

**Ten Years Later: Insights on al-Qaeda's Past & Future
through Captured Records**

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Re-reading the Origins of al-Qaeda through Osama bin Laden's Former Audiotape Collection

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The Conflict Records Research Center (CRRCC) is a valuable resource, especially when accompanied by a discussion not only of what documents tell us, but also of how we read them. In this essay, I want to revisit three sets of documents with an eye toward unpacking what we have come to learn about al-Qaeda and its foundation. These three data sets are: (1) a 32-page document captured during United States military operations sometime before 2002 and posted in two sections online by West Point's Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) in 2006 respectively entitled: "Al-Qaeda's Structure and Bylaws," and "Al-Qaeda Goals and Structure"; (2) court documents from the U.S. v. *Usama bin Laden* trial (concluding in early 2002) and the U.S. v. *Ensaam Arnaut* trial (concluding mid-2003); (3) the citation and interpretation of these documents by scholars, journalists, and various other analysts.

My own training as an anthropologist leads me to the study of texts and archives through broader questions about human society and culture. I approach the institution of al-Qaeda not solely as the organization formed and led during its most coherent years by Osama bin Laden, as we tend to think of it, but rather as a more complex cultural and historical product of ideas, strategies, personalities, texts, and performances; all of which, to some extent, preceded bin Laden and transcended the man himself. The Arabic word *al-qaeda* has been accurately rendered "the base" or "rule." At a certain point during the 1990s, the term grew increasingly relevant to the West as certain individuals, bin Laden foremost among them, adapted the concept and their frameworks to Western audiences, often through English translators. Much of my research to date has focused on an archive of over 1,500 audiotapes that were formerly deposited in bin Laden's residential compound in Kandahar, Afghanistan.³ Acquired by the *Cable News Network* (CNN) in 2002 and later by Yale University, the tapes feature over two hundred speakers from across the Islamic world, including bin Laden himself and a host of al-Qaeda's top operatives and esteemed intellectual heavyweights.⁴

In recent years, valuable work has been emerging on the diversity of ideological currents and conflicts that ripple the fabric of al-Qaeda's umbrella.⁵ Scholars working closely with source texts and occasionally conducting interviews have provided key insights into the ways bin Laden's leadership in the organization was not uncontroversial. Many of the audiotapes in his former house underscore how al-Qaeda was beset from the beginning by contending worldviews, ideological differences, and leadership disputes. Bin Laden's own claims to leadership were facilitated by his family wealth, of course, as well as his social connections among Saudis and an expanding community of Afghan Arab volunteers through the 1980s and 1990s. The influence of his leadership was amplified further by his

1. Funding for this research was provided by the American Council of Learned Societies; Charles A. Ryskamp Fellowship, 2010-11.
2. Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, <https://www.ctcr.usma.edu>, last accessed 29 February 2012.
3. See Flagg Miller, "Al-Qaida's Pragmatic Base: Contributions of Area Studies to Sociolinguistics," *Language and Communication* 28, no. 4 (2008): pp. 386-408 and "Listen, Plan and Carry out Al-Qaida: Theological Dissension in Usama Bin Laden's Former Audiotape Collection," in *Contextualising Jihad! Thought* (London: Hurst and Company/Columbia University Press, 2011), edited by Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi, pp. 69-97.
4. The collection is entitled *The Islamic Fundamentalist Audiotapes*. Yale University is gradually releasing volumes in digital form for public researchers, <http://digitalcollections.library.yale.edu/islamic-fund/index.d>, last accessed 29 February 2012.
5. See, for example, Wahid Brown and et al., *Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in Al-Qaida 1989-2006* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007); Anne Stenersen, "Blood Brothers or a Marriage of Convenience? The Ideological Relationship between al-Qaida and the Taliban," 2009, http://www.alacademic.com/metzajp_mia_ape_research_citation/3/1/2/5/2/ pages312525/p312525-6.php, last accessed 29 February 2012; Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman, *Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions within Al-Qaida and Its Periphery* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2010).

talents in self-marketing. With ranging intellect, he tailored Muslim historical memory and Wahhabi-influenced theology to widespread skepticism in the Middle East about the rewards of modernization for most of the region's populace; he offered plans for redemption that appealed to audiences yearning for a restoration of Arab ethnic pride and purity, especially in the wake of the 1967 war between Arab nations and Israel. He proved adept at media outreach: first with Saudi compatriots and an Egyptian documentary producer, then by the mid-1990s with Western journalists and Qatar's *al-Jazeera* satellite television station. He used such media interviews with Western wider international audiences than many in the Afghan Arab movement, especially as he became an international pariah through the mid-1990s, exiled first from his Saudi homeland and by 1996 from the Sudan as well. Such media attention, along with speculation about his access to family wealth and the militant leverage it availed him, got his name on the roster of most-wanted characters among Saudi and Western intelligence circles, a notoriety that he then used to amplify his status as al-Qaeda's ringleader.

In the years following 11 September 2001, Americans joined others worldwide in seeking not just to understand why such a thing happened but track down those responsible for the attacks and bring them to justice. Many bright minds assembled reports, books, and documents of all sorts to help achieve these goals and communicate their broader significance to public audiences. In the United States, as in much of the West, people who knew little about the complexities of the Muslim world or America's engagements in the Middle East knew of bin Laden's name and leadership. Much of this literature was directed toward them. Ten years later, and with bin Laden dead, I believe that we are in a better position to reassess the accuracy and legacy of this early wealth of history for our understanding of the movement bin Laden claimed to represent.

Re-reading al-Qaeda's Formation

The standard account of al-Qaeda's formation relies on court documents from the U.S. v. *Ensaam Arnaut* trial dated April 2002.⁶ Advanced eloquently by Peter Bergen and Lawrence Wright,⁷ the essence of the narrative goes like this: on 11 August 1988, bin Laden met Abdalla Azzam, Muhammad Atef (a.k.a. Abu Hafsa al-Masri), Ali al-Rashidi (a.k.a. Abu Ubayda al-Banshiri), and others in Peshawar to discuss the formation of an organization called "al-Qaeda" with the aim of keeping jihad alive after the Soviets left Afghanistan.⁸ Syrian national Muhammad Loay Bayazid took minutes for the group, records of which turned up in Bosnia in 2002 and were subsequently used in a U.S. court case against Benevolence International Foundation, a Saudi-based non-profit group later banned worldwide for supporting terrorism. The minutes, available only through an English translation produced by the prosecution, report a discussion between "the Sheikh", identified in court documents as bin Laden, and Mr. Bayazid. While details are sparse, bullet points include mention of a discussion "regarding the establishing of a new military group" along with the words "general camp," "special camp," and

6. The grand jury charges read as follows: "In or about 1988, Usama Bin Laden began directing resources to train mujahideen for eventual deployment to places outside Afghanistan. In or about August 1988, Usama Bin Laden and others (including Wamdouh Salim, a/k/a Abu Jaber al Iraq) held a series of meetings in Afghanistan during which the al-Qaeda (the "Base") organization was formed. Members of al-Qaeda pledged an oath of allegiance [called a "bayat"] to al-Qaeda. Thereafter, Usama Bin Laden used the al-Qaeda organization, as well as affiliated organizations, to provide financial and logistical support to mujahideen in various areas of the world. Al-Qaeda had a command and control structure which included a *majlis al-shura* (or consultation council) which discussed and approved major undertakings, including terrorist operations... In addition to participating in armed confrontations in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda, acting on its own as well as in concert with other groups, also participated in armed confrontations and charges in other locations, including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya" (U.S. v. *Ensaam Arnaut*, "Special April 2002 Grand Jury Charges," United States District Court Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division, 2002, p. 34).

7. Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al-Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006), pp. 74-81; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), pp. 13-196. Bergen elaborates his original position in "The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict Between America and Al-Qaeda" (New York: Free Press, 2011), pp. 23-25.

8. Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 131. U.S. v. *Ensaam Arnaut* documents mention only the presence of bin Laden, Muhammad Bayazid, and unnamed others at this meeting, "Government's Evidentiary Proffer," pp. 34-35.

"Qaeda" (left untranslated and in italics).⁹ They also mention that "within six months of Al-Qaeda, 34 brothers will be trained and ready." Wright concludes that "For most of the men in the meeting, this was the first time that the name al-Qaeda had arisen."¹⁰

About a week later, court documents report that "a meeting was held 'at the Sheikh's house,' leading to the official formation of Al-Qaeda."¹¹ Most of the meeting focused on selecting a new advisory council; essential, notes a court translator, given "a split between Abdullah Azzam and bin Laden within the Office of Services." Bin Laden seems to have been nominated to the advisory council, along with Wail Julaidan, chief of the Red Crescent, Saudi Arabia's largest humanitarian aid society at the time, as well as Abu Ubayda and Abu Hajir al-Iraqi.¹² Military training was also discussed, and recruits were to be enlisted in basic and advanced sessions along the following lines: "Limited duration: they will go to Sada camp [in Pakistan], then get trained and distributed on Afghan fronts under [the] supervision of the military council. Open [ended] duration: they enter a testing camp and the best brothers of them are chosen, in preparation to enter Al-Qaeda Al Askariya [the Military base]." When suggestion was made of the need for oaths by incoming recruits, consensus was reached on the following words: "The pledge of God and His covenant is upon me: to listen and obey the superiors, who are doing this work, in energy, early-rising, difficulty, and easiness, and for His superiority upon us, so that the word of God will be the highest, and His religion victorious."¹³

To these accounts other analysts have supplied further evidence. In 2006, the CTC released documents whose procurement prior to April 2002 suggests acquisition by American military or intelligence personnel operating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan regions after the fall of the Taliban. They are routinely cited to corroborate the story of al-Qaeda's formation under bin Laden's leadership in 1988. One of the most popular documents is divided into two sections, one entitled "Al-Qaeda's Structure and Bylaws" and the other entitled "Al-Qaeda Goals and Structure."¹⁴ The thirty-two page charter, heavily laden with bureaucratic details of executive, political, military, financial, media, and external relations committees, purportedly sets up the organizational coherence of bin Laden's worldwide vision. The document raises several important questions, however. First, no date is provided. Second, no mention is made of bin Laden, or any other specific individual for that matter. To be sure, oaths to "the emir" of al-Qaeda are mentioned as are the details of recruits' rights, obligations, and salaries. When Bergen and Wright cite these details, however, they also infer that oaths given by recruits were made to bin Laden himself.¹⁵ Evidence for their assertions, drawn from U.S. vs. Bin Laden court proceedings against bin Laden for his involvement in the American embassy bombings in East Africa in 1998, includes a testimonial by one of bin Laden's associates in the Sudan, Jamal al-Fadl. Al-Fadl

9 U.S. vs. Enaam Arnaout, "Government's Evidentiary Proffer," p. 34.

10 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 133.

11 U.S. vs. Enaam Arnaout, "Government's Evidentiary Proffer," p. 35.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

14 My analysis suggests that these two files are part of a single larger document, despite their separate titles and cataloging in scholarly literature which are often referred to as AFGP-2002-600178 ("Structure and Bylaws," at one time also catalogued as 2002-600048), portions of which are featured in its abridged and annotated version AFGP-2002-000080, the latter of which is paired with its second section AFGP-2002-000078 ("Goals and Structure"), as noted in this document's English translation. These documents are not to be confused with the similarly labeled "Al-Qaeda: Constitutional Charter, Rules and Regulations" (AFGP-2002-600175). The latter text displays hallmark characteristics from al-Qaeda's official releases in the very late 1990s or early 2000s, including introductory Quranic verses, a definition of "al-Qaeda" that emphasizes its identity as an "Islamic group devoted to jihad," prominent mention of the group's *oqida* (doctrine) and goals of setting up a worldwide Islamic caliphate.

15 Freely paraphrasing al-Fadl, Bergen and Wright both insert bin Laden's name when details of oath-taking arise: "New recruits filled out forms in triplicate, signed their oath of loyalty to bin Laden [my italics], and swore themselves to secrecy" (Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 141-142). "When the Russians decide to leave Afghanistan, bin Laden he decide to make his own group, Al-Qaida, it's established to do jihad. You have to make bayat. 'Bayat' means you swear [on oath of allegiance to bin Laden] [my italics]" (Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 86.) The first reference I have found of someone claiming to have made a *bayat* (oath) to bin Laden, other than Jamal al-Fadl, is the Palestinian operative in East Africa Muhammad Odeh, who dates his pledge to 1992 (cited in *Ibid.*, p. 138).

states that he received a document filled with committee details and membership stipulations that exactly resemble those outlined in the charter documents later released by the CTC. He also states in no uncertain terms that oaths were given not to bin Laden but rather to three other individuals: Abu Ubayda and Abu Hafis, both Egyptian commanders in the group's military committee, and also an Iraqi Kurd by the name of Abu Ayyoub.¹⁶ The latter, insisted the witness, was in fact the group's first emir, an assertion made elsewhere by others.¹⁷ Al-Fadl suggests that while oaths were not made to bin Laden, he remained a kind of "general emir" to whom the others reported; his statements formed part of a plea bargain arrangement with prosecutors after having been convicted of conspiring to attack American military institutions. Whatever we make of al-Fadl's testimony, however, the advisory council that drafted al-Qaeda's charter documents (following the Peshawar meetings cited in American court documents and possibly as late as the spring of 1989) appears not to have wanted any explicit association with bin Laden. Indeed, contrary to what has been assumed from observations on the late August meeting in bin Laden's Peshawar home, the council took pains to make sure that he would not be the group's emir. In a section outlining the leadership's security apparatus, they add the following qualification, inaccessible in its English rendition due to garbled syntax: "Neither the commander of the guards nor his associates can be from any of the Gulf States or from Yemen."¹⁸ With the addition of this single clause, peculiar for a document purporting to be a general charter for all Arab and Muslim militants, bin Laden's core Saudi and Yemeni supporters, those most likely to pledge their lives in his defense, were ensured no part in al-Qaeda's praetorian guard. Rather than laying the foundations for bin Laden's future role in jihad, the document is more accurately a bid to marginalize him.

How are we to make sense of the fact that al-Qaeda's founding charter proves such an impediment to bin Laden's leadership? We must begin with finer points of translation. In Arabic, *qaeda* simply means "base" (as well as "rule" or "precept," as I explore elsewhere).¹⁹ Defense Department translations, much in the fashion of documents produced by prosecutors in American court proceedings, repeatedly leave this single word in its Arabic original. By doing so, they give the impression that discussions of *al-qaeda* (the base) are, in fact, about the organization that we have come to know since 11 September 2001 as bin Laden's brainchild. A closer reading suggests that the "base" being established is an organizational master-plan for the al-Faruq training camp in Jaji, Afghanistan established in 1989, a year after the August meetings in bin Laden's house, and pointedly under Egyptian leadership.²⁰ My analysis suggests the need to revisit arguments made by prosecutors in the U.S. vs. Enaam Arnaout trial, though our lack of original Arabic-language documents from the case prevents definitive conclusions. Before expanding on the implications of my claim, it is worth noting a few more details from the charter as well as corroborations from scholars and ex-militants who have been interviewed about what "al-Qaeda" meant to those involved with bin Laden in the late 1980s.

In the months and years following 11 September 2001, experts of diverse persuasions and experiential backgrounds have spoken of bin Laden's central role in establishing al-Qaeda. In light of bin Laden's identification with the attacks, most prominent in a video released on the eve of U.S. presidential elections in 2004 in which he professed having had intimate knowledge of the hijackers plans, these accounts help remind audiences of his impressive role as bankroller, organizational chief, warrior, and spokesperson for a struggle that would be turned against the United States in no uncertain terms. Given the generalizing and often breezy nature of narratives about bin Laden's role in history,

16 Abu Ayyoub al-Iraqi was killed in Pakistan in 1990.

17 See, for example, Camille Tawfik's interview with Libyan Afghan Arab militant Noman Benmotman in *Brothers in Arms: The Story of al-Qaida and the Arab Jihadists* (London: Saqi, 2010), p. 28.

18 Combating Terrorism Center's Harmony Database Document "Al-Qaida's Structure and Bylaws," <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/AFGP-2002-600178-Orig-Meta.pdf>, p. 33, last accessed 29 February 2012.

19 Miller, "Al-Qaida as a Pragmatic Base: Contributions of Area Studies to Sociolinguistics."

20 Jason Burke's outstanding work anticipates my observations of al-Qaeda's origins at al-Faruq and argues for bin Laden's peripheral role in the initiative. See *Al-Qaeda: Costing a Shodow of Terror* (New York: Palgrave, 2003).

however, it is important to recognize their inadequacy as records of the past, especially considering the desire of some analysts and interviewees to figure prominently in the unfolding drama of bin Laden's unveiling. Countering assumptions that the al-Qaeda we had come to know after 11 September 2001 could be projected backward for over a decade with little substantial change, others have emphasized the historical variability of the term, at least as it refers to a militant movement drawing strength from bin Laden's leadership. Egyptian journalist Ahmad Zaydan argues that al-Qaeda was not considered a political organization even by the 2000s; instead, it came to be understood as a term for practical military operations that had Arab-exclusive inclinations, even as the goal was to work roughly with the Afghan mujahidin.²¹ Khalifan Khamis Muhammad, a militant sentenced for his role in the American embassy bombings in East Africa, has testified that at the time of the attacks in 1998 he had never heard of an organization called al-Qaeda; the term was rather understood to be, in the words of his FBI interrogator, "a formula system for what they carried out."²² My review of bin Laden's tape collection to date has yielded only one cassette referring to "al-Qaeda" as a militant organization or base associated with bin Laden: an al-Qaeda propaganda tape produced in October 2000.²³ More such references may be found in time. At the very least, however, these notes give pause to oversimplistic accounts of al-Qaeda's organizational coherence over time.

One of the more substantial arguments for al-Qaeda's early significance for Afghan Arabs suggests that the concept referred to *qaeda al-mahumut* (records database) in Peshawar that was set up by bin Laden in 1988.²⁴ In coordination with the Office of Services, the database kept track of volunteers not only in Peshawar's guest houses but in training camps and battle zones in Afghanistan as well, and was formalized on computer software in the following year.²⁵ In broad terms, the concept's links to an emerging bureaucratic infrastructure are sensible enough. In bin Laden's recorded speeches, however, bureaucratic renditions of "the base" prove poor currency for inspiring recruits. During the previous year, when speaking about Wail Julaydan's visit to the Lion's Den, bin Laden characterized him as a *rijal idari* (bureaucrat) adding that "while we are all to some administrators, his physique was weak because he spent most of his time at a desk."²⁶ As in the early lectures of top numerous militant strategists, foremost among them Abu al-Walid al-Masri, the intellectual as well as tactical leverage of "the base" inheres in more exuberant heroes and locales, ideally those situated beyond metropolitan centers of informational surveillance, control, and authority. On the one hand, al-Walid speaks of the *muaskar* (training camp). As multiple training camps are set up on the frontier of a battlefield, however, a more general *qaeda* (operational base) becomes necessary, one that can supervise camp activities and coordinate logistics while at the same time remaining spatially re-deployable should its headquarters come under attack. The importance of securing a well-fortified base that could remain in contact with battlefield operations, provide a physical refuge in times of duress, and also remain essentially de-territorialized, makes the base both physical and metaphysical, depending on circumstances.

21 Ahmad Zaydan, *Bin Laden bi-la-Qina* (Beirut: al-Sherika al-Alamiyya li-Kitab, 2003), p. 71.

22 "U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden et. al., Southern District Court of New York" (2001-2), transcript Day 19.

23 Tape no. 1164, *The Islamic Fundamentalist Audiotope Collection*, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Produced by "The Media Department of al-Qaida" in October 2000, this recording features a wedding celebration in Afghanistan involving one of bin Laden's bodyguards. Additionally, a cassette jacket in the collection reads "A political course on bin Laden's Base (Qaeda bin Laden)." Since jackets were separated from their original cassettes during shipping, however, a tape associated with this jacket has not yet been identified. No other recorded material yet found mentions the concept in this way.

24 Burke suggests this possibility based on interviews with Saudi intelligence in Al-Qaeda. Casting a Shadow of Terror, p. 251. Tawil adds that, according to his reports, the base encompassed Afghan Arab camps and battle zones in Brothers in Arms: The Story of al-Qaida and the Arab Jihadists, p. 25.

25 The "computer database" derivation is outlined by Pierre-Henri Bunel in *Proche-Orient, une guerre mondiale? des dérives de la finance internationale* (New York: Carnot, 2004), and is reiterated by Jonathan Randall in *Osama: The Making of a Terrorist* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), p. 90.

26 Tape no. 508, *The Islamic Fundamentalist Audiotope Collection*, Yale University, New Haven, CT. The tape was recorded in 1988 in Saudi Arabia.

If conceived as "a formula system," as Khalifan Muhammad is reported to have said, we might put it this way: the base expresses the relationship of an agent (e.g., a person or group) to fields of perceived ethical contest and struggle, one made credible by its power to represent as well as qualify established systems of authority. The idea of a computer database provides users with an interactive system of logistics; it poorly captures the disruptive potentials of the base for those grappling with corporations and their officiating councils. It also fails to account for the concept's roots in Islamic law, linguistics, and culture, as I suggest elsewhere. For bin Laden, an iconoclastic rendition of al-Qaeda would become all the more essential if, as founding charter documents suggests, attempts were being made to obstruct his influence.

What evidence do we have that "the base" discussed in al-Qaeda's charter is the al-Faruq training camp and, should de-camping be necessary, its template? Aside from the fact that the words "training base/camp" make perfect sense every time *al-qaeda* appears in the original Arabic text, the geographic specificity of the base/camp is clear in repeated discussions of its proximity to Peshawar. Scholars and militants corroborate al-Qaeda's origins at al-Faruq. Terror analyst Rohan Gunaratna suggested as much shortly after the attacks of 11 September 2001, though he later changed his views to fall in line with Bergen and Wright's emphasis on meetings in bin Laden's house the previous year.²⁷ The source for his first assessment was al-Fadl's testimonial: al-Faruq was the location in which he reports first meeting al-Qaeda's first emir, receiving charter documents whose structure very much resembles those later posted online by the CTC and giving an oath before the Egyptian-dominated military committee.²⁸ Al-Bahri goes into further detail elsewhere:

With an increase in the number of Arab mujahedin coming to Afghanistan, a training camp (*muaskar*) called Sada, meaning the "echo" (*sada*) of jihad, was established. It was located along the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. After the arrival of many well-qualified militants from the jihad Group and the Egyptian Islamic Group, Bin Laden and his jihadi associates set up a new and more advanced training camp. It was called the al-Faruq Camp or the al-Faruq Military College (*kulliyat al-Faruq al-askariyya*), and was effectively a military college.... Of course, the college was later called the al-Faruq Military College where military base training occurs (*bi muaskar al-qaeda*), the understanding being that it was a military base for jihad.²⁹

Al-Bahri's narrative suggests that the al-Faruq camp was a qualitatively more advanced "college" for militant training, the significance of which I will discuss below. His account of bin Laden's leadership in setting up al-Faruq corresponds with bin Laden's role as a financier and construction engineer, one whose combat experience the previous year would have put him in a solid position to exercise authority there. Charter documents, as I have shown, complicate this picture: Bin Laden faced serious hurdles in extending actual command over the base and its activities. With respect to the foundations of al-Qaeda, al-Bahri's narrative proves illuminating in another respect: in mentioning the two-stage process of camp planning, the first consisting of basic introductory courses at the Sada camp and the second more advanced training at al-Faruq, al-Bahri sheds key light on the significance of conversations held in bin Laden's home the previous year. The discussion that day was about setting up plans to open the "special" al-Faruq training camp, one whose distinction as a *qaeda* (base) was conceptually different than other muaskarat camps as clarified in the previous meeting on 11 August. Wright's assertion that "for most of the men in the meeting, this was the first time that the name

27 Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (London: C. Hurst, 2002), p. 56; his change of opinion is noted in *Beyond al-Qaeda: The Global Jihadist Movement* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), p. 27.

28 U.S. vs. Usama Bin Laden et. al., p. 191. Al-Fadl's description of the documents he received closely match the core structural components of the CTC's charter documents, particularly the outlining of camp goals, the delineation of "advisory," "military," "financial," and "media" councils, and the clarification of duties expected from emirs and recruits (Ibid., pp. 192-199).

29 "Intizam al-Qa'ida min Dokhul" al-Quds al-Arabi, March 22, 2005, p. 19.

al-Qaeda had arisen" is a historical canard.³⁰ Though his observation parallels conclusions drawn by prosecutors in the U.S. vs. *Ensaam Anouar* trial, al-Bahri's contextualization of training camp initiatives at the time suggests that the designation of *al-Qaeda* as "a group" under bin Laden's leadership would not yet have occurred. Bergen's notes from his own interviews suggest that something has been lost in translation: "Those with knowledge of the meetings at bin Laden's house say that some of those who participated only discussed dissatisfaction about how the Office of Services was being run, and were unaware that some of the other participants also discussed the founding of al-Qaeda."³¹ The very individuals present at the meeting, when asked about the meeting in a post-9/11 era, profess being unaware of al-Qaeda's foundation because no such event took place.

Re-assessment in the Wake of al-Faruq

Two conclusions can be drawn from my re-assessment of al-Qaeda's origins. First, "the base" is a more complicated institution than we have come to understand, especially given the fact that it transcended bin Laden's own leadership. The legacies of a blueprint for a "military college" that provided thousands of students with practical tools and guidance for coordinating transnational Islamic militancy are significant and complex. Little work has been devoted to the al-Faruq camp's ideological orientation, though I sketch a few outlines below. Second, bin Laden seems to have been relatively peripheral to the al-Faruq camp's administrative hierarchy. Even as a bankroller, his investments in al-Faruq seem to have been surprisingly insignificant: a memo from the Central Intelligence Agency in the mid-1990s reports that, since the late 1980s or early 1990s, the only camp benefitting from bin Laden's financial support was a "Kunar camp" for Afghan Arabs located north of Jalalabad. Interviews with Hizb-i Islami and Sayyaf activists confirm this memo.³² Such observations raise obvious questions about how he was able to maneuver himself, by the latter half of the 1990s, into becoming al-Qaeda's number one man.

A few broader notes on the institution benefitting from his outreach and fundraising activities are in order. Al-Faruq's advisory council was composed of over a dozen members from across the Middle East and North Africa. Although Iraqis and Saudis were especially well represented, Egyptians outweighed the contributions of other members both numerically and intellectually.³³ They included the camp's chief instructor Abu Hafis as well as the self-styled Islamic scholars Ayyman Zawahiri and Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (a.k.a. Dr. Fadi), both surgeons by profession. Around the time of bin Laden's 1989 lecture, Zawahiri and Dr. Fadi would be coaching audiences on the merits of breaking free from Egypt's largest Islamist organization, al-jamaa al-islamiyya (Islamic Group). Founded by reform-minded university students in the 1970s, the Islamic Group had suffered attrition through the 1980s as it advocated militant solutions to state injustice. Sermons by the blind cleric Umar Abd al-Rahman, later imprisoned by the United States for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, provided much theological armament to members and would later feature on at least eight tapes in bin Laden's collection. According to Zawahiri, however, the Islamic Group's aims were too parochial, their qualifications to represent the *ummah* (pious community) too indebted to Egyptian nationalism. Accommodation with the infidel state held no appeal to true Muslims, and to support such a stance committed one to *takfir* (apostasy). Branding their movement Islamic Jihad (or "the Jihad Group"), the group's calling card became the assassination of Egyptian state officials, intellectuals, and, by the 1990s, foreign tourists in the country. Although efforts were focused primarily on securing a true Islamic state in Egypt, the organization gained momentum and a wider range of recruits abroad.

30. Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 133.

31. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden: A Know*, p. 80.

32. Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, p. 98.

33. Jamal al-Fadi reports four Egyptians, three Iraqis, two Saudis, and single delegates from Yemen, Oman, Algeria, and Libya (U.S. vs. *Osama Bin Laden et. al.*, 6 February transcript).

In Peshawar and, after public backlash at home during the mid-1990s, the Sudan and Yemen, Jihad Group leaders pressed a transnational coterie of disaffected scholars to defend its mission in more transportable terms. In memos to group members, Zawahiri seems to have tried to put a post-colonial stamp on the group's orientations: he spoke of the enemy as "foreign investors" and of operations as "commercial activities" designed to yield "joint profit," the assumption being that although Muslims were bound by their common hatred for Western global economic domination they could also, however self-consciously, turn its weapons to good use.³⁴

Al-Faruq's instructors, most of them Egyptian, appreciated the need to combine exercises in militant training with workshops on transnational jihadism that could discipline recruits in appropriate strains of reasoning and belief. Classes in physical fitness and weapons use were accompanied by courses on Islamic law, creed, and militancy.³⁵ The legacies of this institution have yet to be understood, partly because it has been overshadowed by its more illustrious twin: a camp using the same name near Kandahar, some two-hundred fifty miles west of Khost, set up by bin Laden himself. The latter al-Faruq, paired with a more advanced facility known among Western analysts as "the airport camp," proved training grounds for al-Qaeda's recruits beginning in 1999.³⁶ Geared to preparing the faithful for al-Qaeda's increasingly open war with the West, the camp hosted a second and less-experienced generation of fighters, many of them from Western countries. Its roster of guests and graduates included a host of 11 September 2001 hijackers including Saeed al-Ghamdi, Ahmad al-Nami, and the brothers Wail and Waleed al-Shehri, as well as a larger corps of militants who would later end up in Guantánamo, most infamous of them Khalid Shaikh Mohammad. As infamous as this second camp would become for minting al-Qaeda's credentials under bin Laden, the first and older al-Faruq must be distinguished from the more recent iteration.³⁷ Inaugurated during a messy post-Soviet era, after the final remnants of the Red Army had left but before Kabul or Jalalabad had been wrested from the Communist sympathies of president Muhammad Najibullah, al-Faruq 1 provided recruits with a curriculum for transnational militancy that remained unparalleled in sophistication and strategic vision. The Khost camp was al-Qaeda's Ivy League campus through at least the late 1990s and likely up to 2001 as well.³⁸

A survey of the lecturers featured on 14 tapes labeled "al-Faruq" in bin Laden's former collection gives rare insight into the ideological orientations that the camp sought to impart to its recruits. Of six individuals identified on tape cartridges, there are two Saudis (Abdalla al-Sabt, Abdalla al-Hamad), two Egyptians (Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khalik, Abu al-Walid al-Masri), one Kuwaiti (Ahmad al-Qattan) and one Yemeni (Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, member of a five-member presidential council throughout

34. Alan Cullison, "Inside al-Qaeda's Herd Drive," *Atlantic Monthly*, September (2004).

35. U.S. vs. *Osama Bin Laden et. al.*, (testimony of L'Houssaine Kherchtou, cited in Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 101-2); *ibid.*, 6 February transcript of Jamal al-Fadi's testimony.

36. Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 109.

37. Rohan Gunaratne discusses Zhawar Kili, a region in Khost hosting a military complex that was built during the Soviet occupation and that later accommodated the addition of al-Faruq ("The Terrorist Training Camps of al-Qaida," in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment Training and Root Causes Volume II: Training* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2006), ed. James J.F. Forest. He does not mention al-Faruq, however, or discuss the profiles or orientations of specific camps within the complex.

38. Al-Faruq's dates of operation are difficult to pinpoint. Based on my re-reading of U.S. vs. *Ensaam Anouar* documents, I calculate that ground was broken on around 10 September 1988 (p. 37), i.e., before the last Soviet troops had officially left the country. In February 1989, administrators welcomed the camp's first class of recruits, however, only in the summer of 1989, following a disastrous defeat at Jalalabad in May in which Shafiq al-Madani, one of bin Laden's closest friends, was killed (Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 140-141). From this perspective, assertions that al-Faruq was founded in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, frequently found in militant narratives, hold primarily symbolic significance. Tape no. 332 in Yale's Islamic Fundamentalist Audio-tape collection, recorded at the camp in 1998 by leading militant theoretician Abu al-Walid al-Masri, suggests that al-Qaeda's top cadres continued to teach there at that time. In August 1998, al-Faruq, as part of the larger Zhawar Kili complex, was the target of U.S. cruise missile strikes in retaliation for embassy bombings in East Africa. These strikes were not very devastating, however, since the camps appear to have been operational again within two weeks (Peter L. Bergen, *Holywar, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Free Press, 2007), p. 122).

the mid-1990s and long a top advisor for Yemen's largest Islamist organization.) The majority of these figures are well-recognized jurists/prudents; some of them, such as al-Zindani, prominent state officials. While dates and locations for their speeches are difficult to identify, the likelihood of their appearance at al-Faruq 1 is high given the controversy that their appearance at al-Faruq 2 would have created by the time of its founding.³⁹ The contents of these tapes vary. Some are clearly lectures on combat and guerilla warfare. Tape no. 332, for example, features Abu al-Walid al-Masri talking to recruits in 1998 about the tactics of fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan's mountainous terrain and the lessons for turning the struggle against Americans. To these tapes might be added at least eight recordings by renowned theorist of global jihad Abu Musab al-Suri; although his lectures tend not to mention locations or dates, he is known to have penned treatises on the legacies of modern Muslim militancy for world-wide jihad during his residence at the camp.⁴⁰ Such audio-lectures suggest the vanguard role of al-Faruq 1 teachers in tailoring Muslim militancy to post-Cold War contexts of American geopolitical influence. Most of the tapes marked "al-Faruq," however, dwell on topics that seem only obliquely related to armed jihad. Coaching audiences on commonalities among Muslims and on unifying virtues and morals, these lectures shy from charges of *takfir* (apostasy) that camp recruits are reported to have indulged in when among Muslims of different sects and political affiliations back in Peshawar. While instructors were known for sowing discord at home, their dissertation at al-Faruq 1 is devoted to solidarity with fellow campmates and those who might be persuaded to join their ranks.

What lessons can we take from the al-Faruq 1 foundations of al-Qaeda? First, al-Qaeda's inner conflicts in the late 1990s and 2000s, much documented by scholars, cannot be contrasted with an earlier period in which it was more ideologically coherent and consolidated. As suggested by bin Laden's peripheral role and in some respects marginalization in al-Faruq founding documents, such struggles marked the organization from its outset.

Second, historical assessments of bin Laden's organizational, ideological, and symbolic influence need to account for the ways his militant initiatives were always mediated by a shifting terrain of jihadi training camps in diverse countries whose various supporting "bases" were not synonymous with those under his control. Bin Laden's record in founding militant camps and promoting his image as a base leader is impressive; roots for such operational momentum were sown in the "Lion's Den" camp in Jaji, Afghanistan, founded in 1986; his residence and guesthouses in Peshawar in the early 1990s; compounds for Afghan Arab returnees in Saudi Arabia before 1994; properties held outside Khartoum in the Sudan from the early to mid-1990s; and, in Afghanistan at Tora Bora, Jalalabad, and later Kandahar from 1996-2001. Beyond these headquarters, bin Laden's own objectives faced continuous and sometimes heated negotiation as militants representing diverse movements jockeyed for leadership. By the late 1990s, of course, bin Laden had acquired status as a figurehead for global anti-American jihad in ways that proved expedient for beleaguered parties seeking redemption in the

39. Saudi Arabia is perhaps the most important index of such controversy. As early as the fall of 1994, attacks by Afghan Arab returnees on Saudi officials resulted in heightened crackdowns on preachers supporting armed jihad even in foreign countries (Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, pp. 70-71). By 1999, two years after al-Faruq 2's founding, Saudi superstar Salman al-Awda openly denounced the jihad in Afghanistan. In the years following 2000, only the most openly militant clerics, such as Hamud al-Shuaybi, defended the Taliban and encouraged Saudis to go fight in the region (Stéphane Le croix, *Les Islamistes: Saoudiens: Une insurrection Marquée* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), p. 303).

40. For example, see "Book by Mustafa Hamid," <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/AFGP-2002-600087-Trans.pdf>, last accessed 29 February 2012.

public eye, at least in some quarters of the Muslim world.⁴¹ In Afghanistan, for example, Taliban chief Mullah Umar stood to gain from publicly backing bin Laden after 1998 when nationalist sentiment against domestic interference by the United States climaxed following cruise missile strikes on militant training camps, a response to the bombing of its embassies in East Africa. Umar's defense of bin Laden at the time, at odds with approximately 80% of the Taliban leadership, provided exceptional leverage given his negotiations with Unocal consultants earlier in the decade when the American oil company sought to bring a pipeline through his district. For many Afghans, Umar's loyalties were not necessarily transparent, however difficult this may be for Westerners to imagine. The circumstances of Mullah Umar's alliance with bin Laden underscore the ways in which his "base" was always intrinsically linked to local political hierarchies. They give caution to portraits of al-Qaeda as a transhistorical constant, an assumption often made in popular strains of network theory that link separate actors through space and time and de-emphasize the need for contextualization.⁴²

Third, al-Faruq's importance as a template for organizing Muslim militancy calls for renewed attention to ideological tensions that arose among Afghan Arabs and Muslim militants generally as bin Laden attempted to lay claim to al-Qaeda's historic mantle. The first axis of tensions expresses as a conflict between cultural particularism and transnationalism. Al-Faruq camp instructors and commanders were heavily dominated by Egyptians whose domestic ambitions for unseating Mubarak's regime had faced serious setbacks and who, unlike bin Laden and many Saudis, were banned from returning home. Like many of their North African associates, then, they were committed to transnational militancy in ways that bin Laden, as evident in his late 1980s and early 1990s audio-recorded speeches, struggled to square himself with. Bin Laden's speeches from these years express little interest in such regions as Kashmir, Tajikistan, Mindanao, and Chechnya, all areas said to be al-Qaeda's strategic priorities at its outset.⁴³ Bin Laden expresses a profound commitment instead to purifying the Arabian Peninsula of what he perceives to be foreign influences. In his 1989 speech entitled "Our Present Reality," over 250,000 copies of which sold in Saudi cassette shops, bin Laden identifies Islam's primary foreign enemies as Iranian Shia above all followed by Egyptian Arab socialists, Iraqi Ba'athists, Yemeni communists, and finally religious minorities such as Christians and Jews who support them. In the years that followed, bin Laden fashioned his leadership through a peculiar form of Arabism, one that gave short shrift to the Palestinians, the bulk of whom, to bin Laden's mind, were victims awaiting manly assistance from a bolder desert race. Such Arabism is often lost in analyses of bin Laden's influence that emphasize his role as Abdallah Azzam's pan-Islamic successor and the new face of deterritorialized and transnational jihad.⁴⁴ Such an argument is easier to justify after 11 September 2001, when, as the mastermind behind the attacks, bin Laden adopts a language corresponding with his status as worldwide figurehead for defying the West. Before 2001, however, his appeal among core supporters had a greater ethno-nationalist basis than we tend to

41. His anti-Americanism, arguably the most important element of his call to arms and his appeal to diverse militant groups, was not given from the outset of his career, whatever bin Laden himself has said on the matter; quite the opposite given his family's close connections with the United States and the West. His significance as a symbol of American defiance arose from particular historical events, foremost among them his blacklisting by the U.S. Anti-Terrorism Act of April 1996 that led to the freezing of his assets, a time *Mogazine* article introducing his name to a popular Western readership a few months later, an audacious speech around the same time that came to be known as his Declaration of War against the United States, interviews by major American television news networks in 1997-1998, subsequent video-taped interviews on al-Jazeera as American-led air strikes in Iraq fueled anti-American sentiment among viewers across the Middle East, and of course his notoriety following the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa.

42. A focus on "bases" plagues such accounts. Actors pledging support for bin Laden's operations at one historical juncture, whatever their intentions, may be incorporated within quite different "bases" initiatives at other moments. One could argue that al-Qaeda's affiliates build credibility precisely on these margins, mobilizing on some occasions under al-Qaeda's common signifier while spurning such affiliations for other causes on others. As Dr. Fadl points out in his influential work *The Essential Guide of Preparation for Jihad (al-Umda fi Imad al-Udda)*, circulated much at al-Faruq, there are at least four kinds of oaths in Islam in Simon Fuchs, *Proper Signposts for the Comp. The Reception of Classical Authorities in the Jihad Manual al-Umda fi Imad al-Udda* (Wurzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2011), p. 96.

43. Michael Scheuer, *Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 73.

44. Yossef Bodansky, *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 49.

think. Analyses that emphasize his indebtedness to medieval Muslim thinkers such Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya or to jihadi theologians more often than not miss this element of his identity. Reports from non-Saudis and non-Arab recruits at bin Laden's camps or those of other Afghan Arabs convey enough insight to suggest that ethno-nationalism was both divisive and persistent, even in his presence.

From this perspective, al-Qaeda is not as unique in the annals of terrorist history as is often claimed. To be sure, bin Laden was talented at posturing himself to global audiences, especially after 11 September 2001. Public statements about the salience of transnational global jihadism to al-Qaeda's mission became his trademark. If he provided a distinctive model for wider groups of militants or sympathetic audiences, however, it was through a kind of sincerity that enabled him to pull off speaking on a world stage, ostensibly representing all Muslims who sought liberation from the yoke of Western influence, while retaining an austerity that was highly specific to his own cultural background and that combined themes of Yemeni mountain primitivism, Saudi-Salafi asceticism, and Arab indigenism redress against the hypocrisies of modern life. Faysal Devji, a scholar of al-Qaeda, suggests that bin Laden rose to prominence for most Arab audiences as a kind of "reality TV" figure on al-Qaeda during the late 1990s as popular frustration over the United States' involvement in Iraq and Palestine fed public desire for something beyond America's reach.⁴⁵ Bin Laden's carefully orchestrated videos at the time were on message, driving up al-Qaeda's viewership through a performance of what anthropologists have called "the tribal zone": a form of identity emphasizing armed indigenous resistance to the economic, environmental, and cultural deprivations of foreign states.⁴⁶ Ayman Zawahiri, it should be noted, never proved as talented as bin Laden at enlisting transregional and global discourses in the service of such neo-tribal imaginaries. Whatever may be rightly said of al-Qaeda's irrelevance to the recent "Arab Spring" movement, bin Laden's performances found an early resonance with the kind of "new social movements" that would play an important role in these later uprisings. Given the roots of such movements in post-industrial societies whose largely middle class and professional leaders had set aside earlier class-struggle vocabularies for coalition-building initiatives focusing on identity and quality of life issues, bin Laden's pitch to commonalities of religion and political defiance struck chords of sympathy among many, even as his violent methods were condemned.⁴⁷ Under bin Laden's leadership, al-Qaeda tapped into popular forms of world-system dissent in ways that have long been familiar to modern terrorist organizations.

A second axis of militant tensions that was occasioned by bin Laden's peripheralism to al-Faruq is expressed in a conflict between two kinds of political theory. I will call them doctrinalism and legalism with the understanding that politics is as much a struggle over symbols as resources. Al-Faruq's courses on militant tactics and weapons use were extensive and have been the primary focus of those trying to understand the camp's influence. Its courses on ideology have received far less attention, though as forums for discussion and text production for well over a decade they are arguably the camp's more enduring legacy. The details of al-Faruq's intellectual production remain to be unpacked. To date, my own analysis of audiotapes and writings produced at the camp suggest the following observation: the primary drift in most courses was not instruction on the finer points of jihadi texts through the ages, nor even was it reinforcing homage to the Islamic state and, in the idiom of the Muslim Brotherhood, its claims upon modern forms of community activism. Rather than offering lessons on governance or jurisprudence, instructors purported to coach students on how better to know their god. Before implementing *Sharia* (Islamic law), the reasoning went, one

45 Faisal Devji, *Landscape of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: Hurst & Co., 2006), pp. 103-107.

46 R. Brian Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, eds., *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare* (Sante Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1992).

47 Stephen Vertigans, *Militant Islam: A Sociology of Characteristics, Causes and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 37-43.

had to know *'aqida* (doctrine).⁴⁸ Salafi renderings of Saudi Wahhabism were paramount, especially those conveyed in discourses of *al-amr bi-maruf wa al-nahy an al-munkar* (commanding the good and forbidding the evil), a task requiring not only considerable self-discipline but also active outreach to other members of the community who might neglect its prerogatives, including those in positions of social and political power. The preponderantly doctrinal element of many courses in transnational militancy at al-Faruq requires some rather fundamental shifts in our thinking of what al-Qaeda offered to its recruits. To begin with, the primary enemy was not the American, Jew, or Christian, but rather the errant Muslim within. Camp instructors devoted much attention, of course, to the common bonds that united Muslims, foremost among them a shared commitment to *tawhid* (monotheism). Themes of unity, however, were belied by instructors' arguments, most of which, developed to rebut misperceptions and correct inaccurate interpretations or practices, give students a portfolio of transportable debate strategies when canvassing support for controversial causes and winning recruits back at home or in other Muslim-majority societies. The assumption in such arguments is that the majority is against you. This viewpoint is expounded by instructors in numerous ways, among them scenarios of global Western domination and classical jihad against infidels occupying Muslim lands. The whetting stone for refining ones' thoughts, words, behavior, and action, however, was one's own co-religionists, a task that required a large measure of theological diplomacy.

Given the thrust of such ideological training, bin Laden's anti-Americanism would require considerable invention, a larger analysis of which exceeds the bounds of this paper. I should note, however, that al-Faruq camp instructors' efforts to make doctrine more central to Muslim militancy played to the favor of such invention in two ways. First, introductory courses on doctrine coached students on building arguments in favor of armed insurrection that were less technical and scholastic than those typically developed through Islamic law. Theology's interest in existential questions about the human condition accommodated discussions of identity, society, and one's everyday senses in ways that made religious imperatives more approachable for non-specialists. Second, theological lectures made such practices as worship, bodily care, self discipline, and intellectual development relevant by illuminating their links to students' experiences as modern global subjects. What emerged from camp instruction, then, was a confidence in mapping struggles not onto older fault lines "Islamic" or "non-Islamic," but rather onto new understandings of human repertoires for action against unjust establishments. Such confidence stemmed from an intimacy with what was happening elsewhere in the world, however much they might be isolated as the product of "Islamic radicalism" alone or a mindset doomed to internal contradiction and failure.

Finally, my analysis of al-Faruq's legacy underscores the importance of attending to practices of reading and to the ways interpretation is shaped by our own historical and cultural experiences. Archives are only as valuable as the tools we employ to unpack them. Area studies programs will continue to be urgent to the work of studying the Muslim world and terrorism. Expertise in foreign languages and the humanities must complement the heavy load taken on by the social sciences. Collaboration among scholars needs to be our bedrock not only for building credibility through different disciplinary perspectives but for building allies in communities and cultures other than our own.

48 For a discussion of Ahl al-Sunna's doctrinal activism and its tensions with Muslim Brotherhood ideology in the Sudan, see Noah Saloman, "The Salafi Critique of Islamism: Doctrine, Difference and the Problem of Islamic Political Action in Contemporary Sudan," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2009). Top speakers in the al-Faruq tapes include Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khalid, one of the most important thinkers for the Ahl al-Sunna community, as well as Abdalla Sabt, his student. Bin Laden became intimately acquainted with Ahl al-Sunna doctrinalism while living in the Sudan between 1992-1996.

