

## LADEN DIED: END OF AL-QAEDA?

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### Abstract

*The news on the killing of Osama Bin Laden with an American operation ten years after, the symbol of al-Qaeda and popularized by the events of September 11, brought into a question: is this the end of al-Qaeda? In this paper, the organization is examined on three levels of analysis; namely individual, organizational and systematic level and the factors and their level of effect are analysed. While analysing an umbrella organization like al-Qaeda with the role of leadership, transformation process and the impacts of international agenda are analysed together with the structure of analysis. It is concluded that al-Qaeda is no longer the same when we have heard first. Also, analysis of the life of Osama bin Laden as political psychology is discussed in the light of his impact on the organization. In the paper, it is also argued that as experienced in such organizations, leadership change leads to transformation rather than extinction of the organisation.*

**Key words:** *Laden, Al-Qaeda, Terrorism, Terrorist*

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## **LADEN DIED: END OF AL-QAEDA?**

The only constant thing is change, nothing stays same. We mention this idea very often with different words. However, as the events occur, we often ignore this reality.

Osama Bin Laden, the head of al-Qaeda, has become the symbol of September 11, when the transformation of the information is reached by American forces in Pakistan; almost everyone had the same question in mind: is this the end of Al-Qaeda? Main motive to ask this question is the perception of Al-Qaeda in 9/11 as the same Al-Qaeda in 2011, ignoring the fact that nothing stays same.

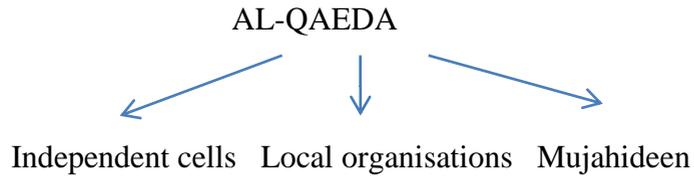
On the other hand, the changing meanings and framework of leadership, existence of the different types of leaderships in the organisations, also ignoring the changes occurred upon the influence of intra-organisational dynamics can be listed as other factors for such an analysis.

Yet, in Al-Qaeda, the role of leadership on the organisational structure is not as it is perceived. In Al-Qaeda, with cell-type structuring, instead of the traditional hierarchical structure, information is not held in any one cell, meaning each person

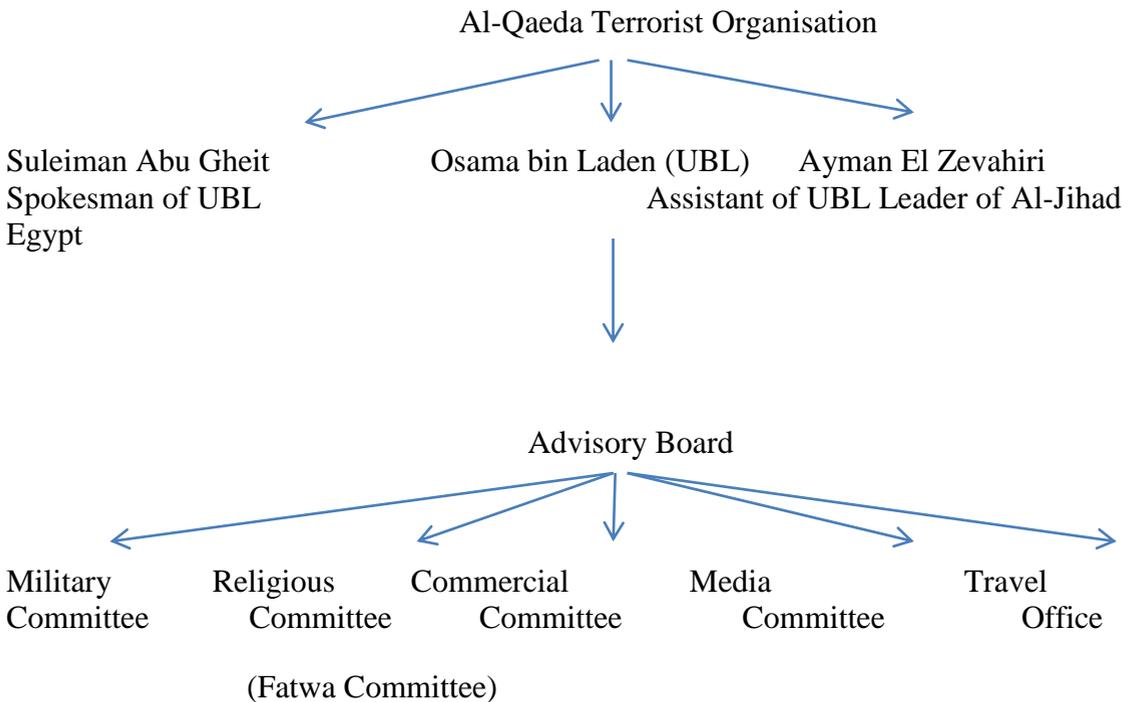
takes part in the leadership structure. In the analysis of Al-Qaeda on individual level, we come across such a leadership structure, however, in the organizational level, its life cycle should be analysed.

Al-Qaeda with ultimate goal of integrating all Muslims under the rule of Caliphate in order to establish an Islamic state in the Middle East, has a structure which can be called as a meeting point for wide range of radical Islamic organisations operating internationally such as Cemaati Islamiye, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hareket-ul-Mujahideen. Al-Qaeda has a worldwide cell structure, connected to radical Islamic groups and continuously supported by them.

Until coalition powers overthrew the Taliban at the end of 2001, the headquarters of Al-Qaeda was in Afghanistan. After this date, Al-Qaeda spread into South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Middle East in small groups, and started terrorist attacks against American powers especially in this region.



Al-Qaeda as an umbrella organisation, one can see that it is still undergoing dynamic changes on the organizational level. Within the dynamic process, the roles of the prominent figures within the organization, changing levels of their importance and levels of impacts and Osama bin Laden’s position consequent to that have changed.



In analysing the role of leadership in such organizations, internal and external dynamics should be considered together. It also requires analysis on system level. It can be argued that developments in international system level have also influences on Al-Qaeda. From operations on Al-Qaeda and developments in the Middle East to the various events occurred in Afghanistan and Iraq have inevitably influenced Al-Qaeda. Such events influencing internal dynamics of the organization also result interrogations within the organisation.

On the other hand, in individual level of analysis, the study of Jerold M. Post<sup>1</sup>, a leading scholar on profiling the leaders of terrorist organisations, content significant data on the profile of Usame bin Laden through the analysis of personal development from the childhood. Born in 1957 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, he is 17<sup>th</sup> son of Mohammed bin Laden who has 40 or 45 children. Mohammed bin Laden, migrated from Yemen, is close to the royal family and set up a large construction company. He left an inheritance of nearly 2-3 billion dollars, when he died in a plane crash in 1967. It is estimated that Osama bin Laden inherited a total of 18-200 billion dollars from his father and it has been stated that he began to inherit 57 billion dollars from his father at the age of 16<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Post, J. M. (2004). **Leaders and their followers in a dangerous world: the psychology of political behaviour**. New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 1-10.

<sup>2</sup> Post, J. M. (2004). **Leaders and their followers in a dangerous world: the psychology of political behaviour**. New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 1-10.

Laden's mother, Hamida, a Palestinian descendant of a Syrian women, was the wife of Mohammed bin Laden and she was the least favourite of his 10 wives. Osama bin Laden was her only child from that marriage. It is argued that it is the reason for Laden's alienation from his family. It is mentioned that his mother Hamida had some problems with her husband because of her free and independent spirit. It is argued that when Laden was born, Hamida was isolated from the family and called "Al-Abeda," meaning slave, and Laden as a single child was called "Ibn Al-Abeda," meaning the son of slave. Since Laden and her mother were humiliated from the day he was born, it shows his wounded self-respect. Another important point in the development of Laden is that Hamida and he did not live in the same flat and therefore she never saw the development of her child. His father died when he was 10, he did not know his mother, and he was raised by people who humiliated him and his mother.

Laden was enrolled to King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, obtained an engineering degree and took courses in business management that undertook a leadership role which enabled his family business on various fields. His skills in these two areas helped him in Afghanistan. Abdullah Azzam, who is a Palestinian radical professor and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood organisation, has an important role in shaping the political ideology of bin Laden. Azzam, exposed ideas to Laden on what could be done and what Laden could do, in response to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. He conveyed the

importance of bringing all Muslims around the world together to defend the Islamic state of Afghanistan. Laden also helped Azzam in the formation of Mekteb El-Khidamat (MAK), Azzam's international network of people. Called as Afghan Arabs, MAK embodies five thousand people from Saudi Arabia, three thousand people from Algeria and two thousand people from Egypt. It is stressed that leadership is not formed until encountered with supporters, his struggle in Afghanistan is critical in psychological development of Laden and his transformation into a leader.

It is stated that when he came to Afghanistan, he was not formed and had naive nature. Then, he was flattered by his followers in Afghanistan. In his relation with Mujahids, it was important to stress the help of God in their success. Here, the enemies were from present Arab countries, the Western-Zionist network and the communists. After his subsequent success in Afghanistan, loyal Arab fighters, who were ready to continue the jihad, shared Laden's vision and organized a jihad around the world and decided to reconstruct the Islamic nation in Bosnia, Algeria, Chechnya, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. It is argued that Osama bin Laden's strength was his belief that his combatants were immortal<sup>3</sup>.

Assisting Azzam, Osama bin Laden fought in-person and was even wounded near Jalalabad. In 1986, he established his camps. His wealth, generosity, simple life, charisma and courage in the war

made him a legend. The basis for his institutionalization was established through the formation of a database of the volunteers through 1988. Based on the database, an organization called 'Al-Qaeda' emerged. The Saudi regime began to fear from that man, who wanted to spread the jihad.

In 1988, after ideological separation from Abdullah Azzam, he founded Al-Qaeda with Ayman al-Zawahiri, the founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. As a result of Abdullah Azzam's assassination in 1989, all of MAK's elements and presence were earned by Al-Qaeda. When the Soviet Union left Afghanistan in 1989, Laden and his followers lost their enemies. When he went to Sudan in 1993, he learned that the United States of America (USA) had gained power over Saudi Arabia and had directed hostility to the USA. Firstly, he aimed at removal of American forces from Arab territory, in his fatwa later in 1998; he stated that all Americans, both civilians and soldiers were to be considered enemies. Laden's speeches were based on Koran.

When Saddam conquered Kuwait in June 1990, Osama bin Laden claimed the mission of protecting the Saudi borders. He got angry as King Fahd summoned the American soldiers; therefore, first he went to Pakistan, then to Afghanistan, and eventually went to Sudan. At this point, it is obvious that his experiences have influenced the formation of the Al-Qaida's aim, which is announced as to expel the Americans and American impact from Muslim countries, especially from Saudi Arabia, to wipe out Israel and to overthrow American-led governments in the Middle East. On the other hand,

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<sup>3</sup> Jacquard, R. (2002). **In the Name of Osama bin Laden: Global Terrorism & The bin Laden Brot.** Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, pp. xi-xii.

there are also non-Salafi (Wahhabi) Muslim countries on the target board of the congregation.

Usame bin Laden announced Gulf War held with the fatwas of the Muslim cleric as one of the reasons of the struggle (jihad) against America<sup>4</sup>. Usame bin Laden, the only terrorist leader ever to have *declared* a holy war against America, has been linked to a number of incidents that have cost Americans their lives, including the bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000 and the destruction of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998<sup>5</sup>. It is argued that Laden has been seen as an outstanding “leader” of radical Islam due to the missions he held, the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the bombing of the American military headquarters in Saudi Arabia in 1996, the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the attack on the American union in Yemen in 2000 and the attacks on September 11th, 2001. It is also expressed that the alienated Arab youth have felt sympathy for Laden's rhetoric and have seen him as a hero. Another argument is that Al-Qaeda terrorists are seen as adults who internalize their own values, seen as real believers who are ready to be at the congregation's disposal with soul, and take the leadership of the charismatic leader for granted, and accept what Laden assumes ethic and religiously acceptable.

<sup>4</sup> Michael S. Swetham, Yonah Alexander (2001). **Bir Terörist Ağının Profili: Usame Bin Laden**. Güncel Yayıncılık, pp. 129-130.

<sup>5</sup> Bodansky, Y. (2001). **Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America**. Rocklin, California: Forum.

Unlike other organisations, Al-Qaeda generally does not undertake the events directly with a press statement. Instead, after the operations Osama Bin Laden makes a speech to show his appreciation about the operations. After the operations in Saudi Arabia in 1996, he declared that these kinds of operations would continue by mentioning ‘laudable activities of jihad’ about them.

In his psychoanalytical studies, Vamık Volkan<sup>6</sup>, a prominent scholar on political psychology, reported that “children who are brought up by people who insulted to them and to their mother may develop an identity dominated by feelings of revenge”. He explains the “egoism of victimization”<sup>7</sup> as how a certain view of one's victimization, the inability to mourn properly and one's own weakness may lead quickly towards terrorism: “The individual who perceives his group as victimized and whose own sense of self is threatened by that perception may be drawn to terrorist activities in the same way that a nation that perceives itself to be victimized may go to war”. Additionally, death of his father and brother, who has been substituted as his father, in a plane crash is significant. He is, consciously or unconsciously, looking for a father figure to save himself from feelings of inferiority. According to him, Laden began to develop his fundamentalist ideas through the findings of Azzam at The King Abdul Aziz University, then, he identified himself

<sup>6</sup> Volkan, V.D. (1999). **Kanbağı, Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre**. Ankara: Bağlam Yayınları, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> Volkan, V. D. (1988). **The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationship**. Northvale N.J.: Jason Aronson, pp. 176-177.

with orphan prophet Mohammed. However, he expresses that he couldn't tame his feeling of revenge and that spending money to promote Al-Qaeda was his biggest deviance/heresy, used his money to insult USA. On the other hand, he asserts that while he was trying to wave the global Islamic canvas, the attempt of the USA and the West to gather all the Muslims under the same tent made the situation even harder.

In the discourse of Osama Bin Laden, he said that "The only way to declare caliphate is the use of force; therefore, the aim of Al-Qaeda is to establish an Islamic State- provided that the boundaries are removed- through abolishing the governments in the Muslim states that are rotten and act under the yoke of the West". In accomplishing that, firstly, it was intended to overthrow the governments and systems in the Arab world. The demolition of these systems is related to the withdrawal of the USA from Arab world. Even if the organization had such an aim, Al-Qaeda had no effect on people's movement which changes ongoing regimes starting from Tunisia to Egypt and Syria and also it shows that it is not as assumed on the support of the public besides the success of the organisation. When the death of Laden is analysed in this perspective, it also reflects that its impact will be limited.

On the other hand, even if Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden seems to be identical

to each other, the organization is not managed solely by Osama Bin Laden. Osama Bin Laden had two people, Dr. Eymen Al-Zawahiri and Muhammad Ataf, acting as advisors and assistants at the highest level. One of these two people, Al-Zawahiri, is the leader of Al-Qaeda and is Osama bin Laden's claimed successor. El-Zawahiri, who joined the Islamic movement at the end of the 1970's in his hometown, is a surgeon from upper class in Egypt.

In the light of such information, one should not miss the point on what would happen after the death of Osama Bin Laden is that changing roles of the leaders within the organization may lead up to various results. Two most important examples can be listed as the transformation of the organisation instead of removal or dysfunction after the killing of Sheikh Ahmed Yasin and Yasser Arafat, the symbol names of Palestinian Liberation Organization and HAMAS, two major organizations of the Palestinian cause. Considering Al-Qaeda's structure and functioning, the organization's reaction to the death of bin Laden can be perceived as normal. There would be a remote possibility entirely about the expectation of a terrorist event as a reaction to the death of the leader by the organisation; it is a far possibility of the removal of the organisation since it is an umbrella organization entirely based on cell structure as Al-Qaeda.

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