a few days later, I have another dream. So I went again, I saw him, and I told him about this. This was after I had declined, I was asked before. Then I had this dream. Then maybe a week, a short time, Sheikh Abu Hafs [Mohammed Atef] came to the guesthouse and asked me again if I wanted to be part of the suicide operation, me and Richard Reid, and this time I said yes.

Later on the same day of the trial, Donahue recounts Moussaoui apparently seeing in one of his dreams a map with the target of the White House on it:

He went on to describe his reason for wanting to fly a 747:

…but if want to say the original reason, okay, what I believe, okay, it is I thought I had a dream where I was into the runway of an airport and I actually took a map out, okay, and I open it and it was the White House with a circle with a cross, like when you do when you do target.

And next to me, okay, in front of there was the four brother, I couldn’t recognize. And next to me there was a 747, the very distinct, you know, like the cockpit, was very distant (tr. 27 March 2006, page 2402, lines 18–250).

Later still the same day, Donahue (Donahue 2007: 80-81) reports how Moussaoui understood dream interpretation in Islam, which was congruent with Islam’s traditional teaching on dream interpretation. He says:

‘So I refer to sheikh Usama bin Laden and some other sheikh there to explain to me the reality, but the dream about the White House, it was very clear to me (tr. March 27, 2006, page 2403, line 24).’

In these trial narratives we see how night dreams were experienced by Moussaoui as decisive in his motivation to become a martyr and, moreover, he reports an accurate dream of an intended target, the White House. Moussaoui is reported as saying, ‘he was crazy about those 72 virgins’ (Donahue 2007: 99), whether ironically or not, we don’t know.
Richard Reid

Richard Reid is the British Al-Qaeda sympathizer sentenced to life imprisonment for attempting to blow up an American Airlines aeroplane flying from France to the USA in December 2001. He was found to be carrying explosives in his shoes. He is reported as divining special meaning about his role as an Islamic militant from his dreams, which he refers to in one of his final three emails (The Times 30 January 2003). I have been unable to obtain a copy of these emails, but the dream is referred to in Moussaoui’s 2006 trial. According to the transcript (CNN):

In the dream, Reid was waiting for a ride, but when the ride (a pick-up truck) came, it was full and Reid could not go. He was upset and had to go later in a smaller car. Reid explained the meaning of the dream as follows: ‘I now believe that the pickup that came first was 9/11 as its true that I was upset at not being sent.’

There is little evidence here of how Reid interpreted this dream. However, this narrative does show his perception of its veracity and potential guidance. In Reid’s interpretation, there is an interpretative translation from the symbolism of the pickup truck to that of the aeroplane; both are forms of group conveyance. Being upset in the dream connects his dream with his real-world loss of the 11 September attack opportunity.

Mullah Omar

Mullah Muhammad Omar led the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and was effectively Afghanistan’s ruler from 1996 to 2001. After the 11 September attacks, there were several media and Internet references to his visionary dreams (Edgar 2004a), referring to his legitimizing the founding of the Taliban by claiming divine guidance and instruction in his dreams. Apparently it was ‘common knowledge’ in Afghanistan that Mullah Omar had been inspired by a ‘holy’ dream.⁸ In 2005 Edgar interviewed Rahimullah Yusufzai, the BBC correspondent in Peshawar. He was one of very few reporters to have met Omar frequently, and was Omar’s main outlet to the Western media.⁹ According to Yusufzai, Omar trusted him because:

the BBC is very powerful in Afghanistan; they (the Taliban) wanted to have good relations with the BBC and I was the first one to reach Kandahar and report about the emerging Taliban. Mullah Omar was grateful to me; that’s why he will call me up; I spoke the same language Pashto and I was a Muslim, I was a Pakistani, I was someone he could trust.
Yusufzai described how Omar derived a charismatic authority from his reported dreams:

The story I was being told everywhere was that because of his courage, because of his very timely decision to fight the Mujahideen that had made him very popular and the Taliban flocked to his banner as they thought he has this vision, this dream, he has challenged the Mujahideen and because he has been instructed to fight the Mujahideen they thought he was going to succeed … The whole project was maybe built on this dream, he had this task or duty to perform and he must lead his Taliban, his fighters, and he must restore order and peace and enforce Sharia, Islamic law … I was told by so many Taliban leaders, commanders, fighters: ‘Look, you know, Mullah Omar is a holy man and he gets instructions in his dream and he follows them up.’ The genesis of the Taliban Islamic movement was this vision, this night dream that Mullah Omar had.

Omar’s reputed talent for true dreams was not confined to a single dream. Yusufzai related how such dreams became a source of strategic military action and decision-making: ‘I kept hearing these stories, no big military operation can happen unless he gets his instructions in his dreams; he was a big believer in dreams.’

Yusufzai told Edgar that on one occasion Omar had telephoned him and had asked him about a dream that his (Omar’s) brother had had:

[He] asked me if I had been to the White House and I said yes; ‘Can you tell me about it?’ and I said, yes, and I told him about the White House in Washington (Mullah Omar already knew that Yusufzai had formally visited the White House before as part of an invited group of journalists) and Omar said in Pashto ‘White house, white palace, look my younger brother had a dream and he was telling me that a white palace somewhere is on fire … I have a belief in dreams and this is what my dreams are saying and if you have been there then this description by my brother of a white palace/house means it will catch fire’ and this was before 9/11. I am convinced that Mullah Omar was not aware of Osama bin Laden’s plans to attack on 9/11.

These reports contain what are now familiar threads: divinatory communication from sacred figures; followers’ belief in true dreams as indicating holiness; and the relationship between dreams and events as in Omar’s brother’s ‘white house’ dream. Direct guidance as to military action is claimed. Omar is called to implement Shariah law and the true Islamic state.
Dreaming also plays a role in the process of becoming a jihadist in the Pakistani-based movement against the Indian occupation of a large part of Kashmir. Before a young man can go on a martyrdom operation in Indian-held Kashmir, he has to obtain parental permission, which may finally be given following a dream by a mother or maternal uncle (Zahab forthcoming):

‘In many cases, a few days before the boy “drinks the cup of martyrdom” (jam-e shahadat nush karna) mothers and often maternal uncles see him in Paradise, wearing beautiful white clothes, smiling, surrounded by trees and flowers and drinking milk.’

Here, paradisiacal imagery from the Koran justifies martyrdom. The mythical world of Islam is seen, recognized, made present and manifest.

Such dreams are also to be found among radical Muslims in Europe, as in the case of Amir Cheema, a twenty-eight-year-old Pakistani textile-engineering student, who died in 2006 in a German prison while awaiting trial for entering the offices of the German newspaper Die Welt with a large knife, intending to kill the editor for reprinting the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. Fifty thousand people later attended his funeral in Pakistan. The following dream narrative by Cheema’s father was published in the Urdu press and then reprinted in English in the weekly Friday Times (30 June–6 July 2006) in Pakistan:

Fountains of light (noor) had burst forth in all directions as the sacred gathering became visible. It was announced that the companions (of the Prophet) had arrived. Then it was declared that the Prophet PHUB himself was seated in the vicinity but his face could not be seen … Then the voice of the Prophet PHUB was heard saying Amir Cheema is coming! (Amir aa raha hai). The companions stood up in respect and started looking in one direction. Then the voice of the Prophet PHUB said: ‘Hasan and Husain, look who I am sending to you, look after him.’

Hasan and Husain were the sons of Ali and Fatima, and so the grandsons of the Prophet Mohammed. The dream announces the elevated spiritual status of Amir Cheema through the word of the Prophet Mohammed, attended by his companions. We again find the themes of sacred light and of the clear communication of the spiritually elevated status of the martyr.
Many of the detainees at Guantanamo Bay were from Pakistan. In May 2005 the following dream narrative was published by the *Daily Times* newspaper (23 May 2005) in Pakistan:

A Guantanamo ex-prisoner named Qari Badruzzaman Badr said in an interview that at Guantanamo many Arabs had dreams in which the Holy Prophet (PBUH) personally gave them news of their freedom and called them the People of Badr. The Prophet said that Christ will soon arrive. One Arab saw Jesus who took his hand and told him that Christians were now misled. Later the other prisoners could smell the sweet smell of Jesus from his hand. His hand was rubbed on all the prisoners.

Again, the dream message is explicit. It is Jesus, a major prophet in Islam, who informs them that the Christian nation, the Crusaders that imprison them, are misled: what a transcendence of their oppression this dream message must have seemed! It is immediately communicated, not only by word of mouth but also by touch, presumably to transfer the *baraka* (blessing) from the dream. Not only the jihadist leaders but also the foot soldiers in Guantanamo see dreams that they interpret as true though the sacred iconography of their content and the relationship with future events. Jaram al-Harath, a detainee from the UK, reported that he was told in a dream that he would be released in two years – which apparently he was (Mirror, 12 March 2004). Likewise Ibrahim Sen, a Turkish detainee, has written about how inmates experienced dreams of the Prophet Muhammad and the angels that watched over them (Vakit, 10 November 2006).

**The Role of Dreaming in Militant Jihadist Action**

For Islamic militant jihadists, in Al-Qaeda or not, dreams and visions are a core way of confirming and legitimating to others their ideological world view and the path to becoming a *shahid*, a holy martyr. Whatever the veracity of individual dream narratives reported in this chapter, there is a clear overall pattern of reliance on divinatory dreams for inspiration and guidance on action, within the Islamic dreaming tradition begun by the Prophet Muhammad. The true dream experience is consistently utilized as a powerful legitimating device within the context of the Islamic theological exegesis of the potential, if very occasional, noumenal power and authority of the night dream. The assertions that jihadists are inspired by night dreams and, secondly, legitimate their actions partly on the basis
of night dreams constitute the first and second analytical threads of our argument.

While dreams are experienced by the ego, they are not generally generated or controlled by the ego (unless the dreamer is an experienced lucid dreamer or a student of Tibetan dream yoga). Social scientists can, through studies of Islamic dreaming, show how particular dream motifs (such as the Prophet and his companions) are part of a shared visionary world view that can connect present-day believers with the mythically real past, and especially with the imagined early glorious days of Islam, the time of the Prophet himself. Moreover, such true dreams appear to facilitate the re-enactment of this past in the present. This merging of mythical dreamt reality and mundane reality constitutes the third thread of our argument, and this is shown for instance in the quotation from Fouda (2003: 109) concerning Binalshibh, who ‘speaks of the Prophet and his close companions as if he had actually met them’. The dreamworld is experienced as more real than this world, and reality becomes more dreamlike, a veil over the sublime glory of hidden paradisiacal worlds. Dreams can be tastes, divinations, of possible welcome futures. Sacred figures are to be emulated and even identified with, and certainly their words are perceived as divine instruction. We see bin Laden clearly interpreting dreams as a spiritual leader.

The fourth thread of our argument is that militant jihadism can apparently be directly authorized by dream content. The classical Freudian distinction between the manifest and latent meanings of a dream is changed. The clearer the manifest communication, the closer to God the dreamer is, as we have seen in many of the dream narratives reported in this chapter. Mullah Omar is given ‘instructions’ in his dreams as to his military strategy, the US ‘white house’ burns, bin Laden is said to have ‘executed’ 11 September to avenge the Palestinians; Moussaoui dreams of flying a plane into a tall building; Abu Cheema is welcomed into paradise and the Prophet is heard speaking clearly; the words of Jesus are heard by a Guantanamo Bay inmate; another is ‘told’ he will be released in two years.

However, not all the dream narratives are understood solely through reliance on their manifest meaning. Reid’s interpretation of the ‘full pickup truck’ passing him by as referring to his missing the 11 September attack is an interpretation from a manifest to a supposed latent meaning, as is bin Laden’s claiming that his soccer team being dressed as ‘pilots’ and winning against the American team is a good omen, as is bin Laden’s interpretation of the ‘Egyptian family going about its business’ as a reference to Atta.

These narratives clearly show that jihadists understand their dreams within the context of the Islamic world view. Dreamt sacred figures, for example, are not unreal projections of the unconscious, or deeply encoded
manifestations of earlier dysfunctional familial experiences, but figures
that inhabit the supernaturally real world of Islam and reassert the eternal
truths of the Koran and the Hadiths.

The relationship between dreams and events is another analytical
thread running through the narratives. Mullah Omar is called to save his
country and introduce Shariah law, and for a while the Taliban did
achieve extraordinary success (Burke 2003), thereby seeming to confirm to
his followers his dreamt inspiration. A final thread – that of the prophetic
example of Muhammad’s advisory dream before the battle of Badr – is
again shown in the dream narratives attributed to Mullah Omar, whose
followers appear to have believed that he was strategically guided in
warfare by his night dreams. Likewise, bin Laden interprets the successful
football match by his ‘pilot’ team against the Americans as a good omen
for his jihadist ‘team’.

Dreams, then, can be offered by such charismatic leaders as Mullah
Omar as a self-justifying and legitimating device, claiming them to be
revelations from beyond this world and containing authorization for
radical human action in this world.

Conclusion

We have aimed in this chapter to show through a wide variety of mainly
secondary source examples that the experience of the true dream in Islam is
a core revelatory narrative that can be understood to legitimate aspects of the
contemporary Islamic militant jihadist movement in the Middle East and
elsewhere. As such, and in contradistinction to Western psychoanalytical
theories of dreaming, perceived, reported and interpreted dreams are a
powerful essence of charismatic religious and political leadership, and such
dream narratives still contribute today, as they have throughout history, to
the generation of existential, political and militant realities. Moreover, the
militant Islamic jihadist narratives reported in this chapter evidence a violent
and sustained critique of Western foreign policy towards the Islamic nation,
and especially the occupation of Palestine. The jihadist rejection of Western
liberal democracy, and implicitly the economic and political hegemony of
capitalistic cosmopolitanism, and their ambition to create a nation of Islam
under the law of Shariah harks back to the golden first age of Islam, and
reported dream narratives are a key inspirational trope in this continuing
endeavour.

Recent debates have discussed cosmopolitanism as a mechanism for
the transcendence of communitarian, national, local and ‘cultural’ limits;
or as a way of connecting people across particular boundaries (Rapport
2007; Theodossopoulos, this volume). In the light of such debates, the
dream-inspired militant Islamic jihadist ideology might be seen as a transnational politico-religious movement of discontent, as a particular variant of counter-cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2007), rather than a Western, hegemonic international cosmopolitanism, based on the Enlightenment ideas proposed by Kant (1912). Militant Islamic ideology might be seen as exclusive, thus in profound opposition to the core Western liberal, political and economic values of contemporary ideas of cosmopolitanism.

Jihadist night dreams, as part of the Islamic jihadist ideological rhetoric, publicly presented and interpreted in news media such as CNN, the BBC, Al-Jazeera, the Pakistani Daily Times or Al-Qalam online, are a persuasive forum with which the message of the Ummah, the nation of Islam, may be constructed and communicated. Through sharing narratives of dream experiences as well as their particular interpretations, ideas about and appeals to the Ummah are spread and strengthened. Following Anderson’s (1983) arguments about the importance of the print media for the ability to imagine and belong to a community (in his account to a national one), we can observe, in this case, the continuous spread of communitarian ideas by other means, but with similar effects. This example illustrates the shift, described by Appadurai (1996) and Theodossopoulos (this volume) from ‘imagined communities’ to ‘imagined worlds’, sometimes to the particular worlds of discontent(s). As Appadurai argues (1996: 7), through the work of imagination, ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood might be recreated or strengthened. Sharing of the dream experience is a way of mediating a common Islam and strengthening the Ummah:

‘[M]ediation produces and reproduces certain configurations of close-distance, mediated self-understandings that depend on the routing of the personal through the impersonal, the near through the far, and the self through the other’ (Mazzarella 2004: 361).

Dreams have been firmly embedded within the rhetoric and practice of Islam and consequently Muslim societies. Sharing and interpreting dreams in particular ways continue to play a vital role for many believers (and non-believers) today. Public use of dream narratives by jihadist leaders (e.g. bin Laden talking about the football/pilot dream) enables the interconnection and ‘assemblage’ of the listeners from various parts of the globe and unites them in a transnational, counter-cosmopolitan imagined world. To borrow Theodossopoulos’s words (this volume), such an imagined community is globalized in its own imagination.

It is paradoxical, however, that the message is not only aimed at the Ummah, or meant to reach Dar al-Islam (the house of Islam), but is also a message for Dar al-Harb (the house of war), so the message is dialectically powerful. This global reach of the message of the Jihadist ideology is a
new or hyper-modern phenomenon, to use Castells’s terminology (Castells 1997: 16), in the sense that it is a particular reaction of discontent from the world of Islam (or a part of that world) to the processes of globalization at a time when the (Islamicized) nation states, along with the ‘cosmopolitan’ organizations (UN, WTO, IMF, etc.), are not able to fulfil all the needs of their inhabitants.

Appadurai (1996: 7, 31) writes about the work of the imagination in the contemporary globalized, cosmopolitanized world saying that its importance lies in the capacity of the imagination to be seen as social practice and, significantly, as a fuel for action. The use of dreams in Islamic jihadist ideological movements might be seen, similarly, as a new way of working with ‘traditional materials in the formation of a new godly, communal world, where deprived masses and disaffected intellectuals may reconstruct meaning in a global alternative to the exclusionary global order’ (Castells 1997: 20).

Rather than creating links with other anti-globalization movements, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates seek a unity across the Islamic world, from the Philippines to West Africa, leading to a mobilization of the Ummah, the nation of Islam. Islamic dream theory and the reported true dreams of its leaders form a global language and an acceptable, even inspiring, rhetoric of mobilization, legitimization and divine purpose. Moreover, this self-proclaimed divinely inspired jihadist movement uses contemporary globalised technology to communicate such convictions. The dream trope and the prophetically sanctioned accessibility of true dreams to Muslims, generate an inner and imagined unity for its leaders and followers that transcends both time and space. The true dreams reported in this ethnography can then be seen to demonstrate to the pan-Islamic anti-Western masses that divine destiny is on the side of militant jihadism.

Therefore, the Islam employed in the jihadist political enterprise, as a counter-thesis to the Western ideas of cosmopolitanism and as an expression of discontent, provides a rich source of cohesive rituals and emotionally powerful symbols that create and maintain inter-group boundaries and encourage intra-group solidarity and intimacy. In the case we present, dream narratives embedded within ideological rhetoric under the umbrella of Islam offer a persuasive and powerful rhetorical tool that modifies social life and can, at times provide part of the catalyst for events like those that occurred on 11 September 2001.
Notes

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1. We are using the term numinous here in the Kantian sense, as the opposite of phenomenal, i.e. that which is not discernible empirically by the five senses.
2. *Ru’ya* in Arabic can refer to either day visions or true night dreams from God. All my references to *ru’ya* refer to what are considered to be such true night dreams.
3. The 2004 fieldwork trip to Turkey, Northern Cyprus and Pakistan (by Iain Edgar) was funded by the British Academy small research grants scheme.
5. Yosri Fouda is the *Al-Jazeera* journalist who in 2002 interviewed in Karachi, Pakistan, two of the Al-Qaeda planners of the 11 September attack, Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Shaykh Muhammad.
6. Marwan (al-Shehdi) was one of the nineteen 11 September suicide bombers.
7. We are very grateful to Marc Applebaum, psychologist and PhD student at Saybrook Graduate School, San Francisco, for his help in developing this idea.
8. Personal communication, Mariam Abou Zahab, a French political scientist (IEP/CERIINALCO, Paris), who has spent many years conducting research in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
10. The battle of Badr in AD 622 was a key battle against the Meccan Quraish tribe. The Muslims were victorious.
11. Again, we are grateful to Marc Applebaum for his help in developing this idea.

References


