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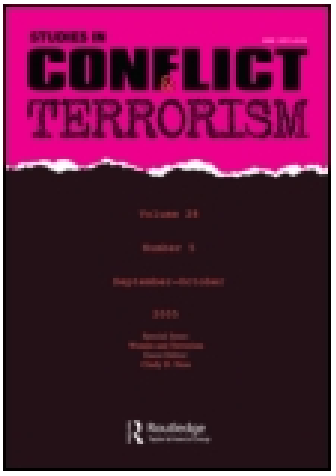

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Revisiting the Early Al Qaeda: An Updated Account of its Formative Years

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Revisiting the Early Al Qaeda: An Updated Account of its Formative Years

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Ten years after 9/11, and after the death of Osama bin Laden, this article re-examines the early history of Al Qaeda—from its founding in August 1988 up until bin Laden's declaration of war against the United States in Afghanistan in 1996—by examining the group's aims, operations, alliances, finances, and administration during five distinct phases of the evolution of bin Laden's worldview. The authors argue that in assessing the formative years of bin Laden's organization, it is equally wrong to minimize the ambitions and organization of the early Al Qaeda as it is to telescope back from the Al Qaeda of the 9/11 attacks to argue that the group was organizing itself to wage a global Jihad *from its inception. The authors outline how it was only a half decade later—after the group had decamped to Sudan, and after the U.S. had deployed troops in Saudi Arabia and Somalia—that al Qaeda shifted to conceiving its central mission as attacking American targets.*

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Ten years after 9/11, and after the death of Osama bin Laden, this article re-examines the early history of Al Qaeda from its founding in August 1988 to bin Laden's declaration of war against the United States in Afghanistan in 1996. It will examine the evolution of Al Qaeda in the following five phases: the first six months of the organization during which the Afghan war was still being fought against the Soviets; the next six months of the organization after the withdrawal of the Soviets in February 1989 until bin Laden's return to Saudi Arabia; the year-and-a-half period when bin Laden was living in Saudi Arabia from November 1989 to early 1991; the period from early 1991 to early 1992 when bin Laden returned to Pakistan; and the period from 1992 to 1996 when his organization decamped to the Sudan.

The article aims to update the knowledge of the origins of Al Qaeda by drawing on Peter Bergen's *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006), which includes the minutes of the founding meeting of bin Laden's organization and the testimonies of dozens of associates of bin Laden.[1] It also draws on

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internal Al Qaeda documents recovered by the U.S. military from Afghanistan after 9/11 and made publicly available by West Point Combating Terrorism Center's "Harmony" documents database, and additional first-hand testimony from individuals close to the Al Qaeda fold that has emerged in recent years. This new body of information challenges a number of existing accounts of how Al Qaeda was conceived and how it operated in its early years and it provides a corrective to two influential schools of thought on the history of Al Qaeda that emerged after 9/11, one of which understated, and the other of which overstated, the group's degree of organization prior to 1996.

Two prominent accounts, in particular, downplayed how organized, cohesive, and operational Al Qaeda was in its early years. Jason Burke's *Al Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* (2003), argued that it was only after Bin Laden returned to Afghanistan in 1996 that Al Qaeda became an important player in terrorism, and even then not as a "huge and disciplined group" but as "the temporary focus of many different strands within modern Islamic militancy."[2]

Burke stated that in the late 1980s and early 1990s it was unclear whether bin Laden's group even "called themselves al Qaeda,"[3] and that the notion of Al Qaeda as an organized entity may have been the result of "US investigators [of the 1998 African embassy bombings] very keen to find a group, led by an identifiable figure and to give it a name."[4] Burke argued that when bin Laden founded his new group in Peshawar, Pakistan "sometime between 1988 and 1989,"[5] it was neither particularly unique—"there were plenty of other groups also committed to a wider battle"[6]—nor quick to get off the mark.

"The al Qaeda project languished,"[7] Burke argued when bin Laden went back to Saudi Arabia between late 1989 and early 1991, while during the group's relocation to the Sudan from 1992 to 1996, according to Burke, Bin Laden was "at least as interested in experimental arboriculture and road construction as he was in an international legion of Islamic militants."[8] Burke maintained that during the Sudan years Al Qaeda "had barely expanded beyond the dozen or so individuals who had pledged allegiance [to bin Laden] in 1989" and "was heavily reliant on the know-how of established military outfits [such as Egypt's Jihad group]."[9]

In the same vein as Jason Burke, but with much less nuance, were the preposterous propositions proffered by Adam Curtis in his 2004 three-hour BBC documentary, *The Power of Nightmares*, which stated that "beyond his small group, bin Laden had no formal organization, until the Americans invented one for him." Curtis claimed that Al Qaeda was first "invented" in 2001 when U.S. prosecutors put four men involved in the 1998 plot to blow up two U.S. embassies in east Africa on trial in New York. Curtis claimed that former bin Laden aide Jamal al Fadl, a key prosecution witness, spun a story about the Saudi militant that would make it easier for U.S. prosecutors to target bin Laden using conspiracy laws that had previously put Mafia bosses behind bars.[10]

In Curtis's own words: "The picture al-Fadl drew for the Americans of bin Laden was of an all-powerful figure at the head of a large terrorist network that had an organized network of control. He also said that bin Laden had given this network a name, al Qaeda. . . . But there was no organization. These were militants who mostly planned their own operations and looked to bin Laden for funding and assistance. He was not their commander. There is also no evidence that bin Laden used the term 'al Qaeda' to refer to the name of a group until after 11th September, when he realized that this was the term the Americans had given it."[11]

While Burke and Curtis downplayed how organized, cohesive, and operational the early Al Qaeda was, a markedly different view was offered in Rohan Gunaratna's *Inside al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (2002). Gunaratna argued that from its founding

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"al Qaeda got off to a good start. It inherited a fully fledged training and operational infrastructure" [that of Abdullah Azzam's Services Bureau], while for recruitment it drew on a vast mujahedeen database originally created by Osama bin Laden for tracking martyred or missing mujahedeen."[12]

Gunaratna maintained that the early Al Qaeda was unique in the scope of its ambition, with bin Laden determined, from the beginning, to turn it "into an unflinching hostile global terrorist force, established with the aim of destroying Israel and America and re-establishing the Caliphate by means of a worldwide Jihad."[13]

The authors' research into the early history of Al Qaeda, based on the discovery of new documentation and the testimonies of individuals linked to, and involved in, the early Al Qaeda organization provides a corrective to these two divergent schools of thought. In assessing the formative years of bin Laden's organization, it is equally wrong to minimize the ambitions and organization of the early Al Qaeda as it is to telescope back from the Al Qaeda of the 9/11 attacks to argue that the group was organizing itself to wage a global *Jihad* from its inception.

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Phase 1: Al Qaeda's Founding (August 1988–February 1989)

The best source of information on the origins of Al Qaeda comes from the founding documents of the organization itself. In March 2002, Bosnian authorities seized documents in the Sarajevo offices of the Benevolence International Foundation, a Muslim charity long supportive of *Jihads* around the world. The Bosnians discovered a substantial number of electronic files and documents stored on a computer. One of the computer files was entitled "Tareekh Osama" ("Osama's History"), a collection of bin Laden's correspondence, minutes of meetings, and other documents, which detailed his activities during the Afghanistan *jihad* and the formation of Al Qaeda.[14]

These files were entered into evidence in the Chicago trial of Enaam Arnaout, an employee of Benevolence International who was convicted of racketeering in 2003. The prosecutor in the case was Patrick Fitzgerald, who prosecuted several important terrorism cases in New York during the 1990s, and later was appointed Special Prosecutor in the Valerie Plame leak case. Fitzgerald certified the authenticity of the documents retrieved in Bosnia.[15]

Among these documents are the founding minutes of Al Qaeda from a three-day meeting held in bin Laden's house in Peshawar. They establish that Al Qaeda was formally founded on 18 August 1988 placing the formation during the *jihad* against the Soviets, and not after the February 1989 withdrawal of Soviet troops as some previous accounts of the foundation of Al Qaeda had stated.[16]

The participants at the meeting included bin Laden, Abu Ubaidah al Banjshiri—Al Qaeda's military commander—and Abu Hajir al Iraqi—Al Qaeda's religious advisor (real name: Mamdouh Salim). They formally established an advisory council, a list of membership requirements, and an oath of allegiance for new members of Al Qaeda:[17]

> TAREEKHOSAMA/54/Tareekh Osama 127 - 127a
>
> In the Name of God, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful.
>
> The brothers mentioned attended the Sheikh (bin Laden's) house. Most of the discussion was about choosing an Advisory Council. [There is also] a summary of what happened [with the] Maktab Al Khadamat (the Services Office). The

meeting was held for two days in a row and the Advisory Council [met] on Friday, with the following brothers:

1. Sheikh Usama (bin Laden)
2. Abu Ubaidah Al Banjshiri (Al Qaeda's military commander)
3. Abu Burhan.
4. Sheikh Tameem.
5. Abu Hajir (Al Qaeda's religious advisor)
6. Abu Anas.
7. Abu Al Hasan Al Madani.[18]
8. Abu Al Hasan Al Maki.
9. Abu Ibraheem.

The meeting [was] summarized in 2 points by the Sheikh [bin Laden]:

- The complaints.
- Mismanagement and bad treatment in Maktab Al Khadamat (the Services Office).

The Sheikh decided to engage the Council in making a change. The meeting stayed from sunset until two at night. And on Saturday morning, 8/20/1988, the aforementioned brothers came and started the meeting, and the military work was suggested to be divided in two parts, according to duration:

- Limited duration: They will go to Sada Camp, [a camp on the Afghan-Pakistan border] then get trained and distributed on Afghan fronts, under supervision of the military council.
- Open [ended] duration: They enter a testing camp and the best brothers of them are chosen to enter Al Qaeda Al Askariya (the Military Base).

Al Qaeda is basically an organized Islamic faction; its goal will be to lift the word of God, to make His religion victorious.

Requirements to enter Al Qaeda:

- Members of open duration (an apparent reference to an open-ended commitment).
- Listening and obedient.
- Good manners.
- Referred from a trusted side.
- Obeying statutes and instructions of Al Qaeda.

The pledge [to join al Qaeda]:

The pledge of God and his covenant is upon me, to listen and obey the superiors, who are doing this work, in energy, early-rising, difficulty, and easiness, and for his superiority upon us, so that the word of God will be the highest, and His religion victorious.

The meeting ended on the evening of Saturday, 8/20/19. Work of al Qaeda commenced on 9/10/1988, with a group of fifteen brothers, including nine administrative brothers.

That bin Laden named his organization "al Qaeda Al Askariya" (the Military base) as "a basically organized Islamic faction" should dispel once and for all claims that Al Qaeda was a later invention of U.S. investigators, or that it has always been merely a loose alliance of *jihadists* with no formal command structure or organization. Conversely, there is no evidence in these minutes that bin Laden at this stage wanted this new organization to develop into a "global terrorist force" as Gunaratna suggested. Rather, the aims of the

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organization are couched in vague terms: "to lift the word of God and make His religion victorious." Initially Al Qaeda seems to have been preoccupied not with ambitions on the world stage, but rather with internal politics within the *jihadist* movement in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The minutes reveal an important fact about the rationale for the formation of the Al Qaeda organization that was not grasped in early assessments of the group after 9/11. That is that rather than being simply an outgrowth of the Services Office (Maktab Al Khadamat or MaK)—the office Abdullah Azzam had set up in 1984 with bin Laden's help to coordinate the recruitment of Arabs to the Afghan Jihad—Al Qaeda was actually set up *in opposition to* the Services Office. This was reflected in the founding meeting of Al Qaeda, in which bin Laden clearly stressed the need for a new approach—"make a change"—in response to the "mismanagement and bad treatment in Maktab Al Khadamat [the Services Office]."

Here it is useful to clear up a factual inaccuracy in Gunaratna's account of the genesis of Al Qaeda. In *Inside al Qaeda* he stated that it was Abdullah Azzam, and not bin Laden that initially "conceptualized al Qaeda in 1987 . . . as the ultimately successful [Afghan] campaign was drawing to an end . . . to redirect the mujahedeen rank and file into another ideologically worthwhile struggle."[19] There are two problems with this assertion. The first is that in 1987 the Afghan war was in one of its fiercest phases of fighting and anyone participating in the *jihad* was at this stage unlikely to have been contemplating a "what shall we do next" moment. The second is that Gunaratna, as many others have, conflated Azzam's mentioning of "al Qaeda" in an April 1988 issue of *Jihad* magazine—by which Azzam only meant "the base of followers"—with "al Qaeda Al Askariya" (the military base), bin Laden's August 1988 breakaway organization.

Gunaratna refined his account somewhat in an article published in 2010 in this journal: "Bin Laden broke away from MaK and formed the 'Al Qaeda organization' in Peshawar, Pakistan on 11 August 1988. Although Azzam ideologically conceived 'Al Qaeda al Sulbah' (The Solid Base), Osama bin Laden emerged as its undisputed founder," he wrote.[20]

But rather than being conceived by Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden's Al Qaeda was formed in reaction to Azzam's refusal to countenance bin Laden's desire in 1987 to set up a separate Arab military force to fight the Soviets. In order to fully grasp why this was the case it is important to understand the currents of the time in *mujahedeen* circles in Peshawar. Bin Laden first came to Pakistan in the wake of the Soviet invasion, providing funds and equipment for the Afghan *Jihad* across the border. In 1984 he co-founded the Services Bureau (MAK) with his longtime mentor Abdullah Azzam, an organization dedicated to helping the Afghan *jihad*. Azzam was the inspirational force in bringing Arab recruits and funds to the war in the early 1980s. During this period Azzam was very much a father figure to bin Laden, taking the rich, virtuous, but still inexperienced, young Saudi under his wing when he visited from Jeddah.[21]

In 1984 bin Laden first ventured across into Afghanistan, an experience that immediately captivated him. He told the Syrian journalist Basil Muhammad, "I feel so guilty for listening to my friends and those that I love to not come here [to Afghanistan] and stay home for reasons of safety, and I feel that this delay of four years requires my own martyrdom in the name of God."[22] It was his experience on the Afghan front that would do most to change bin Laden, making him determined to shift away from merely funding the *Jihad* to fighting it on the front lines.[23]

Between 1986 and 1987 bin Laden established a base near a Soviet garrison inside Afghanistan, located in Jaji in eastern Afghanistan, about ten miles from the Pakistani border. The base was known as "al Masada," the Lion's Den. According to Hasan Abd-Rabbuh al-Surayhi, a Saudi recruit to the Lion's Den, bin Laden said, "we want this site to

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be only for the Saudi mujahedeen and not for anyone else."[24] Bin Laden was also joined at the Lion's Den by at least two Egyptians, Abu Ubaidah al Banjshiri and Abu Hafs al Masri (also known as Mohammed Atef), later to become Al Qaeda's military chiefs.[25] Bin Laden's then-best friend, Jamal Khalifa, who regarded the Lion's Den base as a kamikaze operation given its proximity to the Soviet base, tried, in vain, to persuade bin Laden to disband the camp, telling him "everybody is saying this is wrong, so Osama, please leave the place right now."[26]

It was from the Lion's Den base that bin Laden fought a week-long military engagement with the Soviets in the spring of 1987 that would become known as the battle of Jaji. Bin Laden emerged from this encounter a war hero, his reputation burnished in the pages of *Jihad* magazine, edited by Abdullah Azzam, who saw bin Laden's heroics at first hand during the fighting.[27] According to Abdullah Azzam's son, Hutaifa Azzam, it was after Jaji that a much more self-assured bin Laden emerged with his own vision of *Jihad*. It was then that bin Laden began to break away from his former mentor. Hutaifa Azzam observed, "you could say that bin Laden separated from my father in 1987. Bin Laden said that he wanted to make special camps for Arabs only, where we can start our own Jihad and we can give orders. We will gather all the Arabs in Afghanistan in one area in Jalalabad. My father was against that. He was shocked."[28]

Abdullah Azzam was opposed to the idea of a separate Arab-Islamist military force because he saw the presence of Arabs scattered throughout all of the Afghan factions and regions functioning as morale boosters who could simultaneously teach the Afghans about true Islam, aid them with education and medicine, and bring news of the Afghan *jihad* to wealthy donors in the Middle East. A single Arab-Islamist military force would end this effort, and in any event could have no strategic impact on the conduct of the war because the number of Afghan Arabs fighting the Soviets at any given moment inside Afghanistan never amounted to more than several hundred.[29]

Bin Laden saw matters rather differently. He believed that an Arab military force would stand its ground against Soviet attacks because his recruits were so willing to martyr themselves, unlike the Afghans who had a much more lackadaisical approach to fighting, and might leave the battlefront if they faced serious opposition, or sometimes simply because they had to go home to their villages to plant fields, or to attend weddings and funerals. Bin Laden felt that his Arab force could deliver an important psychological victory for the Afghans and the entire Muslim world if it stood up to the Soviets.[30] After the battle of Jaji in 1987 he started to implement his idea to create his own Arab force, moving his recruits to camps in the Jalalabad area.[31]

Bin Laden's decision to set up an Arab-Islamist military force was influenced by a number of Egyptians around him. Early on, during the Afghan war he met Abu Ubaidah al Banjshiri and Abu Hafs al Masri (Mohammed Atef), two veterans of Islamist militant groups in Egypt. Banjshiri and Abu Hafs also had experience in the military and police work respectively, experience that they would put to good use in organizing the paramilitary activities of Al Qaeda. According to Bin Laden's then best friend Jamal Khalifa, their piousness, and experience of the world impressed bin Laden. They were instrumental in setting up the Lion's Den camp. It was then, Khalifa says, that they sowed the seed of establishing and leading a separate military force in bin Laden's mind, telling him, "Look Osama, you are the leader which we can trust . . . we will follow you."[32]

It was Abu Ubaidah and Abu Hafs who provided an introduction between bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, who they knew from their militant days in Egypt.[33] The two men met in Peshawar in 1986 as bin Laden was readying his camp across the border.[34] Al-Zawahiri, who was at the time trying to set up a new incarnation of the Egyptian Al-Jihad

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group, was attracted by bin Laden's financial resources and his reputation as a war hero; bin Laden admired the Egyptian for his long experience in the Islamist movement. Al-Zawahiri was determined to detach bin Laden from Azzam's MAK, which he argued was wasting bin Laden's precious financial resources on projects tangential to fighting *Jihad*. According to former Egyptian Jihadist Osama Rushdi, who was imprisoned together with al-Zawahiri in Egypt and was a close associate of his during this period in Peshawar, "the bad chemistry between bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam began because the MAK had a lot of bureaucracy problems, the administration was not good and projects were not completed. Ayman al Zawahiri was frustrated by this. He made a lot of noise about it and pushed bin Laden to be unhappy with this situation. Al Zawahiri said, 'Spend your money yourself, do not give it to Abdullah Azzam.'"[35]

Rushdi recalled that Abu Hafs and Abu Ubaidah were pressed by al-Zawahiri and Sayyid Imam al Sharif, a hard-line Egyptian ideologue, to convince bin Laden of the need to topple Middle Eastern regimes, the key long-term goal of many of the Egyptian Jihadists in Peshawar. By his account the duo made little headway early on in this regard:

> In Peshawar in the early years Osama had no ideology. He forbade talk against the Saudi royal family. The Saudi Salafists at that time had no political ideology. It was Zawahiri, Abu Hafs and Abu Ubaidah that made Bin Laden more political. Sayyid Imam and Zawahiri told Abu Hafs and [Abu Ubaidah al] Banjshiri to make sure they were close to bin Laden in order for their group to secure his financial support. Abu Hafs and Banshari were the bridge between Zawahiri and Bin Laden. They were followers of Sayyid Imam and they also fought with Bin Laden at Jaji. It was [only] after the Gulf War that Bin Laden began to change.[36]

Bin Laden set up Al Qaeda, not as a revolutionary group, but as a formal separate military organization for Arab Islamists still fighting the Afghan War.[37] It was a logical progression from bin Laden's decision, encouraged by Abu Ubaidah, Abu Hafs, and al-Zawahiri "to go it alone," disenchanted as he was by Abdullah Azzam's refusal to countenance a separate force, and unhappy about how his funds were being used up in non-military enterprises. Al Qaeda was not, in its inception, intended to be any sort of global terrorist enterprise.

It is unclear how much bin Laden was looking at all beyond the Afghan war in August 1988. The documents relating to the founding of Al Qaeda make no mention of the organization being founded in order to wage *jihad* in new locations.[38] But this certainly may have been part of the rationale for the founding of Al Qaeda. The Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, who knew the future Al Qaeda leader in this period, said bin Laden "predicted that the mujahedeen would be victorious in weeks or months" and was concerned he would lose "all those Arab mujahedeen [that] will all go back to their countries." Al Qaeda, Khashoggi stated, was founded "so that the flame of Jihad should continue elsewhere . . . in places like Central Asia."[39] Furthermore, Abu Walid al Masri (real name: Mustafa Hamid)—an Egyptian Jihadist who first met bin Laden in the spring of 1989—in later correspondence with Al Qaeda leaders—reminded them that the organization had set no geographic constraints to waging *Jihad* in its founding charter.[40]

Phase 2: New Horizons (February 1989–November 1989)

After the Soviet withdrawal in February 1989, Al Qaeda leaders, buoyed by the defeat of the superpower, were talking about internationalizing the *Jihad*. Al Surayhi, the Saudi

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previously recruited to bin Laden's lion den in Afghanistan, met with Al Qaeda Al Askariya's leaders in 1989. He recalled that Abu Ubaidah al Banjshiri, in the presence of bin Laden and Abu Hafs Al Masri, tried to persuade him to join their group saying:

"You are aware of brother Osama bin Laden's generosity. He has spent a lot of money to buy arms for the young mujahedeen as well as in training them and paying for their travel tickets. Now that the Jihad has ended, we should not waste this. We should invest in these young men and we should mobilize them under his umbrella. We should form an Islamic army for jihad that will be called al Qaeda. This army will be one of the fruits of what bin Laden has spent on the Afghan jihad. We should train these young men and equip them to be ready to uphold Islam and defend Muslims in any part of the world. The members of this army should be organized and highly trained."[41]

These early ambitious goals were confirmed by Egyptian Jihadist Abu Walid al Misri who in correspondence with Al Qaeda leaders in the mid-1990s wrote that Al Qaeda's watchword early on was "universal Jihad." Misri wrote that "Even though I opposed this policy, as it goes beyond the scope of al-Qa'ida's capabilities, al-Qa'ida committed to it nonetheless and even took steps to realize it."[42] Abu Walid's letter was recovered by the U.S. military after 9/11 in Afghanistan and now forms part of West Point's Harmony document database.

These vague internationalist ambitions were also articulated in an undated internal Al Qaeda document from the Harmony database, which described the organization's "general goals" as:

1. Spread the sentiment of Jihad in the Islamic nation.
2. Preparation of the Islamic cadre through training and participation in fighting operations.
3. Backing and supporting the Jihad movements in the world according to ability.
4. Coordination between Jihad movements in the world according to ability[43]

In November 1989 bin Laden left Afghanistan and Pakistan to return to Saudi Arabia. That autumn he had become embroiled in Pakistani politics, bribing Pakistani parliamentarians to vote against Benazir Bhutto in a no-confidence vote. Bin Laden considered Bhutto to be leading an anti-Islamist government. When Bhutto discovered bin Laden's actions she put pressure on the Saudi government to get bin Laden to return to Saudi Arabia.[44]

The founding of Al Qaeda marked an irrevocable split between bin Laden and his former mentor Abdullah Azzam, one that would have fateful consequences. Azzam advocated a concept of *jihad* that was essentially a traditional fundamentalist interpretation of the nature of *jihad*: The reclamation of once-Muslim lands from non-Muslim rule in places such as Palestine, the then–Soviet Union, and even southern Spain, which had been under Muslim rule five centuries earlier. The predominantly Egyptian militants who surrounded bin Laden at the end of the 1980s advocated something more radical: the violent overthrow of governments across the Muslim world they deemed "apostate," a concept of *jihad* that Azzam and many of his followers rejected, as they wanted no part in conflicts between Muslims.[45] (This is not the place to rehearse the intellectual underpinnings of the views of the Egyptian militants, but suffice to say that they owed a great deal to writings of the thirteenth-century thinker ibn Taymiyya and of the modern Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb.)

The split between Azzam and the ultra-*jihadists* around bin Laden may have cost Azzam his life; he was assassinated by unknown assailants in November 1989, a year after Al Qaeda had been secretly founded. The assassination of Azzam on 24 November 1989 in Peshawar is a pivotal point in this story. Over the years bin Laden had drifted away from Azzam, establishing his own military organization that would evolve into Al Qaeda.

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Meanwhile, Azzam became increasingly convinced that the Afghan commander Ahmad Shah Massoud represented the future of Afghanistan, a conclusion that was not shared by the Islamist hard-liners who surrounded bin Laden.[46]

Who killed Azzam remains a mystery and will likely remain so. There are several candidates that have been floated, including KHAD, the intelligence agency of the Afghan communists who were then still in power in Kabul, which had ample reason to bump off one of the leaders of the Afghan resistance. Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, might also have wanted Azzam dead, as the influential Palestinian cleric played a role in the emergence of Hamas in the late 1980s and was recruiting and training Hamas fighters along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border.[47]

However, the more one examines Azzam's death the more plausible it looks that it was not Hamas or the Afghan communists that killed him, but rather a coalition of Egyptian hard-liners and the Afghan leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who had the strongest motives and inclination to murder Azzam. With Azzam dead, Hekmatyar eliminated a key advocate for his principal opponent, Afghan military commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, while the Egyptian *jihadists* got rid of the leader of the "Afghan Arabs" who did not share their views about the necessity of overthrowing Middle Eastern regimes. Bin Laden was not in Pakistan at the time of Azzam's assassination, but his closest allies benefited from Azzam's death as only Azzam had the spiritual authority and moral weight to rein in the ultra-*jihadists*. With Azzam gone there was little intellectual counterweight to Al Qaeda's Egyptian faction's ideas among the Afghan Arabs.[48]

The period up to the death of Azzam marked the end of the initial phases of Al Qaeda. But how clearly had its goals been thought out by this stage and how much had the organization been built up? Certain tentative observations can be made about Al Qaeda at this point. The first is that Al Qaeda had no specific mission plan yet. The Afghan field of operations was clearly still the pressing concern of Al Qaeda's leaders. The Afghan communists remained a strong force. Bin Laden and early recruits to his new force took part in the bloody siege of Jalalabad in March 1989, suffering the loss of about one hundred men, a heavy loss.[49] The other large question facing those involved in the Al Qaeda leadership was what the organization could do beyond Afghanistan. Here the Egyptian element around al-Zawahiri had a very specific conception about how bin Laden's funds and recruits could be used. Al-Zawahiri was still determined in this period to overthrow Mubarak's regime in Egypt. He had been successful in splitting bin Laden away from Abdullah Azzam by arguing that Azzam's MAK was preventing bin Laden's funds being channeled into military operations. What al-Zawahiri really wanted, however, was bin Laden's funds to help build up his own Egyptian group. In this he was somewhat successful. Osama Rushdi, who was close to al-Zawahiri, says that $100,000 was provided by bin Laden to al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad in Peshawar during this period.[50]

There is no evidence however that at this stage bin Laden shared al-Zawahiri's desire to take the *Jihad* to Egypt. Nor did bin Laden at this stage conceive of a *Jihad* against the United States. Beyond Afghanistan, his most pressing concern was to topple the socialist government of South Yemen, something he initially seems to have viewed as a liberation struggle like the Afghan *Jihad*, rather than the sort of regime change al-Zawahiri was pressing for in the Middle East.

Abu Musab al Suri, a Syrian Jihadist, who spent time with bin Laden between 1988 and 1989, stated in his 2004 book, *The Call for Islamic Global Resistance*, that "At the time Al Qaeda did not have any operational plans outside Afghanistan. Sheikh Osama didn't have any direct special venture except Yemen." Suri, also known by his real name Mustafa Setmariam Nasar added, "Sheikh Osama's fundamental and special Jihad plan was to create

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a Jihad movement in Southern Yemen. He commenced this vision in 1989–1990." Suri said this explained why bin Laden focused on recruiting Saudis and Yemenis into his fledgling Al Qaeda organization.[51]

Abu Walid al Misri, the Egyptian Jihadist who developed close relations with bin Laden from the spring of 1989, placed even more importance on Yemen in bin Laden's thinking, stating in his 2002 book *History of the Afghan Arabs* that "Bin Laden talked freely about the need to liberate south Yemen from Communist rule, after the Afghan example, so as to have a massive Muslim presence in Yemen similar to the one in Afghanistan. All his moves and preparations were within that framework. To him the Afghanistan arena was just one for training, or preparing for the decisive confrontation on the land of Yemen. It is for this reason he established the al Qaeda organization to internationalize the Jihad."[52]

Bin Laden's initial reluctance to countenance a clash with Arab regimes even resulted in tension with the members of al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Jihad and other *Jihadists*. Noman Benotman, a former Libyan Jihadist who first became acquainted with Al Qaeda's leaders around 1990, and is now a senior researcher at the Quilliam Foundation a counterterrorism think tank in London, recalled that:

> The main focus of bin Laden is Yemen. Even when he was in Afghanistan he would spend a lot of money on the Jihad in Yemen. In 1989 and 1990 a lot of people from the Jihadi movement considered bin Laden as a non-Muslim. He doesn't care about the Arab regimes. He doesn't declare Saudi King Fahd a non-Muslim. He didn't care to fight in India or Egypt or Algeria. And he started to be involved in a clash with Egyptian Jihad. I heard from the leaders of Egyptian [Islamic] Jihad: "Spoiled Saudi with a lot of cash, that's it, he's still thinking of the Saudis as if they are a legitimate regime.[53]

A survey of leading Arab *mujahedeen* undertaken between the start of Benazir Bhutto's prime-ministerial term in December 1988 and Azzam's death in November 1989, which now forms part of the "Harmony" document database, provides perhaps the best snapshot of the views of Azzam, bin Laden, and the Egyptians around al-Zawahiri during this period. The survey asked what the next stage of the *jihadi* movement should be in Afghanistan. These were their responses:[54]

> **Abdullah Azzam:** [there should be] token participation for the purpose of raising the Afghans' morale, training the Arabs, and spreading the spirit of jihad among the Arabs, with the long-term goal being the waging of jihad against the Jews in Palestine.
> **Usama bin Ladin:** deep participation in the battles in accordance with the political and strategic vision of the leadership in Peshawar, with the long-term goal being the liberation of South Yemen from communism.
> **Egyptian Islamic Jihad:** participation in battles for the purpose of training personnel in a battlefield environment. Nothing is to be hoped for from the war in Afghanistan, nor will there arise an Islamic State there, on account of doctrinal/ideological defects (*khalal al-'aqa'id*) among the leaders and the masses. Egypt is the heart of the Islamic world and it is necessary to establish the Caliphate there first.

The large concentration of *Jihadi* groups and fighters in Peshawar created both a radicalizing tendency and fierce factional infighting of the kind that may have led to the death of Azzam.

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The genesis of Al Qaeda must be understood in this context. Bin Laden was only able to create a somewhat cohesive organization because of his open wallet and by keeping Al Qaeda's aims broad enough to keep different militant strands on board.

But during this period Al Qaeda was more than, as Jason Burke suggested, just the focal point of different *jihadist* groups with only a handful of bin Laden loyalists. In the series of meetings held in August 1988 to formally found Al Qaeda it was agreed that "within six months of al Qaeda [being founded] 314 brothers will be trained and ready."[55] By November 1989 Al Qaeda is likely to have built up a sizeable force. After the battle of Jaji, bin Laden had already set up a camp system in Jalalabad and after the defeat of the Soviets, bin Laden again set up his main base in Jaji.[56]

Al Surayhi, the Saudi recruit to bin Laden's "Lion's Den" Afghan encampment, described how "after the founding of al Qaeda, they established arms training camps [where] the majority of instructors were Egyptian, who were paid their salaries by bin Laden."[57] To these camps bin Laden was able to attract several hundred recruits, many from Saudi Arabia. According to the former Libyan *jihadist*, Noman Benotman, "the majority of al Qaeda members were from Saudi Arabia. And you're talking about hundreds of people."[58]

There is also evidence of significant levels of organization during this period. It is unclear whether Al Qaeda's committee structure fully evolved before the group decamped to the Sudan in the early to mid-1990s, but Al Qaeda's determination to organize itself was present from the start, with the appointment of "nine administrative brothers" and the characterization of the group as "an organized Islamic faction" at the founding meeting in August 1988. That meeting also set up a Shura Council to run Al Qaeda and one can infer that certain tasks were delegated to certain individuals, for example military matters to al Banjshiri and religious matters to Abu Hajir al Iraqi.

The former Libyan *jihadist* Noman Benotman experienced at first hand how "well prepared" Al Qaeda's operation was in the first months of 1990, when he trained for Jihad just after bin Laden had returned to Saudi Arabia. Benotman stated his trainers at the al Farouk camp, in the Khost region of Afghanistan, "were all members of al Qaeda" focusing on "transferring people from one life to another, from a civilian to a guerilla warrior."[59]

The available evidence indicates that recruitment for Al Qaeda was meticulously carried out. From the beginning the organization kept detailed files on its recruits.[60] The founding minutes of Al Qaeda are precise about the requirements needed to join the organization. Al Surayhi, the Saudi Lion's Den recruit, recalled that the most important criteria were that recruits should be "young, zealous, obedient, and with a weak personality that obeys instruction without question." Once signed up, the new recruits "return to higher training in the camps on specialized military curricula," Surayhi stated.[61] An Al Qaeda employment contract in the Harmony database underlined the importance that Al Qaeda attached to its human resources division. Although undated, the document listed salaries in Pakistani rupees indicating it may have been drafted during this early period when Al Qaeda was based in and around Peshawar. The contract contained sections on duties, holidays, salaries, benefits such as travel tickets for visits home, rewards, punishments, and a pledge of loyalty stressing secrecy and obedience. In one of many clauses revealing the banality of the everyday administration of the Al Qaeda organization, the contract stipulated the salaries and vacation day allowances for married and unmarried fighters, with more generous terms for those with spouses. The message was clear: working for Al Qaeda could be a career.[62]

Another undated internal Al Qaeda "Harmony" document announcing the goals of Al Qaeda's various committees, stressed the importance of training to Al Qaeda. It listed the goals of Al Qaeda's "military committee" as follows:[63]

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– General Goals

1. Preparation of freedom fighting young men, their training, and organizing them for combat.
2. Organization and supervision for combat participation on the battlefield.
3. Preparation of programs and military procedures.
4. Offering what is needed of military mechanics for combat.

– Special Goals

1. Recruitment of individuals for enlistment in Al Qaida.
2. Upward development in the level of fighting Al Qaida members.
3. Making Al Qaida an establishment for combat and training experts.

The fact that the Arabic text stated that this was an "announcement" of such goals means that it is possible that these goals were drafted in Al Qaeda's formative years in Pakistan. The former Egyptian Jihadist Osama Rushdi observed that already in 1989 "al Qaeda provided good military training which they arranged themselves."[64]

There is evidence that Al Qaeda started to set up a recruiting system in Saudi Arabia in this period. A former Yemeni recruit Abu Jandal (real name: Nasir Abdullah al Bahri) who lived in Saudi Arabia in the late 1980s and joined Al Qaeda in 1997 becoming bin Laden's chief bodyguard, stated that:[65]

> Early on, al Qaeda's recruitment of new elements "existed on a large scale in Saudi Arabia, but was under the cover of guesthouses and houses that hosted the wounded mujahedeen from Afghanistan for treatment from Saudi hospitals that were used as a cover for al Qaeda offices. The process of attracting youths was not clearly and methodically orientated towards al Qaeda at that time, however, it became a kind of recruitment directed towards joining the al Qaeda organization. [These guesthouses] were completely dismantled when Osama bin Laden moved to the Sudan."

Phase 3: Bin Laden Returns to Saudi Arabia (November 1989–Early 1991)

It is difficult to characterize the evolution of Al Qaeda's aims in the November 1989–early 1991 period for the simple reason that bin Laden was physically absent from the organization's training camp system in Afghanistan/Pakistan during the entire period. According to former Libyan Jihadist Noman Benotman, when bin Laden left Peshawar in November 1989, he also sent several hundred Saudi recruits back to Saudi Arabia, not to fight *jihad* there but to study *Sharia* law.[66] According to bin Laden's son Omar, Al Qaeda's leader also settled some recruits who were not able to return to their home countries on his farm in Jeddah.[67]

Back in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden continued to dabble in large-scale political machinations (as he had in Pakistan) which saw him offer to provide the Saudi royal family with *mujahedeen* recruits to defend the Kingdom from Saddam Hussein after the Iraqi dictator's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. "My father was a patriot in those days, loyal to his country and his King," recalled his then-ten-year-old son Omar bin Laden.[68] By all accounts the Saudi authorities' blunt dismissal of bin Laden's offer, and their decision to invite in U.S. troops, was a transformative moment for Al Qaeda's leader, who would eventually turn toward advocating violence against both the House of Saud and the United States.

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Bin Laden, during this sojourn in Saudi Arabia, therefore did not have any definite plan on how he wanted to use the Arab volunteers he was funding back in Afghanistan. And it is unclear how much direct communication there was in this period between bin Laden and the al Qaeda leadership that had remained in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Saudi Arabia bin Laden appears to have jumped from aspiration to aspiration.

Much of his attention continued to be focused on the goal of liberating southern Yemen from Communist rule, and unifying Yemen under Islamic rule. According to Syrian Jihadist Abu Musab al Suri in 1990 many around bin Laden felt that the time was ripe to initiate *Jihad* there. According to Suri all the "requirements" were in place for such a campaign because of a powerful coalition of support for *Jihad*, which included many northern Yemenis, Islamists from both Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Yemeni tribes, and the merchant class of Hadramaut—bin Laden's father's hometown in north east Yemen. In addition, al Suri stated, many *Jihadists* from southern Yemen had returned home from fighting *Jihad* in Afghanistan.[69]

But bin Laden, according to al Suri, hesitated, because he first wanted to persuade Islamist leaders like prominent Yemeni cleric Abdul Majeed al Zindani to join forces with him. That support was never forthcoming. "We lost a golden opportunity," recalled Al Suri.

When accords were signed formally uniting north and south Yemen in May 1990, Al Qaeda's leader must have felt like history was passing him by, with the leader of northern Yemen, President Saleh, a politician bin Laden regarded as a secularist, taking the credit and accruing the benefit, not him. This led bin Laden for the first time to contemplate armed *Jihad* against a non-Communist government in the Arab Muslim world, something which he had previously been very uncomfortable with. Syrian Jihadist Abu Musab al Suri recalled:

> Since the unification the project of Sheikh Osama became to try Jihad on the whole of Yemen. The conflict about the Constitution of the Unified Yemen and the differences between Islamists and secularists [on this issue provided] an opportunity to declare Jihad on Ali Abdullah Saleh and the newly born government of unified Yemen. Sheikh Osama moved to exploit that opportunity.[70]

According to Al Suri bin Laden's entourage had a book published under the name of a prominent Yemeni cleric that they themselves drafted calling Yemen's constitution and government infidel and approving *Jihad* against it.[71]

According to Noman Benotman, around this time bin Laden started to play the anti-American card to further his objectives in Yemen. "During the Gulf war bin Laden started to claim that the whole Gulf was under occupation by the American army as a way to get recruits for his big project at the time which was Yemen. He thought that was a very suitable country for the Islamic state project. His family is from there. He felt he could easily get equipment into Yemen," said Benotman.[72]

Despite laying some of the groundwork for armed *Jihad* in Yemen and the presence in the country of Yemeni Al Qaeda recruits who had returned from Afghanistan, bin Laden did not immediately throw his organization into an armed insurrection against the Saleh regime, perhaps because of his continued discomfort with violent *Jihad* in the Arab Muslim world. Instead he focused on building up Al Qaeda's presence in the country and made a number of political and financial maneuvers to try to win Islamist allies.

Abu Musab al Suri, the Syrian Jihadist, recalled that after 1990 bin Laden tried to persuade Islamists to overthrow the new regime in Yemen. "He spent a great deal of money on this project but they turned him down because Saleh gave them prestigious jobs

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and granted them money and power," al Suri stated.[73] Those who cut the ground from underneath bin Laden included Yemeni cleric al Zindani, who in return for calling an end to Islamist protests against the regime secured a place for his son on Yemen's ruling council, acording to al Suri. Saleh also secured the loyalty of a significant number of *Jihadists* who had been trained by bin Laden in Afghanistan with gifts and positions in the army, civilian administration, and even the presidential guard, according to al Suri.[74] The loss of Islamist and *Jihadist* allies undercut bin Laden's ambitions in Yemen. According to al Suri by 1996 Bin Laden had come to see Yemen mainly as a potential safe haven which could be helpful in his *Jihad* against the United States.[75]

Despite Bin Laden's state of drift in Saudi Arabia, it would arguably be wrong to conclude, as Jason Burke did in his 2003 book, that Al Qaeda "languished" during the period he was in Saudi Arabia.[76] In fact, in terms of the camp system in Afghanistan, quite the opposite appears to have been the case. L'Houssaine Kherchtou, a Moroccan Al Qaeda recruit, first came to Pakistan in January 1991. In the 2001 embassy bombings trial, Kherchtou recalled "how many people were coming from all over the world towards Afghanistan to help Muslims there." He also explained how arriving at bin Laden's Peshawar guesthouse Bait al Ansar he was processed in a methodical way, "they let you know how long you have for training and which camp you are going to be trained in."[77] Later in Peshawar he made the oath of *bayat* to Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda, Kherchtou was told, "is a group to fight for Islam ... all over the world." It was explained to him that "Osama bin Laden is the Emir, al Banjshiri is the number two, and Abu Hafs is the third one."[78]

During this period of bin Laden's absence from Pakistan/Afghanistan it was al Banjshiri and Abu Hafs who appear to have run the training camps system. Kherchtou recalled that, even after bin Laden's return, it was Abu Hafs who made decisions about what training Al Qaeda members should undertake, assigning him in 1992 to be trained by an Egyptian-American, Ali Mohammed, a former American soldier with some Special Forces training. Kherchtou's account of his subsequent training illustrates that by 1992 Al Qaeda was beginning to formulate a sophisticated operational doctrine similar to that they would use in the 1998 African embassy bombings. Kherchtou testified that Ali Mohammed explained to him how, "you collect the information about certain targets ... they [the leadership] read all the information ... and make some decisions about how to attack that target, and then they send another group who supply everything so as to attack the target. Whenever that third group finishes it has to leave. At the end the fourth group who can do the job come so as to do the final job."[79]

During bin Laden's stay in Saudi Arabia, Al Qaeda was not, as far as is known, involved in any operations outside Afghanistan. Rather, Benotman, the former Libyan Jihadist, recalled that Al Qaeda recruits and other Arab *Jihadists* were still heavily involved in fighting the Afghan communists, for example fighting in the siege of Khost between 1989 and 1991.[80]

When he left to Pakistan, bin Laden appeared to be entering a new phase, according to Benotman:

> The first thing he did when he left for Pakistan, he wrote a letter to his brother saying, "Sorry I will never come back," And I think that's when bin Laden started to reshape his view about Saudi Araiba. He started to think, oh, it's [a] real business. You can't be a leader for jihad and the same time be allied to Arab governments.[81]

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Phase 4: Bin Laden Returns to Pakistan (Early 1991–Early 1992)

On his return to Pakistan in early 1991, bin Laden's energy was taken up again by the fighting in Afghanistan and the increasing tension between Afghan factions. Wael Julaidan, a Saudi friend of bin Laden's who seems to have been present at the founding meeting of Al Qaeda, remembers that he and bin Laden "used to go and visit the Afghan leaders to solve disputes."[82] Bin Laden also poured serious financial resources into an attempt to dislodge the Afghan communists from Kabul, an effort that never got off the ground. Abdullah Anas, an Algerian former *Jihadist* who was one of the co-founders of the Services Office (MaK), recalled "in 1991 [Bin Laden] had a project to enter Kabul and he spent $1.5 million." Additionally, Haji Deen Mohamed, an Afghan *mujahedeen* commander, who met bin Laden in Peshawar during this period, recalled that "bin Laden brought money for the mujahedeen to attack Kabul."[83]

It was after bin Laden's return to Peshawar that Al Qaeda launched what appears to be its first operation overseas, the attempted assassination in Rome in November 1991 of Zahir Shah, the deposed king of Afghanistan, by a Portuguese recruit to Al Qaeda, Paulo Jose de Almedia Santos. Santos's subsequent description to a Portuguese magazine of how this operation was conceived sheds fascinating light on how Al Qaeda functioned and was organized by 1991.[84]

Santos, a convert to Islam, described how he attended a training camp in Afghanistan in 1990 before being recruited into Al Qaeda. After being rejected by the engineering department of Al Qaeda, Santos was tasked to work in a group monitoring the international media for bin Laden, illustrating the presence of organized structures early on in Al Qaeda.

Santos also shed light on the nature of bin Laden's goals on his return to Pakistan from Saudi Arabia, as he was one of the Al Qaeda members who welcomed bin Laden back to Peshawar in 1991. "[Al Qaeda's] final aim was to establish the Caliphate and Islamic government and combat oppression. The immediate aim was to train Muslims in the art of warfare," the Portuguese recruit later stated, indicating that Bin Laden, in the midst of his plotting against the Saleh regime in Yemen, may have been beginning to entertain the wish list of the Egyptian Jihadist faction, if not yet their prescription of violent regime change across the Arab world. Santos recalled he proposed the assassination of the Afghan king because of anxiety that his return would increase factional fighting amongst the Afghan groups. In proposing such an attack he would have been preaching to the converted. The Islamist militants close to bin Laden did not want the return of the popular king to Afghanistan, as he was deemed to be a secularist. The fact that this would be Al Qaeda's first act of international terrorism underlined the degree to which the organization was still rooted in the Afghan political context.

The way in which Santos's mission was conceived shows that although Al Qaeda had organizational structures in place by 1991, there were limits to how organized decision making was in this period. Santos said the operation was his idea and that he made a proposal to Al Qaeda's leaders. He added that "in our group, there wasn't a well defined hierarchy, we were rather disorganized: You could give a try to whatever entered your head. After having described the project, I was invited to Peshawar to meet bin Laden. He wanted to know why I was so sure the king had to be killed. Abu Hafs was also there. They asked how I could carry it out, with whom, and what my plan was."

According to Santos, bin Laden took a hands-off approach to his proposed operation. "Whether bin Laden gave the green light or not is not important. Bin Laden, at that time, did not give any orders. He was the guy who gave the money to keep the organization going, he had a reputation for being courageous, but he didn't give orders," Santos stated. According to Santos it was Abu Hafs, the senior Egyptian Al Qaeda operative who had remained in

Afghanistan and Pakistan when bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia, who was the most important in the day-to-day running of Al Qaeda. "Abu Hafs was the real chief of al Qaeda. Bin Laden was very humble. I could ask him for advice in particular circumstances and he would simply say: 'Go and ask Abu Hafs, who is much more intelligent than me,'" Santos stated. (The importance of Abu Hafs as the go-to operational guy in Al Qaeda has been confirmed by other *jihadists*, and also by U.S. counterterrorism officials privy to the interrogations of Al Qaeda members).

Although 1991 was the year in which Al Qaeda launched its first international operation and intensified the training recruits received in the Afghan training camps, it was also a year in which Al Qaeda leaders began to look for a new base from which to launch operations. Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda leadership had grown increasingly frustrated with the rampant factionalism of the Afghan *mujahedeen*, a factionalism that had always been latent during the 1980s but became increasingly pronounced after the withdrawal of the Soviets. According to Abdullah Anas, the former Algerian Jihadist, bin Laden and Hekmatyar (one of the most well-financed *mujahedeen* warlords) had began to take distance from each other, with Arabs around Hekmatyar dismissing bin Laden's continued claims of a leadership role in Afghan affairs.[85]

During this period there was also increasing pressure on Pakistan from Middle Eastern governments to expel Arab militants living in the country, which would intensify in 1992 and 1993. Bin Laden therefore dispatched Jamal al Fadl, a Sudanese member of Al Qaeda, to prepare the way for the organization to move to Sudan with the purchase of $250,000 worth of farm-land in the country.[86] This paved the way for Al Qaeda's relocation. In early 1992, bin Laden brought to Sudan those Al Qaeda recruits that could not return to their own countries including, Egyptian, Libyan, and Algerian recruits wanted by regimes at home. Those who could return to their country, like Saudi recruits, were allowed to do so if they wished. According to the former Egyptian Jihadist, Osama Rushdi, in 1992 "al Qaeda sold everything in Peshawar."[87]

A May 1994 letter written to Al Qaeda leaders in the Sudan by Abu Walid al Misri, an Egyptian operative who remained in Pakistan, suggested that after being forced to relocate the group justified its move there as a way to focus efforts on *Jihadist* fronts in the Arab world.

> I remind you that before you abandoned the Asian position under the slogan that you were going to work in the heartland region—the Arab region—you had totally rejected the concept of movement on the flanks claiming that the battle would be decided in the heartland.

On the eve of their departure to Sudan however, Al Qaeda leaders still differed on the contours of the battle in the Arab "heartland." During his time back in Pakistan in 1991–1992, bin Laden - despite his financial support for Zawahiri's group, his very real flirtation with Jihad against the Saleh regime in Yemen, and his growing dislike of the Saudi royal family - was still less than comfortable with the idea of waging Jihad in the Arab Muslim world, according to former Libyan Jihadist Benotman, who first became acquainted with him during this period. Benotman noted that bin Laden did not attend a series of seminars held by Egyptian Islamic Jihad in conjunction with other Jihadist groups in Peshawar during the course of 1991 which concluded that mobilization of the Muslim masses was key to toppling dictatorships and the creation of Islamic states throughout the Arab world.[88]

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Phase 5: The Sudan Years 1992–1996

After the move to Sudan, Al Qaeda retained some presence in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It maintained a guesthouse in Hayatabad, a suburb Peshawar, and a presence in a number of *Jihadist* training camps in Afghanistan.[89] According to a study by West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, Egyptian operative Abu Walid al Misri remained in the region, where he took charge of the remnants of the Al Qaeda camp system in Afghanistan, and oversaw the training of *Jihadists* streaming in from Central Asian countries, including militants from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Tajikistan's Nahda party.[90] The training of the Tajik fighters was known as the "Furqan project" and was partially funded and staffed by Al Qaeda.[91]

But despite these projects Al Qaeda was, according to its own admission at the time, a weakening force in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In a May 1994 letter Abu Walid al Misri complained to the Al Qaeda leadership in Sudan that:[92]

> [The Asia Corps'] present situation is not much beyond the zero point. All we need to know is that it only has five full-time personnel. The number of cadres cooperating with it from abroad also five. Its financial situation is even worse than its organizational situation. . . . The Asian Corps suffers from the negative effects of sedition in Kabul that followed the conquest, the negative effects of disorganized evacuation and removal of the Arabs from the area, the negative effects of international pursuit of the Arabs in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

Abu Walid by this time did not feel Al Qaeda had their priorities right. In the May 1994 letter he rebuked Al Qaeda's leaders for "having washed its hands of the Central Asian region," as this was "a complete contradiction of the founding charter of al-Qa'ida and of its very watchword, which is universal jihad."[93] This disagreement over priorities was just one of the disagreements that broke out in Al Qaeda's top circles during its early years. In late 1994 bin Laden ordered many of the Al Qaeda operatives working to train Central Asian recruits to move to Sudan. Not long afterward Abu Walid joined them.[94]

The move to Sudan was a new departure for Al Qaeda. A significant number of Al Qaeda recruits returned to their native countries and did not join bin Laden in the Sudan. The number of Al Qaeda members around bin Laden is therefore likely to have shrunk, at least during his first years in Sudan. Nor is there evidence that Al Qaeda continued to operate a training camp system in Sudan on the scale that it did in Afghanistan. Jamal al Fadl, the Sudanese recruit later testified in a New York courtroom that Al Qaeda operated camps in the north of the country but characterized them as offering "refresher training." Abu Jandal, a Yemeni recruit, who would become bin Laden's personal bodyguard and confidante when bin Laden returned to Afghanistan in 1996, has stated that the Al Qaeda training camps that did exist in Africa were situated in Somalia not Sudan during this period.[95] The main factor preventing Al Qaeda from training recruits in the Sudan appears to have been the Sudanese government's opposition to Al Qaeda maintaining training camps in the country.[96] According to Noman Benotman, a former Libyan Jihadist who spent time in bin Laden's company in the Sudan in the mid 1990s, the Sudan years were difficult ones for Al Qaeda, not least because of continued disagreements within its leadership ranks.[97]

These testimonies contradict Gunaratna's assertion in an article published in this journal in 2010 that "in Sudan, bin Laden was able to implement his vision of the 'base' and establish a vast complex of training camps for newly recruited Jihad fighters."[98]

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It would also be wrong, however to infer, as Jason Burke did in his 2003 book, that in Sudan "bin Laden was at least as interested in experimental arboriculture and road construction as he was in creating an international legion of Islamic militants." It was certainly true that bin Laden placed significant energy and resources in agricultural projects and road construction—"enthralled," as his son put it with "bringing the country up to modern standards"—but he also had a wider rationale for helping the Sudanese government build up its infrastructure.[99] Bin Laden told Jamal al Fadl, that "the agenda was bigger than business . . . we need to help the government and the government [will then] help our group." Bin Laden's companies in the Sudan employed thousands of employees, mostly Sudanese. But he also put Al Qaeda and Egyptian Islamic Jihad members on his companies' payroll. Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, an Egyptian who worked on bin Laden's projects recalls how, "others working on other projects, with lower job titles and levels of responsibility were getting paid more money than I was."

Bin Laden's son Omar recalled just how loyal bin Laden's fighters remained: "My father had not only employed the same veterans who had lived on our farm in Jeddah, but had brought in others. The ones who did not live in our area were scattered around the country in other housing. . . . Many veterans told my brothers and me that our father was the only one who never forgot them . . . they worshipped him with their whole hearts."[100]

It was in Sudan that one of the early goals of Al Qaeda—fighting for Muslim causes around the world—began to be realized. The Peshawar/Afghanistan years (1988–1992) had seen the organization concentrate on fighting in Afghanistan and the training of its recruits. In Sudan, Al Qaeda moved from an emphasis on training toward an emphasis on spreading its operations, influence, and know-how to different *jihadist* fronts across the world. During this period Al Qaeda sent fighters to Bosnia and Somalia and also opened a satellite office in Baku, Azerbaijan. And it dispatched members to train the Filipino Moro front and delivered $100,000 to affiliates in Jordan and Eritrea.[101] Several of its members also undertook the task of writing the multivolume *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad*.[102]

Al Qaeda also sent fighters to the Caucasus and Central Asia, the front Egyptian operative Abu Walid al Misri would have liked the organization to focus more on. In letters dispatched around 1994 to bin Laden, Abu Hafs and Abu Ubaidah in Sudan, Abu Walid, the most senior Al Qaeda figure remaining in South Asia argued that Al Qaeda strikes in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan would be the best way to help militants rebelling against Russian rule in Chechnya. Sending Arab volunteers directly to Chechnya he wrote would be "dangerous" and "militarily ineffective." (Al Qaeda nevertheless did send some fighters to the country.) Abu Walid also wrote that "the challenge for al Qaeda is to unite the rising jihadi spirit in Arab lands with that in the Caucasus. The regions of Ingushetia, Dagestan, Abkhazia, and Azerbaijan are fruitful areas for expansion because of the hostility toward Russia in those areas." Abu Walid wrote that opposition by Ahmed Shah Massoud had set back Al Qaeda's attempts to set up operations in Tajikistan.

In the letters Abu Walid asserted that Russia had been delegated responsibilities to crack down on Muslims in Central Asia as part of a worldwide "Jewish-Crusader" plot against Muslims, language that demonstrated Al Qaeda's increasing hostility toward the United States.[103]

Al Qaeda also built up relationships with several other militant Islamist groups during its time in the Sudan, cooperating with Algeria's GIA, the Syrian Jamaat-Jihad al Suri, and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) which had a hundred strong contingent in the Sudan.[104]

According to former Libyan Jihadist Noman Benotman, who spent time in the Sudan in 1994 and 1995, a disagreement broke out between bin Laden and leaders of his LIFG

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group stationed in the Sudan after bin Laden requested the LIFG cease its operations in Libya because the Saudi viewed Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi as an ally against the United States. The episode demonstrated bin Laden's growing hostility to the United States and his continued equivocation about launching *Jihad* in the Arab world.[105]

During the Sudan years, Al Qaeda maintained a guesthouse in Lebanon and some of its members trained with Hezbollah on how to blow up large buildings. Bin Laden also met with Imad Mugniyeh, the Iran-based head of Hezbollah who was responsible for the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut that precipitated an American withdrawal from Lebanon. It was a model that bin Laden hoped to follow in his future terrorist operations.[106]

It was in Sudan that Al Qaeda leaders conceived—for the first time—of the United States as an enemy to be attacked. The presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia had deeply angered bin Laden. According to Jamal al Fadl, in 1992 bin Laden gathered together Al Qaeda members on his farm to tell them, "We cannot let the American army stay in the Gulf area and take our oil, take our money. We have to fight them."[107]

After the December 1992 arrival of American troops in Somalia, bin Laden was even more adamant according to al Fadl. At another gathering the Sudanese recruit recalled bin Laden declaring, "the Americans have now come to the Horn of Africa, and we have to stop the head of the snake." Abu Jandal, the Yemeni recruit, said that bin Laden viewed the arrival of U.S. troops in Somalia as a threat to the growing Islamist movement in Sudan and that bin Laden had been influenced by the fact that one of his spiritual mentors in Saudi Arabia, Salman al Awdah, had drawn attention to the importance of opposing the American presence in Somalia in an audiotape entitled "Industry of Death."[108]

Bin Laden's call for *jihad* in Somalia seems to have been more eagerly welcomed by Al Qaeda's recruits in the Sudan than by Al Qaeda members who had returned to their own countries after the organization left Afghanistan. Bin Laden's former bodyguard, Abu Jandal, said, "Bin Laden sent messages to all the brothers in Saudi Arabia, in Yemen and everywhere. [Some of them] replied, 'Abu Abdullah (Bin Laden), I cannot participate with you because I have a family and young children.' Many of them were still in shock and affected by the turn of events in Afghanistan after the departure of the Soviet troops. Jandal confirmed Abu Walid al Misri's contention that the power struggle between Islamic factions had caused a 'kind of disappointment among the Arab mujahedeen.'"[109]

In late December 1992, two weeks after the arrival of American troops in Somalia, Yemeni individuals affiliated with Al Qaeda launched the organization's first attack on an American target, bombing two hotels in Aden that were used to transit American troops to Somalia. The bombings killed a tourist, but no Americans. It is unclear whether this operation was directly planned by bin Laden, but what is not in doubt is that he had already given the signal to Al Qaeda that the United States needed to be countered. According to Abu Walid al Misri, bin Laden would later refer to this operation as evidence of the weakness of the United States, since the operation halted the use of Yemen by the Americans as a transit point to Somalia.[110] (The operation was likely orchestrated by Tariq al-Fadhli, a close associate of bin Laden's during the war against the Soviets who, like bin Laden, came from a Yemeni family, but had grown up in Saudi Arabia.)

Bin Laden also sent Al Qaeda fighters into Somalia, entrusting Abu Hafs with setting up Al Qaeda's operations there according to Jamal al Fadl.[111] Al-Zawahiri's group Egyptian Islamic Jihad appear to have played a significant role in the operation, with Egyptian operative Sayf al Adel who in 2010 appears to have resumed a key leadership role in the group appointed Al Qaeda's point-man for Sudan.[112]

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Internal Al Qaeda correspondence recovered by the U.S. military in Afghanistan, and now part of West Point's "Harmony" document database, has shed significant additional light on Al Qaeda's operations in Somalia. According to a West Point study of the documents the campaign began in late January 1993 when Abu Hafs dispatched a team of operatives from Peshawar to Nairobi, Kenya to conduct an operation they entitled "MSK" an Arab word meaning "to grab." Their mission orders were:[113]

1. Find a location for military operations that would replace Afghanistan
2. [T]he location must be near the Arab region. . . .
3. [A]ttempt to help the brothers in Somalia and Ogaden.

Upon arriving in country, according to the West Point study, the Al Qaeda team established three training camps with the agreement of the General Islamic Union, the Somali militant group better known as al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI).[114]

In March 1993 Mohammed Sadiq Odeh an Al Qaeda operative of Palestinian descent who later helped plot the embassy bombing in Kenya was dispatched by al Adel from Sudan to Somalia. After his arrest, Odeh, revealed to the FBI that "he was told by al Adel that Jihad in Afghanistan was over and that that they were moving to do Jihad elsewhere. Odeh stated that his mission in Somalia was to train some tribes in fighting and to provide food and money." Odeh also revealed that Abu Hafs himself traveled to Sudan to meet with the tribe of Somali leader General Mohamed Farah Aideed, a rebel leader fighting against U.S. and UN troops.[115]

The picture that emerges from the recovered Al Qaeda documents is of Al Qaeda making repeated attempts to prod militants in Somalia into confrontation with U.S. forces there. In December 1993 Salih al Wahid, an Al Qaeda operative dispatched a letter to Abu Hafs reporting back on a meeting with Somali militants in which the Al Qaeda operative pressed the Somalis to strike U.S. and UN forces in Somalia. Wahid also pressed the Somalis to renew training activities disrupted by the threat of airstrikes.[116] According to West Point researchers the internal Al Qaeda documents revealed that the anarchic situation in Somalia presented as many difficulties as opportunities to Al Qaeda. The group, for example, had little success forging alliances with local militias, and played only a small role in operations against Western forces. The West Point researchers concluded that the group was never able to establish a secure safe haven in the area because of its lack of understanding of the country's political, social, and deeply tribal structures.[117]

L'Houssaine Kherchtou, the Moroccan Al Qaeda recruit, was stationed in Kenya during this period. He subsequently revealed that Nairobi was used by Al Qaeda to transit from the Sudan to Somalia and that Al Qaeda was training Somalis and working together with Somali Jihadists in an unsuccessful operation to "put explosives in a car and put it inside the compound of the United Nations."[118]

At some point al Adel himself ventured on a scouting mission to various locations in Kenya and Somalia, taking on the name Omar al Sumali, and writing back to Al Qaeda leaders about successful raids launched by Somali allies against Belgian and Indian peacekeepers. Adel provided Al Qaeda leaders with a positive assessments of the Somali fighters' capabilities. "We should remain here with them," he wrote.[119]

Al Qaeda's most prized target in Somalia was U.S. troops. A letter dispatched by Egyptian operative Abu Walid al Misri to al Adel in September 1993 stated, "The American bald eagle has landed within range of our rifles. You can kill it or leave it permanently disfigured. If you do that, you will have saved Sudan, Yemen, Bab al-Mandab, the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and the waters of the Nile. Could you want more magnificent objectives of war than those?"[120]

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Al Qaeda's most notorious claimed "success" in Somalia was the bringing down of an American Blackhawk helicopter in Mogadishu in October 1993, an attack that precipitated the pullout of U.S. troops in March 1994.[121] Bin Laden boasted about this operation when he met the Palestinian journalist Abdel Bari Atwan in Afghanistan in 1996, but is not possible to ascertain the veracity of the claim.[122] A May 1994 letter from Egyptian operative Abu Walid al Misri to Al Qaeda's top brass in the Sudan referred to Al Qaeda cadres in Somalia achieving a brilliant victory over the Americans, but made no specific mention of the attack on the helicopter.[123] While members of Al Qaeda had developed considerable skills using rocket propelled grenades to bring down helicopters during the Afghan war and members of Al Qaeda were dispatched to Somali in 1993 to train Somalis to attack Americans, it remains unclear—given the fog of war—who brought down the helicopter in Mogadishu.

Whatever the truth by 1993, five years after its founding, Al Qaeda now conceived its central mission as attacking American targets. Al Qaeda leaders viewed Somalia as a success that had exposed what they saw as American weakness. "Your early arrival on Somali soil ahead of the enemy America gave you an excellent opportunity to gain advance knowledge of the battleground and prepare," Egyptian operative Abu Walid wrote to Al Qaeda's top brass in Sudan in May 1994. "The Somali experience confirmed the spurious nature of American power and that it has not recovered from the Vietnam complex. It fears getting bogged down in a real war that would reveal its psychological collapse at the level of personnel and leadership," Abu Walid added. Bin Laden told Palestinian journalist Atwan that the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia made him view the U.S. military as a weak force.[124]

According to former Libyan Jihadist Noman Benotman, who spent time in Bin Laden's company while in the Sudan in 1994–95, "The reason bin Laden fully turned on the Americans was because of Sudan. He felt he was protecting Sudan from the Americans whose aim was to destroy the Sudanese regime. He felt there was a conspiracy against Sudan and that there was a need to fight back. In Somalia bin Laden was protecting Sudan beyond its borders, taking the war to the Americans. Somalia would give bin Laden a big boost and make him feel he could defeat the Americans."[125]

From 1993 on United States interests became a central target for Al Qaeda. In February of that year, Ramzi Youssef, a *jihadi* freelancer who had passed through Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, launched an operation to bomb the World Trade Center in New York. There is no evidence that bin Laden had any direct role in this attack. However, the imprisonment of the Egyptian cleric Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, the spiritual leader of the group's Egyptian members, in the wake of the attack, infuriated Al Qaeda's leaders. In retaliation they contemplated bombing the U.S. embassy in Saudi Arabia, but did not go ahead with the plan because they did not want to kill civilians, scruples they would abandon five years later in the Africa embassy bombings.[126]

In 1993 Al Qaeda started five years of planning to launch a major attack on the American targets in Africa, which resulted in the August 1998 attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. The information U.S. investigators have put together on this operation and the recollections of those involved in the attacks have provided another glimpse of how the organization functioned and how decisions were made during this period.

In the African embassy operation, unlike Santos's operation to assassinate the Afghan King, bin Laden took a strong interest in the minutiae of the planning process. Ali Mohamed, the Egyptian-American Al Qaeda trainer who had trained L'Houssaine Kherchtou and other Al Qaeda members sophisticated reconnaissance and targeting doctrines in Afghanistan in early 1992, later told a U.S. court that he was dispatched by bin Laden to Nairobi in late 1993 to conduct surveillance of targets, including the American embassy, to retaliate against the United States for its involvement in Somalia. He then returned to meet with bin Laden in Khartoum "where my surveillance files and photographs were reviewed by Osama bin

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Laden. Bin Laden looked at the picture of the American Embassy and pointed to where a truck could go as a suicide bomber."[127] This episode showed bin Laden as the then hands-on CEO of Al Qaeda.

Bin Laden's involvement in detailed planning in the plot illustrated that in Al Qaeda's most important operations bin Laden took personal charge. (The pattern would be the same for the 9/11 plot, which was first floated to bin Laden by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) in 1996. KSM's colleague, Ramzi Binalshibh traveled from Germany to Afghanistan to brief bin Laden personally about the shape of the imminent operation in early September 2001.)

More light on bin Laden's involvement in the African embassy mission was shed by the FBI interrogation of Mohammed al 'Owhali, an Al Qaeda operative, who was arrested after the attack on the U.S. embassy in Nairobi in 1998. Al 'Owhali revealed that although bin Laden was intimately involved in the target selection and gave his approval for the operation, he delegated the recruitment and logistical planning for the operation to other Al Qaeda leaders. "Osama bin Laden is at the very top of al Qaeda but he has several senior military leaders directly under him, and bin Laden provides the political objectives to these military leaders and these people would then provide the instructions down to the lower chains of command," al 'Owhali told the FBI.[128] His recollection illustrated that while bin Laden might be a hands-on CEO, he also knew how to delegate.

One can only speculate about the source of this managerial style, but bin Laden grew up hearing tales of his father's success as a manager of the one of the largest companies in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden's father was a hands-on manager who got his hands dirty at the company's various construction sites. Similarly, when bin Laden worked for the family business he would drive the bulldozers himself. Bin Laden's studies at university in economics may also have had some bearing on his managerial style, but as he dropped out of university to work full time for the Saudi BinLadin Group it seems likely that this later experience would have been the most formative influence on his style of management.[129]

Abu Hafs and al Banjshiri also played lead roles in preparing the attacks on the embassies. The importance of these two Egyptians during the Sudan years must be underlined. They continued to provide the key link between al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad and Al Qaeda. According to Abu Jandal, bin Laden's former Yemeni bodyguard:

> Abu-Ubaidah [Al Banjshiri] was in effect the general field commander in the Horn of Africa. He used to discuss events and developments with Osama bin Laden on a daily basis. Abu-Ubaidah was the supervisor of the activities in the Horn of Africa from Uganda to Somalia and from Kenya to the Horn of Africa and Sudan. All these areas were under his supervision. He had a big role in planning and implementing these two operations. He was the executive commander of these two attacks. As far as I know, he had the intention to let the al Qaeda organization hit the two embassies and to let the Egyptian Jihad organization do the job.[130]

Al Qaeda's eventual decision to go ahead with the attacks was not just the result of a *diktat* from the top leadership. There was a significant back and forth between the Al Qaeda leadership and Al Qaeda's wing in Somalia. According to bin Laden's onetime bodyguard Abu Jandal:

> The brothers in the al Qaeda organization [initially] objected. They objected to the idea of bombing the two embassies because they considered Kenya an

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> important passageway to Somalia and they did not want it closed. How could they close this passageway? How could they enter Somalia then? Therefore, at the beginning the brothers in al Qaeda did not want to do that—so that they might not invite Kenya's wrath against them. However, eventually, when restrictions imposed on them increased and after they left Somalia, they decided to carry out the two attacks.[131]

This episode is significant because it shows that Al Qaeda was not entirely undemocratic in its early years; not just in the launching of operations—like Santos's assassination attempt on the Afghan King—but also in taking into account the views and priorities of its operatives in the field.

The embassy attacks were meticulously planned. American-Egyptian Al Qaeda operative Ali Mohammed visited Nairobi several times in 1994 and 1995 to conduct extensive further surveillance of the American embassy.[132] Al 'Owhali, one of the embassy bombers, recalled that he "attended very specialized training" for the attack in Afghanistan in 1996. That training, undertaken, after Al Qaeda operatives returned to the country, closely resembled Ali Mohammed's earlier training courses in Afghanistan in 1992. Al 'Owhali later stated that the cell that carried out the attack was made up of "four separate sections, the intelligence section, the administration section, the planning and preparation section, and then the execution section,"[133] illustrating the terrorist organization's penchant for bureaucracy.

Al Qaeda's meticulous planning and consultative process for the embassy attacks shows that in the Sudan it built a significant degree of organization, cohesiveness, and operational capability. This would suggest that Jason Burke's contention, that Al Qaeda in the Sudan "had barely expanded beyond the dozen or so individuals who had pledged allegiance in 1989" and "was heavily reliant on the know how of established military outfits" needs significant revision.

By 1996 Al Qaeda's institutional structure was already fully set up. Jamal al Fadl, who left the organization that year, told a U.S. court that "under the Shura council we had different committees. We have committee for military purpose. The emir of the military committee, his name is Abu Ubaidah al Banjshiri. We got money and business committee. Under the money committee, we got office for immigration. We got another committee for media reporting and the newspaper. There was a daily and weekly publication."[134]

Al Fadl's description was confirmed by an internal Al Qaeda document recovered by the U.S. military in Afghanistan after 9/11 that comprehensively detailed the goals and competencies of Al Qaeda's military, political, administrative/financial, and informational committees and their subsections, as well as the qualifications necessary for operatives appointed to leadership positions on them. While undated the document was likely drawn up during Al Qaeda's early years, as it stated it was announcing the goals of these committees. Those appointed were obliged to fulfill a myriad of requirements, including holding regular meetings with members of other committees, developing yearly plans, supervising subordinates, and reporting up to superiors. All this was a remarkably high level of bureaucratization for what was a relatively small organization. It was possible that such regulations were deliberately drawn up to enforce a sense of process and discipline within what otherwise might have been fractious Al Qaeda ranks, but the regulations may also have reflected the fact that many Al Qaeda operatives came from Middle Eastern states with traditions of extreme bureaucratization.[135]

Al Fadl's revelation that Al Qaeda had a media committee was reflective of the fact that even when he was a relatively young man bin Laden was thinking about his media strategy. Bin Laden sponsored the Peshawar-based *Jihad* magazine starting in late 1984, a

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magazine that was designed to attract money and recruits to the Afghan cause. The magazine reported favorably about bin Laden until the death of Abdullah Azzam in late 1989 when the magazine stopped reporting on bin Laden's activities. In 1987 bin Laden invited the mainstream Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, to eastern Afghanistan to document his battles against the Soviets. Around the same time, the Egyptian film maker, Essam Deraz, started shooting a documentary about bin Laden and his followers. This coverage gave bin Laden a heroic public profile around the Middle East.[136]

When bin Laden was based in Sudan he also started granting interviews to Western reporters such as Robert Fisk of the *Independent* and Scott Macleod of *Time*, in which he presented himself as a successful investor in Sudan. Throughout the period up until 1996 bin Laden proved adept at getting his message out in the media, a talent he would perfect in the years after 9/11. Bin Laden's media focus was confirmed in a letter he wrote to Mullah Omar before 9/11 in which he declared that "it is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods; in fact, its ratio may reach 90% of the total preparation for the battles."[137]

If Burke in his 2003 book understated the early Al Qaeda's capability and importance, Gunaratna in his 2002 analysis went too far in the other direction. Gunaratna stated that Al Qaeda's "global network as we know it today was created while it was based in Khartoum."[138] Gunaratna wrote that during this period "al Qaeda established ideological, political, financial, and military control over several Islamic terrorist groups,"[139] adding, "to function at a global level al Qaeda created a worldwide strategic framework of Islamist military and political organizations. From the early 1990s onwards Osama bin Laden invited representatives of Islamic terrorist and political groups to join al Qaeda's Shura Majlis or consultative council [and] established relations with thirty terrorist groups."[140]

In reality the early Al Qaeda's worldwide reach, although significant, was not as extensive as Gunaratna suggested. It is true Al Qaeda established strong relationship with Arab Islamist organizations, many of which had been present or created during the Afghan Jihad, such as the *Group Islamique Armée* (Armed Islamic Group, GIA), the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, the Moroccan Combatant group, and the Syrian Jamaat e-Jihad al Suri, while also forging relations with Chechnyan, Eritrean, and South East Asian groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).[141] But these relationships during the early 1990s were one of partnership only. They never amounted to a coordination of an international *jihad*. (Gunaratna was correct, however, in stressing that Al Qaeda managed its relations with affiliates, through cultural, social, and family ties).

Al Qaeda's key partnership in the Sudan was with al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ). The two organizations formally joined forces only in 1998, but in reality they were always closely tied. Several of the operations that emanated from Sudan were launched by al-Zawahiri's group. During this period the EIJ carried out its own attacks in Egypt as well as assisting Al Qaeda with planning the African embassy attacks. EIJ's operations included an attack that injured the Egyptian interior minister in August 1993 and a failed attempt to kill the Egyptian prime minister in November 1993 that killed a young girl. In 1995, the EIJ and Egypt's Islamic Group collaborated in a failed assassination attempt on the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, in Addis Ababa.[142]

The Egyptian government's furious crackdown on the group in the wake of this attack prompted al-Zawahiri, in revenge, to order an attack on the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan in November 1995. By then, with prospects bleak for continuing operations in Egypt, al-Zawahiri was already coming around to bin Laden's re-orientation of *Jihadi* efforts to focus on attacks against the United States.[143] In his 2001 autobiography *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet Mohammed*, al-Zawahiri revealed that his group originally

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intended to target the American embassy in Islamabad, but determined it was too hard a target. Al-Zawahiri at this time labeled the United States "the far enemy" and accused it of propping up what he considered to be un-Islamic regimes in the Middle East.

The bin Laden–al-Zawahiri partnership certainly deepened during their period in the Sudan. Al-Zawahiri needed bin Laden's funds and charismatic appeal while bin Laden respected al-Zawahiri's political smarts and the expertise that EIJ members could give Al Qaeda. Al-Zawahiri's arguments about targeting Middle Eastern regimes may have resonated more after an assassination attempt on bin Laden in late 1994. His son Omar bin Laden recalled that the failed attempt made his father behave "as if every government in the world other than the Sudanese were his devoted enemy . . . his passion for Jihad was expanding"[144] A *takfiri* treatise published by Sayyid Imam al Sharif in the Sudan in 1994, the hard-line Egyptian ideologue, may also have influenced bin Laden's according to former Egyptian Jihadist Osama Rushdi, despite Imam's frustration that bin Laden did not sufficiently heed his advice[145] (Imam later renounced his hard-line views from his Egyptian prison cell in 2007.)[146]

In the Sudan, bin Laden supported EIJ members to the extent that certain non-Egyptian members of Al Qaeda became envious of their treatment. However, during this period there were still limits to how closely bin Laden and al-Zawahiri worked together. Al-Zawahiri was often away from the Sudan: he is reported to have traveled extensively, visiting the Balkans, Austria, Dagestan, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, the Philippines, and Argentina, to raise funds and set up EIJ cells.[147] And Abu Hafs and Abu Ubaidah, who ran the daily operations of Al Qaeda, owed their primary loyalty to bin Laden rather than al-Zawahiri.

In the Sudan, bin Laden began moving against both the "far" and "near" enemies. For the first time he orientated Al Qaeda against the United States by intervening in Somalia, planning from 1993 at attack against the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar al Salam. By supporting Arab groups such as the GIA and the EIJ, and working against President Saleh in Yemen, he was also now prepared to move against Arab regimes, something he had been reluctant to do when was based in Pakistan.

While the Saudi government's rejection of his offer to help defend the Kingdom in 1990 angered bin Laden, it was not until 1994 that he turned irrevocably against the Saudi regime. A key factor in this was the imprisonment of two clerics that had been his spiritual inspiration—Safar al Hawali and Salman al Awdah—who had criticized Saudi Arabia's agreement to allow U.S. troops into the Kingdom. Ibrahim al Sanoussi, Hassan al Turabi's right hand man in the Sudan, recalled that the clerics' imprisonment had a deep impact on bin Laden, who "began to speak about the reformation that you have to have in [Saudi Arabia]."[148] In September 1994 bin Laden issued a statement claiming that the clerics' imprisonment meant that Saudi Arabia was now waging a "war against Islam."[149]

Compounding bin Laden's hatred for the Saudi regime in 1994 the Saudi government forced his family to disown bin Laden and confiscated his passport. Bin Laden's strained relations with the Kingdom led him that year to set up a group in London, "the Advice and Reformation Committee," under Khaled al Fauwaz to oppose the Saudi regime.

From early 1994 this body issued a string of communiqués drafted by bin Laden critical of the Saudi regime. Despite the increasingly strident tone of the letters it is worth noting that bin Laden was not yet willing to dispatch Al Qaeda operatives to wage *Jihad* against the Saudi regime. It was not till 2003 that Al Qaeda launched a campaign of attacks in the Kingdom, very likely with bin Laden's authorization.

In an open letter to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia issued by the Committee in July 1995 bin Laden unleashed a tirade of criticism against the Saudi royal family for its internal corruption and alliance with the United States:[150]

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> O King, that your regime has committed the forbidden things in Islam which nullify its validity before God. The devastating failure and the dishonorable corruption which have been proven against your regime are enough reasons to overthrow it. By legislating the positive blasphemous laws and obligating people to seek judgment by them, by pledging your allegiance and support to the infidels against the Muslims, you have committed many of the things which are contrary to the teachings of Islam and which demand that you be revolted against and removed.

Bin Laden in the letter also stressed his disappointment for Saudis backing for the "wrong" side in the brief 1994 Yemeni civil war between southern separatists and the Saleh regime. "Your political and military support for the Yemeni Communists turned to be the mortal blow that broke your political backbone and the razor that shaved away your creditability on the Islamic front," he wrote.

Although bin Laden had taken some steps toward forcibly removing President Saleh from power before being thwarted in his plans, he had an even deeper antipathy for the socialist separatists in the south. This led bin Laden in 1994 to instruct his supporters and followers in Yemen, including fighters who had returned from Afghanistan to fight alongside Saleh's troops against the separatists in the south, according to Syrian Jihadist Abu Musab al Suri.[151]

Bin Laden therefore did not take advantage of a potential opening for the group in the country. Abu Walid al Misri, the Egyptian operative had written to Al Qaeda leaders shortly after violence broke out in Yemen in 1994 arguing that it offered Al Qaeda a golden opportunity to expand its operations in the country:

> Once again the Yemen file is being opened for jihad after a wait of several years. ... How suitable will it be for a new Islamic thrust, albeit limited in scope and results? It may not be possible for us to make Yemen leap from its present situation into a fully-integrated Islamic status through military jihad action [but] the alternative is not to stop the jihad but to carry out a phased advance.[152]

But in the Sudan, preoccupied with his activities there and his intervention in Somalia, bin Laden's priorities were shifting away from regime change in Yemen, according to Syrian Jihadist Abu Musab al Suri. Around the time he moved to Afghanistan, according to al Suri, bin Laden had come to see Yemen as a safe haven for his larger struggle against the United States rather than a front for *Jihad*. As he told Palestinian journalist Abdel Bari Atwan in 1996, he now wanted to concentrate on fighting "the head of the snake" and was reluctant to engage with members of its "tail" including Ali Abdullah Saleh.[153]

According to al Suri, bin Laden's decision to orientate Al Qaeda against the United States during the Sudan years can only be properly understood in the context of his growing opposition to the Saudi regime:

> His long stay in Sudan gave him enough time for contemplation. His rhetoric changed from lenient media opposition to the Saudi Royal Family to calling for serious reforms through harsh speeches and criticism of the government as well as the hypocrite official religious institutions.
> There were two methods to confront the Saudi royal family. Either by confronting the Sauds, thereby necessitating confrontation with the Islamic clerics

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> to unveil their hypocrisy, in order to overthrow the Sauds' legitimacy. This is a losing battle in the eyes of the people due to the size and influence of the religious establishment. Or a safer route, which is to attack the American presence [in Saudi Arabia]. Thus the Sauds will be forced to defend them, which mean they will lose their legitimacy in the eyes of Muslims. This will lead the religious establishment to defend [the Americans] which in turn will make them lose their legitimacy. Then the battle will be on clearer grounds in the eyes of the people.
> Sheikh Osama chose the second option, and I think he was right to a large extent. Furthermore, Sheikh Osama had studied the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the dictator governments in Warsaw Pact countries and . . . was convinced that with the fall of the United States all the other components of the existing Arab and Islamic regimes will fall as well. Therefore he was convinced of the necessity of focusing his effort on fighting Jihad (Holy war) against America. He then started to call upon those around him to the idea of fighting the war against the 'Head of the Snake', as he would call it, rather than against 'its many tails' (i.e. the authoritarian governments of the Middle East).[154]

There is some evidence that in his final year in Sudan, bin Laden was already prepared to go public with a declaration of war against the United States, one that he would make instead shortly after his arrival in Afghanistan "from the peaks of the Hindu Kush" on 23 August 1996. Abu Jandal, bin Laden's former bodyguard said that "Sheikh Osama was going to declare Jihad against the United States while he was still in Sudan. But he was unable to do so because the Sudanese Government refused to permit him and prevented him from making the announcement. So he traveled to Afghanistan and made his announcement there."[155]

The Finances of the Early Al Qaeda

The article will now make observations about aspects of the nature of Al Qaeda in the 1988–1996 period taken as a whole. A first question is how decisions on the allocation of funds and investments were made during this period. Unfortunately, there is not yet sufficient information to build up a systematic idea of how Al Qaeda managed its finances. A detailed study of Al Qaeda's financing is beyond the scope of this article. The authors' research, and recovered Al Qaeda documents, however, can confirm the following:

- Osama bin Laden inherited around $20 million.
- Al Qaeda operated an organized accounting system and carefully recorded salaries and expenses of its membership. This system was inherited from Abdullah Azzam's Services Office, which coordinated the Afghan Jihad. It was also used in bin Laden's Bait al Ansar guesthouse in Peshawar.
- Al Qaeda had a business committee.
- Bin Laden was important to the funding of the early Al Qaeda. Over time the organization relied more heavily on financial donations from Middle Eastern businessmen, mosques, and charities. The informal *hawala* system was important in this regard.
- Bin Laden refused to countenance raising funds through the drug trade when this was proposed to him in 1991.

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- Bin Laden spent significant sums of his own money on the operations of the MAK (Services Office). One of the key reasons for the formation of Al Qaeda was that bin Laden felt that his resources were being wasted on non-military projects.
- Bin Laden gave Ayman al-Zawahiri $100,000 to kick-start his Jihad organization. Bin Laden continued to fund al-Zawahiri's group in the Sudan. According to the 1999 interogation of Ahmed al Naggar funding for the group primarily came from bin Laden.[156]
- An undated internal Al Qaeda document recovered by the U.S. military in Afghanistan detailing the bylaws of the organization provided significant detail on the groups inner financial workings. Parts of the document may have been drafted during Al Qaeda's early years based in Peshawar as it detailed salaries paid in Pakistani Rupees. West Point's Combating Terrorism Center provided this summary:[157]

> The group maintains both rupee and US dollar accounts. There is to be no overspending, particularly from the fixed budgets that are allotted to specific al-Qa'ida units, and members are to minimize borrowing from those accounts. There are also limits on non-monetary rewards. The president of each council is to spend the unit's budget. In terms of salaries, those with wives and children are to receive more money. All members are entitled to at least airplane ticket back to their homes or go on hajj per a specific period of time, depending on marital status. Medical care can be provided in the training camps, or barring that, Peshawar or other locations. Members may take out loans for specific needs, such as furniture. Al-Qa'ida also provides disability benefits, and extensive vacation time, as well as severance packages.

- Bin Laden spent significant sums in interventions in Pakistani, Yemeni, and Afghan politics. In 1989, he attempted to bribe Pakistani politicians to vote against Benazir Bhutto in a no-confidence vote. In Yemen, he spent large amounts of money to depose the communist government in the South. And in Afghanistan he spent $1.5 million to try and drive the communists out of Kabul.
- Bin Laden invested heavily in infrastructure and farming projects in the Sudan, employing several thousand workers. As Sudan was an economic basket case at the time it is likely that bin Laden was one of the largest investors in the country.
- Al Qaeda assisted several other *Jihadist* groups financially from Sudan.
- Al Qaeda was prepared to spend millions of dollars on acquiring Highly Enriched Uranium in the Sudan. Jamal al Fadl was tasked with offering the purported sellers $1.5 million.
- Bin Laden emerges as something of a cheapskate; for instance, he nickel-and-dimed his employees in Sudan. Although Al Qaeda was ready to expend great resources on purchasing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) it was also cheap when it came to other expenditures and salary payments. Essam al Ridi, an Egyptian pilot who bin Laden tasked with purchasing a jet to ship in Stinger missiles from Peshawar, was told that the organization was only prepared to spend $250,000 on a jet, forcing al Ridi to purchase a barely functional airplane from a "boneyard" in Arizona. Al Ridi later refused to work with bin Laden because the Saudi only offered him a contract of $1,200 a month.[158]

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- Al Qaeda began to experience financial difficulties in the Sudan in 1994 after bin Laden lost his Saudi passport and was cut off from his family. Moroccan Al Qaeda recruit L'Houssaine Kherchtou recalled:

> In 1994 and 1995 we had a crisis in al Qaeda. Osama bin Laden himself said to us that he had lost all his money, and he reduced the salary of his people and when I wanted to go to renew my flying license in Kenya he told me, "just forget about it." In December '95 my wife was pregnant and I needed money for the hospital; it was five hundred bucks I think, and I asked Sheikh Sayyid el Masry. I asked him if he can give me some money. At that time Usama Bin Ladin was in one of his projects in Kassala, another city in the Sudan [Sheikh Sayyid el Masry] told me "There is no money. We can't give you anything, and, why you don't take your wife to the Muslim hospital?"[159]

- Bin Laden's low salaries prompted Sudanese recruit Jamal al Fadl to steal money from the organization because he was annoyed that members of al-Zawahiri's organization were receiving higher salaries than he. Al Fadl recalled:

> [I stole from bin Ladin]—$110,000. When I find they know I take the money, I tell them yes, I pay around between 25,000 to 30,000 [dollars] back. [Bin Ladin] told me, "I don't care about the money, but I care about you because you start this from the beginning. You work hard in Afghanistan, you are one of the best people in al Qaeda group, we give you everything, when you travel we give you extra money, we pay your medical bill—why you did that?" I tell him, "The reason we talk about before, the Egyptian people, they got a lot of money, they got more salary than other, and we told you some people, they joined the al Qaeda only a few years ago and we started the al Qaeda and why they got [higher] salary?" He said "There's no reason for you to do that. If you need money, you should come speak with me.[160]

- Al Qaeda greatly underestimated the cost of maintaining training camps and recruiting local fighters in Somalia between 1993 and 1996. It was more expensive to hire Somalis than they expected. Operating just one camp cost $130,000 per month without even counting for administration, media, and the tribe's expenses.[161]

Bin Laden's Leadership Style in the Early Al Qaeda

Without bin Laden there would have been no Al Qaeda. It was not just his funding that was crucial to the early Al Qaeda, but also his charismatic ability to recruit individuals to his cause and ability to maintain unity among *jihadis* known for their factionalism. As Fawaz Gerges has pointed out it is no accident that a *bayat* was sworn personally to bin Laden: "from the outset, bin Laden, Abu Hafs and al Zawahiri, impressed on their followers the need to blindly trust the leadership and stay loyal. Loyalty and obedience took precedence over intuitional transparency and democratic decision making."[162]

Part of bin Laden's charismatic appeal was, in Hollywood terms, his "back story." He is the son of a Saudi billionaire who personally fought the Soviets in the 1980s with almost suicidal bravery. The way bin Laden lived his life was also attractive to his followers; he

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was a man who abjured all the comforts of modern life, sleeping on the floor, eating little, a man of disarming personal modesty, who displayed an almost freakish religiosity. The fact that he self-consciously modeled his life of *jihad* on the life of the Prophet Mohammed was also not lost on his followers.

During Al Qaeda's early years, bin Laden seems to have recognized that his organization needed a unifying cause to keep it together. If Adolf Hitler's vehicle to keep the National Socialist Party together was anti-Semitism, then bin Laden's was, by 1993, *jihad* against the United States. Yet sometimes disagreements did break out between Al Qaeda's leaders. Al-Zawahiri's Egyptians were frustrated by bin Laden's refusal to countenance attacking Arab regimes in the late 1980s. And Al Qaeda's Somali branch opposed plans to bomb American embassies in Africa for several years. There was an element of debate and consultation amongst the organization's more established members.

One interesting disagreement broke out around 1996 when the organization moved back to Afghanistan. According to Abu Walid al Misri, a confidante of bin Laden's, Abu Hafs was vocal about the need for Al Qaeda to develop a weapons of mass destruction program (WMD). According to Abu Walid al Misri "as to the WMD proposals bin Laden did not approve of them but he refused to voice publicly the rejection of the idea probably because of his extreme politeness with those around him and his refrain from discomforting them or offending them." It seems that it was Abu Hafs who drove Al Qaeda's WMD ambitions in this period. According to Abu Walid, bin Laden and a wing around him at this stage felt that such weapons were "a giant in a bottle and no one dares to leave it out." It is therefore likely that Al Qaeda's attempted purchase of uranium in Sudan was driven by Abu Hafs. In Afghanistan after 1996, Abu Walid stated, "Abu Hafs took charge of the WMD issue and acted with his own stubbornness and determination but in the end bin Laden succeeded in frustrating Abu Hafs and his program." Bin Laden later dropped his objections to the development of WMD. Interestingly, Abu Walid also stated that Abu Hafs and Abu Ubaidah were conducting an operation to obtain WMD, "without the knowledge of bin Laden," when Abu Ubaidah drowned in Lake Victoria in 1996.[163]

A possibly helpful way to characterize bin Laden's leadership style is as a charismatic leader. Here a useful analogy with very obvious caveats—bin Laden never ran a modern state—is Adolf Hitler's leadership style in Nazi Germany. Hitler in turn went through established channels and in turn completely ignored them. Sometimes he stood aloof from military operations and sometimes, in projects he truly considered important, he intervened over such small details that he infuriated his General Staff. There is something of this in the way bin Laden ran Al Qaeda, never engaging fully with the planning process but keen to be kept informed and to select the exact point where a truck would hit the American embassy in Nairobi in August 1998. Just as Hitler was able to inspire subordinates to carry out various tasks without spelling out exactly what he wanted achieved (the What-Would-the-Fuhrer-Want? impulse), bin Laden was able, and until his death continued to be able to, inspire attacks. A case in point may well be the December 1992 by attack on a hotel in Yemen used for the transit of American troops. There is no evidence this was directly planned by Al Qaeda. The Yemeni individuals who carried out the attack may, however, have heard of bin Laden's call for *Jihad* in Somalia.

Conclusion

This article is intended to shed some light on the nature of the Al Qaeda organization in its early years. Al Qaeda existed as an entity from August 1988 and displayed significant levels of organization, cohesiveness, and operational capability early on. This article has

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challenged accounts that have understated these features of the early Al Qaeda. It has also, however, challenged accounts that overstate Al Qaeda's ambitions and capabilities in this period. But this still leaves open the question of how to depict the early Al Qaeda.

In Peter Bergen's *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* the analogy of a multinational company was marshaled to try and explain the functioning of Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda had indeed, since the early 1990s, displayed a significant degree of corporate structure with its various committees for media, military, and business affairs; its top-down CEO (one of whose aliases is "the Director"), the salaries it paid many of its members, and the comprehensive training it provided to its recruits.

Materials recovered in Afghanistan after the fall of Taliban also suggest that the corporate model was a useful way to understand the pre-9/11 Al Qaeda. Allan Cullison, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, for instance, purchased a computer in Kabul that turned out to be have been used by members of Al Qaeda, including Ayman al-Zawahiri himself. Memos were written in what Cullison describes as "language mimicking that of a multinational corporation." Bin Laden was referred to as the "contractor," while acts of terrorism became "trade." A memo from al-Zawahiri griped about how salaries had been halved for the militants living in Afghanistan and bemoaned the lack of accounting of monies spent in Yemen, the kind of memo familiar to anyone who has toiled inside a bureaucratic organization.[164]

The corporate analogy, however, has its limitations as does any attempt to fit the early Al Qaeda into any one neat category. This is because Al Qaeda was to a large degree a new phenomenon that included elements of a top-down criminal enterprise run by a hands-on CEO. At the same time the organization was both a result of, and a generator of, a larger ideological movement that terrorism expert Marc Sageman has termed the "global Salafi jihad."[165] In the same way that physicists describe light as both a wave and a particle depending on one's vantage point, so too the early Al Qaeda sometimes mimicked a multinational corporation, while at other times it looked more like a network of like-minded *jihadists* bound by a common ideology. Al Qaeda's blend of strong religious motivation, its genesis in a country that was foreign to its members, its global operations, its overlapping hierarchies of rank, personal relationships, and family ties, and its unusual leader all made it unique.

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Notes

1. Paul Cruickshank helped with research for Peter Bergen's book *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of Al Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
2. Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2003), p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 9.
4. Ibid., p. 12.
5. Ibid., p. 8.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 9.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Adam Curtis, "The Power of Nightmares," BBC (2004).
11. Ibid.
12. Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 55.
13. Ibid., p. 23.

14. The Government's Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements, *United States v. Enaam Arnaout*, No. 02-CR-892 (North District of Illinois, filed 6 January 2003). Some of this material can be found in the proffer. Much of it is retained by Motley Rice, the lead law firm for the 9/11 victims' families.

15. Ibid.

16. For example, Rohan Gunaratna stated that Al Qaeda was founded in 1987 by Abdullah Azzam. One of the present authors (Peter Bergen) stated that Al Qaeda was founded in 1989 in *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Touchstone, 2002).

17. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 80–81.

18. This appears to be the Saudi Wael Julaidan. Julaidan's lawyers provided no comment.

19. Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, pp. 3–4.

20. Rohan Gunaratna and Aviv Oreg, "Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and its Evolution," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33(12) (2010), pp. 1043–1078.

21. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 49–73.

22. Ibid., p. 39.

23. Ibid., p. 47. Jamal Ismail, a Pakistani journalist who worked for *Jihad* magazine in the 1980s, states that bin Laden had experience with Jalaluddin Haqqani during this period.

24. Ibid., pp. 52–53.

25. Ibid., p. 51. Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's close friend and brother in law, stated that Egyptians were present at Jaji.

26. Ibid., p. 52.

27. Ibid., p. 50.

28. Ibid., p. 60.

29. Ibid., pp. 49–50.

30. Ibid.

31. This is according to Hutaifa Azzam. Ibid., p. 62.

32. Ibid., p. 82.

33. This is according to Osama Rushdi. Ibid., p. 67.

34. This is according to Jamal Ismail. Ibid., p. 63.

35. Ibid., p. 68.

36. Osama Rushdi interviewed by Paul Cruickshank in London, November 2007.

37. It should be noted that several testimonies from individuals involved with the early Al Qaeda state that Al Qaeda was founded only after the departure of Soviet forces. For example, Jamal Al Fadl testifying in the 2001 African embassy bombings trial stated "when the Russians decided to leave Afghanistan, bin Laden he decide to make his own group." Hasan Abd-Rabbuh al-Surayhi, an early Saudi recruit to the *Jihad*, in a later interview with Asharq al Awsat stated "the establishment of al Qaeda was discussed in the home of Osama bin Laden following the departure of the Russians from Afghanistan at the end of the Jihad. I was one of those who witnessed the birth of al Qaeda." Their chronology, however, does not square with the actual founding meeting of Al Qaeda in August 1988. Their assertion that Al Qaeda was founded after the Soviet withdrawal is either a problem of memory or more likely because they were not fully in the Al Qaeda loop.

38. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 76–81.

39. Ibid., p. 8.

40. See *Cracks in the Foundation-Leadership Schisms in Al Qaeda from 1989–2006* (New York: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2007), p. 11; "Abu'l-Walid al-Masri: A Biographical Sketch," West Point CTC Website. Available at http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Abul-Walid.pfd (accessed April 2011).

41. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 83.

42. *Cracks in the Foundation-Leadership Schisms in Al Qaeda from 1989–2006*, p. 11.

43. "Al-Qa'ida Goals and Structure," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006. Available at http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaida-goals-and-structure-english-translation

44. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc*., pp. 63–65.

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45. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 74–75.
46. Ibid., pp. 92–93.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., pp. 87–92.
50. Ibid. p. 70.
51. Ibid., pp. 108–109. Also Abu Musab al Suri, "The Call for Islamic Global Resistance," published in Jihadist websites in December 2004, pp. 774–777.
52. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 109.
53. Ibid., p. 109.
54. See *Cracks in the Foundation-Leadership Schisms in Al Qaeda from 1989–2006*, pp. 8–9.
55. The sixth month goal was mentioned in a meeting between bin Laden and Mohamed Loay Bayazid (a.k.a. Abu Rida) on 11 August 1988. See Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 79.
56. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.*, p. 63.
57. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 84.
58. Ibid., p. 110.
59. Ibid., p. 98.
60. For example, among the Tareek Osama documentation was the detailed personal file of the Sudanese-American, Wadi el Hage who became bin Laden's private secretary. See Ibid., p. 78.
61. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 84.
62. "Employment Contract," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
63. "Al-Qa'ida Goals and Structure," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
64. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 94.
65. Khaled al Hammadi, "Bin Laden's Former Bodyguard Interviewed on al Qaeda Strategies," Al Quds al Arabi, in Arabic, 3 August 2004 and 20 March to 4 April 2005.
66. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 110.
67. Najwa Bin Laden and Omar Bin Laden with Jean Sasson, *Growing Up Bin Laden: Osama's Wife and Son Take Us Inside Their Secret World* (New York: St Martin's, 2009), p. 82.
68. Ibid., p. 83.
69. al Suri, "The Call for Islamic Global Resistance," p. 774. The authors thank Mohanad Hage Ali for his help translating sections of al Suri's book.
70. Ibid., p. 775.
71. Ibid.
72. Noman Benotman interviewed by Paul Cruickshank, London, November 2007.
73. al Suri, "The Call for Islamic Global Resistance," pp. 775–776.
74. Ibid.
75. Bryce Loidolt, "Managing the Global and Local: The Dual Agendas of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34(2) (2011), p. 105; al-Suri, "The Call for Islamic Global Resistance," p. 777.
76. Burke, *Al Qaeda*, p. 4.
77. *The Encyclopedia of Jihad* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy), written between 1991 and 1993, has a long entry on the Bait al Ansar guesthouse, meticulously detailing how it was run from a financial and operational point of view. The impression is of a highly organized outfit.
78. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 100–103.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., p .99.
81. Ibid., p. 114
82. Ibid., p. 104.
83. See ibid., pp. 104–105.
84. Ibid., pp. 116–120.

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85. Ibid., p. 106.
86. Ibid., p. 121.
87. Ibid., p. 106.
88. Noman Benotman interviewed by Paul Cruickshank, London, November 2007.
89. See Bergen, *Holy War, Inc*., p. 92.
90. See *Cracks in the Foundation-Leadership Schisms in Al Qaeda from 1989–2006*, p. 10.
91. "Abu'l-Walid al-Masri: A Biographical Sketch."
92. The Five Letters of the African Corps, Letter 3, CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
93. See *Cracks in the Foundation-Leadership Schisms in Al Qaeda from 1989–2006*, p. 11.
94. See ibid., p. 11; The Five Letters of the African Corps; In another letter around this time Abu Walid al Misri wrote: "It is no secret to you that the position of the Arabs in Pakistan is going from bad to worse. Hostile language and provocations increase as the Arab presence weakens and the number of mujahedeen falls. Now there is nothing worthy of mention in Peshawar with respect to the jihad capabilities that at one time had built up there. Even the attitude of the Pathan Afghans, in particular, is bad in Peshawar. The Arabs have become subject to crude police harassment. . . . All we have is the beleaguered space between our camp and Kabul in which to move with relative freedom."
95. al Hammadi, "Bin Laden's Former Bodyguard Interviewed on al Qaeda Strategies."
96. *USA vs. Usama bin Laden*, Testimony of Jamal al Fadl, 6, 7, 13, 20 February 2001.
97. Noman Benotman interviewed by Paul Cruickshank, London, November 2007.
98. Gunaratna and Oreg, "Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and its Evolution."
99. Najwa and Omar bin Laden, *Growing Up Bin Laden*, p. 113.
100. Najwa and Omar bin Laden, *Growing Up Bin Laden*, p. 112.
101. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc*., pp. 88–89.
102. Ibid., p. 87.
103. The Five Letters of the African Corps, Letter 4 and 5, CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
104. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc*., pp. 88–89; al Hammadi, "Bin Laden's Former Bodyguard Interviewed on al Qaeda Strategies"; Noman Benotman interviewed by Paul Cruickshank, London, September 2008.
105. Noman Benotman interviewed by Paul Cruickshank, London, August 2008.
106. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc*., pp. 88.
107. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 137.
108. al Hammadi, "Bin Laden's Former Bodyguard Interviewed on al Qaeda Strategies."
109. Ibid.
110. Abu Walid al Misri, "History of Arab Afghans" (2002), serialized in *Asharq al Awsat*, 8–14 December 2004.
111. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 137.
112. Ibid., p. 138; "Trip Report and the Situation in the Southern Region," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 4 May 2007.
113. Al Qaida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa, Harmony Project, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, p. 5.
114. Ibid., p. 6.
115. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 138–139.
116. "Situation Report from Somalia," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 4 May 2007.
117. Al Qaida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa, p. 2, pp. 29–47.
118. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 141.
119. "Trip Report and the Situation in the Southern Region."
120. The letter from Abu Walid al Misri was addressed to "Sayf." The Five Letters of the African Corps, Letter 1, CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
121. BBC On This Day, 4 October 1993: "US Forces Killed in Somali Gun Battle."

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122. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 137–138.
123. The Five Letters of the African Corps, Letter 3.
124. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 138.
125. Paul Cruickshank interview with Noman Benotman, London, November 2007.
126. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc*., p. 90.
127. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 143.
128. Ibid., pp. 2, 20–21.
129. Ibid., pp. 1–23.
130. al Hammadi, "Bin Laden's Former Bodyguard Interviewed on al Qaeda Strategies."
131. Ibid.
132. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 141.
133. Ibid., pp. 220–221.
134. Ibid., pp. 86–87.
135. "Al-Qa'ida Goals and Structure," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
136. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 425.
137. "Letter to Mullah Mohammed 'Omar from bin Laden," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
138. Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, p. 95.
139. Ibid., p. 5.
140. Ibid., p. 6.
141. Peter Bergen, *Holy War, Inc*., p. 89.
142. Youssef Ibrahim, "Egyptian Group Says it Tried to Kill Mubarak," *New York Times*, 5 July 1995; Holly Fletcher, Backgrounder: Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Council of Foreign Relations, 30 May 2008. Abu Jandal said that the non-Egyptian wing of Al Qaeda was probably not involved in this attack.
143. In 1995 Zawahairi wrote a letter to the head of the Algerian GIA stating that all Islamist movements should adopt the confrontation with Israel and the United States to attract the masses to later topple local regimes. See Vahid Brown "Al Qaida Central and Local Affiliates, Self Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions within Al Qa'ida and its Periphery," CTC's Harmony Document Database, December 2010, pp. 69–99.
144. Najwa and Omar Bin Laden, *Growing Up Bin Laden*, p. 129.
145. Paul Cruickshank interview with Osama Rushdi, London, November 2007; 3-part interview with Isma'il Sayyid Imam (son of Sayyid Imam, Al-Misri Al-Yawm), 26–28 November 2007.
146. Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling: The Jihadist Revolt against Bin Laden," *The New Republic*, 11 June 2008.
147. Lawrence Wright, "The Man behind bin Laden," *The New Yorker*, 16 September 2002.
148. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 149–150.
149. Letters from bin Laden Statement 6: Saudi Arabia Unveils its War Against Islam and its Scholars, CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
150. "Open Letter to King Fahd from bin Laden," CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center Released 14 February 2006.
151. al Suri, "The Call for Islamic Global Resistance," p. 776.
152. The Five Letters of the African Corps, Letter 3, CTC's Harmony Document Database, West Point Combating Terrorism Center, Released 14 February 2006.
153. al Suri, "The Call for Islamic Global Resistance," p. 777.
154. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 114–116.
155. al Hammadi, "Bin Laden's Former Bodyguard Interviewed on al Qaeda Strategies.'"
156. "Bin Laden had U.S. Terror Cell for a Decade," *Sunday Times*, 11 November 2001.
157. "Al-Qa'ida's Structure and Bylaws," CTC Harmony Document Database, West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, Released 2 October 2007.
158. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 130–132.

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159. Ibid., pp.153–154.

160. Ibid., pp. 154–155.

161. Al Qaida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa, p. 21.

162. Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 38.

163. al Misri, "History of Arab Afghans."

164. See Andrew Cullision, "Inside al Qaeda's Hard Drive," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 2004.

165. See Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

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