

**THE IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF  
OSAMA BIN LADEN**

BY

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## **Abstract**

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One name is above all others when examining modern Islamic fundamentalism – Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden has earned global notoriety because of his role in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks against the United States of America. Yet, Osama does not represent the beginning, nor the end of Muslim radicals. He is only one link in a chain of radical thought. Bin Laden's unorthodox actions and words will leave a legacy, but what factors influenced him?

This thesis provides insight into understanding the ideological foundation of Osama bin Laden. It incorporates primary documents from those individuals responsible for indoctrinating the Saudi millionaire, particularly Abdullah Azzam and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Additionally, it identifies key historic figures and events that transformed bin Laden from a modest, shy conservative into a Muslim extremist.

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## GLOSSARY

Muhammad **Abduh** (1849-1905) – Egyptian creator of Salafiyya movement

**Al-Jazeera** – Arab television network. Broadcasts the video statements of Osama bin Laden

**Al-Qaeda** – international Islamic militant organization, translates as The Base. Founded by Osama bin Laden in 1989

Taysir **Alluni** – network reporter for Al Jazeera in Afghanistan and Iraq until present time

Hasan **al-Banna** (1906-1949) – Egyptian founder of The Society of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928

Muhammad **bin Laden** (d.1967) – father of Osama who moved from Yemen to Saudi Arabia and became a self-made millionaire in the construction business

Osama **bin Laden** (b.1957) – Saudi-born commander-in-chief of al-Qaeda (see timeline). Also known as the Emir, the Prince and the Lion

**Caliphate** – “successor” who carried on the responsibilities of the Prophet as spiritual head of Islam

**Emir** – prince or leader

King **Fahd** bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud (1921-2005) – king of Saudi Arabia, former leader of House of Saud

**Fatwa** – a ruling on an Islamic law issued by a Muslim scholar

**Hadith** – Traditions relating to the deeds and words of the Prophet, which are not specifically mentioned in the Koran

**Hamas** – Palestinian Islamic resistance organization. Name is an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawma al-Islamiyya, which means Islamic Resistance Movement

**Hegemony** – dominating influence of one nation over others

**Hezbollah** – Shia Islamic political and military organization inspired by the Iranian revolution of 1979. Name in Arabic means Party of God

Saddam **Hussein** (1932-2006) – President of Iraq 1979-2003. Deposed by Americans in 2003 and sentenced to death by hanging by Iraqi interim government

**Jihad** – taken from the Koran, literally means to struggle or to strive

**The Kingdom** – Saudi Arabia

Mohammed Jamal **Khalifa** (1957-2007) – Saudi Arabian businessman and Osama’s best friend during his college years

**Mecca** – most holy city of Islam as designated by Muhammad

**Medina** – second holiest city in Islam. Burial place of Muhammad

**Muslim Brotherhood**, Association of the Muslim Brethren (Al-Ikhwan al Muslimeen) – group formed in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. Although the group is highly influential, their objectives and methods remain controversial today

**Mujahid** – a person engaged in a jihad. Plural is mujahidin or mujahedeen

Sayyid **Qutb** (1906-1966) – influential Egyptian-born author who promoted and defined many current Islamic fundamentalist trends and beliefs

Kermit **Roosevelt Jr.** (1916-2000) – CIA agent who masterminded the 1953 coup and return of the Shah of Iran in 1953

**Salafism** – neo-orthodox branch of Islam supporting the return to early teachings of the faith with an emphasis on the Koran

**Shariah** – Islamic law laid down by God, literally means “path”

**Shi’ism or Shia Islam** – the second largest denomination of the Islamic faith. Believe that Ali ibn Abi Talib is the true successor to Muhammad, as heir must be blood relative of the Prophet

**Sunnism or Sunni Islam** – largest denomination of the Islamic faith. Accept the first four caliphs as successors to Muhammad

Taqi al-Din Ahmad bin ‘Abd al-Salam bin **Taymiyya** (1263-1328) – 13<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, warrior and activist. Source of inspiration for many radical Muslim thinkers

**Umma** – Islamic community or nation

Muhammad ibn Abd al-**Wahhab** (1703-1792) – founder of the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia. Allied with House of Saud in 1744. Also known as the Teacher

**Wahhabism** – conservative reform movement of Sunni Islam (see above)

Ayman **al-Zawahiri** (b.1951) – Egyptian-born medical doctor and second-in-command of al-Qaeda

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## **Timeline for Osama bin Laden**

- 10 Mar **1957** Born to Yemeni construction mogul and Syrian mother in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Aug **1957** Bin Laden family moved to Medina and later to Jeddah
- 3 Sep **1967** Father, Muhammad bin Laden, died in plane crash
- 1976** Attended King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah
- 24 Dec **1979** Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
- 1980** Made first trip to Pakistan
- 1984** Co-founded Service Office with former professor, Dr. Abdullah Azzam
- 1989** Founded al-Qaeda
- Feb **1989** Last Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan
- 24 Nov **1989** Abdullah Azzam and two sons assassinated in car bombing
- 2 Aug **1990** Iraq invaded Kuwait
- 1991** American-led coalition entered Middle East to remove Iraqi forces
- 1992** Moved to Khartoum, Sudan
- April **1994** Government of Saudi Arabia denounced his citizenship
- May **1996** Moved to Afghanistan under pressure from Sudanese government
- 23 Aug **1996** Declared war on the United States
- 23 Feb **1998** Formed World Islamic Front against the Crusaders and Jews with Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri
- 26 May **1998** Held press conference to announce Islamic World Front
- 7 Aug **1998** US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania were bombed killing 264 (12 Americans) and injuring over 5,000

- 12 Oct **2000** USS Cole was bombed in the Yemeni port of Aden killing seventeen American sailors and causing \$250 million of damage
- 11 Sep **2001** Hijacked commercial planes crashed in Washington D.C., New York and Pennsylvania killing over 2,800, toppling the Twin Towers, damaging the Pentagon and causing billions of dollars of damage
- 2004** Joined forces with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi
- 2004** Assumed responsibility and took pride in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks

“Our goal is for our nation to unite in the face of the Christian Crusade. This is the fiercest battle. Muslims have never faced anything bigger than this.<sup>1</sup>”

-Osama bin Laden, October 2001

## **Introduction**

September 11, 2001 is a date that will live in infamy. From a historical perspective, it was the deadliest attack on American soil since the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. For many Americans, the surprise attack may have caused a sixty year flashback to the days of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his legendary speech from the Congressional floor expressing the details of the assault to a shocked nation. Yet, the eleventh day of September has been an important day in Islamic heritage for centuries. Historians educated in Middle Eastern affairs remember this date long before the smoldering rubble and twisted metal were created from the domestic airliners, which were malevolently transformed into missiles.

Even though fundamentalists today contend that the Muslim world has been on the ropes, Islam certainly has a proud history. There was a time when it was the Christian infidels who were constantly being pushed back by the marauding forces advancing under the banner of Mohammed. For centuries, the conquerors of the Ottoman Empire proudly controlled one of the largest territorial realms ever amassed. Islam was at the center of this expansion. During the height of its domain in the late seventeenth century, this kingdom stretched across northern Africa to the Persian

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Ibrahim, Ayman Zawahiri, and Osama bin Laden, The Al Qaeda Reader (New York: Doubleday, 2007) 272.

Gulf through Anatolia and extended as far as Hungary.<sup>2</sup> As the ambitious vanquishers pressed onwards to Vienna and the Hapsburg territories, the tides finally turned against the invading forces. Knowing that the city of Vienna marked the entrance to all of Central Europe, the quarrelling Europeans were able to put aside their petty differences in the name of protecting all Christendom. Even though the city walls were breached and much of the surrounding countryside was destroyed, the armies of the Ottoman Empire finally tasted defeat. The date of this infamous blow – September 11, 1683.<sup>3</sup>

Although this military loss certainly did not mark the end of the Muslim state, it most definitely represented the pendulum of power beginning to swing towards Christian Europe. For modern Islamic fundamentalists, Western influence has only been detrimental and disabling for the Middle East. Individuals like Osama bin Laden take this belief a step farther by blaming the United States and its “insidious” partner, Israel, as the true inhibitors of Muslim people around the world. Believing that he was dealing a colossal blow for repressed Muslims everywhere, bin Laden must have found great irony on the date that his al-Qaeda forces decided to unleash havoc on the Christian superpower.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004) 43.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006) 194.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the attacks on September 11, 2001 were not the first inspired by Osama bin Laden against the United States. Bin Laden declared war against America years before. His al-Qaeda forces had already bombed US embassies and military personnel. More often than not, this fact seems to be overlooked by the general media.

“If you Americans refuse to listen to our advice and the goodness, guidance, and righteousness that we call them to, then be aware that you will lose this Crusade Bush began, just like the other previous Crusaders in which you were humiliated at the hands of the mujahidin, fleeing to your home in great silence and disgrace.<sup>5</sup>”

-Osama bin Laden’s warning to the United States<sup>6</sup>

### **Osama bin Laden: A Man of Mystery?**

In order to understand an act of violence, a vigilant detective must attempt to answer the most basic questions comprised of solving who, what, when, where, how and why. The government of the United States has diligently aimed at unraveling the mysteries behind attacks such as September 11<sup>th</sup>. The most difficult question to answer is why. Why attack America? Why would anyone want to inflict such a horrendous blow? Why would a group target civilians? Even though neither Osama bin Laden nor his universally feared terrorist organization al-Qaeda initially took credit for the assault, experts from around the world immediately began pointing the finger at the Saudi millionaire. As the limelight focused directly on bin Laden for these cruel acts, the global community wanted to know why.

Attempting to comprehend the actions of Osama bin Laden is no easy endeavor. Known as the Emir, the Prince and the Lion, bin Laden is a highly complex and exceptionally interesting individual. Yet, it is impossible to understand Osama or his deeds without a strong background in Middle Eastern history and a working familiarity with Islam. Although much of the West remains confused about

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<sup>5</sup> Osama Bin Laden, and Bruce Lawrence, Messages to the World: the Statements of Osama Bin Laden (New York: Verso, 2005) 172.

<sup>6</sup> This excerpt is from a letter addressed “To the Americans.” The letter is dated October 6, 2002. It was posted on the internet in Arabic on October 14, 2002.

the motives behind the Saudi exile, it is certainly not from the lack of attempts by bin Laden. The world's most wanted man has communicated through a wide spectrum of television interviews ranging from Peter Arnett of CNN and John Miller of ABC to al-Jazeera's<sup>7</sup> popular reporter, Taysir Alluni.<sup>8</sup> Besides posting his thoughts on various internet sites and sending emails to major newspapers, Osama has distributed home-made video and cassette tapes to major media outlets, including a 1996 interview with *Time* magazine.<sup>9</sup>

As bin Laden spread his ideas through such interviews, his captivating dialogues were aired into homes around the globe. In 1997, Peter Bergen was the American who was able to convince the al-Qaeda leader to choose CNN as the venue for his first western interview.<sup>10</sup> In this meeting in the mountains of Afghanistan, Pulitzer Prize winner Peter Arnett was the correspondent responsible for questioning the tall Saudi. During this discussion, bin Laden warned, "The country of the Two Holy Places has in our religion a peculiarity of its own over the other Muslim countries. In our religion, it is not permissible for any non-Muslim to stay in our country. Therefore, even though American civilians are not targeted in our plan, they must leave. We do not guarantee their safety."<sup>11</sup> Although bin Laden had already declared war against the United States in 1996, this was his first acknowledgement to the Western media that civilian lives could be in jeopardy. During his ABC interview

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<sup>7</sup> Al-Jazeera is a Qatari-based satellite news channel.

<sup>8</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 69, 106.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 240.

<sup>10</sup> Peter L. Bergen, Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden (New York: Free Press, 2001) 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 20.

a year later, the Emir foreshadowed that there is no delineation between American combatants and non-combatants in his holy war. In May 1998, bin Laden and his associates held a press conference in Eastern Afghanistan stating he had, “formed with many other Islamic groups and organizations in the Islamic world a front called the International Islamic Front to do jihad against the Crusaders and Jews.”<sup>12</sup>

While the logic behind his vengeful actions can be questioned by Muslims and Christians alike, Osama bin Laden spent a substantial amount of time in the latter half of the 1990s in an effort to forecast to the world the blueprints of his terror-inspired actions. Viewing himself as an oracle, the millionaire-turned-revolutionary obviously felt it necessary to prophesize his future aspirations. It is significant to note that the strategy of using the media was a risky undertaking, since bin Laden became a suspect wanted by both American and Saudi officials. This peril would only heighten with each al-Qaeda attack. Even before his 1998 antagonistic dialogue with John Miller of ABC, American agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Pentagon (headquarters of the Department of Defense) had taken notice of al-Qaeda’s declaration of war against the US.<sup>13</sup> Following al-Qaeda’s simultaneous embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania<sup>14</sup> on August 7, 1998, the United States fired tomahawk cruise missiles at bin Laden

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<sup>12</sup> Peter L. Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I Know: an Oral History of Al Qaeda’s Leader (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006) 202.

<sup>13</sup> John Cooley, Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism (Sterling, VA: Sterling Press, 2002) 208.

<sup>14</sup> The attacks left 244 dead and 4,000 wounded.

training camps in Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan<sup>15</sup> in an unsuccessful attempt to suppress its adversary and his jihadi followers.<sup>16</sup>

Bin Laden cast personal danger aside in order to showcase his global media campaign. In the process of investigating the foundations of Osama bin Laden and looking at why he strove to inflict pain on the West, oft overlooked primary documents, like these interviews, will give a measure of insight. Without these documents, the horrible attack on September 11<sup>th</sup> would appear as an unfathomable act against Western culture by a deranged lunatic.

Regardless of whether he is waging a massive media campaign or attempting to receive accolades for his part in the Islamic fundamentalist movement, the words of Osama bin Laden are available. However, the key to unlocking the philosophies of the al-Qaeda leader cannot be discovered in a single document. It is essential to look at a large number of bin Laden's statements, as each text must be studied in the broader context of his overall mission. In spite of this, Osama provided great ideological insight into his motives in a letter to all Americans. Posted on the internet in Arabic, bin Laden enlightened the world with a wide-ranging overview of why he and his radical followers declared war against the lone superpower.

Prior to Osama's creation of this letter, sixty prominent American thinkers constructed a letter titled "What We're Fighting For" following the attacks on US soil to explain why Islamic terrorism would never bring the US to its knees.<sup>17</sup> Following

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<sup>15</sup> Believed to be a front for making chemical weapons, the Sudanese pharmaceutical factory was partially owned by bin Laden. Later reports for toxins came back negative.

<sup>16</sup> Michael B. Oren, Power, Faith, and Fantasy (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007) 577-578.

<sup>17</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 196.

the public release of this document in February 2002, a group of prominent Saudi scholars drafted their own version in May entitled “How We Can Coexist.”<sup>18</sup> Not wanting to be left out of the debate across the Atlantic, bin Laden responded to both letters in his aptly named, “Why We Are Fighting You.”

In this fascinating document, bin Laden surmised that the United States had caused political upheaval throughout Muslim-dominated lands. Broken into an elementary outline form, he wanted Americans to understand basic questions; “1) Why are we fighting and opposing you and 2) What are we calling you to, and what do we want from you?”<sup>19</sup> The Saudi, who has been described as quiet, reserved and even shy, accused the US of various crimes against Islam. Following in the footsteps of Sayyid Qutb, he pointed out that American morality continued to wither into an abysmal state. Most importantly, bin Laden stated, “The first thing that we are calling you to is Islam.”<sup>20</sup> Based on the Koranic passage, “We never punish until we have sent a messenger”<sup>21</sup> Osama hoped to silence Muslim critics from the umma that condemn attacks against the “uninvited” American public.<sup>22</sup> As discussed at further length in this thesis, this is an example of bin Laden’s lack of religious training causing him to fumble in his Islamic jurisprudence.

In recent decades, numerous fundamentalist organizations have utilized suicide attacks as a military tactic to strike fear into an enemy and gain international media attention. Bin Laden has encouraged his al-Qaeda forces to exercise such

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 162.

<sup>20</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 201.

<sup>21</sup> The Koran, (New York: Bantam Dell, 2004) 22:39.

<sup>22</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 160-161.

ploy. In the case of September 11, the concept of flying planes filled with civilians into targets was essentially a modified version, albeit on a much larger scale, of a suicide bomber. Osama has praised these nineteen hijackers and believes their brave death will be immediately rewarded by entry into heaven. This is another example of bin Laden's confusion on religious matters. Explained by expert Bernard Lewis, "Islam has always strongly condemned suicide, regarding it as a major sin. The suicide forfeits any claim he may have had to paradise, however strong, and is doomed to eternal punishment in hell, where his torment will consist of the unending repetition of the act by which he committed suicide."<sup>23</sup> This thesis will provide examples of how bin Laden's extreme fundamentalist beliefs do not match up with generally accepted Islamic teachings.

For much of the West, the actions of Osama bin Laden have been cloaked in confusion and misinterpretation. No matter how barbaric his attacks may seem, he is not a bloodthirsty monster killing without rhyme or reason. In fact, his moves are very much calculated. The Saudi millionaire has chosen an extremist path to ascertaining the ultimate goal of saving his beloved religion.

Utilizing the substantial documentation available today, this thesis will identify the ideological foundation of Osama bin Laden. As many primary materials exist, the reader will see the words directly from the mouth of the world's most wanted man. Through an exhaustive analysis of the influential individuals and circumstances which led to the radicalization of bin Laden, perhaps the West will be

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard Lewis, The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam (USA: Basic Books, 2003) xii.

able to better understand the question of why it has been under attack in recent years. After all, the keys to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can only be found by looking through the doorways of the past. In the case of Osama bin Laden, one cannot comprehend bin Laden today without understanding his ideological foundation.

“Defensive warfare is the most critical form of warfare, since we are warding off an invader from our sanctities and religion. It is a unanimously accepted duty. After belief, there is no greater duty than to repulse the invading enemy who corrupts faith and the world. There are no rules or conditions for this; he must be expelled by all means possible.<sup>24</sup>”

- Ahmad bin ‘Abd al-Salam bin Taymiyya

## **Ibn Taymiyya**

Islamic fundamentalists like Osama bin Laden and his contemporaries have been constantly striving to alter the future course of Islam through any and all means possible to empower the global Muslim community. Ironically, these radicals invariably continued to look to the past to justify their unorthodox and often extreme methods today. In fact, these revolutionary roots can be traced directly back to a 13<sup>th</sup> Century man renowned as a philosopher, warrior and activist. If Abdullah Azzam has been credited with the titles of “Emir of Jihad” and “Godfather of global jihad<sup>25</sup>,” then it is Taqi al-Din Ahmad bin ‘Abd al-Salam bin Taymiyya who is considered by many to be the true “Grandfather of Jihad.” The writings of Ibn Taymiyya, also known as the Sheikh of Islam, have been exploited by conservatives and liberals alike. Bin Laden has definitely been swayed by these teachings, as his testimonies are riddled with references by this controversial cleric.

The period known as the Middle Ages has become synonymous with crusading knights. In the 150 years following the death of the Prophet in 632, Muslim conquests stretched from Spain across Northern Africa through the Middle

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<sup>24</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 170.

<sup>25</sup> John Esposito, Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 7.

East and into Asia. The period known as the High Middle Ages<sup>26</sup> was a time of great conflict in the Middle East, as European Christians headed east to reclaim the lost holy land. For the followers of Islam, the deadliest threat appeared as a marauding horde from the East. Into this chaotic period, Ibn Taymiyya was born in January 1263 and raised by parents of the Hanbali ulema.<sup>27</sup>

Just five years before Taymiyya's birth, Hulegu Khan<sup>28</sup> and his Mongol forces massacred the Muslim inhabitants of Baghdad, including the caliph.<sup>29</sup> Taymiyya was still a child when his family was forced to relocate to Damascus for safety because of the invaders. Descending from a long line of noted theologians, Ibn Taymiyya demonstrated academic brilliance from an early age and became an uncompromising Hanbali<sup>30</sup> cleric at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.<sup>31</sup> As a member of the Hanbali school, he taught that the Koran and the hadith must be strictly obeyed and whatever is not mentioned in these sources is not required.<sup>32</sup> Up to this point, Islam had spread in all directions from the time of Mohammad's unification of Arabia. This quickly changed when the Mongols arrived. For Ibn Taymiyya, the Asian horsemen were like a plague from the East bent on destroying all the successes of the Prophet. Moreover, the Mongol's half-hearted "conversion" to Islam while continuing to

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<sup>26</sup> This period is generally identified between the 11<sup>th</sup> Century and the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>27</sup> T. Ibn Taymiyya and Yahya Michot, Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule (Oxford: Interface Publications, 2006) 150.

<sup>28</sup> Hulegu Khan (c. 1216-1265) was the grandson of Genghis Khan.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davidson, A Concise History of the Middle East, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006) 103.

<sup>30</sup> Of the four Sunni schools of law, the Hanbali are considered the most conservative.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Benjamin, and Steven Simon, The Age of Sacred Terror: Radical Islam's War Against America (New York: Random House, 2003) 44-45.

<sup>32</sup> Vernon Egger, A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2004) 294.

practice old customs and laws of Genghis Khan only further exacerbated Taymiyya's wrath.<sup>33</sup>

Because the Mongols continued to practice Yasa code and deviate from Shariah law, Ibn Taymiyya issued an unorthodox fatwa setting a precedent claiming the invaders were living in sin and consequently not Muslims.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, true believers had a duty to revolt against the Asian trespassers and to remove them from the lands of Islam. Taymiyya stated: "That then is the jihad against the unbelievers (kuffar), the enemies of Allah and His Messenger. For whoever has heard the summons of the Messenger of Allah, and has not responded to it, must be fought, 'until there is no persecution and the religion is Allah's entirely.' [Qur'an. 2:193]."<sup>35</sup> From the day the Sheikh of Islam issued it, this famous fatwa has been debated among religious authorities. This radical concept—waging war against fellow Muslims—is at the root of Osama bin Laden's ideology.

Taymiyya's fatwa established a religious precedent, but this declaration was not out of the norm considering his puritanical credence. From his perspective, Muslims everywhere had fallen away from the true path to Allah. He envisioned an Islam reformed to the ways of Medina and called for a literalist interpretation of the Koran and an overall purification of his religion.<sup>36</sup> These basic ideals have been the manifesto for Islamic fundamentalists ever since. Centuries later, Osama bin Laden works to make Taymiyya's goals a reality.

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Laqueur, Voices of Terror: Manifestos, Writings, and Manuals of Al Qaeda, Hamas and Other Terrorists from around the World and Throughout the Ages (New York: Reed Press, 2004) 388.

<sup>34</sup> Esposito 46.

<sup>35</sup> Laqueur, Voices of Terror 392.

<sup>36</sup> Esposito 45-46.

Following the ultra-conservative and intense path of his religious teachers, Osama bin Laden was well-acquainted with the Islamic implications put forth by Ibn Taymiyya. The Saudi dissident had studied the fatwas issued by the 13<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher and attested that his own personal ideology follows that of the Damascene theologian. In Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden, author and professor at Duke University Bruce Lawrence has collected from several different sources the writings, audio statements and television interviews released by the al-Qaeda leader since 1994. Stemming directly from the mouth and pen of bin Laden, this primary source is crammed with references to the lessons of the Sheikh of Islam. Of particular interest, bin Laden has argued that it is the legal duty of all good Muslims to fight until Palestine is freed from the Israeli invaders. The al-Qaeda leader has stated:

The current Jewish enemy is not an enemy settled in his own original country fighting in its defense until he gains a peace agreement, but an attacking enemy and a corrupter of religion and the world, for whom the words of Sheikh of Islam Ibn Taymiyya apply: ‘There is no greater duty after faith than unconditionally fighting the attacking enemy who corrupts religion and the world. He must be resisted as hard as possible, as stipulated by our companions the scholars and others’ (Internal quote from Ibn Taymiyya’s book, al-Ikhtiyarat al-Faqahiyya, pg 309.).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 9.

Along with the incandescent rhetoric displayed by Osama bin Laden, the Saudi millionaire was not the only member of al-Qaeda to issue a fatwa based on the precedent set by Ibn Taymiyya. Abu Hajer al-Iraqi<sup>38</sup> was a military officer and electrical engineer before joining the Afghan jihad against the Soviets and eventually becoming a trusted advisor for bin Laden.<sup>39</sup> Even though Abu Hajer had not received theological training, he was promoted to the upper echelon of al-Qaeda leadership when he was appointed to the head of the fatwa committee. In his own variation of the teachings of the Damascene theologian, Abu Hajer expressed a personal interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas concerning the Mongol invaders. He explained to forty al-Qaeda members, "Anyone who aided the Mongols, who bought goods from them or sold to them or was merely standing near them, might be killed as well. If he is a good Muslim, he will go to Paradise; if he is bad, he will go to hell, and good riddance."<sup>40</sup> Based on the leadership of an uneducated, self-proclaimed theologian, the al-Qaeda fatwa committee mandated decisions calling for the destruction of American forces and permitting attacks against civilian targets in the name of Allah.

Undoubtedly, the words of Ibn Taymiyya from seven centuries ago remain pertinent to the modern Islamic movements. However, his writings and fatwas cannot be considered in a "black or white" manner. In dealing with the works of a philosopher from a different epoch, it is imperative to judge the material in the

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<sup>38</sup> Many mujahidin live under aliases. His real name is Mamdouh Mahmoud Salem.

<sup>39</sup> Wright 423.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 198.

context of that particular historical period. In a trend that many radicals appear to be guilty of, the wise lessons from the past can become twisted into an anecdotal jumble of hijacked ideas.<sup>41</sup> When this unfortunate warping occurs, the original concept is lost. Many conservative Muslim thinkers feel this is exactly what has happened to the thoughts of the Sheikh of Islam.

Yahya Michot, who specializes in Islamic theology at University of Oxford, leads the contention that Ibn Taymiyya has been misinterpreted and misunderstood. To articulate his thesis, Michot translated Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule written by Ibn Taymiyya. Contributing to this historic piece of literature, the author added a series of deductions by six Muslim thinkers ranging on a political scale from the most extreme to the very liberal. In the foreword of the book, James Piscatori set the tone by saying, “Ibn Taymiyya is not the arch-radical that many today would like him to have been. No more is he, necessarily, the arch-conservative he is made out to be by those political and religious establishments in the Muslim world that approve of him.<sup>42</sup>” In Michot’s eyes, the exceptionally complex writings of Ibn Taymiyya have become oversimplified and over generalized by individuals neither properly trained nor qualified to examine the ancient texts in proper context. As explained in the afterword, the Oxford professor said: “Since 9/11, however, the situation has worsened. The most ignorant untruths are reproducing a space, not only in the media but even in supposedly serious studies.<sup>43</sup>”

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<sup>41</sup> Fundamentalists for Christianity and Judaism are guilty of this as well.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Taymiyya and Michot xiv.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 123.

Never fully realizing the magnitude and severity of Muslim fundamentalism starting with the Marine barracks bombing in 1983 in Beirut by the Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah<sup>44</sup>, the United States government has remained poorly prepared to deal with growing Islamic radicalism through the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Still reeling from the attacks against its home soil, the American government on the whole has made an attempt to recognize the Sheikh of Islam without understanding his intricate complexities. For instance, the Hanbali scholar has received his share of blame for influencing the al-Qaeda hijackers, despite being dead for seven centuries. The 9/11 Commission Report stated: “As we mentioned in chapter 2, Osama bin Laden and other Islamist terrorist leaders draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within one stream of Islam (a minority tradition), from at least Ibn Taymiyya, through the founders of Wahhabism, through the Muslim Brotherhood, to Sayyid Qutb.<sup>45</sup>” While the Commission Report was correct in ascertaining that Ibn Taymiyya’s works are recited by the Muslim radicals, larger questions remain. Perhaps it would be more helpful for the Commission to attempt to understand the multifaceted idiosyncrasies of the philosopher from the Middle Ages. Yahya Michot would definitely agree that the US government needs to do a bit more research. He boldly argued, “The fact is, this great Mamluk theologian continues to be presented, unjustly, as an extremist, with many dire, radical positions to his name. That image is a grave distortion. My modest hope for the present work (Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule) is that, by

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<sup>44</sup> Benjamin and Simon 223.

<sup>45</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on the Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (New York: Norton, 2004) 362.

showing how far his ideas have been misunderstood – as much, often enough, by Muslims as by non-Muslims – the texts and arguments in it may contribute to correcting the injustice done to his name.<sup>46</sup>”

Certainly volumes could be written on the controversial figure of Ibn Taymiyya and the true intentions of his Islamic declarations. From 1298 until his death in 1327, he was constantly being challenged by government officials and was jailed on several occasions for over five years.<sup>47</sup> The fact remains that the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Damascene was highly motivational for the most infamous man of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Osama bin Laden’s statements to the public are crammed with references to Taymiyya, whose fatwas he believed support his global war.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibn Taymiyya and Michot ix.

<sup>47</sup> Egger 294.

“But whoever shall kill a (Muslim) believer intentionally, his recompense shall be hell; forever shall he abide in it; God shall be wrathful with him, and shall curse him, and shall get ready for him a great torment.<sup>48</sup>”

-The Holy Koran; Sura IV

### **Saudi Arabia’s ties with Wahhabism**

Originating in the Middle East from modern day Saudi Arabia, Islam has become the world’s second largest religion spreading to all four corners of the globe.<sup>49</sup> In a similar fashion to its Christian predecessor<sup>50</sup>, the faith splintered into a variety of schools, doctrines and sects following the death of the prophet Mohammad in 632. These divisions are much more complex than simply the Sunni/Shia distinctions. Historically, Arabia was the home to countless Muslim minority groups. This religious open-mindedness would begin to dissipate in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century with the rise of Wahhabism, culminating with nearly complete spiritual intolerance following the creation of the state of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d.1792)<sup>51</sup>, born in 1703 in central Arabia and educated at the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, remains at the very core of Sunni Islamic fundamentalism today.<sup>52</sup> Travelling around the Middle East, Abd al-

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<sup>48</sup> The Koran 61.

<sup>49</sup> Despite having its roots in the Middle East, the largest Islamic country today is Indonesia with over 200 million Muslims, which is more than the total in all twenty-three Arab countries put together. Statistic pulled from Neal Robinson’s Islam: A Concise Introduction on page 13.

<sup>50</sup> Arguing that the Catholic Church had fallen away from its intended path over many issues including the purchasing of indulgences, Martin Luther is Christianity’s most well known reformer. Even though debates had been raging for a number of previous years, Luther’s posting of his Ninety-five thesis on October 31, 1517 is the recognizable start date for the period known as the Protestant Reformation. Date provided by Brian Tierney, Donald Kagan, and L. Pearce Williams, Great Issues in Western Civilization, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1992) 75.

<sup>51</sup> Cyril Glasse, The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991) 39.

<sup>52</sup> Cleveland 123.

Wahhab, also known as the Teacher, attempted to return Islam to its purest form by teaching his own personal brand which came to be called Wahhabism. According to his puritanical vision, Muslims had lost their way and needed to be absolved in order for Islam to return to greatness. He even argued against the traditional Sunni practice that uttering the shahada fulfilled a Muslim's first religious duty<sup>53</sup> because he felt Islamic scholars had been corrupted over the centuries.<sup>54</sup> The only way to attain this goal was through devotion to the Koran and Sunna, which is the appropriate code of conduct for Muslims based on the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>55</sup>

Considering that both men emphasized the basic principles of Islam, it is not surprising that Abd al-Wahhab was motivated and moved by the works of his 13<sup>th</sup> century predecessor, Ibn Taymiyya.<sup>56</sup> In turn, Osama bin Laden adopted the contributions of each of these legendary Muslims into his own orthodox credence centuries later. Of course, the founder of the Wahhabi movement did not revere all of Taymiyya's religious verdicts, so the Teacher only cited what fit his practices and ignored other portions of Islam's dogma.<sup>57</sup> For example, Abd al-Wahhab (and bin Laden) did not extrapolate the concluding points of Taymiyya's most famous dissertation about the Mongols. After justifying war against the recently converted

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<sup>53</sup> According to page 16 in Neal Robinson's Islam: A Concise Introduction, the five pillars of Islam are: "the shahada, or testimony that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God; performance of the ritual prayer; compulsory almsgiving; the fast of Ramadan; and the pilgrimage to Mecca."

<sup>54</sup> "Wahhabiyya," Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 1999) 40.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Baer, Sleeping with the Devil: How Washington Sold our Soul for Saudi Crude (New York: Crown, 2003) 85.

<sup>56</sup> Benjamin and Simon 52.

<sup>57</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl, The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists (New York: Harper Collins, 2007) 57.

Mongol hordes, Taymiyya stated, “As for those who cannot offer resistance or cannot fight, such as women, children, monks, old people, the blind, handicapped and the like, they shall not be killed, unless they actually fight with words [e.g. by propaganda] and acts [e.g. by spying or otherwise assisting in the warfare].<sup>58</sup>” For Abd al-Wahhab and Osama bin Laden, this lesson fell on deaf ears.

Interpreting Islamic law in the strictest manner possible, Abd al-Wahhab reputedly stoned a woman charged with adultery, and he was forced out of town by an angry mob.<sup>59</sup> As luck would have it for Abd al-Wahhab, he found refuge with others who embraced his unforgiving ideology. Even though there are historical discrepancies on how the Teacher ended up in Dariyah, the fact remains that Abd al-Wahhab forged an alliance with the House of Saud in 1744.<sup>60</sup> From this point on, Wahhabism and the Saudi royal family have been interlocked. The importance of this union in 1744 has been underestimated, but the extreme teachings of Abd al-Wahhab would not have spread without this amalgamation. Saudi swords began enforcing Wahhabi doctrine. Tobacco was outlawed, buildings deemed immoral were condemned, and highly venerated tombs were destroyed, including mausoleums at the birthplace of the Prophet.<sup>61</sup> As the battle for control of Arabia heightened, there are numerous accounts of Wahhabi atrocities against Muslims and non-Muslims, combatants and non-combatants alike.

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<sup>58</sup> Laqueur, *Voices of Terror* 393.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom: Arabia & the House of Sa'ud* (New York: Avon, 1983) 56.

<sup>60</sup> The House of Saud fought for centuries to conquer Arabia and finally succeeded in 1932.

<sup>61</sup> “Wahhabiyya,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 42.

After Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud (b.1876-d.1953)<sup>62</sup> conquered a significant portion of the Arabian Peninsula in a bloody and ruthless series of campaigns, he established the fundamentalist teachings of Wahhabism as the official state religion.<sup>63</sup>

Financially supported by the skyrocketing petrodollars, Wahhabism went international in the early 1960s, especially through the proselytizing activities of the World Islamic League.<sup>64</sup> Carmen bin Laden, who moved to Arabia after marrying Osama's brother, has written, "The Saudi version of Islam – Wahhabism – is ferocious in its enforcement of a stark and ancient social code."<sup>65</sup>

Like so many of the fundamentalist figures from the past, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his Wahhabi ideology remain pertinent in modern Muslim politics. This is true for radicals like bin Laden, particularly since the Emir was raised in the capital of Wahhabism – Saudi Arabia. Since the marriage of convenience with the House of Saud, the strength of Wahhabism has waxed and waned over the ages. Al-Qaeda showcases Wahhabi sentiments through its extreme views on Shariah law and by believing Islam must perpetually rule any land that has ever been under Muslim dominion.<sup>66</sup> The radical ideas of the Teacher are on the rise again.<sup>67</sup> The superlative Islamic scholar and jurist, Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl taught,

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 525.

<sup>63</sup> Baer 86.

<sup>64</sup> Esposito 106-07.

<sup>65</sup> Carmen Bin Ladin and Ruth Marshall, Inside the Kingdom: My Life in Saudi Arabia (New York: Warner Books, 2004) 63.

<sup>66</sup> Aaron Mannes, Profiles in Terror: The Guide to Middle East Terrorist Organizations (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004) 17.

<sup>67</sup> With current King Abdullah in his early 80's, a struggle could ensue between strict Wahhabis and the House of Saud following his death.

“Every single Islamic group that has achieved a degree of international infamy, such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda, has been heavily influenced by Wahhabi thought.<sup>68</sup>”

Originally, the followers of Abd al-Wahhab branded themselves Muwahhidun, and the title Wahhabis was actually a name created by their adversaries.<sup>69</sup> As an important point of clarification, the word “Wahhabism” is not a term used by the supporters of Abd al-Wahhab to describe themselves. Instead, disciples of this rigid and ultraconservative group prefer to be associated as Salafis (pious ancestors). The refusal to accept the terminology “Wahhabis” was because one of the principle concerns for Abd al-Wahhab dealt with personal veneration. Imitating a non-believer made one a non-believer, so he felt prefixes and labels were an imitation of Western infidels and was, therefore, unacceptable.<sup>70</sup> This Saudi-born sect does not parallel other Islamic groups and is a mixture of the teachings<sup>71</sup> of Ibn Hanbali and Ibn Taymiyyah. “The legal approach of Wahhabism is in many respects unique, but it coincides most closely with the school of Ibn Hanbal, and may be considered a kind of Hanbalism, although the Wahhabis would deny this, or any other, affiliation.<sup>72</sup>” Viewing themselves as the only pure avenue to Allah, this group does not want to be named as one sect of many. Rather, they consider themselves the one and only true sect.<sup>73</sup> “Wahhabi clerics describe themselves as adherents of Salafism and idealize the time of the Prophet and his companions and insist that on all issues Muslims

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<sup>68</sup> Abou El Fadl 45.

<sup>69</sup> Robin Bidwell, “The Politics of Islam,” Middle East Review 1985: 50.

<sup>70</sup> Abou El Fadl 50.

<sup>71</sup> For Sunnis, the four schools of law include the Hanafi school, Maliki school, Shafii school and Hanbali school. See Neal Robinson’s Islam: A Concise Introduction pages 150-155 for further details.

<sup>72</sup> Glasse 416.

<sup>73</sup> This work has utilized the term “Wahhabism” to avoid confusion.

ought to rely on the Koran and the Sunnah (all the deeds and words of the Prophet – second in importance to the Koran).<sup>74</sup>”

The absolute brutality and lack of respect for human life displayed by Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda foot soldiers is a hotly contested topic in the world of Islamic law. In a religion that teaches murder against a fellow Muslim as one of the most sinful acts possible, how can the Saudi legitimately make holy war against both the infidels and the faithful? Bin Laden found his answer by following in the footsteps of Abd al-Wahhab. Under the Wahhabi banner of fanaticism, Muslims living in the act of shirk or heresy must be killed under the precedence established by Abu Bakr, who was the first “Rightly Guided” caliph.<sup>75</sup> In this mindset, an individual is not necessarily a Muslim by simply living the Five Pillars of Islam. Should the accused person be “judged” as not being a Muslim, then he or she is open to attack. Classical Islamic literature discredits these misconstrued ideas, but sadly the Teacher refused to accept any non-extremist instruction. Continuing to ignore these peaceful fatwas, the leadership of al-Qaeda has pursued the practices of Abd al-Wahhab.

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<sup>74</sup> Fawaz A. Gerges, The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 131.

<sup>75</sup> Abou El Fadl 54.

“For a child, the death of a parent shatters assumptions even more basic than the order of how life should proceed. It shatters core beliefs about the world itself. A child believes in a safe and secure world, a world in which events are predictable and orderly, a world that can be understood. When death is sudden and unexpected, the world and everything in it seem less safe and more precarious.”<sup>76</sup>

-Maxine Harris, child psychologist

## **Death of Muhammad bin Laden**

Looking at his background, Osama bin Laden does not seem to be a likely candidate for creating an international terrorist organization and, in the process, becoming the most wanted man on the face of the planet. He was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 1957 as the 17<sup>th</sup> of more than 50 children<sup>77</sup> (the seventh son) into a multibillion-dollar family.<sup>78</sup> His father Muhammad bin Laden was an illiterate craftsman who emigrated from Yemen between 1925 and 1931.<sup>79</sup> Osama’s mother was Syrian. After developing a relationship with the Saudi royal family, Muhammad bin Laden and his construction company received tremendous fame and wealth from government-funded projects that ranged from road-building to renovating mosques in Mecca and Medina, the holiest cities in the Muslim world. Unlike fellow radical, Hasan al-Banna, who learned from and shared religious fervor with his father, the young bin Laden did not have that parental role model. Osama lost his father when he was ten-years old. This would leave an indelible impression on him. Making

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<sup>76</sup> Maxine Harris, The Loss that is Forever: the Lifelong Impact of the Early Death of a Mother or Father (New York: Penguin, 1995) 21.

<sup>77</sup>The number of children for Muhammad bin Laden has been reported between 52 and 57.

<sup>78</sup> Esposito 3.

<sup>79</sup> There are discrepancies as to Muhammad bin Laden’s date of immigration. Some analysts believed the date to be as early as 1925, although Lawrence Wright listed the latest year as 1931 on page 425 of The Looming Tower.

national news in 1967, Muhammad bin Laden was killed in an airplane crash, leaving his business and riches to his family.<sup>80</sup>

At the time of Muhammad bin Laden's death, the once poor Yemeni immigrant from the Hadramout had built up a conglomerate of companies and had become the biggest private contractor of its kind in the world, possessing 90 of the largest Caterpillar excavators available in that era.<sup>81</sup> Even though he was young when his father died in a plane crash, the impressionable Osama must have wanted to be part of Muhammad's legacy. Birth order remained important in Saudi Arabia, so naturally Osama's older brothers took the leadership positions in the bin Laden empire. While his eldest brothers ran the business, Osama was forced to find another way to make his mark on the world.

During the Middle Ages in Europe when birth rates were high, children in large families had to find alternative methods of survival. The oldest son would usually be lucky enough to inherit the family land. If a family could not support them, the younger siblings would leave the farm and attempt to become an apprentice by learning a trade or skill. For others still, the answer was to turn to God by joining a monastery. In the case of Osama bin Laden, he became inspired by Medieval Muslims and found a higher calling as a crusader for Islam.

“One cannot understand the scale of the son's ambition without appreciating the father's accomplishment. Remote and powerful but humble in manner, Mohammed bin Awahd bin Laden was a legend even before Osama was born. He

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<sup>80</sup> Bergen, Holy War, Inc. 48.

<sup>81</sup> Cooley 96.

presented a formidable model to a young man who idolized him and hoped to equal, if not surpass, his achievements.<sup>82</sup> The characteristics used here to describe the bin Laden founder are traits that Osama has always held in esteem. Many Westerners, who have personally met bin Laden, have commented on the quiet, almost shy and humble demeanor of the world's most wanted man.

A poor Yemeni immigrant, Mohammad bin Laden never received much education. This did not stop the determined bricklayer from becoming one of the richest men in the region. Despite being illiterate and living with one glass eye, Osama's father was a genius with figures, which he never forgot and calculated effortlessly in his head.<sup>83</sup> His trade as a construction worker, designer and builder allowed the opportunity for creating something out of nothing. Inspired by his tremendously successful father, Osama always wanted to build something of his own and was quite willing to put in the effort to accomplish his goals.

Portions of the western media have unscrupulously described Osama bin Laden as a wild, drunken womanizer in his youth. This could not be farther from the truth. Indeed, ex-CIA agent Robert Baer described such immoral activities by wealthy Saudis in *Sleeping with the Devil*. In this context, the rich Saudi men cannot wait to leave their Wahhabi-dominated country for a break from piety. According to Baer, these young men traveled abroad to waste tremendous amounts of money on anything and everything contrary to the teachings of Islam. While these illicit activities certainly took place, there is no sound proof that Osama bin Laden was a

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<sup>82</sup> Wright 71.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 74.

part of such behavior. His sister-in-law, Carmen bin Ladin has stated, “Years later, I was amazed to read in the Western press that Osama had been a playboy as a teenager in Beirut. I think if it were true, I would have heard about it...As far as I know, Osama was always devout. His family revered him for his piety.<sup>84</sup>” His constant religious zeal, even at an early age, was most likely a result of his father’s untimely fatality.

Osama’s hatred for the United States might have been born with the death of his father. On September 3, 1967, it was an American named Jim Harrington<sup>85</sup> who was ultimately responsible for piloting Muhammad’s Twin Breech airplane into a three foot deep crater in the Saudi desert.<sup>86</sup> In the ensuing years, the bin Laden clan vacationed in Europe, possibly to unify following the loss of their unwavering patriarch. Still relatively young, Osama did not partake in these trips. To this day, there is no evidence that bin Laden has ever visited the United States. From a counterfactual point of view, obviously there is no way of knowing the type of person that Osama would have become had his father not been killed during his youth. However, the death of a parent certainly has profound effects on children. As explained by expert Maxine Harris, “For most the loss of a parent registers as a ten on an emotional Richter scale. The solid ground beneath one’s feet no longer exists, and

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<sup>84</sup> Bin Ladin and Marshall 71-72.

<sup>85</sup> Harrington was a retired fighter pilot from the US Air Force.

<sup>86</sup> Steve Coll, The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008) 118-120.

that which held things together and made them solid and secure is gone.<sup>87</sup>” In the mind of a young Osama, the mistakes of an American pilot had killed his father.

Osama had enormous admiration and respect for his dad, whom he idolized. Other than the vast number of divorced wives, Mohammad bin Laden was a Saudi hero and could do no wrong in the eyes of his ten-year old son. Osama most likely developed his religious passion in the footsteps of his father. In a 1999 interview with Jamal Ismail, he stated: “Because of God’s graciousness to him (Mohammad bin Laden), sometimes he prayed in all three mosques [in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem] in one single day. May God have mercy on his soul. It is not a secret that he was one of the founders of the infrastructure of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.<sup>88</sup>” In this quotation, the younger bin Laden proudly spoke about his father as a leader for Islam and a national idol. Following the untimely death of his father in 1967, Osama strove to epitomize his father’s example as a great Muslim and regional icon.

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<sup>87</sup> Harris 14.

<sup>88</sup> Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I know 2.

“Osama was just like many of us who become part of the [Muslim] Brotherhood movement in Saudi Arabia. The only difference which set him apart from me and others, he was more religious. More religious, more literal, more fundamentalist. For example, he would not listen to music. He would not shake hands with a woman. He would not smoke. He would not watch television, unless it is news. He wouldn’t play cards. He would not put a picture on the wall. But more than that, there was also a harsh or radical side in his life.<sup>89</sup>”

-Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi journalist and friend of bin Laden

### **Osama bin Laden’s College Life**

Unlike his older brothers who decided to leave Saudi Arabia for foreign universities, Osama bin Laden chose to stay in his native country. With his family’s great wealth and international stature, the younger bin Laden could have selected from a number of prestigious schools around the world. His brothers were educated all over the globe, usually in business related fields. For example, Osama’s older sibling, Yeslam, and his wife attended the University of Southern California.<sup>90</sup> Hoping to pair his education and religious curiosity, Osama bin Laden chose King Abdul Aziz University<sup>91</sup> in his native Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Even in his earlier days, the Saudi youth was always on the conservative side. Yet, bin Laden’s eyes were opened wide to the world of radical Islam during his collegiate experience.

Osama met Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, in his beginning days at the university.<sup>92</sup> Unlike his taller and richer friend, Khalifa was from a modest family background. However, his family gained respect in the Islamic community because they were able to trace his lineage directly to the Prophet.

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<sup>89</sup> Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I know 21.

<sup>90</sup> Carmen Bin Ladin 25.

<sup>91</sup> King Abdul Aziz University is also called Jeddah University.

<sup>92</sup> Wright 90.

Khalifa stated, “In ’76 I met Osama...I was twenty, and he was nineteen. At that time we were religious and we were very conservative; we go to that extreme side. When I met him, he was religious already.<sup>93</sup>” As their friendship grew, so did their spiritual fanaticism. Following graduation from King Abdul Aziz University, Khalifa (1956-2007)<sup>94</sup> left his job as a biology teacher in Medina and joined his best friend bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1985.<sup>95</sup>

Two professors at King Abdul Aziz were exceptionally important to the development of bin Laden’s extreme views. “Each week, Mohammad Qutb, the younger brother of the martyr, would lecture at the school. Although bin Laden never formally studied with Qutb, he usually attended his public lectures.<sup>96</sup>” In case the martyrdom of Sayyid Qutb did not provide legendary stature for the Egyptian writer, Mohammad continued to preach his brother’s intense doctrine. According to his classmate Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden first gained a strategy for conducting jihad after reading Qutb’s Milestones and Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya while in college.<sup>97</sup> Today, Osama has often cited the teachings of Qutb and Ibn Taymiyya as justification for what many see as unethical decisions.

At King Abdul Aziz University, Osama bin Laden found his mentor in Dr. Abdullah Azzam. The friendship of the Palestinian exile and Saudi millionaire shaped both of their lives. “Sheikh Azzam, known as the fighting Sheikh for his

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<sup>93</sup> Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I Know 16.

<sup>94</sup> Khalifa married Osama’s half sister and was later accused by the FBI of fund-raising for terrorist groups. He was murdered in Madagascar in 2007.

<sup>95</sup> Wright 427.

<sup>96</sup> Wright 91.

<sup>97</sup> Coll, The Bin Ladens 204.

uncompromising views on offensive jihad, also discovered Usama bin Laden as a young college student at King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah, where Azzam's lectures electrified audiences and turned them onto restoring Islamic glory through violence.<sup>98</sup> These provocative speeches inspired the youthful bin Laden to follow Azzam for the following decade. As discussed in a later chapter, Dr. Azzam was extraordinarily instrumental in molding Osama. Following the assassination of Azzam in 1989, bin Laden gained legitimacy as a fundamentalist leader after taking control of the Palestinian mentor's organization and networks.

Out of the limelight of government agencies, certain Middle Eastern colleges and universities have acted as an incubator for radical thinking and fundamentalist groups to develop. Like the Qutb brothers, Dr. Azzam was an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>99</sup> "It was there (at King Abdul Aziz University) that bin Laden first became associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group, and first came under the spell of two prominent teachers of Islamic studies, Abdullah Azzam and Muhammad Qutb.<sup>100</sup>" Before Azzam created the Service Bureau to aid the Muslim fighters against the Red Army, he worked to free his homeland of Israeli forces. "Osama bin Laden was an impressionable college sophomore on a \$1 million annual allowance during the first shocking upheavals of 1979. His teachers in Jeddah included Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian who would become spiritual founder of

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<sup>98</sup> Aboul-Enein, Youssef, "Ayman al-Zawahiri: the Ideologue of Modern Islamic Militancy," Maxwell Air Force Base, ALA: USAF Counterproliferation Center, Air University, 2004: 5  
<<http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LSP67656>>

<sup>99</sup> "Defence of the Muslim Lands; the First Obligation after Imam," Religioscope, 5 Sept 2007  
[http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam\\_defence\\_2\\_intro.htm](http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_defence_2_intro.htm)

<sup>100</sup> Bergen, Holy War Inc. 50.

Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist rival to the secular-leftist Palestine Liberation Organization.<sup>101</sup> Thus, bin Laden learned from the preeminent Islamic organization and would later utilize this knowledge in the development of al-Qaeda.

In colleges and universities around the world, the ideals of young men and women are heavily influenced by their friends and professors. This was also true in the case of Osama bin Laden. Before becoming the most wanted man on the planet, Osama was an impressionable, young Muslim searching for an identity and determined to find a worthwhile cause. Steve Coll, like many experts, does not believe bin Laden ever received a degree based on testimony from his best friend, Jamal Khalifa.<sup>102</sup> Regardless of whether or not he completed his degree, Osama's college experience at King Abdul Aziz University granted him the opportunity to strengthen his already conservative views. Bin Laden's collegiate career, particularly because of the influence of Abdullah Azzam, careened the Saudi millionaire to the precipice of extremism.

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<sup>101</sup> Steve Coll, Ghost Wars: the Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001 (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) 85.

<sup>102</sup> Coll, The Bin Ladens 211.

“If the enemy enters the lands of Islam, he must surely be repelled as soon as possible for all Islamic lands are one umma. There must be a general call to arms, without requiring permission from the father nor any other opposition.<sup>103</sup>”

-Ahmad bin ‘Abd al-Salam bin Taymiyya<sup>104</sup>

## **Osama bin Laden and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan**

In modern Middle Eastern history, 1979 could be known as the year of the awakening. Americans might compare this year with 1776, 1812 and 2000<sup>105</sup>. The Muslim populace saw the creation of a new Islamic state, an invasion by a foreign aggressor and a historic birthday for Islam. November 20, 1979, which began as a celebration for the dawning of the fifteenth century, turned into a hollow holiday as a group of radicals led by Juhaiman al-Utaiba held Mecca’s Grand Mosque hostage.<sup>106</sup> As discussed in further detail in a later chapter, 1979 also featured a Shia revolution in Iran that deposed the rule of the Shah, hence ushering in an Islamic Republic. Having entered King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah in 1976, Osama bin Laden was attempting to finish his degree as these world changes were taking place all around him.<sup>107</sup> A critical factor in the transformation of the Saudi student into the international prince of terror occurred with the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan on December 24, 1979.

In identifying the ideological foundation of Osama bin Laden, the USSR offensive against Muslim-dominated Afghanistan cannot be over emphasized. With

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<sup>103</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 93.

<sup>104</sup> This quote is from a letter in December 2002 by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri.

<sup>105</sup> The year 2000 marked the Christian jubilee celebration commemorating Christ’s birth.

<sup>106</sup> Esposito 71.

<sup>107</sup> Wright 90.

the Soviet invasion of 1979, bin Laden discovered an applicable outlet for his fundamentalist background. Surprisingly, personal acquaintances of bin Laden have gone on the record to describe young Osama as preferring a more moderate stance. For instance, Ahmed Badeeb of Saudi intelligence stated, “He was not an extremist at all, and I liked him because he was a decent and polite person. In school and academically he was in the middle.”<sup>108</sup> Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, who became bin Laden’s closest friend in college, has also gone on the record by saying that the future leader of al-Qaeda was not always an ultra-extremist.<sup>109</sup> The evidence showed that the fundamentalist route for bin Laden developed at King Abdul Aziz University but was significantly elevated by the communist invasion of Afghanistan.

After a military coup ushered in a republic in 1973, Afghanistan was tossed into political upheaval again following a Soviet-backed counter-coup five years later.<sup>110</sup> The ensuing civil war quickly spilled over the border into Russian territory. On Christmas Eve, the Red Army invaded to squash the uprising. Viewed in the Islamic world as an unwarranted assault by the godless communists, the incursion sparked anger and resentment throughout the Middle East. As the shockwaves of malcontent turned to rage by governments and individuals alike, Islamic nations began calling for volunteers to aid the encircled Afghan freedom fighters.

Desiring hegemonic status in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia answered the Muslim battle cry. Many youthful Saudis influenced by years of Wahhabi doctrine

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<sup>108</sup> Coll, Ghost Wars 88.

<sup>109</sup> Wright 90-93.

<sup>110</sup> Baer 132.

were eager to prove their mettle by defending their faith and their northern brethren from the guns of the Red super power. Before the war was over, Saudi Arabia contributed over \$3 billion in financial support and more than 5,000 volunteers to the cause.<sup>111</sup> This was a chance for bin Laden to shine. Prefacing an interview in November 1996 with Nida’ul Islam with a personal biography, bin Laden stated: “His (referring to himself) first visit to assist the Afghan mujahidin came a few days after the entry of the Russians in 1399 AH (1979).<sup>112</sup>” Most experts feel bin Laden may have exaggerated how quickly he joined the battle front. After years in the shadow of his famous father and business-minded older brothers, Osama stepped forward when the Soviet occupation provided the perfect opportunity.

Maximizing his personal influence and lucrative family business, Osama did not start out in the trenches taking Soviet fire. Rather, the young Saudi spent most of his time overseeing the transportation of heavy construction vehicles donated from the Saudi Bin Laden group.<sup>113</sup> They were flown first into Pakistan then rolled across the border to Afghanistan. At other times, bin Laden cut new roads, built hospitals and storage depots in the rough Afghan countryside.<sup>114</sup> Just as important to the mujahidin cause, the recent college student spent a significant amount of time during the war raising financial capital from wealthy Persian Gulf donors. The charismatic bin Laden must have been a natural for this role, particularly because of his family’s

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<sup>111</sup> Mannes 18.

<sup>112</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 32.

<sup>113</sup> Benjamin and Simon 98-99.

<sup>114</sup> Cooley 98.

close friendship with the House of Saud<sup>115</sup> coupled with the regional popularity of his father, Mohammed. According to his proud mentor Abdullah Azzam, Osama raised between \$5 and \$10 million dollars for the mujahidin in 1984.<sup>116</sup> Planting the seeds for the future of al-Qaeda in 1984, Osama bin Laden established a guesthouse in Peshawar called Beit al-Ansar<sup>117</sup> for Muslims en route to the battle front.<sup>118</sup>

As the war slowly trudged on costing thousands of lives to both sides, Osama became more daring in his efforts. Transfixed on making a difference and a name for himself, the Saudi with construction experience<sup>119</sup> began crossing the mountain passes from Pakistan into Afghanistan with weapons, vehicles and food. Utilizing his work experience in Saudi Arabia and his schooling in engineering, bin Laden was instrumental in building a fortified entrenchment inside Afghanistan at Jaji. This is the perfect example of how bin Laden transformed his skills into the art of war. Tora Bora, which was another Osama creation, was the cavernous compound<sup>120</sup> in which the United States military lost the world's most wanted man in early December 2001.<sup>121</sup> Long before his vendetta against America, the Arab lion gained a reputation as a fearless mujahidin by fighting the Russian bear. Starting on April 17, 1987 and lasting for a week, bin Laden along with fifty Arab volunteers held off two hundred

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<sup>115</sup> According to John Cooley's Unholy Wars page 202, the Saudi Royal family awarded the bin Laden family the "contract of the century" by offering the construction firm a \$3 billion deal to renovate the holy places of Mecca and Medina in 1983.

<sup>116</sup> Wright 117.

<sup>117</sup> Literally translated "House of the Supporters" is a reference to the Prophet Mohammad's followers who helped him under duress to flee from Mecca to Medina.

<sup>118</sup> Bergen, Holy War Inc. 54.

<sup>119</sup> Although accounts differ, Bin Laden is believed to have spent some time working for the family business.

<sup>120</sup> The complex of Tora Bora is located on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

<sup>121</sup> Gary Berntsen, and Ralph Pezzulo, Jawbreaker: the Attack on Bin Laden and Al Qaeda: A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander (New York: Crown, 2005) 31.

Soviet troops, including Russian Special Forces known as Spetsnaz, at the battle of Jaji.<sup>122</sup> Lawrence Wright believes bin Laden had little effect on the outcome of the skirmish.<sup>123</sup> Various accounts of the battle have described bin Laden on a wide spectrum from fearless to frightened. His performance matters little. More importantly, the battle established Osama as a credible defender of the faithful, regardless of how he actually handled himself in the fight. Recognized by his entourage as a wealthy individual who did not need to be in the muddy Afghan trenches, the lore of bin Laden only escalated for his work as a pauper and not as a prince. He achieved widespread recognition throughout the Muslim world, and this became a pivotal tool for future recruitment of money and manpower.

The battle-tested bin Laden gained confidence. In a December 1998 interview, Osama bragged:

We believe that those who waged jihad in Afghanistan did more than their duty. They found out that with meager resources – a few RPGs (Rocket Propelled Grenades), a few antitank mines, and a few Kalashnikovs – the myth of the mightiest military known to mankind was annihilated; the greatest military machine was annihilated, and with it the myth of the so-called superpowers.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Coll, Ghost Wars 162.

<sup>123</sup> Wright 136-138.

<sup>124</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 261.

In addition to the fierce combat displayed by the Muslim defenders<sup>125</sup> there were many additional factors to the Soviet retreat. Time and time again, the Saudi Sheikh had publicly boasted about his participation in the Afghan jihad. From quotes like the one above, it is easy to imagine the sense of pride Osama attributed to his participation. Moreover, bin Laden began believing that Muslim crusaders would accomplish the goals set forth by their fundamentalist forefathers. In his mind, a contingent of fighters loyal to Allah managed to bring down one of the major Cold War combatants.<sup>126</sup> Wanting to strike while the iron was hot, bin Laden did not waste time following his success at Jaji to assert himself into a global media campaign.<sup>127</sup>

As fate would have it, the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by Russian forces caused the paths of legendary fundamentalists to cross. Comprising a triangle of terror, Abdullah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden each contributed in his own way to the future of Islamic radical thought. The Saudi millionaire was already acquainted with Azzam from his college days, and the two worked in unison with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to provide necessary supplies to the mujahidin across the mountain passes. During a lecture by bin Laden at a hospital in 1987, Osama was introduced to Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the man who would become al-Qaeda's

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<sup>125</sup> At this time, the battle-hardened native Afghans were responsible for causing the most damage to the Red Army. On the whole, the Arab volunteers or Arab mujahidin were not seasoned fighters and made a larger contribution financially than militarily. See Benjamin and Simon's The Age of Sacred Terror page 101 for further details.

<sup>126</sup> In this sense, bin Laden was mistaken. Unrecognized in public accounts by Osama, the Arab-Afghan fighters received immense help from foreign nations like Saudi Arabia and the US. For details on the war, see Steve Coll's Ghost Wars.

<sup>127</sup> Bin Laden's use of the media has continued to this day, despite the international bounty on his head.

second-in-command.<sup>128</sup> From 1987-1990, Zawahiri directed his skills towards ending the Red invasion.<sup>129</sup> Down the road, the Egyptian doctor would leave his philosophical fingerprints all over the international terrorist organization known as “the base.” Dr. Abdullah Azzam and Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri are the two most influential individuals in the radical Islamic transformation of Osama bin Laden.

The Afghan jihad gave Osama bin Laden his calling. In his own words from October 2004, the al-Qaeda leader boasted, “...we have gained experience in guerilla and attritional warfare in our jihad against that great and wicked superpower, Russia, which we, alongside the mujahidin, fought for ten years until, bankrupt, it was forced to withdraw (out of Afghanistan in 1989) – all praise be to Allah.<sup>130</sup>” The Saudi millionaire used his family fortune to advance the green banner of Islam. Additionally, he became connected to a tremendously extensive network of conservative, philanthropic donors who would help to financially support his holy wars. The Soviet invaders offered the chance for the Emir to learn military tactics from some of the best guerilla fighters in the world. Afghanistan helped bin Laden gain a guide and mentor in Abdullah Azzam and an ally in Ayman al-Zawahiri. Following the withdrawal of the Soviets, Afghanistan provided a safe-haven to practice waging war and even allowed al-Qaeda forces to become acquainted with the landscape later used to fight the United States armed forces. Above all else, the world’s most wanted man gained confidence in himself, his Muslim fighters and his

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<sup>128</sup> Coll, *Ghost Wars* 163.

<sup>129</sup> Aboul-Enein, “Ayman al-Zawahiri” 7.

<sup>130</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 217.

fundamentalist religion. He began truly believing that the only way to return Islam to greatness was through radical means. Bin Laden hungered for more success.

“The way to establish God’s rule on earth is not that some consecrated people – the priests – be given the authority to rule, as was the case with the rule of the Church, nor that some spokesman of God become rulers, as is the case in a ‘theocracy’. To establish God’s rule means that His laws be enforced and that the final decision in all affairs be according to these laws.<sup>131</sup>”

-Sayyid Qutb

## **Salafiyya**

Often inaccurately used intermittently with Wahhabism, Salafism is another Islamic term that is frequently misused and misunderstood by the Western media. Indeed, there are common fundamentalist characteristics that overlap between these groups. However, Wahhabism and Salafism originated from different historical roots. Each, in its own way, has affected the development of the Saudi Sheikh, Osama bin Laden. According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Salafiyya is defined as, “A neo-orthodox brand of Islamic reformism, originating in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and centered on Egypt, aiming to regenerate Islam by a return to the tradition represented by the “pious forefathers” of the Primitive Faith.<sup>132</sup>” Applied primarily today to the most extremist Muslim groups, the Salafiyya movement originally created by Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and his contemporaries involved Islam and rational modernism.<sup>133</sup>

Many Islamic fundamentalists, especially Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, strove to justify their actions by reciting Islamic history. Often, these radicals were simply not accurate in their portrayals. In some circumstances, they

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<sup>131</sup> Sayyid Qutb, Milestones (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Ilm, 1990) 58.

<sup>132</sup> “Salafiyya,” Encyclopaedia of Islam 900.

<sup>133</sup> Esposito 79.

infused their personal version of the story with traditionally accepted facts in order to facilitate their agenda. Originally, the Salafiyya movement did not incorporate anti-western rhetoric. This historical precedent seems to have been overlooked or simply ignored. “In fact, its founders (of the Salafiyya movement) strove to project contemporary institutions such as democracy, constitutionalism, or socialism onto the foundational texts, and to justify the paradigm of the modern nation-state of Islam.<sup>134</sup>”

These ideals would never be accepted by those labeled today as modern Salafis.

“Salafism opened widely the door to subjectivism. It meant in practice that everyone was, or at any rate could be, his own interpreter of the holy writ – except, of course, that the Salafis thought they had a monopoly as far as truth was concerned.<sup>135</sup>”

Similarities exist between Wahhabism and Salafism. “Methodologically and in substance, Salafism was nearly identical to Wahhabism, except that Wahhabism was far less tolerant of diversity and differences of opinion.<sup>136</sup>” In particular, both of these ideologies desired to return to the golden age of Islam, which commenced directly under the leadership of Prophet Mohammad. From this perspective, Muslims have fallen away from the righteous path provided through the example of 7<sup>th</sup> Century Medina. “Until the 1930s this movement (Salafiyya), though not as puritanical as that of Wahhabis of Arabia, basically preached a return to the early principles of Islam as laid down by the prophet and as practiced by his immediate successors to the spiritual-political leadership of the Islamic Community, the four Orthodox Caliphs

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<sup>134</sup> Abou El Fadl 77.

<sup>135</sup> Walter Laqueur, No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century (New York: Continuum, 2003) 30.

<sup>136</sup> Abou El Fadl 75.

(AD 632-61.)<sup>137</sup> The faithful must stop turning away from Allah and realign their very core to the teachings of the Koran. Al-Qaeda has always believed that its violent acts will bring about this global change.

Osama bin Laden has found certain Salafiyya beliefs very appealing.

“According to Salafism, effectively anyone was considered qualified to return to the original sources and speak for God. The very logic and premise of Salafism was that any commoner or layperson could read the Qur’an and the books containing the traditions of the Prophet and his Companions and then issue legal judgments.<sup>138</sup>”

This could not be more apropos for the banished Saudi. Both before and after the hijacking of American planes, bin Laden attempted to hijack the hearts and souls of the international Muslim community by expressing his own personal interpretation of Islam. Since bin Laden has never been formally educated on religious matters, many moderate Muslims have refused to endorse him and his unorthodox convictions. Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri has written and recorded a tremendously significant amount of al-Qaeda rhetoric. Like most of his al-Qaeda leadership, the Egyptian doctor is not trained to speak on behalf of his religion. As previously discussed, the leader of the al-Qaeda fatwa committee also did not have the proper qualification to speak on such complicated matters. Obviously, bin Laden has taken the Salafiyya pillar of religious self-interpretation to heart. Bernard Lewis, a preeminent Middle Eastern scholar, counters such convictions by stating, “Even while ordaining holy war as a religious duty, Islamic law lays down elaborate laws for the conduct of warfare, including such

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<sup>137</sup> P.J. Vatikiotis, The History of Egypt, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986) 196.

<sup>138</sup> Abou El Fadl 76.

matters as the opening and termination of hostilities, the treatment of noncombatants, and the avoidance of certain indiscriminate weapons. Nevertheless, then as now, among Muslims as among others, there have been groups who practiced murder in the name of their religion...<sup>139</sup>»

Despite having very dissimilar backgrounds, when did Salafism and Wahhabism become interchangeable? “Meanwhile, through a complex sociopolitical process, Wahhabism was able to rid itself of some of its extreme forms of intolerance, and it proceeded to co-opt the language and symbolism of Salafism in the 1970s until the two had become practically indistinguishable.<sup>140</sup>” Hasan al-Banna, another hero in the eyes of bin Laden, spent ample time learning in his youth at the Salafiyya bookstore and strove to maintain a Salafiyya message at the forefront of the Brotherhood’s ideology.<sup>141</sup> Sayyid Qutb also had a role in making these terms interchangeable. This Egyptian author and activist was a known Salafi.<sup>142</sup>

According to most scholars, traditional Salafis are largely focused on change inside of Islam, not on world domination. As attested by Fawaz Gerges: “They (Salafis) advocate a strict adherence to traditional Islamic values, religious orthodoxy, correct ritualistic practice, and moral issues, especially as they pertain to the seclusion of women. Classical Salafis had much more in common with religious nationalists than with transnational jihadis.<sup>143</sup>” Hence, the actions of Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda followers most certainly did not fit into the context of traditional Salafism.

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<sup>139</sup> Lewis xii.

<sup>140</sup> Abou El Fadl 79.

<sup>141</sup> Richard Mitchell, The Society of Muslim Brothers (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) 5,14.

<sup>142</sup> Abou El Fadl 82.

<sup>143</sup> Gerges 131-32.

This Salafi nuance occurred as the result of a myriad of events, especially the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Extremist factions of the Muslim Brotherhood have also been blamed for this corruption. Osama developed a hybrid version. “Bin Laden and modern Saudi jihadis are a product of this recent marriage between evangelical Salafism-Wahhabism and transnationalist Islamism represented by the late Sayyid Qutb.<sup>144</sup>”

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 133.

“So I say that, in general, our concern is that our umma unites either under the Words of the Book of God or His Prophet, and that this nation should establish the righteous caliphate of our umma, which has been prophesized by our Prophet in his authentic hadith: that the righteous caliph will return with the permission of God.<sup>145</sup>”

-Osama bin Laden

## **Fall of the Caliphate**

Completely foreign to the Middle East, the concept of separation of church and state is a Western ideal. This is most likely because of the Judeo-Christian religious orientation favored by most of Western civilization. According to the Gospel of St. Matthew: “So Jesus said to them, “Well, then, pay to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay to God what belongs to God.<sup>146</sup>” Osama bin Laden could not disagree more with this contention. Literally translated, the word Islam means “to submit,” and a devoted Muslim must turn all aspects of one’s life to Allah. In the West, governments desired a disconnection between church and state in order to balance the might of the Catholic Church. For Islam, there has never been an institutional church with a hierarchical delegation of clergy. Thus, there was no need for the partition, but yet each individual Muslim maintains global responsibilities. Robin Bidwell explains, “Islam, on the other hand is bound be intensely political, for its leaders hold that it is the task of every believer to work towards the reshaping of the world along Islamic lines.<sup>147</sup>” Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad and based on Koranic verses, a representative known as a caliph was chosen to lead the newly formed religion. The caliph, which means “successor” or “viceroy,” carried on

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<sup>145</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 121.

<sup>146</sup> Good News Bible Matthew 22:21, P.240.

<sup>147</sup> Bidwell 50.

the functions of the Prophet as spiritual head and temporary ruler of the Islamic state.<sup>148</sup>

According to the Sunni interpretation, the first four successors are known as the “rightly guided” caliphs<sup>149</sup>. Without the leadership of the Prophet, the years following his death were a turbulent time for Islam. Three out of the four righteous caliphs<sup>150</sup> were murdered.<sup>151</sup> The year 661 marked the end of a twenty-nine year rule for the four “rightly guided” when Muawiya began his rule from Damascus.<sup>152</sup> Even though quarreling occurred in certain historical epochs over caliph authenticity<sup>153</sup>, the tradition of the caliphate persisted from the time of the Prophet’s death in 632 into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

A priest or pastor is an essential part of the religious experience for Christians. In Islam, the spiritual leadership plays a series of different roles. Unlike the Christian Bible, which is God’s word divinely inspired but written through men, the Koran is considered by Muslims to be the actual words of Allah as recited verbatim from his prophet, Muhammad. The ulama, which literally translated means “the learned”, have traditionally been responsible for interpreting the Koran and the actions of the Prophet into Islamic laws called the Shariah.<sup>154</sup> These laws provide direction and govern the everyday life of Muslims. Following the lifestyle established at Medina in

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<sup>148</sup> Glasse 84-85.

<sup>149</sup> The “rightly guided” caliphs include Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali.

<sup>150</sup> Umar was stabbed by a Christian slave with personal grievances. Uthman and Ali were killed in an act of regicide by Muslim Arabs attempting to free the Islamic community from unrighteous rulers.

<sup>151</sup> Lewis 126.

<sup>152</sup> Neal Robinson, Islam: A Concise Introduction (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999) 17.

<sup>153</sup> Tracing back to the earliest years of Islam, the lineage of the caliph remains a major issue of disagreement between Sunnis and Shias.

<sup>154</sup> Esposito 34.

the 7<sup>th</sup> Century by the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims are to submit their entire being to the one true God. With this all-encompassing ideology in mind, “scholars who compiled the Shariah, the judges who applied it in the Islamic courts, and the legal experts who advised the judges were considered part of the ulama establishment.<sup>155</sup>” Religious teachers, who were required to be experts in Islamic laws in order to properly instruct others, were also considered to be part of this distinction. Extremely important, the body of ulama confirms authority<sup>156</sup> to rule by representing legitimacy in issues of state and religion.<sup>157</sup>

Setting aside nearly thirteen centuries of Islamic tradition, Mustafa Kemal<sup>158</sup> with the Turkish national assembly changed Islam forever in March 1924 by deposing Caliph Abdul Mejid and abolishing the caliphate.<sup>159</sup> This reformation was viewed by Islamic fundamentalists as one of the most diabolical acts committed against the faith. Following the Swiss model, Father Turk did away with religious courts in favor of a secular structure. Even though Ataturk dissolved the caliphate thirty-three years before Osama was even born, the decision from Istanbul had a profound impact on the future ideology of bin Laden.

For the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, the removal of the caliph was only the ominous beginning. Hasan al-Banna did not want to see his beloved Egypt follow a similar, secular (and thus, Western) path like that of Turkey. In defense of the global community of Muslims, al-Banna dreamed of establishing a Muslim state

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<sup>155</sup> Cleveland 28.

<sup>156</sup> Even in hereditary monarchies such as Saudi Arabia, the ulama must “elect” the sovereignty.

<sup>157</sup> Glasse 407.

<sup>158</sup> Mustafa Kemal is also known as Ataturk or “Father Turk.”

<sup>159</sup> Cleveland 180-181.

in Egypt, followed by the reestablishment of the caliphate, and finally the mastery of the world of Islam by allowing the followers of Allah to control their own destiny.<sup>160</sup> Al-Qaeda would love nothing more than to see al-Banna's dreams become a reality. Under this notion, bin Laden's organization described their mission as: "To establish truth, get rid of evil, and establish an Islamic nation."<sup>161</sup>

Osama bin Laden and Hasan al-Banna were not the only ones hoping for a new caliph. Bruce Lawrence, who has translated and edited bin Laden's statements, ascertained: "Since the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate, no country has replaced Turkey as the Muslim world's center. According to Sayyid Qutb, in order to bring about a new Caliphate governed by God's law there must be a revival in one Muslim country, enabling it to attain success."<sup>162</sup> As discussed in another chapter, bin Laden embraced these teachings from Qutb. For Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the fundamentalist road has been long and challenging. Al-Qaeda's second-in-command has fought both the "Near" and "Far"<sup>163</sup> enemies in an attempt to bring about global change. In his most famous manuscript entitled Knights under the Prophets Banner, Zawahiri repeated: "The establishment of a Muslim state in the heart of the Islamic world is not an easy or close target. However, it is the hope of the Muslim nation to restore its fallen caliphate and regain its lost glory. Do not precipitate collision and to be patient

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<sup>160</sup> Youssef Aboul-Enein, "Al-Ikhwān Al-Muslimeen: The Muslim Brotherhood," Military Review July-August 2003: 30.

<sup>161</sup> Wright 162.

<sup>162</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 42.

<sup>163</sup> The "Near" enemy refers to the authoritative regimes in Muslim-dominated countries, which fundamentalists believe are not acting in accordance with the true ways of Islam. An example of the "Near" enemy would be Egypt under Hosni Mubarak. The "Far" enemy refers to non-Muslim nations, which fundamentalists believe are trying to prevent Islam from greatness. The United States and England are examples of the "Far" enemy.

about victory.<sup>164</sup>” These goals were recurring themes throughout the Egyptian doctor’s rhetoric.

For the upper echelon of al-Qaeda, Afghanistan<sup>165</sup> offered the best opportunity for a modern revival of the caliphate. Unfortunately for the Afghan people, the Soviet withdrawal in the late 1980s did not put an end to the death and despair. In the ensuing power vacuum, a gory civil war commenced. Ethnic cleansing and other human rights violations became the norm, as quarreling warlords ravaged the countryside. Once again proving to be a pivotal date, on September 11, 1996 the Taliban captured Jalalabad, and fifteen days later, the capital city of Kabul fell to Mullah Omar’s marauding forces.<sup>166</sup> Arriving as a guest of the Taliban government, Osama bin Laden proudly announced: “They (the Taliban) are committed to support the religion approved by God, and that country remains as the Muslims have known it, a stronghold of Islam, and its people are amongst the most protective of the religion approved by God, and the keenest to fulfill His laws and to establish an Islamic state.<sup>167</sup>”

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<sup>164</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Laura Mansfield, His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006) 201-202

<sup>165</sup> An author’s note: The political, geographical and strategic importance of Afghanistan has been underestimated. Starting with the struggle between Great Britain and Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the rules and players of the Great Game may have changed but Afghanistan remains exceptionally important in modern Middle Eastern affairs.

<sup>166</sup> Ahmed Rashid, Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) 228.

<sup>167</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 41-42.

The al-Qaeda leaders presume a new caliph will return Islam to the true path. Certainly influenced by Ataturk's decision, Osama bin Laden and his radical followers will stop at nothing to bring about the homecoming of the caliphate. He has attempted to blame the West for preventing a "successor" from being reestablished. However, this war should be taking place inside the ulema. Bin Laden has chosen to use bombs and bullets, instead of pens and paper. Perhaps, he has selected the most radical method because Osama has never possessed religious authenticity or training. The abolishment of the caliphate remains an exceptionally relevant historical event for Muslim radicals. Even though the caliph fell over 80 years ago, modern fundamentalists like bin Laden act as though it was only yesterday. This is another example of extremists believing that the past offers the answers to Islam's problems today.

“Don’t forget what happened to the Shah of Iran despite the reputation, strength, and experience of his security apparatus...<sup>168</sup>”

-Osama bin Laden in a letter warning against authoritative regimes

### **Fall of the Shah and the Persian Experience**

The ultimate goals formulated by Osama bin Laden and his fundamentalist followers are clear. For years, bin Laden has been announcing his plans for basic change. At the forefront of his agenda, the al-Qaeda leader desires a world dominated by Islam. Originally, he believed, like so many other radicals, that this revolutionary transformation would originate in Muslim-dominated lands and spread to all four corners of the globe. Lawrence Wright described one of these aspirations by stating: “The main object of the Islamists’ struggle was to impose Islamic law – Sharia. They believe that the five hundred Koranic verses that constitute the basis of Sharia are the immutable commandments of God, offering a road back to the perfect era of the Prophet and his immediate successors – although the legal code actually evolved several centuries after the Prophet’s death.<sup>169</sup>” To date, Osama bin Laden has repeatedly spoken out against the authoritative Middle Eastern governments for not following the path of Allah. He has vehemently harangued against the leadership in his homeland of Saudi Arabia. As previously discussed, 1979 marked a year of utmost importance in the modern history of Islam. As the deposed Muhammad Reza Shah (d. 1980)<sup>170</sup> left Iran on January 15, 1979, the Pahlavi dynasty was brought to a

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<sup>168</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 273.

<sup>169</sup> Wright 56.

<sup>170</sup> Cleveland 430.

close.<sup>171</sup> For the youthful bin Laden, the revolution in Iran demonstrated to the world what Muslims were capable of achieving.

Since Osama bin Laden was born in the Kingdom and was thus heavily influenced by the Sunni-teachings of Wahhabism, he must view the Shia revolution<sup>172</sup> as flawed from the beginning because of the theological differences between these two major versions of Islam. In his mind, the Muslim rise must be brought about by Sunnis. Also contrary to bin Laden's message, the Iranian uprising was accomplished by Persians, who are certainly from different ethnic backgrounds from Osama and his fellow Arab tribesmen. Despite these key differences, the ripples from the rise of the Shah had worldwide repercussions, particularly for the Saudi dissident. Traditionally, revolutions have generally aimed at installing a more secular and democratic form of governance. In the case of Iran, it was the first revolution in modern day that successfully led the country into religious statehood.

Since Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989)<sup>173</sup> gained complete control of Iran, radical Shia groups have been linked to state-sponsored terrorist activities. This should not be a surprise as the Ayatollah has publically stated, "Islam says: Whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword! People cannot be made obedient except with the sword! The sword is the key to paradise, which can be opened only for holy warriors."<sup>174</sup> There is an ongoing debate

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<sup>171</sup> Glasse 467.

<sup>172</sup> According to chapter four of Charles Kurzman's The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran, the fact that Iran is predominately Shia was an important cultural factor, which enabled the successful overthrow of the government.

<sup>173</sup> Cleveland 427.

<sup>174</sup> Wright 55.

about coordination between organizations like al-Qaeda (Sunni) and Hezbollah (Shia), as analysts stretch to prove the old adage that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Just like the links between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's Iraq<sup>175</sup>, solid evidence has yet to surface to connect these groups.<sup>176</sup> The Age of Sacred Terror states, "On the contrary, the split between Sunni and Shiite runs so deep that many, if not most, Muslims who espouse radical Islamism like bin Laden believe that Shiites are either heretics or not Muslims at all."<sup>177</sup> Despite the distance between these unorthodox groups, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri have learned from their Shia cousins.

The fall of the Shah marked a major shift in Middle Eastern politics and the end of a dynasty, which had begun under Muhammad's father, Reza Shah (d.1944)<sup>178</sup> on April 25, 1926.<sup>179</sup> Bin Laden definitely did not accept the practices of the Shia. However, he must have approved of Islamic law becoming the official way of Iran, just as he has openly supported the stringent Taliban rule in Afghanistan under Amir Mullah Mohammed Omar<sup>180</sup>. While much of the world viewed the actions of the Taliban as repressive, brutal and inhuman, the Saudi dissident trusted that a strict interpretation of the Shariah law is the only way for true believers. With the rise of the Ayatollah, Iran became governed by Islamic decree. After dismissing 50 percent

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<sup>175</sup> Prior to the US invasion, al-Qaeda propaganda was against the authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein. Since his removal, al-Qaeda forces have clashed with American troops stationed throughout the country. Particularly lethal, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was appointed leader of al-Qaeda forces in Iraq by bin Laden in 2004.

<sup>176</sup> The Bush administration has continued to make allegations concerning the relationship between al-Qaeda and Hussein's Iraq.

<sup>177</sup> Benjamin and Simon 263.

<sup>178</sup> Malcolm Yapp, The Near East since the First World War: A History to 1995 (New York: Longman, 1996) 178.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. 174.

<sup>180</sup> The birth year of Amir Mullah Mohammed Omar is unknown. His current whereabouts are also unknown.

of the country's civil judges, the Iranian court system under Khomeini's instruction removed all non-Islamic laws and was forced to base their decisions solely on religious regulations.<sup>181</sup>

Additionally motivating to the al-Qaeda leader was the fact that Muhammad Reza Shah and the Pahlavi reign had been traditionally supported by western nations, notably by Great Britain and the United States. Both of these western powers<sup>182</sup> were directly responsible for the Shah. After all, the CIA was accountable for facilitating the Shah's return to the throne in 1953, following the brief Mossadegh power struggle.<sup>183</sup> Articulated by Kermit Roosevelt<sup>184</sup> in his account of this operation in Countercoup, the solution to regaining command for His Imperial Majesty lay in the hands of the people of Iran. Roosevelt, who acted as the field leader of the joint American-British operation AJAX, attested to only spending less than \$100,000 dollars for the entire process.<sup>185</sup> Prepared to spend more, the relatively insignificant price tag only further demonstrated the role of the Persian masses. According to Roosevelt, the involvement and participation by the people ensured the continued supremacy of the Pahlavi dynasty. To date, Osama bin Laden and his comrades have lacked this public conviction.

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<sup>181</sup> Bakhash, Shaul, The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution, Rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984) 22.

<sup>182</sup> Threatened by Mossadegh, the western alliance feared Iran would fall under the communist influence of the Soviet Union, either through treaties or force.

<sup>183</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005) 108-119.

<sup>184</sup> Kermit Roosevelt, who was the grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, became the head of the CIA's Middle East Department.

<sup>185</sup> Kermit Roosevelt, Countercoup: the Struggle for the Control of Iran (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979) 166.

By replacing a monarchy with an Islamic republic, the rise of the Ayatollah established a new standard in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Persian revolutionaries accomplished their mission after years of effort. Unfortunately for the people of Iran, the leaders of the rebellion possessed only a vague picture for the future. Determined to institute an Islamic state built on the ways of the Prophet in the Seventh Century, Khomeini never had a realistic plan for governance.<sup>186</sup> As a result of this ill-fated lack of planning, many of those involved in the overthrow of the Shah later became disillusioned with the rule of the clerics. This leads to an important question. What would Osama bin Laden do if his military campaign turned out to be successful? Gauging from his interviews, bin Laden, in true politician form, has not discussed such details. Like Khomeini before 1979, Osama is only focused on his revolution, not the long-term effects of his actions.

The removal of the Shah had great implications for Osama bin Laden. Setting a revolutionary precedent, the citizens of a modern nation installed an Islamic theocracy.<sup>187</sup> Even though the revolution occurred in a predominately Persian country dominated by Shiites, the events of 1979 gave bin Laden hope. This is precisely the type of world Osama wishes to construct with the Muslim masses rising up to Islam's banner. However, he has not yet been able to win the propagandist battle for control of the faithful. Bin Laden and his radical followers will not be able

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<sup>186</sup> Bakhsh 73.

<sup>187</sup> It can be contended that a significant number involved in the revolution were not aware of the consequences of the uprising. The argument has been made that Iran under the Ayatollah was just as repressive, if not more repressive than under Muhammad Reza Shah. See Charles Kurzman's [The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran](#).

to re-create the Persian experience without winning the hearts and minds of the worldwide Muslim community.

“As a result of this, in all its different forms and guises, the Jews have taken control of your economy, thereby taking control of your media, and now control all aspects of your life, making you their servants and achieving their aims at your expense – precisely what Benjamin Franklin warned you against.<sup>188</sup>”

-Osama bin Laden in a 2002 letter to the American public

### **Conflict with Israel**

Even before the state of Israel declared independence in 1948, a conflict between the followers of Judaism and Islam<sup>189</sup> existed in the Middle East. Although many Americans believe this divergence has lasted for centuries, the disagreement is essentially a 20<sup>th</sup> Century development. Entire libraries have been filled with books describing the complicated relationship between these two monotheistic faiths. This thesis is not designed to delineate new evidence on this hegemonic battle for regional power or identify the controversy of Palestinian politics. However the fact remains; Osama bin Laden has definitely been influenced and motivated by the creation of the Israeli state and by its rocky relationship with neighboring Muslim nations.

Starting during his childhood, Osama bin Laden was raised to regard Israel with disdain. Osama’s father, Muhammad bin Laden, like many others in the Middle East, wished to make a difference in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He was openly anti-Israel and anti-Jewish, because he alleged the lands of Palestine belonged to the Arabs.<sup>190</sup> As a man with extensive resources at his disposal, Muhammad bin Laden wanted to maximize his profitable construction business to help this cause. “One day, as the story goes, he demanded that his company’s engineers convert two hundred

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<sup>188</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 203.

<sup>189</sup> In turn, Christianity has historically conflicted with Judaism and Islam in the Middle East.

<sup>190</sup> Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I know 8.

bulldozers into tanks for the purpose of attacking Israel. Told that the task was impossible, he decided instead to produce as many sons as possible and convert them into fighters. But out of all the bin Laden sons, Osama became the only fighter.<sup>191</sup>”

Despite maintaining only a relatively small geographical area and possessing a modest population, Israel has traditionally fared well in battle against Muslim adversaries. The Jewish state was able to repel invasions during its war for independence in 1948. Next, Israel dealt one of the most lopsided victories in history to an Arab contingent<sup>192</sup> during the 1967 Six Days War<sup>193</sup>. This discomforting defeat occurred despite an overwhelming statistical superiority for the Muslim nations; the Arabs maintained 2,700 tanks, 800 combat aircraft, 217 ships versus Israel’s modest 800 tanks, 190 planes and 37 ships.<sup>194</sup> In less than a week of fighting, the Israeli state expanded its land area by three times after occupying the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.<sup>195</sup> The preemptive attack by Israel combined with the Muslim shellacking only furthered regional hatred for the Jews. In 1973, this concentrated repugnance united another Arab alliance, which once again battled their neighboring nemesis. Even though the military numbers appeared to prove yet another triumph for the state of Israel, both sides claimed to have possessed the upper hand at the conclusion of the struggle. Egypt and Syria lost 2,000 tanks,

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<sup>191</sup> Esposito 4.

<sup>192</sup> The majority of the Arab alliance was comprised of forces from Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Other Arab countries such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia also contributed military personnel against Israel.

<sup>193</sup> The Six Days War is also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the June War.

<sup>194</sup> Goldschmidt and Davidson 332.

<sup>195</sup> Mansfield 274.

450 aircraft and 11,200 soldiers<sup>196</sup> compared to Israeli losses of 800 tanks, 100 aircraft and 2,500 killed.<sup>197</sup> It is doubtful that the world took notice at the time, but 1973 is also the year that Osama bin Laden recognized in a November 1996 interview as the beginning of his radicalization.<sup>198</sup> In another interview five years later with al-Jazeera's Taysir Alluni, bin Laden blamed the Israeli victory on US intervention<sup>199</sup> by stating, "And the United States has involved itself and its people again and again for more than 53 years, and recognized and supported Israel, and dispatched a general air supply line in 1393 AH (1973) during the days of Nixon, from America to Tel Aviv, with weapons, aid, and men, which affected the outcome of the battle, so how could we not fight it (America)?<sup>200</sup>"

Palestine remains one of the most controversial anomalies in international relations. Under the safe haven of Great Britain following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Jewish and Arab inhabitants of Palestine often erupted in civil strife. Not officially supporting either side, the last British soldiers were withdrawn on June 30, 1948.<sup>201</sup> Since this time, Palestine has seen almost constant bloodshed. Like many of his fellow Arabs, the Saudi millionaire feels Palestine must be liberated from Jewish control. In what is believed to be his first public speech against the

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<sup>196</sup> Egypt suffered 7,700 killed-in-action compared with 3,500 fatalities for Syria.

<sup>197</sup> Cleveland 376.

<sup>198</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 31-32.

<sup>199</sup> On pages 191-193, Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri's Knights Under the Prophets Banner states, "During the 1973 October war between the Arabs and Israel, the United States began airlifting to Israel weapons, ammunition, equipment, and even tanks from warehouses of the operating US Army units directly into the battlefield... Without this direct and flagrant military support for Israel, it would not have been able to achieve the success that it made in the last part of the war."

<sup>200</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 126.

<sup>201</sup> Yapp 137.

United States, bin Laden spoke out in a Saudi mosque in 1990 blaming America for bringing millions of Jewish immigrants from Russia to Israel.<sup>202</sup>

Bin Laden's animosity towards Israel and Palestine seems to have deepened in recent years. After examining his rhetoric from the past, he appears to have increased his loathing of the Jews. In his younger years, Osama heard anti-Jewish language from his Palestinian-idol in exile, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam. Perhaps, he has adopted this modern detestation from his more loquacious partner, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who has invested countless pages of idiom against the Jewish state. For example, the Egyptian doctor believed, "In addition, we must acknowledge that the west, led by the United States, which is under the influence of the Jews, does not know the language of ethics, morality, and legitimate rights."<sup>203</sup>

Besides his constant verbal bombardment against the Palestinian question and US/Israeli unity, Osama bin Laden's recent testimonials revealed a deep concern about a secret Zionist movement bent on world domination. Bin Laden believed the Jewish state dreams of extermination of Islam. In 1998, he stated, "Since the time that Iraq became a force to be reckoned with in the region, becoming the greatest Arab power to threaten Jewish and Israeli security, America has been digging up issues...It is clear today that any attack on any Islamic country is initiated by the true aggressor: Israel...The Jews have succeeded in obligating American and British Christians to strike Iraq."<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I Know 110.

<sup>203</sup> Al-Zawahiri and Mansfield 199.

<sup>204</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 275.

One of the more popular conspiracy theories in the Middle East is that the American press is controlled by Tel Aviv. During interviews, the Saudi Emir has declared that the Jewish lobbyists have infiltrated all areas of United States politics. In a 2001 al-Qaeda recruiting video, bin Laden contested, “We speak of the American government, but it is in reality an Israeli government, because if we look into the most sensitive departments of the government, whether it is the Pentagon or the State Department or the CIA, you find that it is the Jews who have the first word inside the American government. Consequently they use America to execute their plans throughout the world.<sup>205</sup>” In terms of recruitment, the al-Qaeda ranks have only been enlarged by a strong stance against Israel, as many Muslims in the Middle East are engrained with a hatred for their tiny neighbor.

For Osama bin Laden and his extremist followers to be successful, the fundamentalist movement will only persist with support from a sympathetic Muslim population. For this to happen, it is essential for al-Qaeda to demonstrate the continuance of a conflict. Israel provides a perfect alibi. The group has stated,

Come let me tell you what is meant by “Greater Israel” and what disasters beset the region. What is happening to our people in Palestine is merely a model that the Zionist-American alliance wishes to impose upon the rest of the region: the killing of men, women and children, prisons, terrorism, the demolition of homes, the razing of farms, the destruction of factories. People live in perpetual fear and paralyzing terror, awaiting death at any moment

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<sup>205</sup>Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I Know 291.

from a missile or shell that will destroy their homes, kill their sisters, and bury their babies alive.<sup>206</sup>

According to bin Laden's warped view of Zionist control of America, any damage inflicted on the US consequently hurts the Israeli cause. The al-Qaeda leadership constantly verbalized their malicious attitudes towards Israel. Both bin Laden and Zawahiri have openly defied the leadership in their native countries<sup>207</sup> and blame American intervention as an enabling overlord. Hence, the existence of the state of Israel has never been a primary concern for bin Laden. Always included in his rhetoric, Osama has been careful to include the Jewish nation as a migraine to the Muslim cause in the Middle East. However, the crafty Saudi is simply hijacking a traditional Arab grievance in order to maintain compassion, financial assistance and recruits from the conservative Islamic base. In the case of Israel, bin Laden's words have spoken louder than his actions. There is no denying that he has a deep-seated hatred for the Jews, but where are his victories over Israel? Al-Qaeda's major attacks are primarily against American and Western targets.

This does not mean that Osama bin Laden has not been influenced by the conflict with Israel. His father, Mohammad is remembered as a great hero and Arab patriot in Saudi Arabia. Osama was taught, probably directly from his dad and certainly through his example, to loathe their Jewish neighbors. Attending the conservative Islamic and pro-Arab King Abdul Aziz University would have only exacerbated these anti-Semite feelings. He would have been constantly bombarded

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<sup>206</sup>Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 277.

<sup>207</sup> Bin Laden was born in Saudi Arabia, and Zawahiri is from Egypt.

by hatred for the Jews during his partnership with Palestinian exile, Abdullah Azzam. In turn, bin Laden used the Israeli clash as a motivational tool. Only the future will tell if bin Laden will turn his efforts against the Jewish state, but his ideological beginnings were definitely affected by the Arab conflict with Israel.

“Since the goal was what provided the impulse to follow the path, and the goal has become obscured and confused in our umma, it was absolutely imperative that we clarify and define it, and I believe that we have succeeded to a great extent in doing so. We have come to the conclusion that it is our duty to establish sovereignty over the world and to guide all of humanity to the sound precepts of Islam and to its teachings, without which mankind cannot attain happiness.<sup>208</sup>”

-Hasan al-Banna

### **The Society of the Muslim Brothers and Egyptian Influences**

Considered one of the major cradles of civilization, the Egyptian Nile delta has been a land rich in agriculture and tradition for millennia. Springing forth from the fertile farming region in the Northern Province of the country, the preeminent Islamic fundamentalist group of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century grew out of this area and has challenged the Egyptian government ever since. Just as the farmers planted, tilled and cared for the essential crops of the region, the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>209</sup> sowed seeds of Islamic reform which caused social upheaval throughout the country. In contrast to the popularity and prestige surrounding the famous bin Laden construction family, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood was born into relative obscurity. Still, Hasan al-Banna (b. 1906-d.1949)<sup>210</sup>, his organization, and his followers played a pivotal role in shaping the world’s most famous terrorist, Osama bin Laden.

Just as Saudi Arabia was subjected heavily to Wahhabi ideology, Egypt has been influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood since the society’s humble conception in 1928. As wonderfully articulated by Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, Professor of Islamic

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<sup>208</sup> Hassan Banna, and Charles Wendell, Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949): A Selection from the Majmu’ at rasail al-Imam al-shahid Hasan al Banna (Berkley, U of CA Press, 1978) 72.

<sup>209</sup> Henceforth, The Society of the Muslim Brothers will also be referred to as The Muslim Brothers.

<sup>210</sup> “Hasan al-Banna,” Encyclopaedia of Islam 1018-1019.

Studies at Hartford Seminary, “There are three types of Islamism in the modern Muslim world: 1) pre-colonial; 2) colonial; and 3) post-colonial. Wahhabism falls into the first category, whereas the Ikhwan of Egypt (the Muslim Brotherhood movement) falls into the second and the Jihad and Gama’a al Islamiyya movements falls into the third.<sup>211</sup>” Certainly Wahhabism has played a role in influencing the Emir, but being born and raised in the Kingdom did not mean that he was swayed solely by these deep-seated Saudi teachings. Each of these three historic distinctions provided important aspects for bin Laden Islamic indoctrination.

Osama bin Laden is surrounded with a significant number of Egyptian followers, many of whom are known members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Saudi sheikh’s most trusted advisor and second in command of al-Qaeda, was born in Cairo on June 19, 1951.<sup>212</sup> Even though the Egyptian doctor was the leader of the group Islamic Jihad, he nevertheless possessed close ties to the Brothers. During a government interrogation, Zawahiri attested to his radical beginnings by saying, “When I was in high school in 1965 or 1966, when I started reading religious books and following the Muslim Brothers’ incident of 1965.<sup>213</sup>” Indeed, fifteen of the nineteen hijackers on September 11<sup>th</sup> were Saudis. However, the upper echelon of al-Qaeda is crammed with Muslim Brother inspired Egyptians. For example, Egyptian born executive leaders included Mohammed Atef, bin Laden’s

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<sup>211</sup> Muntasir Zayyat, and Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden M Abu-Rabi’, The Road to al-Qaeda: the Story of Bin Laden’s Right-Hand Man (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2004) 2.

<sup>212</sup> Wright 432.

<sup>213</sup> Zayyat and Abu-Rabi 42.

minister of defense (d. 2001), Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, al-Qaeda field general, Seif al-Adl, a military commander, and Abu al-Walid al-Masri, the leading theologian.<sup>214</sup>

Attempting to quell the rising popularity of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, government regimes often resorted to heavy-handed tactics, including all forms of torture to the accused and their families. In turn, many of the Brothers were forced into exile. As the refugees found sanctuary in neighboring countries, the Society's ideals were spread throughout the Middle East. A prominent member of Muslim Brotherhood, despite being born in Palestine, Abdullah Azzam had a great impact on bin Laden. It was Azzam who appears to have first introduced the ideals of the Society of the Muslim Brothers to the Saudi college student.<sup>215</sup> The relationship between Azzam and his student has been underestimated by many writers' accounts.

Even though bin Laden, his family, and his minions have chosen to live without modern conveniences like heat, air-conditioning, or running water in dismal, off-the-beaten-track locations like Afghanistan and Sudan, al-Qaeda possesses a modern, impressive organizational structure.<sup>216</sup> There is great irony in a global terrorist group living in a most antiquated lifestyle but utilizing contemporary technology for global warfare. Although there is debate among analysts about the combat leadership and field acumen of Osama bin Laden, the self-proclaimed mujahidin was definitely responsible for al-Qaeda's innovative configuration. Certainly not known in the Arab world as a religious scholar or academic

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<sup>214</sup> Gerges 141-142.

<sup>215</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 31.

<sup>216</sup> For additional information on this topic, see Peter Bergen's [Holy War Inc.](#)

overachiever, experts are not even sure Osama earned a degree from King Abdul Aziz University. A personal resume issued by bin Laden in 1996 only stated he: “studied management and economics.<sup>217</sup>” Yet, bin Laden’s academic lessons in economic studies/marketing at Jeddah University and engineering from Riyadh University became perfect weapons for organizing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century international rebellion.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, it was during his time at King Abdul Aziz University that young Osama was first introduced to the teachings of Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>219</sup> As the global battle for the soul of Islam continues, the relative success of al-Qaeda stems from the calculating mind of the Saudi dissident. Bin Laden’s model was undeniably modern; however, he did not recreate the wheel.

Just as Osama bin Laden has worked tirelessly to ensure that his organization expanded and succeeded, Hasan al-Banna strove to accomplish a similar goal more than half a century earlier. According to the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, the first regulations over the operational existence of the Brothers began around 1930-31.<sup>220</sup> Working with boundless exertion from the Society’s early days up to his death in 1948, Banna prophetically designed a model with a legacy that would last long after he was gone. Led by a *General Guide*, the Society for the Muslim Brothers maintained a *Consultative Assembly*, *Guidance Council*, *Technical Operations* wing, as well as a controlled *Field Apparatus*.<sup>221</sup> Al-Qaeda has adopted a similar

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<sup>217</sup> Coll, The Bin Ladens 211.

<sup>218</sup> Cooley 202.

<sup>219</sup> Bergen, Holy War, Inc. 50.

<sup>220</sup> Mitchell 163.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. 164.

foundation with by-laws, a constitution, and committees to advise the leadership.<sup>222</sup> Understanding the influence of the Brothers on the Saudi millionaire, Peter Bergen believes, “While bin Laden became the public face and moneybags of al-Qaeda, its key members are Egyptian and its ideology and tactics are based on Egyptian models.<sup>223</sup>”

From the very early days of the Muslim Brotherhood, some of its members argued that the best course of action to produce results involved using violence. For instance, the best method for removing the British from Egypt was to use military tactics to demonstrate that the Brotherhood’s verbal rhetoric was serious. Thus, the Secret Apparatus was born. As early as 1940, the Secret Apparatus was being trained by sympathetic members of the Egyptian officers corps, and covert guerilla training camps were created in the Makatam Hills overlooking Cairo along with other underground facilities in southern Egypt.<sup>224</sup> This group, composed of Muslim Brothers trained in weapons and tactics, was ready to fight with short warning. Just as the name suggests, very few individuals outside of the Apparatus knew of its existence. Most members of the Muslim Brotherhood were unaware of the activities of this group. The Secret Apparatus would use terrorist tactics to introduce panic among the occupying British force, and later against the domestic secular governments. Believing in the aggressive methodology of the Secret Apparatus, bin Laden has also chosen a violent means to gain his ends.

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<sup>222</sup> Wright 162.

<sup>223</sup> Bergen, *Holy War Inc.* 203.

<sup>224</sup> Youssef Aboul-Enein 28.

Discussed in detail in another chapter of this thesis, the destruction of the caliphate created an outrage among the fundamentalists. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hasan al-Banna a mere four years after Ataturk disbanded the highly respected religious position. Peter Mansfield discussed the Egyptian teacher's motives, "Al-Banna's appeal was simple and idealistic. He called for an Islamic state based on the Holy Koran, the traditions of Islam providing everything that was needed for the new social order."<sup>225</sup> Decades later and on an international stage, Osama bin Laden has created an Islamic organization in an effort to bring about his preferential world order. From al-Banna to Zawahiri and Qutb to bin Laden, 20<sup>th</sup> Century fundamentalists have sought a return of the caliphate.

Putting their lives in peril, Osama bin Laden and Hasan al-Banna each attempted to alter the course of their native government unsuccessfully. For Banna, the Egyptian government became disenfranchised with his actions and the growing power of the Brothers during World War II.<sup>226</sup> Following the killing of the Egyptian prime minister by a member of the Muslim Brothers, the secret police retaliated one year later.<sup>227</sup> Hasan al-Banna, the Supreme Guide of the Society of the Muslim Brother, was assassinated on February 12, 1949 in the streets of Cairo.<sup>228</sup> Bin Laden has faced similar threats. After years of speaking out against the House of Saud, it

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<sup>225</sup>Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Press, 1991) 194.

<sup>226</sup>"Hasan al-Banna," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 1018.

<sup>227</sup> Esposito 55.

<sup>228</sup> Wright 18-19.

has been rumored that Saudi agents sent by the government attempted to assassinate Osama during his time in the Sudan.<sup>229</sup>

At the most basic level, the goals of Osama bin Laden and Hasan al-Banna have been similar. Both men have risked their lives to raise their beloved Islam. Each crafted a fundamentalist organization to continue their work long after they are gone. As described by Richard Dreyfuss, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood yearned for the past. “Banna insisted that Muslims should return to the simple days that prevailed during the era of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors, rejecting modern scholarly interpretations of Islamic law and what he saw as the Westernized impurity of thought that had started to beguile Muslims, especially youth.<sup>230</sup>” Almost 60 years after al-Banna’s assassination, bin Laden is still trying to make this dream a reality.

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<sup>229</sup> Mannes 23.

<sup>230</sup> Dreyfuss 51-52.

“All the Arab presidents and kings betrayed the Muslim nation. It is better to seek out death, than to wait for it.”<sup>231</sup>

-Osama bin Laden<sup>232</sup>

## **House of Saud**

Born into one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the Middle East, Osama bin Laden does not appear to fit the profile of an international terrorist. Looking for financial resources or finding a job were never problems that he faced. Growing up, the boundaries of his homeland were never in jeopardy. Unlike some of the other countries in the region which were led by secular governments, the leadership in Saudi Arabia was comprised entirely of Muslims. With the significant Wahhabi influence, Osama along with the rest of the population were even encouraged to practice a puritanical version of Islam. Why did this quiet, affluent and pious Saudi turn against his own government?

In Saudi Arabia, who you know is very important. For the bin Laden clan, this was not a problem. After all, it was the relationship between Mohammad, the Yemeni born patriarch of the bin Laden family, and the Saudi king that was the origin of their rise to the top. As King Abdul Aziz became confined to a wheelchair in his later years, the aging Saudi leader commissioned Mohammad bin Laden to create a ramp in order for his car to be driven to his bedroom on the second floor of his

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<sup>231</sup> Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I know 291.

<sup>232</sup> This statement is from a two-hour long al-Qaeda videotape.

Khozam Palace.<sup>233</sup> Impressed by the precision and innovation of the final work, Abdul Aziz awarded bin Laden contracts around the Kingdom.

From this encounter with the monarch, the father of Osama was able to build a business empire from the construction needs of King Sa'ud's nation-wide development programs.<sup>234</sup> By building roads, airports and renovating holy sites, the family name and company became legendary inside the Kingdom.<sup>235</sup> No government projects can be acquired without the consent of the Saudi royals. For over half a century, the House of Saud and the bin Ladens have been well-connected. According to Osama, Saudi King Faisal wept for many days following the death of his father.<sup>236</sup>

This symbiotic relationship was exceptionally lucrative for the bin Laden clan, but Osama chose the spoils of the afterlife by openly opposing the Saudi leadership. Even in his younger days, the pious bin Laden must have recognized that certain members of the House of Saud did not act as instructed by proper Wahhabi doctrine. With the rise of oil prices, astronomical amounts of money began flowing into the Kingdom. Stories began circulating concerning younger members of the royal family using the national treasury as a debit card. Even more demeaning to Osama, the money from the black gold was contributing to sins of the flesh.<sup>237</sup> Bin Laden must have been infuriated by the ruling family in the Land of the Prophet acting in such an immoral fashion.

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<sup>233</sup> Wright 75.

<sup>234</sup> Lacey 466.

<sup>235</sup> Cooley 96.

<sup>236</sup> Bergen, [The Osama bin Laden I know](#) 9.

<sup>237</sup> For more details, please see [Sleeping with the Devil](#) by Robert Baer.

There is an old saying, “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you.” In dealing with the House of Saud, Osama bin Laden never heeded this warning. Speaking of the injustices committed by his former government, Osama bin Laden stated:

The Saudi regime has committed very serious acts of disobedience – worse than the sins and offenses that are contrary to Islam, worse than oppressing slaves, depriving them of their rights and insulting their dignity, intelligence, and feelings, worse than squandering the general wealth of the nation.

Millions of people suffer every day from poverty and deprivation, while millions of riyals flow into the bank accounts of the royals who wield executive power. ....It has gotten to the point where the regime has gone so far as to be clearly beyond the pale of Islam, allying itself with infidel America and aiding it against Muslims, and making itself an equal to God by legislating on what is or is not permissible without consulting God.<sup>238</sup>

From 1989-1991 bin Laden was quarantined, as Saudi security officials confiscated his passport in an attempt to prevent contact with Islamic extremist groups.<sup>239</sup> On April 7, 1994, King Fahd publically decreed the end of Bin Laden’s citizenship because his behavior “contradicts the Kingdom’s interests and risks harming its relation with fraternal countries” and for his “refusal to obey instructions issued to him.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 247-248.

<sup>239</sup> Cooley 98-99.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. 101.

Accusing the House of Saud of falling away from Shariah law, bin Laden created the Advice and Reform Committee in 1992 to advocate for national changes in Saudi Arabia.<sup>241</sup> Maximizing the clout of his family name, Osama certainly drafted this group because of numerous frustrations with the direction of his homeland. The use of American troops would have been a major grievance. As his rhetoric against the royal family continued, bin Laden was stripped of his Saudi citizenship and his domestic assets were frozen.<sup>242</sup>

As featured in the next chapter, Saudi Arabia's invitation to the American-led coalition against Saddam Hussein in the early 1990s was the hypothetical straw that broke the camel's back. Bin Laden was greatly disgruntled by the unwillingness of the Saudi royals to consider utilizing his Afghan veterans in the conflict. Moreover, the American soldiers, who were allowed to remain in the Kingdom after the fighting, were viewed by Osama as a constant cancer. From his perspective, the United States was only partially to blame for this indignation. His government was just as guilty for allowing foreign forces to remain embedded in the land of Mecca of Medina against the wishes of the Prophet.

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<sup>241</sup> Mannes 23.

<sup>242</sup> Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I know 150.

“The latest and greatest of these aggressions, incurred by the Muslims since the death of the Prophet, is the occupation of the land of the two Holy Places.<sup>243</sup>”

-Osama bin Laden referring to the continued presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia<sup>244</sup>

## **US Invasion**

Creating an intercontinental crisis, the armed forces of Iraq invaded their defenseless neighbor, Kuwait, on August 2, 1990.<sup>245</sup> When Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein refused to retreat from the oil-rich nation, the United States led an international coalition<sup>246</sup> to remove the aggressor state. The ensuing US military campaign was one of the most successful in the history of warfare. However, the invasion just as importantly marked America as the sole Superpower in the Middle East.<sup>247</sup> Prior to the arrival of Western troops in the holy lands, the radical principles of Osama bin Laden had already been established. Yet, the events surrounding the American offensive solidified his fundamentalist ideology and terminated any hope of rectifying bin Laden’s rocky relationship with the House of Saud.

On the heels of the epic Iran-Iraq War<sup>248</sup>, President Saddam Hussein once again upset the balance of power in the Gulf region with his sweep into tiny Kuwait. Before this international incident, he had feared the Persian revolution would spread

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<sup>243</sup> Bergen 165.

<sup>244</sup> This excerpt is from bin Laden’s August 23, 1996 declaration of war against the United States.

<sup>245</sup> Cleveland 478.

<sup>246</sup> According to Peter Mansfield’s A History of the Middle East, the coalition was comprised of more than 600,000 soldiers from 54 countries.

<sup>247</sup> It is also important to note that the US led invasion took place right after the Soviet Union ceased to exist, thus ensuring American global hegemonic status.

<sup>248</sup> The bloody Iran-Iraq War began with Iraqi aggression on September 17, 1980 and lasted until both sides were exhausted in 1988. See A History of the Middle East on page 330 for further details.

into his vast Shia population and preemptively started a war with Iran.<sup>249</sup> Following this gruesome war, Saddam did not wait long to strike again. Under the pretense that Kuwait had been “artificially” removed from Iraq by British policy makers, Hussein sought to reclaim “Iraq’s 19<sup>th</sup> province.”<sup>250</sup> With a well-equipped but limited Saudi defense force, the battle-tested Iraqi troops could easily have rolled across their southern border into the heart of the Kingdom. The Saudi monarchy called across the Atlantic Ocean for help. Infuriating bin Laden, King Fahd invited the United States armed forces into the land of the Prophet, even offering to finance the cost of the expeditionary force.<sup>251</sup> This was humiliating to the Saudi-born Osama. Overconfident in his participation in ending the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, bin Laden believed that his army of mujahidin would once again be successful against an aggressive invasion of Muslim lands.

In their public addresses in recent years, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have tried to enflame the Muslim masses to fight the second American occupation of Iraq initiated by the George W. Bush administration. However, this was not always bin Laden’s position. “I said many times in my speeches at the mosques, warning that Saddam will enter the Gulf,” said the Saudi dissident. “No one believed me.”<sup>252</sup> As forty-two Iraqi divisions mounted on the Kuwait border, the House of Saud attempted to confer with the Butcher of Baghdad (as Saddam Hussein

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<sup>249</sup> Bakhsh 126.

<sup>250</sup> Oren 563.

<sup>251</sup> Cooley 207.

<sup>252</sup> Wright 176-177.

has been called) but to no avail.<sup>253</sup> The negotiations quickly failed, and Iraqi armor engulfed the small state of Kuwait. Hussein justified the hostile move to retrieve Iraq's 19<sup>th</sup> province, but the oil-rich financial capabilities of Kuwait were quite appealing in the wake of a trillion dollar war debt accrued fighting Iran.<sup>254</sup> In bin Laden's mind, Allah had presented another opportunity for him to guide the combat-ready mujahidin to another victory.

As Iraq threatened to move south, Osama desperately wanted the chance to defend his native soil. He immediately wrote a letter to King Fahd offering the assistance of the Arab Afghan mujahidin to defend the Kingdom from the northern invaders.<sup>255</sup> His request was never accepted. Exasperated that the Saudi monarchy rebuffed his offer in lieu of the greatest military machine ever assembled, bin Laden never forgave the royalty for allowing a Christian army into the land of the Prophet. Moreover, this anger only deepened as coalition forces remained embedded in Saudi Arabia. Of the 540,000 US troops involved in the conflict, nearly 20,000 remained in the Kingdom after the liberation of Kuwait.<sup>256</sup>

There is a Muslim belief<sup>257</sup> stemming from the time of the Prophet that no two religions shall ever share the land of the Two Holy Mosques<sup>258</sup>. Even though he was living with his family in Khartoum, bin Laden was irate that King Fahd had not kept

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<sup>253</sup> Al-Zawahiri and Mansfield 335, 338.

<sup>254</sup> Oren 563.

<sup>255</sup> Esposito 11.

<sup>256</sup> Rashid 133.

<sup>257</sup> As explained by Victor Davis Hanson on page 292 in The Al Qaeda Reader, "This injunction is based on an authoritative hadith (found in both Bukhari and Muslim), where Mohammad said: 'There shall not be two religions together in the Arabian Peninsula.'"

<sup>258</sup> In modern day Saudi Arabia, the Two Holy Mosques are the holiest sites in Islam and are located in the cities of Mecca and Medina.

his promise of removing coalition forces months after the defeat of the Iraqi military.<sup>259</sup> With the conclusion of the Iraq invasion of Kuwait, the once powerful Middle Eastern country was devastated. Saddam Hussein and his Ba’thist party had exhausted the nation through almost a decade of fighting. In an attempt to prevent future conflicts in the region and sustain surveillance over the Butcher of Baghdad, the United States left a military contingency in Osama’s native soil.

Always in need of new recruits, Bin Laden has developed into a master of radical motivational speaking. Twisting the situation to meet his needs throughout the 1990s, the Prince compared the US bases in Saudi Arabia to the occupying forces of the Crusades. In a 2002 document released by the second-in-command of al-Qaeda, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri relayed this message by stating, “These (US) forces have been present for nearly twelve years since Iraq withdrew (from Kuwait) and capitulated (since the 1991 Gulf War). During that time – and due to sanctions – nearly two and a half million<sup>260</sup> Iraqi children have been killed...<sup>261</sup>” The Egyptian doctor continued, “No, the issue is about occupation, thievery, plunder, domination, and the Crusaders’ suppression of Muslims in their holiest lands: the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>262</sup>”

As articulated in this writing, the radicalization of Osama bin Laden can be traced to his younger days and was solidified, by his own admittance, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. However, the House of Saud’s decision to invite the

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<sup>259</sup> Wright 192.

<sup>260</sup> An accurate number of Iraqi deaths appear to have eluded the leaders of al-Qaeda, as bin Laden and al-Zawahiri has each proposed different statistics at various interviews.

<sup>261</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 105.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. 106.

Christian-dominated nation of the United States to wage a war on behalf of Islam was a personal slight to bin Laden. The fact that the American military remained entrenched in the region only added fire to the Emir's already hostile disposition.

Bin Laden believes at the most basic level that the current hegemony possessed by the West is coming to a close. More specifically, America's status as lone superpower is waning. Through the unorthodox trials and tribulations of his al-Qaeda followers, Islam will once again be returned to the top. In a symbolic statement, the reign of the United States and the West will come crashing down just like the Twin Towers. In a letter sent by Hasan al-Banna in 1946, the leader of the Muslim Brothers proclaimed that one strong push by the defenders of the faith would topple the unjust, tyrannical and weak West.<sup>263</sup> These sentiments have remained the battle-cry of Osama during his reprehensible actions of terror. For bin Laden, September 11<sup>th</sup> was supposed to mark the first domino in the American collapse.

To accomplish the fall of the West, according to bin Laden, the Prophet's army must start by striking at the perceived enforcer of these harsh foreign policies - the United States armed forces. As described by Lawrence Wright: "In large part, it was because they saw America as the locus of Christian power... Viewed through the eyes of men who were spiritually anchored in the seventh century, Christianity was not just a rival, it was the archenemy. To them, the Crusades were a continual historical process that would never be resolved until the final victory of Islam."<sup>264</sup> The man known as the "young lion" has often attempted to inspire his besieged

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<sup>263</sup> Laqueur, No End to War 32.

<sup>264</sup> Wright 194.

supporters<sup>265</sup> around the globe by insulting the fighting capabilities of the American military.<sup>266</sup> With each escalating assault against the West, al-Qaeda hopes to deal the deathblow to the Christian crusaders.

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<sup>265</sup> Bin Laden believes that Islam is under attack. In his statements, he often calls for prayers for Muslims suffering in Palestine and Chechnya.

<sup>266</sup> Ibrahim, Zawahiri and bin Laden 263.

“Indeed, Islam has the right to take the initiative. Islam is not a heritage of any particular race or country; this is God’s religion and it is for the whole world. It has the right to destroy all obstacles in the form of institutions and traditions which limit man’s freedom of choice. It does not attack individuals nor does it force them to accept its beliefs; it attacks institutions and traditions to release human beings from their poisonous influences, which distort human nature and which curtail human freedom.<sup>267</sup>”

-Sayyid Qutb from Milestones

### **Sayyid Qutb**

Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda leadership have created innovative ways of achieving their ends. Yet, the Saudi Sheik certainly cannot claim a monopoly over radical Muslim thought. Although bin Laden has become infamous for his diabolical actions, he will never be renowned by the umma for creating Islamic dogma.

Throughout this thesis, the famous outlaw has been shown to be influenced by numerous circumstances and individuals. From these interactions, Osama has accepted a number of unconventional teachings as his own. In terms of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic fundamentalism, there is only one name - Sayyid Qutb. Just as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke provided the ideological spark for the Founding Fathers of the American Revolution, Sayyid Qutb ignited the ember for the world’s most wanted man.

Raised in a middle class family, Sayyid Qutb was born near Assyut in Upper Egypt in 1906.<sup>268</sup> Like bin Laden and Zawahiri, Qutb grew up in a rather conservative household. Following in his mother’s example, he always revered his

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<sup>267</sup> Qutb, Milestones 75.

<sup>268</sup> Laqueur, No End to War 33.

religion and memorized the Koran by the age of ten.<sup>269</sup> After graduation from a college created by reformers to incorporate western curriculum into Egyptian classrooms, the astute Qutb became a civic administrator for the Ministry of Public Instruction.<sup>270</sup> Following his father's death in 1933, Qutb moved with his family to an outward suburb of Cairo.<sup>271</sup> Over the next several years, he became known for his unique abilities to manipulate words as a writer, poet and literary critic. A visit to the United States helped transform his fundamentalist side. Sayyid then felt compelled to direct the hearts and minds of the Muslim masses in order to revive the ways of the Prophet.

Sayyid Qutb received a college education from Dar al-Ulam<sup>272</sup> and originally had an affinity for Western writers and Western culture.<sup>273</sup> “He was Western in so many ways – his dress, his love of classical music and Hollywood movies. He had read, in translation, the works of Darwin and Einstein, Byron and Shelley, and had immersed himself in French literature, especially Victor Hugo.<sup>274</sup>” This admiration would all change after a visit to the United States in the late 1940s. While researching the academic realm for the Egyptian government, Qutb's first-hand account described America as a land of materialism, immoral activity and racism. During an extended stay in Greeley, Colorado, he was particularly annoyed by the

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<sup>269</sup> Wright 10.

<sup>270</sup> Esposito 56.

<sup>271</sup> Wright 11-12.

<sup>272</sup> Hasan al-Banna also attended Dar al-Ulam.

<sup>273</sup> Esposito 56.

<sup>274</sup> Wright 10.

amount of time and money spent on the upkeep of lawns.<sup>275</sup> His cross-continental journey<sup>276</sup> coincided with Egypt's Cold War alliance with the Soviet Union, which he felt placed his homeland one step further away from becoming a nation run by Islamic law. Worse yet for Qutb, Israel was granted independence by the United Nations in 1948. One year later, Hasan al-Banna, the distinguished creator and head of the Muslim Brotherhood, was assassinated by King Faruq's secret police.

After personally surveying the moral decay in American society for more than a year, Qutb returned to Egypt to make his mark on his homeland. From the very start of his journey by ship in November 1948 until his joyous reunion in Cairo via airplane, Qutb was forced into socially awkward situations.<sup>277</sup> Viewing himself as modern day defender of righteousness, Sayyid's faith only became more steadfast and unwavering because of his experience in the United States. Lacking an imposing presence or military training, Qutb wisely chose pen and paper as the weapon of choice for his crusade. He joined martyr Hasan al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood and became the ideological center for the group.<sup>278</sup> Qutb lost his life in 1966 for his staunch views against the government and involvement with the Brothers.

Forty years after his death, Sayyid Qutb remains one the most frequently read and influential Islamic fundamentalist writers to this day. His numerous works, which originated in the Middle East, have been translated and spread around the

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<sup>275</sup> John Calvert, "The World is an Undutiful Boy!": Sayyid Qutb's American Experience," Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 11.1 (2000): 96.

<sup>276</sup> His tour of the US included New York City, Washington, D.C., Denver, Greeley, San Francisco, Palo Alto and San Diego.

<sup>277</sup> Calvert 96.

<sup>278</sup> Selma Botman, Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919-1952 (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991) 124.

globe. Osama bin Laden has studied Qutb's writings extensively. Therefore, it is important for the reader to grasp an understanding of these documents. First published in Arabic in 1949 and later printed in English in 1953, Social Justice in Islam is one of Qutb's earlier works. With a very organized and developed writing style, he attempted to build a chapter-by-chapter case for Muslims to return to a traditional Islamic lifestyle. Written during the dawning of the Cold War, he argued that it is imperative for the future of Muslims to cast aside the pressure to side with either democracy or communism. Social Justice articulated the need to remain faithful to the all encompassing, long-established customs of Islam. Qutb's writing style in Social Justice contains a less traditional Muslim style than his later works. There is almost a westernized tone about this book, which is ironic considering much of the book points out what is wrong with democracy and the West. Drawing on a more traditional method, Qutb utilized passages from the Koran to support his points. In turn, bin Laden often supported his case with verses from the Koran.

Blazing the way for fundamentalist thought, Qutb maintained little respect for Judaism. The deep-seated hatred between Muslims and Jews may appear irrational, especially considering the shared historical linkage to Abraham. However, the contempt is rather obvious in Social Justice with lines such as: "Judaism was suffering an eclipse, when it had become a system of rigid and lifeless ritual, an empty and unspiritual sham."<sup>279</sup> Particularly fervent in recent years, bin Laden has not concealed his personal animosity for Israel and its people. Specifically aimed at

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<sup>279</sup> Sayyid Qutb, Social Justice in Islam, trans John B. Hardie. (Washington, DC: American Council of Learned Societies, 1953) 2.

the United States, Qutb believed that Zionist groups work behind the scenes in America to campaign against Islam. The al-Qaeda leaders have stressed this same conspiracy theory in many interviews.

Qutb went directly to his point and said, “Our mission is to call for a renewal of Islamic life, a life governed by the spirit and the law of Islam, which alone can produce that form of Islam we need today, and which is in conformity with the genuine Islamic tradition.”<sup>280</sup> To create a feeling of distrust, Social Justice outlined how the Western philosophy of life is purely based on worldly greed and reminded the reader that the horrors of both World Wars were caused by the West. In the concluding chapter, he additionally claimed that the West only uses morals to gain personal advantages. This appears to have a sardonic twist, as one might make the argument that Sayyid Qutb was doing the exact same thing.

In the concluding chapter of Social Justice, Qutb maintained that the Muslim world is at a crossroads. Perhaps it was this line of thinking that developed into his later work, Milestones, also translated as Signposts. Summarizing the main ideological thread of Social Justice, Qutb discussed the future options of Western democracy, Eastern communism or a return to true Islamic ideals. Although Qutb was not nearly as vehement as in later writings, he certainly contended that the way for Muslims to return to greatness was by revisiting the rich traditions of the past. Throughout this work, three foundations for Islamic justice are highlighted. Qutb believed in absolute freedom of conscience, complete equality of all men and the firm

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid. 227.

mutual responsibility of society. He seemed to overlook the fact that these egalitarian ideals are at the very center of democracy. While his evaluation of democracy holds legitimacy in certain areas, it is difficult to believe that these principles are more apparent in a traditional Islamic society than in a truly democratic form of governance. Around the time Social Justice was written, the influential Egyptian must have enjoyed some small faith in the Middle Eastern governments, as he followed up this previous argument by directing the Muslim masses to work through legal and developmental channels to reach this goal.

Quickly becoming a valuable asset to the Society of the Muslim Brothers, Sayyid Qutb acted as the chair of the section for the propagation of the message, editor of their newspaper and eventually the spokesman for the Society.<sup>281</sup> On July 23, 1952, a group of young military officers, who would become known as the Free Officers, organized a successful coup d'état against the Egyptian regime.<sup>282</sup> The uprising followed years of economic impotence and constant conflict with the British. The youthful officers group, which included Colonel Gamal Abd al-Nasser (1918-1970) and Colonel Anwar al-Sadat (1918-1981), selected the reputable and respected General Muhammad Naguib (1901-1984) to act as their senior leader.<sup>283</sup> Changing from one regime to another, the Free Officers were successful in bringing down the monarchy and tried to instill new governance. Originally the popular choice of the Free Officers and acting President of the Republic since June 1953, General Naguib

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<sup>281</sup> Mitchell 141.

<sup>282</sup> Cleveland 303.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid. 304, 305.

resigned as President after a power struggle with Nasser.<sup>284</sup> Later, Nasser placed Naguib under house arrest for his ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>285</sup> The young Colonels would rule<sup>286</sup> Egypt for the next twenty-seven years.<sup>287</sup>

Believing that the Free Officers intended to bring about an Islamic state, Qutb accepted another government post for educational reform and even acted as a conduit between the Brothers and the Revolutionary Command Council.<sup>288</sup> The honeymoon between the Society and the government did not last long. Accused of participating in a failed assassination attempt<sup>289</sup> against Nasser, Qutb was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment in the Tura prison outside Cairo on May 3, 1955.<sup>290</sup> Paralleling the later experience of Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sayyid was brutally beaten and abused by prison guards. With a similar outcome, both Egyptian fundamentalists only became more extremist in their religious zeal during their time in the penal complex. Years later, Zawahiri would describe Qutb in Knights Under the Prophet's Banner as, “the most prominent theoretician of the fundamentalist movement.”<sup>291</sup> Qutb had always suffered from poor health, and after two heart-attacks, was moved into the prison hospital in May 1955.<sup>292</sup> While in the infirmary, the Egyptian writer created his legacy through his writings.

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<sup>284</sup> Vatikiotis 375, 381.

<sup>285</sup> Peter Mansfield 245.

<sup>286</sup> Nasser ruled from 1954-1970. Next, Sadat ruled from 1970-1981.

<sup>287</sup> Goldschmidt and Davidson 486, 491.

<sup>288</sup> Benjamin and Simon 62.

<sup>289</sup> The assassination attempt took place on October 24, 1954.

<sup>290</sup> Calvert 101.

<sup>291</sup> Al-Zawahiri and Mansfield 137.

<sup>292</sup> Wright 34.

After being released from prison in 1964, Qutb was rearrested a year later on charges of leading a terrorist organization and plotting to assassinate President Nasser along with Egypt's most famous film stars and singers.<sup>293</sup> He was found guilty, sentenced to death and hanged on August 21, 1966.<sup>294</sup> Because of his own harassment, imprisonment, and torture at the hands of the Egyptian government, the later works of Qutb are not nearly so diplomatic. His ill-treatment combined with constant conflict being imposed on other members of the Muslim Brotherhood created the change in the tone of his works. While publishing over forty books, many from a jail cell, Sayyid witnessed twenty-five of his Brothers killed by government agents.<sup>295</sup> Both Qutb, and later bin Laden, felt betrayed by their native government for acting in a manner they perceived as against Islam.

Although many underlying themes are apparent in both Social Justice and Milestones, the significant differences in these books broadcast the transformation of Qutb. Social Justice was completed by 1949 and does not contain the seething critique of his later works. While the book cited many Koranic verses to develop arguments, it appears to have been created for a more "academic" reader. Ironically, it is almost Western in the distinction that Qutb attempts to use logical plan planks to communicate his ideology. This is simply not the case in Milestones, which preaches deeper religious principles and is aimed at the average Muslim on the street. Perhaps through trial and error, Qutb discovered a more efficient writing style to bring his

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<sup>293</sup> Mortimer 270.

<sup>294</sup> Calvert 101.

<sup>295</sup> Esposito 58.

message to the Islamic populace. Written during a turbulent time in the Middle East, Milestones instructs the Muslim world the path to follow in order to return to greatness. In his most popular book, he recalls stories of Prophet Muhammad battling on behalf of Allah. Addressing the issue of a defensive jihad, Sayyid believes the homeland of Islam is not a territory marked by borders on a map but is located wherever a Muslim worships the one true God. From his perspective, Muslims have no choice but to defend their religion to ensure there is no wall preventing Islam from spreading. Qutb's works have provided intellectual ammunition for recruiting new members into fundamentalist groups like al-Qaeda.

Given as a title to great saints, the word "qutb" literally translated means "axis" or "pole" and is the recognition of a spiritual center residing inside human beings.<sup>296</sup> It appears this is the perfect name for Sayyid, who committed his life to Islamic fundamentalism. Forty years after his death, Sayyid Qutb remains one the most widely read and influential Islamic fundamentalist writers. His numerous works, which originated in the Middle East, have been translated and spread around the globe. Unlike some of the less-educated fundamentalist leaders of today, Qutb has great insight in the history of Islam and a particularly impressive background in Koranic knowledge. Unfortunately, this also allows him to warp some passages to fit his argument. Benjamin and Simon understand, "It was Sayyid Qutb who fused together the core elements of modern Islamism: the Kharijites' takfir, ibn Taymiyya's

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<sup>296</sup>Glasse 327.

fatwas and policy prescriptions, Rashid Rida's salafism, Maudadi's concept of the contemporary jahiliyya and Hassan al-Banna's political activism.<sup>297</sup>”

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<sup>297</sup> Benjamin and Simon 62.

“Bin Laden’s former associates describe him as deeply impressionable, always in need of mentors, men who knew more about Islam and the modern world than he did.”<sup>298</sup>

-Ahmed Rashid, authority on al-Qaeda and the Taliban

### **Dr. Abdullah Azzam**

Since Osama bin Laden became an international fugitive for his role of threatening global security, journalists and analysts alike have written numerous books and news articles on the Saudi exile. Unfortunately without the proper respect for academic research, discrepancies in the mass media have become apparent in describing the legendary Muslim fundamentalist. Moreover, there seems to be a glaring omission in certain evaluations. Many works simply do not take into account the crucial role the controversial Palestinian Abdullah Azzam (b.1941)<sup>299</sup> played on the ideological foundation of Osama bin Laden. Some modern Middle Eastern history books do not even make mention of Azzam’s name, and most of his writings have never been translated into English. Dr. Azzam will not be underestimated in this thesis. As articulated by jihad expert Fawaz Gerges, “More than any other contemporary figure, Azzam, considered the spiritual father of the Afghan Arabs, exercised a formative influence over bin Laden...”<sup>300</sup>

Bin Laden is well known for his part in designing al-Qaeda. Lesser known, however, is the fact that he was not the lone architect in the construction of one of the greatest terrorist organizations of all time. While a student at King Abdul Aziz

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<sup>298</sup> Esposito 11.

<sup>299</sup> “Defence of the Muslim Lands,”

[http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam\\_defence\\_2\\_intro.htm](http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_defence_2_intro.htm)

<sup>300</sup> Gerges 131.

University in the late 1970s, bin Laden was heavily influenced by the teachings of Dr. Abdullah Azzam, who has become known as the “Emir of Jihad” or “Godfather of global jihad.”<sup>301</sup> After Israel’s victory in the Six Days War<sup>302</sup>, Azzam moved to Jordan.<sup>303</sup> This experience created a deep life-long hatred of the Jewish state and its Western supporters and at the same time probably influenced his ideas on jihad. Following his crusade against Israel, Azzam became a faculty member at the University of Jordan in Amman, where the fiery professor taught Islamic law.<sup>304</sup> A member of the Muslim Brotherhood since attending al-Azhar University in Cairo, the Jordanian Palestinian was forced to teach in Saudi Arabia because it was the only country that would take him.<sup>305</sup> With his doctorate in Islamic law and ultra-conservative view, Azzam became close to fellow exile and faculty member, Mohammed Qutb.<sup>306</sup> Both men were idolized by bin Laden.

Many Middle Eastern researchers have speculated that Azzam created the pro-Palestinian group Hamas<sup>307</sup>, although it is generally accepted that Shaykh Ahmad Yasin founded the organization in 1973 based on the model of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>308</sup> During an interview, Bin Laden has stated: “...Sheikh Azzam increased his activity with the mujahidin in Palestine, and specifically with

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<sup>301</sup> Esposito 7.

<sup>302</sup> The Six Days War is also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the June War.

<sup>303</sup> Benjamin and Simon 99.

<sup>304</sup> Bergen, Holy War, Inc. 55.

<sup>305</sup> Baer 127.

<sup>306</sup> Coll, Ghost Wars 155.

<sup>307</sup> The word Hamas means Islamic Resistance Movement.

<sup>308</sup> Yapp 475.

Hamas.<sup>309</sup>” In 1980, Azzam relocated to Pakistan after the Muslim World League hired the Palestinian professor to head its educational section.<sup>310</sup> With his prior experience in setting up radical organizations, Azzam helped his former pupil to construct al-Qaeda. The student-teacher reunion did not last long. After other attempts on his life in 1989, Azzam and two of his sons were killed in a car bombing in Peshawar, Pakistan.<sup>311</sup>

Religious authority was one of the most important dynamics in the Azzam/bin Laden relationship. The PhD, which Azzam obtained from al-Azhar University in Cairo, held tremendous weight in the Muslim world. His faith-based education allowed the Palestinian exile the ability to justifiably speak on religious matters. With a business background, Azzam’s protégé has always been haunted by a lack of credibility to address the complexities of Islam. Bin Laden was forced to find religious clout from other men following the death of Azzam.

Just as Milestones<sup>312</sup> is Sayyid Qutb’s most prominent work, Abdullah Azzam has spread his Islamic values through Defense of the Muslim Lands. In support of the message of the fiery Palestinian, Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote, “And such is the case with every land occupied by the unbelievers, and may Allah have mercy on the martyr of Islam – as we consider him – Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, who constantly repeated and affirmed that the Muslims are in sin from the fall of Spain until today, because they have not performed their personal duty of freeing the lands of Islam

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<sup>309</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 77.

<sup>310</sup> Dreyfuss 279.

<sup>311</sup> Laqueur, No End to War 52.

<sup>312</sup> Milestones is also called Signposts.

from the infidels.<sup>313</sup>” The lectures by Azzam oozed with the most basic Qutb principles particularly that the global community of Muslim believers had fallen away from their religious responsibilities, and subsequently desperately needed to return to Allah’s true path.

The restoration of the fallen caliphate is another value at the very core of Qutb, Azzam and bin Laden. Describing the Palestinian fundamentalist’s persona and motto, Peter Bergen viewed Azzam as:

A barrel-chested man whose enormous gray beard and fiery rhetoric made him a commanding presence, Azzam believed that jihad was an absolute necessity to restore the Khalifa, the dream that Muslims around the world could be united under one ruler. His motto was ‘Jihad and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogues.’ And he put that belief in practice, often joining the mujahedeen, ‘holy warriors,’ battling the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>314</sup>

These radical teachings were not lost on the Saudi apprentice. According to Benjamin and Simon, “Azzam became a mentor for bin Laden. The Saudi’s belief in the reestablishment of a caliphate through an immediate jihad and his disdain for secular Arab nationalism were undoubtedly fostered by this relationship (with Azzam).<sup>315</sup>”

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<sup>313</sup> Al-Zawahiri and Mansfield 340.

<sup>314</sup> Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.* 55-56.

<sup>315</sup> Benjamin and Simon 100.

Without the involvement of Abdullah Azzam, there would have been no al-Qaeda. Bin Laden is often credited as being the founder of this fundamentalist organization. This is only partially correct. Azzam created the Office of Services in Peshawar to provide aid to the Afghan cause in 1984, and he enlisted his former pupil, bin Laden, as operating partner and financial supporter.<sup>316</sup> Five years later in 1989, Osama founded al-Qaeda to maintain contact with the Afghan veterans.<sup>317</sup> Not one to shy away from the camera, bin Laden has taken pleasure in his global notoriety. He took credit, where credit was due. The Saudi Emir also gave credit to Azzam in 1996 by saying, “He (referring to bin Laden) established alongside Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Azzam – May God bless his soul – the office for mujahidin services in Peshawar; he (again referring to himself) also established along with Sheikh Azzam the Sidda camp for training of Arab mujahidin who came for jihad in Afghanistan.<sup>318</sup>” Although these Arab mujahidin were not seasoned fighters in the early years of Afghanistan, the training camps created by Azzam and bin Laden provided schools of war to practice various tactics and techniques. During the latter years of American Civil War, General Ulysses S. Grant had great success with the Northern army against the forces of the Confederacy because of the early training by the battle-shy General George McClellan. In this same manner, today’s al-Qaeda forces have been turned into a worthy fighting entity because of the years of training provided by the Afghan camps.

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<sup>316</sup>Coll, Ghost Wars 155.

<sup>317</sup> Mannes 20.

<sup>318</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 32.

The assassination of Abdullah Azzam and his two sons is still shrouded in mystery, as the perpetrators have never been captured or come forth. In the absence of the truth, many conspiracy theories have circulated about who was responsible for the car bombing. The United States, Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), al-Zawahiri and bin Laden have all been accused in this carousel of blame. Defending his innocence, Osama publicly stated:

The Jews were the ones who were complaining most about the Sheikh's (Azzam) movement, and who were constantly targeting him. It is therefore believed that Israel, in collusion with some of its Arab agents, killed the Sheikh. As for this accusation against me, it was fabricated by the Americans, the Jews, and some of their agents. It doesn't even merit a response. Those who witnessed events know of the close relationship between Sheikh Azzam and myself.<sup>319</sup>

Government authorities did little to investigate the mysterious circumstances surrounding Azzam's death. Because of this, the public sphere will probably never know the truth behind the assassination. One thing is for sure, bin Laden benefited greatly from the death of his mentor. Defeating Azzam's son-in-law in a bid for supremacy, the Saudi protégé took control of the recruiting and support networks for the Office of Services.<sup>320</sup> This was a defining moment for bin Laden. Even before creating al-Qaeda, Osama had money, manpower and weapons at his disposal. Just as importantly, the Saudi millionaire began cultivating relationships with Islamic

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<sup>319</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 77.

<sup>320</sup> Coll, Ghost Wars 204.

organizations and individuals willing to financially support fundamentalist activities. Between 1979 and 1989, an estimated \$600 million flowed into the Service Bureau from wealthy Gulf contributors.<sup>321</sup> Additionally, the death of Abdullah Azzam's two sons in the car bombing made it easier for bin Laden to win over the much sought-after leadership role.

The mentor/student relationship Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden shared was a cornerstone in the radicalization of the Saudi millionaire. Montasser al-Zayyat, who was imprisoned with Ayman al-Zawahiri, speculated that the current state of al-Qaeda would not be possible without this earlier friendship. Zayyat wrote:

Azzam used bin Laden's financial help to provide relief services to the mujahedeen in their war against the Soviets. The impact that Azzam had on bin Laden was limited to political and geographical issues related to jihad against the Soviets. Azzam was not interested in clashing with the Arab governments that supported him. Still, Azzam's interaction with bin Laden laid the groundwork for Zawahiri's influence.<sup>322</sup>

Zayyat underestimated the Palestinian's role on the development of Osama, but he delivered other important points. In the case of bin Laden, the influence of Azzam opened the door for the more radical Zawahiri.

Abdullah Azzam spent the entirety of his life teaching, preaching and working for radical Islam. He ultimately lost his life for the cause. He is quoted as saying, "I feel that I am nine years old, seven and a half years in Afghan Jihad, one and a half

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<sup>321</sup> Dreyfuss 279.

<sup>322</sup> Zayyat and Abu-Rabi 69.

years in Jihad in Palestine and the rest of the years have no value.<sup>323</sup>” Unlike Osama bin Laden, Dr. Azzam was educated in Islamic law and was considered by certain delegations as a legitimate source to instruct on complicated religious issues. Speaking in reverence for Azzam’s work, bin Laden said: “When the Sheikh started out, the atmosphere among the Islamists and sheikhs was limited, location-specific, and regional, each dealing with their own particular locale, but he (Azzam) inspired the Islamic movement and motivated Muslims to the broader jihad.<sup>324</sup>” He certainly inspired bin Laden. Simply put forth by Lawrence Wright: “Bin Laden revered Azzam, who provided a model for the man he would become.<sup>325</sup>”

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<sup>323</sup> “Defence of the Muslim Lands,”

[http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam\\_defence\\_2\\_intro.htm](http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_defence_2_intro.htm)

<sup>324</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 77.

<sup>325</sup> Wright 111.

“The American people are the ones who pay the taxes which fund the planes that bomb us in Afghanistan, the tanks that strike and destroy our homes in Palestine, the armies which occupy our lands in the Arabian Gulf, and the fleets which ensure the blockade of Iraq. These tax dollars are given to Israel for it to continue to attack us and penetrate our lands. So the American people are the ones who fund the attacks against us, and they are the ones who oversee the expenditure of these monies in the way they wish, through their elected candidates.<sup>326</sup>”

-Zawahiri justifying his attacks against US civilians

### **Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri**

Throughout this thesis, Osama bin Laden’s ideological foundation has been demonstrated to be comprised of a mixture of historically significant events coupled with the deep-seated teachings of Islamic fundamentalist icons. Above all else, bin Laden was driven to infamy by the personal contact and sway of two well-educated individuals. From the time of their introduction at King Abdul Aziz University and continuing until his final days, Dr. Abdullah Azzam instilled radical principles in Osama. This mentor-student relationship has indeed been underestimated. The Palestinian-born Azzam expanded on the conservative-minded Saudi and provided bin Laden the ideological tools to take matters into his own hands by becoming a defender of the faith. Just as important in the transition of the millionaire, following the assassination of Abdullah Azzam the subsequent take-over of the Service Bureau by bin Laden legitimized Osama’s desire for power and provided the necessary infrastructure to achieve his delusions of grandeur. Abdullah Azzam laid the groundwork; however, it was an Egyptian doctor who led Osama beyond the

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<sup>326</sup> Al-Zawahiri and Mansfield 293.

imaginable<sup>327</sup>. Despite their alliance being a recent undertaking, the influence of Ayman al-Zawahiri has had a profound impact on the world's most wanted man. Along with Azzam, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden have produced a "Triangle of Terror" with the Saudi outlaw at the apex.

Born in 1951<sup>328</sup> to a devout Muslim family in an upper class suburb of Cairo, Ayman al-Zawahiri's family placed a tremendous emphasis on the boy's education.<sup>329</sup> Similar to Bin Laden's upbringing, al-Zawahiri worked hard and is remembered for behaving in a modest way. Despite this facade, Ayman became involved in Islamic politics as a youth by joining the Muslim Brotherhood at the tender age of fourteen.<sup>330</sup> Following the disastrous defeat of the Arab coalition at the hands of Israeli military in 1967, he discovered his first passion, which ironically was helping the hurt and injured. After graduating in 1974 with highest honors and gaining a Master's degree in surgery in 1978 from the Faculty of Medicine at Cairo University, al-Zawahiri earned a PhD in surgery with distinction from a school in Peshawar, Pakistan.<sup>331</sup>

On October 6, 1981<sup>332</sup>, President Anwar al-Sadat was assassinated during a military parade by members of the Egyptian army.<sup>333</sup> The assembled notables were

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<sup>327</sup>Some Middle Easterners do not believe that bin Laden (who eventually admitted to being behind the atrocities in 2004) was involved in the assault. After reviewing testimony from individuals who had personal contact with Osama bin Laden, many cannot believe that the quiet, shy Saudi millionaire has repeatedly chosen to kill non-combatants in diabolical terrorist plots.

<sup>328</sup>The year of al-Zawahiri's birth has been disputed. For instance, John Esposito believes the year to be 1953 in Unholy War. This thesis will utilize the date provided by Zawahiri's biographer and former cellmate, Montasser al-Zayyat.

<sup>329</sup>Zayyat and Abu-Rabi 16.

<sup>330</sup>Esposito 18.

<sup>331</sup>Zayyat and Abu-Rabi 18.

<sup>332</sup>October 6<sup>th</sup> was selected as for the military parade in commemoration of the Egyptian "triumph" in the 1973 war against Israeli forces. Discussed earlier in this thesis, Israel and the Arab coalition have both claimed victory.

bombarded with machine gun bullets and grenades. Broadcast to the world, the leader of the plot announced, “My name is Khalid Islambouli, I have slain Pharaoh, and I do not fear death.”<sup>334</sup> Hoping to inspire an uprising across Egypt, the conspirators were only able to accomplish their goal of ending the Sadat rule. Ironically, Hosni Mubarak, who has controlled Egypt since the 1981 tragedy, has responded to radical Islam with a heavier hand than Sadat ever dared. Due mostly to pitiful planning and a misconceived notion of reality, the assassin’s larger plan of jump-starting a revolution never came to fruition.

The young army lieutenant Islambouli and his fellow plotters had looked to the extremist group al Jihad led by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri to assist their suicidal mission.<sup>335</sup> However, Egyptian authorities were never able to prove that the doctor was involved in the Sadat assassination. After reviewing Zawahiri’s public statements and examining his involvement in al-Qaeda activities, patience and preparation are two of his most common themes. He has often depicted Muslim uprisings that have failed. In almost all of these circumstances, Zawahiri pointed out that poor leadership and planning led to the collapse of the mission. The educated Egyptian has learned from the mistakes of his comrades. In the same mindset as Osama bin Laden, it was obvious that the Egyptian doctor will not allow his al-Qaeda soldiers to go into battle unprepared. A wise and devoted leader, al-Qaeda’s second-in-command did not suggest the accomplishment of his objectives to be either quick

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<sup>333</sup> Yapp 229.

<sup>334</sup> Benjamin and Simon 83.

<sup>335</sup> Laqueur 37.

or simple. Rather, he encouraged the faithful to patiently continue striving for this outcome. Granted, he wished to topple the secular Egyptian government, but because of the rushed nature of the plot against President Sadat, Zawahiri may not have provided the full support of his fundamentalist group in the assassination/uprising scheme.

Nevertheless, Zawahiri was convicted of dealing in illegal weapons and received a three year sentence, which subsequently was almost completed by the time of the trial's end.<sup>336</sup> Montasser al-Zayyat shared a cell and befriended Ayman. As discussed in his book The Road to al-Qaeda, Zayyat believed the doctor became radicalized in response to the beatings and general neglect from prison guards. From meeting and learning from fellow inmates, Zawahiri became familiar with other extremists. Unwittingly, the Egyptian authorities put these men and their unorthodox ideas in an environment that became an incubator for radical thought. Zayyat wrote:

I met Zawahiri in the Tora Prison, where we stayed in the same cell for three years. He was the picture of humbleness and politeness...Zawahiri changed so much when he went to Peshawar. There, he was influenced by others in the atmosphere that was characterized by hard-line policies. He formed a new group in 1987 called Tanzeem al-Jihad (Jihad Organization), a year later he changed it to its current name, Islamic Jihad.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Wright 67.

<sup>337</sup> Zayyat and Abu-Rabi 85.

In 1987, Osama bin Laden was introduced to the leadership of Egypt's Jihad group, which would eventually join forces with al-Qaeda.<sup>338</sup>

As in the case of bin Laden, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was also critical to the radicalization of Ayman al-Zawahiri. Following his release, Zawahiri practiced medicine in Egypt and Saudi Arabia before moving to the jihad front. This was not his first time in the region. He spent seven months in Afghanistan as early as 1980, along with short trips before and after his incarceration in 1981, 1984 and 1986.<sup>339</sup> Before meeting and befriending Abdullah Azzam, the Egyptian doctor found a calling as a field surgeon serving the Arab and Afghan mujahidin.<sup>340</sup>

Following heated discussions with the Saudi Royal family, Osama bin Laden moved in 1992 to Sudan hoping to assist in the Islamic revolution underway.<sup>341</sup> With the outbreak of the first Chechnyan war, al-Qaeda pumped men, weapons and materials to the Muslim fighters.<sup>342</sup> Investing personal capital into Sudanese farms, factories and banks, Osama additionally contributed to the poor African nation by modernizing Port Sudan and tried to stimulate economic growth by constructing a new highway from Khartoum to this renovated harbor.<sup>343</sup> There is not conclusive evidence to show an exact amount, but most experts believe Osama lost millions

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<sup>338</sup> Bergen 62.

<sup>339</sup> Aboul-Enein, "Ayman al-Zawahiri" 7.

<sup>340</sup> Esposito 13.

<sup>341</sup> Rashid 133.

<sup>342</sup> Benjamin and Simon 113.

<sup>343</sup> Mannes 21.

because of his investment in Sudan.<sup>344</sup> As bin Laden once again wore out his welcome, the man who had invested immense wealth into the Sudanese economy was forced under government pressure to relocate to Afghanistan.<sup>345</sup> Zawahiri did not follow him initially. While attempting to immigrate to Chechnya to open an independent branch of Islamic Jihad in 1996, the international fugitive was captured by Russian authorities in Dagestan but was released after a month because his false passport never revealed his true notoriety.<sup>346</sup> With the bull's eye on his back, the Egyptian doctor found amnesty with his fellow exile and future partner in the mountains of Afghanistan.

The relationship between Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri was publically solidified in a declaration in 1998.<sup>347</sup> In this short treatise from February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the World Islamic Front was created by the dynamic duo in association with leaders<sup>348</sup> from three other radical groups.<sup>349</sup> At the dénouement, the newly formed group proclaimed:

On this basis, and in accordance with God's will, we pronounce to all Muslims the following judgment: To kill the American and their allies –

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<sup>344</sup> Prior to 9/11, US Intelligence agencies could not agree on the financial worth of bin Laden. In some cases, the agencies differed by hundreds of millions of dollars. For additionally information, see Steve Coll's The Bin Ladens pages 488-496.

<sup>345</sup> Bin Laden did not have many options at this point, as Saudi Arabia had already revoked his citizenship.

<sup>346</sup> Coll, Ghost Wars 383.

<sup>347</sup> According to The Al Qaeda Reader page 14, this document is commonly referred to as The World Islamic Front's Declaration to Wage Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders.

<sup>348</sup> The letter is signed by: Sheikh Osamah bin Muhammad bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, amir of the Jihad Group in Egypt, Abu-Yasir Rif' ai Ahmad Taha, Egyptian Islamic Group, Sheikh Mir Hamzah, secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan and Fazlur Rahman, amir of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh.

<sup>349</sup> Bin Laden and Lawrence 58-59.

civilians and military – is an individual duty incumbent upon every Muslim in all countries, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Holy Mosque from their grip, so that their armies leave all the territory of Islam, defeated, broken, and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of God Almighty...<sup>350</sup>

Perhaps bin Laden hoped that multiple signatures would validate his decree.

However, this infamous fatwa never received authorization from credited clerics of the recognized ulema.

In 2001, Zawahiri published Knights under the Prophet's Banner. Aware of the encircling American nets, the Egyptian doctor admitted in this writing that his future was unknown. Perhaps because of this, Zawahiri provided tremendous personal information and insight on the activities of al-Qaeda. Having access to thoughts and words of Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri is an incredibly useful tool towards understanding the motivation of al-Qaeda and its founder Osama bin Laden. However, Knights Under the Prophet's Banner definitely does not read like a terrorist instruction manual. Still, the manuscript is enlightening for anyone wanting to understand al-Qaeda's inspiration. From this intriguing manuscript, many analytical pieces of information surface about the thought-process of this Islamic fundamentalist. The United States does not face an unworthy adversary. Zawahiri's early years did not revolve around the army, but he has shown the ability to learn and adapt military tactics (particularly guerilla and unorthodox strategies) into a force

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid. 61.

with which to be reckoned. After calling for an international battle against the United States, Zawahiri explains in Knights Under the Prophet's Banner: "This would be followed by the earth-shattering event, which the west trembles at the mere thought of it, which is the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Egypt. If God wills it, such a state in Egypt, with all its weight in the heart of the Islamic world, could lead the Islamic world in a jihad against the West."<sup>351</sup>

In recent years, experts have debated the holy alliance between the Egyptian doctor and the Saudi millionaire. One point of contention is that Zawahiri was exclusively motivated to joining the ranks of bin Laden out of financial exhaustion. Many, including his cellmate Montasser, believe that Zawahiri was forced to leave his beloved-homeland due to an attack gone astray. The intended object of the attack was the motorcade of Egyptian Prime Minister Atif Sidqi, but instead a young girl named Shayma was killed.<sup>352</sup> Because of the public backlash against Zawahiri and his organization, the ideological leader of al-Qaeda lost funding and was forced out of the country. Trying to regain support and explain his side of the story, bin Laden's second-in-command claimed: "I deeply regret her death and am willing to pay blood money. This girl was as old as my own daughter.....The unintended death of this innocent child pained us all, but we were helpless and we had to fight the government, which was against God's Shariah and supported God's enemies."<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Al-Zawahiri and Mansfield 113.

<sup>352</sup> Zayyat and Abu-Rabi 65.

<sup>353</sup> Al-Zawahiri and Mansfield 102-103.

Just as they were to Abdullah Azzam, Bin Laden's financial resources must have been attractive to Zawahiri in the early years. While living in the Sudan, the Saudi millionaire did provide fiscal support to Zawahiri's faction of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, a violent splinter group.<sup>354</sup> However, it is naïve to believe that Dr. Zawahiri viewed Osama only as a limitless credit card. One must remember, Ayman al-Zawahiri did not have much success<sup>355</sup> in his quest to bring about an Islamic state in his homeland of Egypt. By allying with bin Laden, he transferred his approach from attacking the near enemy to the far enemy. "It is misleading to say that Zawahiri joined al-Qaeda mainly because of a financial crisis and his increasing dependence on bin Laden. Zawahiri's alliance with bin Laden afforded him the opportunity, which had previously eluded – or not interested – him, to lead an international network with impressive human and financial resources."<sup>356</sup>

Whereas Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam shared a mentor-protégé link, the nature of the camaraderie between Ayman al-Zawahiri and the Saudi dissident was less hierarchical. The supreme guides of al-Qaeda have been acquaintances since the latter half of the 1980s. During this time, each radical has influenced his collaborator and vice versa. At the core of his book, Montasser al-Zayyat has argued:

Sheikh Osama bin Laden was an important factor in the changing of Zawahiri's approach. Zawahiri managed to introduce drastic changes to

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<sup>354</sup> Coll, *Ghost Wars* 381.

<sup>355</sup> Zawahiri was able to bring about some chaos against the government. More importantly, he created contacts and an organizational structure that have remained pertinent in al-Qaeda.

<sup>356</sup> Gerges 130-131.

Osama bin Laden's philosophy after they first met in Afghanistan in the middle of 1986, mainly because of the friendship that developed between them. Zawahiri convinced bin Laden of his jihadi approach, turning him from a fundamentalist preacher whose main concern was relief work, into a jihadi fighter, clashing with despots and American troops in the Arab world.<sup>357</sup>

Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri share experiences and backgrounds. Both men were raised in prominent Middle Eastern families. Each of them is highly educated. Growing up, the pair that would become the two most wanted men in the world were considered by family and friends to be shy, withdrawn, religiously devout and introverted. From their perspective, Islam was under duress from secular governments and the invading outside world. Osama and Ayman wanted to personally make a difference in saving their religion. In their eyes, the Afghan invasion by the godless Soviets was unbearable. Both men expressed outrage with their native country, were exiled and have been hunted by their former governments. From an ideological point of view, the evidence shows that bin Laden and the older Zawahiri have actually influenced each other. The financial capabilities, charismatic leadership skills and a connected organizational structure are all qualities provided by bin Laden. The Egyptian doctor was never able to attain these on his own. In a similar fashion, Zawahiri offered decades of hard-nose experience of battling in the name of Allah. Like Abdullah Azzam, his determined style has influenced the Saudi to become even more radicalized.

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<sup>357</sup> Zayyat and Abu-Rabi 68.

“The first phase of our post-9/11 efforts rightly included military action to topple the Taliban and pursue al Qaeda. This work continues. But long-term success demands the use of all elements of national power: diplomacy, intelligence, covert action, law enforcement, economic policy, foreign aid, public diplomacy, and homeland defense.

If we favor one tool while neglecting others, we leave ourselves vulnerable and weaken our national effort.<sup>358</sup>”

-The 9/11 Commission Report

## **Conclusion**

For Osama bin Laden, the path from conservatism to extremism was long, arduous and deep-rooted. Beginning in his childhood, this process developed over decades with radical Islamic teachers influencing him throughout his journey into fundamentalism. Growing up in a turbulent time in the Middle East, regional affairs certainly affected his transformation. Unlike his current partner Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was significantly radicalized from his time in an Egyptian prison, there was not one cataclysmic event that baptized Osama into the prince of terror. His conversion to Islamic extremism challenges conventional wisdom. Sociological issues like poverty and employment were never factors for the son of a millionaire. Money was never issue. Nor were educational opportunities, as he was challenged academically at King Abdul Aziz University. Contrary to the youth of his Palestinian-idol Abdullah Azzam, Osama was not born in an occupied area or war-torn environment. Not under any religious repression, Bin Laden’s puritanical practice of Wahhabism would have been encouraged in his native Saudi Arabia. Osama does not fit under the West’s preconceived notion that terrorist activities are the result of individual hardships, economic inequality or personal religious persecution. Rather, he feels it

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<sup>358</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States 363-64.

is his beloved Islam and the Muslim nation as a whole, which is under internal and external duress. In his heart, bin Laden believes himself to be like a counterweight raising the scales for Allah. Only after years have his religious ideals become sharpened and engrained.

Those closest to bin Laden remember him as a pious, devout child. Only ten years old when disaster struck his family, Osama must have been affected by the death of his famous father, Muhammad bin Laden. From his personal statements about Muhammad, it is obvious that the younger bin Laden maintained great admiration for his deceased father. Following a more radical approach, Osama has worked hard to follow in his footsteps. Certain media outlets have accused bin Laden of living the life as a rich, millionaire playboy. However, these accounts do not appear to be accurate, particularly after reviewing the statements of his sister-in-law, Carmen bin Ladin.

Like many teenagers, Osama bin Laden began to develop his personal philosophies in college. At King Abdul Aziz University, bin Laden came into contact with members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other radical groups. Already a conservative Muslim prior to his arrival, the university proved to be an incubator for Osama's unorthodox beliefs. According to his closest friend, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, he was enlightened by the principles of the legendary Sayyid Qutb. It must have helped his extremist progression that Sayyid's brother, Mohammad Qutb, lectured on the campus. Most of all, Osama's fundamentalist education would continue years after leaving college because of his association with Dr. Abdullah

Azzam. Bin Laden's conversion grew under the tutelage of this Palestinian-born exile.

If Azzam and Qutb provided a system of values at King Abdul Aziz, then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan offered a tangible outlet for bin Laden's theoretic education. In 1979, the Middle East witnessed numerous historical events involving radical members of Islam. Most important for bin Laden, Russia sent troops and planes into Muslim-dominated Afghanistan on Christmas Eve. Applying his fundamentalist lessons, Osama began working to defend his entrenched Muslim brethren. Teaming up with the experienced Abdullah Azzam, he gained practical insight from operating with a master philanthropist and motivational speaker. Later in the war, bin Laden began crossing the border from Pakistan into hot combat zones. His efficiency in the field as a fighter and tactical leader is a point of debate. Regardless of his true performance, bin Laden became famous for his part in the battle of Jaji. The Saudi millionaire would use this notoriety as a springboard for building his rapport throughout the Middle East. The invasion of Afghanistan allowed bin Laden to practice in the arts of war. He learned how to maximize his financial abilities, utilize the family's construction business, raise capital and connect with wealthy Muslims in the Gulf and gain field experience. The Soviet invasion was critical to bin Laden's radicalization.

The continued conflict between the Arab world and Israel has impacted bin Laden. His hatred for the Jewish state originated from his childhood home, as Osama's father Muhammad is remembered for cursing the neighboring country. The

destruction of Israel has never been a primary objective for bin Laden. However, his rhetoric against the tiny nation has only become more vociferous in recent years, probably for recruiting purposes. The personal vendettas of Ayman al-Zawahiri and the Palestinian-born Abdullah Azzam against Israel would have additionally persuaded bin Laden to take a more extreme approach. Still, Osama's attacks on the Jewish state have remained mostly verbal. In the last decade, al-Qaeda has preferred to choose targets in the United States and Europe.

Events, such as the creation of Israel in 1948 and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, are certainly not the sole factors for bin Laden's reformation. In the mind of Islamic fundamentalists, Muslim history is always alive. Believing in fatwas issued by a 13<sup>th</sup> Century theologian, Osama has attempted to legitimize many of his cruel actions with the teachings of Taqi al-Din Ahmad bin 'Abd al-Salam bin Taymiyya. Specifically, the Saudi exile believes al-Qaeda has the right to judge and kill fellow Muslims deemed to have fallen away from the true path of Allah. Hijacking this Damascene scholar's argument for fighting the Mongol hordes, bin Laden has taken an extremist position. By taking this stance, Osama turned away from Koranic passages barring Muslims from killing other Muslims.

Before his visit in November 1948, Sayyid Qutb was originally fascinated with the great thinkers and creative writers found in Western culture. His trip to America crushed these optimistic sentiments. Unlike Qutb, Osama bin Laden never gave the West a chance. His scorn might have started with the death of his father, because it was an American pilot that crashed Muhammad bin Laden's plane. Over

the next few years, numerous members of the bin Laden family visited England and Sweden.<sup>359</sup> Media accounts have erroneously reported Osama to be involved in these trips. There does not appear to be any evidence of bin Laden visiting Europe, and certainly no verification of Osama on US soil.

For bin Laden, the invitation by the House of Saud to finance and house the American-led coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991 was an unimaginable offense. He never understood why the Saudi royals allowed foreign infidels into the holy lands to defend Mecca and Medina. After helping to defeat the Russian superpower, Osama truly believed that his mujahidin veterans could repel the Iraqi invaders. Even more offensive for bin Laden, the US troops remained in Saudi Arabia years after the conflict had been resolved. Bin Laden already had grievances with the extravagant lifestyles of the royal family, but the House of Saud's alliance with the west was unforgivable.

Above all else, Osama bin Laden's radicalization was brought about by the influence of his relationships with Abdullah Azzam and Ayman al-Zawahiri. These two men have been prominent figures in Osama's life from his early collegiate career. Prior to his death in 1989, Azzam established his unorthodox philosophies during bin Laden's younger days. This close knit bond between the "godfather of global jihad" and the "Saudi Emir" extended from their time together at King Abdul Aziz University right up to Azzam's assassination. Taking the place of bin Laden's deceased dad, Dr. Azzam acted as a mentor and father-figure to the significantly

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<sup>359</sup> Coll, The Bin Ladens 135-136.

younger Osama. Working together to defeat the godless Soviets in Afghanistan, the Saudi protégé learned first-hand the indispensable abilities of fund-raising, networking, and organizational techniques essential for defending Islam against the modern world. Without Abdullah's assistance, bin Laden's al-Qaeda would probably be less effective and possibly non-existent. Ironically, Osama actually benefited from the mysterious death of his tutor. Filling the empty leadership role, bin Laden gained immensely by taking over Azzam's Office of Services.

Still believed to be alive, although his current whereabouts are unknown, Ayman al-Zawahiri developed a darker, more militant side to bin Laden. The al-Qaeda leaders do not share a teacher-apprentice relationship similar to the one with Azzam. Instead, the Egyptian doctor and Saudi millionaire have managed a symbiotic bond of mutually influential existence. Although the exact date of this pair's first meeting is debatable, they have been in contact since the middle to late 1980s. As their affinity for one another grew over the next decade, both men would bring varying ideologies to the table. Osama provided organizational expertise, financial means and a charismatic demeanor. These were attributes Zawahiri lacked. In return, the Egyptian physician was endowed with significant field experience from the Afghanistan invasion and first-hand familiarity of resisting Islamic authorities. Later, the medically-trained Zawahiri implemented his objectives into al-Qaeda giving bin Laden's organization a formidable ideology. His ideas of fighting for the green banner of Islam on a global scale presented a new perspective for bin Laden.

After years of needling the United States and its western allies with smaller scale terrorist tactics, Osama bin Laden achieved global infamy for his contributions to the events of September 11, 2001. Since becoming the world's most wanted man, bin Laden has been forced to reduce his fundamentalist rhetoric because of his status as an international fugitive. However, his animosity and utter disdain for his enemies has only increased in his most recent statements. Bin Laden has shown no remorse for his actions, and it is doubtful that he will ever deviate from his current mission. After all, the Saudi millionaire confidently believes that his al-Qaeda followers are doing Allah's work for the benefit of all Muslims.

As America has already witnessed, stopping bin Laden will not be an easy task. While his battle field prowess remains a point of contention, it cannot be denied that Osama's al-Qaeda is cleverly crafted for its purpose. The problems he has caused for the United States will not simply disappear after he is gone. The well-designed structure of al-Qaeda's sleeper cells continues to make apprehending his minions very difficult. The safety of the international community will remain in jeopardy because of the randomness of the attacks.

Resorting to their fundamentalist philosophies and ignoring segments of the Koran, there is no line discriminating combatant and non-combatant. For them, it does not matter who is killed: man or woman, young or old. Bin Laden's hierarchical chain-of-command offers promotion after a member is captured or killed. From the pages of Mao Zedong or Ho Chi Minh, the creation of the al-Qaeda model is brilliantly crafted for maximization of a smaller force against a larger one. Even

though Islam has condemned such actions, suicide missions have been deployed as a rather successful tactic by al-Qaeda troops. These specially-trained “martyrs” are never one of the members of the leadership council. Thus, the top of the al-Qaeda infrastructure had remained intact, prior to the creation of the George W. Bush doctrine’s “War on Terror.”

American armed forces have succeeded in capturing and killing some al-Qaeda leaders. However, the strongest and most technologically advanced military in the world has not been able to silence bin Laden or his nefarious partner, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Much to the chagrin of the Bush administration, bin Laden has remained elusive of American nets even with a \$25 million dollar bounty on his head.<sup>360</sup> Because of his crusade in the name of Islam, Osama is viewed by many Muslim fundamentalists as a hero. These bin Laden admirers have helped to conceal the whereabouts of the Saudi exile in recent years. After refusing to renounce his smear campaign against the House of Saud, it was rumored that Saudi agents attempted to assassinate Osama in Sudan. He found safety in the mountains of Afghanistan with the leader of the Taliban, as the one-eyed Mullah Mohammed Omar has provided protection for his fellow fundamentalist. According to the personal accounts of Gary Berntsen in Jawbreaker, a lackluster performance by US forces coupled with sympathetic Afghan/Pakistani allies allowed bin Laden to escape in late 2001. The

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<sup>360</sup> According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation website, the FBI has offered \$25 million dollars for information leading up to bin Laden’s arrest. An additional \$2 million dollar bounty is being offered by the Airline Pilots Association and the Air Transport Association.

cavernous terrain and sympathetic local populace has offered the perfect hiding spot for the world's most wanted man.

Raised in a conservative home and educated throughout his life by Islamic fundamentalists, Osama bin Laden has been inspired by historic events and personal interactions with Muslim radicals. From all of these experiences and lessons, the Saudi fugitive has crafted his own brand of extreme Islam. He will continue to call fellow Muslims to his system of beliefs. He will continue to fight in the name of Allah. Most of all, he will be true to this ideology.

“The means by which enlightened rulers and sagacious generals moved and conquered others, that their achievements surpassed the masses, was advanced knowledge. Advanced knowledge cannot be gained from ghosts and spirits, inferred from phenomena, or projected from the measures of Heaven, but must be gained from men for it is the knowledge of the enemy’s true situation.<sup>361</sup>”

-Sun Tzu, author of Art of War

### **P.S.**

An old adage boldly states, “If we do not learn the lessons from history, then we are doomed to repeat them.” Indubitably, this quote, which can be heard in high school history classrooms, has proven to be accurate. This was certainly true in the case of Adolf Hitler, the creator of Nazi Germany. The avid anti-Semite who has been rumored to have Jewish ancestors, foretold of the hatred and havoc he wished to unleash in his manifesto, Mein Kampf (My Struggle). Adolf Hitler, whose name translated is wolf, and Osama bin Laden, whose name in Arabic means young lion<sup>362</sup>, have much in common in this regard. Just like Hitler, Bin Laden spent an exorbitant amount of time relaying his message of hate to the Western powers long before taking any destructive action.

At 8:46 Eastern Standard time on September 11, 2001, a Los Angeles-bound American Airlines jet was piloted by Islamic fundamentalist into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.<sup>363</sup> This maniacal feat marked the commencement of the largest mass murder of American civilians in the nation’s history. For many in the West, the three thousand non-combatants killed was the beginning of a “War on

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<sup>361</sup> Sun Tzu, Art of War, Trans. Ralph Sawyer (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1994) 231.

<sup>362</sup> Bergen 47.

<sup>363</sup> Oren 582.

Terror.” For bin Laden, the assault was merely another successful strike against his nemesis in a war which had been raging for years. The Saudi millionaire and his al-Qaeda minions had finally dealt a blow substantial enough to gain universal recognition.

“One of bin Laden’s initial targets was the first woman to lead a modern Muslim nation: Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, regarded as a liberal because of her education at Oxford and Harvard.<sup>364</sup>” Tragically, the organization created by Osama managed to achieve this goal on December 27, 2007. This thesis was not designed with the intent of analyzing American policy towards bin Laden or al-Qaeda. However, there are critical pieces of evidence, which could certainly aid in the prevention of more human losses. Osama bin Laden is not a blood-thirsty monster on a killing spree for the sake of blood lust. Rather, the Saudi millionaire turned terrorist has dedicated his power, money and connections to accomplishing the goals of Islamic fundamentalists. He is not like a silent serial killer, where authorities have no available knowledge of their perpetrator. Putting aside his own personal safety, bin Laden has risked capture on many times to publicly declare his extremist principles. In order for either an individual or government to embark on the mission to stop Osama and al-Qaeda, it is imperative to comprehend his complex ideological foundation and future goals.

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<sup>364</sup> Bergen 63.

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