

Abu Muhammad al-Sadeq, “The *Ummah*’s Movement, Between Elitism and Populism,” [1 September 2015](#) (all in-text hyperlinks added). Translation by Samuel Heller.

Praise be to God, Lord of all worlds, and peace be upon Muhammad and his family and companions.

Those with causes and principles are often few among the many. As God most high says, “[And few of my servants are grateful](#),” and, “[And most among mankind know not](#).”

When we contemplate the history of nations, we find the ineffectiveness of both pure elitism and pure populism in terms of effecting societal change and transitioning from weakness to empowerment. Causes’ success is linked to the extent to which the *umma* [broader nation] responds to the elite, just as it is linked to the elite’s ability to weave itself into the *umma*, to lead the *umma* and convince it of [the elite’s] goals, and to convince it that it must shoulder hardships [in achieving those goals]. Just as pure elitism is a state of isolation incapable of delivering [the movement] to its desired end, so pure populism leads to the project being lost, to no program altogether. Rather, the [solution to] the matter lies between them.

And so we believe in the guidance of the [holy] texts on the matter of a wise, righteous elite’s leadership of its *al-hadinah al-sha’biyyah* [popular base] – alerting it if has erred, bringing it into harmony when it is weak, rendering it steadfast if hesitates. And if that elite enters a battle that is necessary to defend the absolute principles of religion and the temporal world, [the elite must] clarify to its base in the *umma* the necessity of that move after making all efforts to lessen the conflict’s effects [on the people]. In doing so, the unthinking one is made alert, the disobedient one instructed, the fearful one made steadfast, and the prejudiced one tamed. In this way, the wicked media will have no means of sowing discord and division between the elite and the *umma*.

In a time of weakness and a dearth of committed elites, of defense against an aggressor and frequent division, one must hold fast to the absolute principles and holistic teachings of religion, even if that leads one to fail to secure some of [religion’s] secondary teachings and details, to say nothing of that on which our *imam* forebears differed. Those with causes must assume the best of each other when there exists some suspicion, particularly for those who have great responsibilities and must work their way towards righteous ends.

The successful elite is the one that transitions from the concept of the “elite” to that of “*umma*,” as did the Prophet, peace be upon him. For in his community, there was the worshipper, the scholar, the warrior, but also those who defied [God’s will] and hypocrites. The Prophet – peace be upon him – was careful that he be at the helm of his community for the people of faith, relying on wise policy and correct consciousness, for those people were the core of society, and his heart was with the *umma*.

In the revolution of al-Sham, if the elite want to make real their message, they must join with the people’s revolution. They must adopt the people’s legitimate aims, and likewise work to convince the people to adopt [the elite’s] aims.

In truth, victory is the people’s adoption and embrace of the elite’s message. At that point, neither the East nor the West will be able to extinguish the Islamic character of the revolution, and both the elite and the people will be victorious, God willing.

God most high said, [“When you see God’s victory and conquest, you shall see the people enter God’s religion in droves.”](#) So contemplate this divine message, how [God] made people’s entrance into religion the aim and desired end of this victory.

For the jihadist movement to have its resurgence, it must embrace society’s different colors – within [the bounds] of its fixed Islamic principles – to form a mosaic that expresses the reality of a living community. There is no harm in finding in the *mujahid* movement’s ranks – particularly when repelling an aggressor enemy – the various classes of society: the Ash’ari, the Maturidi, the Salafi, the Madhabi, the Sufi, the pious and the disobedient. That the movement might absorb this diverse spectrum at a time of social change, when people are distant from the specific and pure, is in fact evidence of [that movement’s] wisdom and among the secrets of its success, after the blessing of God.

For those who want to expand on this, let them look at the story of the Sheikh of Islam ibn Taimiyyah in the era of the Tatars, the story of Salah al-Din and the people’s revolutions, and the experience of the Taliban. All of them are alive and with us, as are [the writings of Azawad](#).

I ask God on high, the Decider of fate, to grant us good fortune in word and deed.

And in conclusion, praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

War on the Rocks