

# Al-Jazeera Demystified

*EIR's Stockholm Bureau chief Hussein Askary pulls back the curtain on the British origins of the Arabic news service.*

While BBC Arabic Television itself may be dead, its editorial spirit, its style and even its programmes, albeit under different names, live on—transmitted from the tiny Gulf State of Qatar. Al-Jazeera (the Peninsula) Satellite Television went on air at the beginning of last November [1996], staffed chiefly by ex-members of BBC Arabic Television, and headed by Chief Editor, Sami Haddad, a skilled broadcaster and former Current Affairs Editor with BBC Arabic Radio at Bush House for many years.

—Ian Richardson, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*,  
April 21, 1997

Jan. 16—Any discussion of Al-Jazeera TV's sinister role in the current developments in North Africa and Southwest Asia, and the role of the State of Qatar, should be seen in light of the above words by Ian Richardson, published London-based Arabic daily *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*. Although not telling the whole truth, he gave a useful account of the shutting down of BBC Arabic on April 21, 1996, and the birth of Al-Jazeera a few months later. The Saudis were behind the shutdown of the BBC Arabic service because they were the financiers of the operation, and when they collided with the British Empire's "permanent interests" which know no "permanent allies," they closed the money spigot and shut off the satellite supply from the Saudi-owned Orbit Communication Corporation which was providing the transmission for BBC Arabic.


Richardson was the managing editor and creator of BBC Arabic Television News. According to his own biography, he had previously held such sensitive "news"/intelligence collector functions for the British Foreign Office-run news agency as: editor, BBC World Service Newsgathering; BBC World Service field co-ordinator for the Gorbachov-Reagan-Bush summits; and BBC World Service field co-ordinator

for the Tienanmen Square uprising, Beijing (<http://www.richardsonmedia.co.uk/>).

From its inception, Al-Jazeera TV was one tool among many, of British intelligence and cultural warfare (disinformation war), born out of a crisis created by the British themselves, involving Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other actors. The aim of the British was to order the affairs of the region and the world, at a time that London was preparing the permanent "war on terror" and crisis management and dictatorship rule, currently in process in the United States, the EU, and other parts of the world.

The period Richardson was referring to, when the transmutation of BBC Arabic into Al-Jazeera Satellite

**THE FAILED DREAM THAT LED TO AL-JAZEERA**  
Ian Richardson on Britain's role in the birth of the Arabic channel...



Sunday, 21 April, 1996, is a date that will forever be burnt into my memory and the memories of the 150 or so former staff of BBC Arabic Television. It was the day that I killed off, at just over an hour's notice, my baby: a television service launched with high hopes and, given a fair wind, one that could have brought about sweeping changes in the media in the Arab world - not just in the Middle East and North Africa, but also in Europe and the US; indeed any country that had a substantial Arab community.

*Ian Richardson's website: The photo shows the Arabic BBC crew which later became Al-Jazeera. Although not telling the whole truth, Richardson's article gives a useful account of the shutting down of BBC Arabic in 1996, and the birth of Al-Jazeera a few months later.*

TV occurred, was a turbulent one, which started when the current Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani (a British Sandhurst Military Academy graduate) carried out a palace coup against his father Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani in June 1995. Hamad was assisted by his cousin, the current Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jasim Al-Thani. The elder Khalifa, who was abroad at the time of the coup, sought help from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the two most powerful Arab countries, in a counter-coup which failed in February 1996.

A massive diplomatic crisis took place, involving Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Nineteen Saudis were implicated in the failed counter-coup, many of whom were later sentenced to death (but execution was suspended) or life imprisonment. Unconfirmed reports allege that the young Sheikh Hamad was assisted by foreign powers to stay in power, in spite of the fact that major regional powers and part of the ruling family were against him. What is known, however, is that the Queen of England and her government were the first to acknowledge the new ruler of Qatar.

### **Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia**

Simultaneous with these developments, Saudi Arabia was being targeted by an operation run from London to destabilize the Al-Saud dynasty, ironically the most important ally of the British Empire and its largest weapons importer. What was involved is partially a succession fight inside the Al-Saud family (due to King Fahad bin Abdul-Aziz's failing health, caused by a stroke in 1995), which the British wanted to steer to preserve the special relationship between the Kingdom and Britain. But what was more important strategically, was to shape the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America.

As has been extensively documented by *EIR*, the British policy vis-à-vis the U.S. republic since the death of President Franklin Roosevelt has been to involve the U.S. in permanent wars in Asia, and prevent any strategic-economic alliance among the U.S., Russia, and China. British foreign and intelligence policy manages that by playing the special friend and ally with the U.S. in imperial wars and adventures around the world. Smaller nations, such as the Arab governments in the Middle East are treated like useful tools, that can be treated harshly when they do not fall in line with the British schemes, and nicely, if they do.

King Fahad, under whom the British-Saudi Al-Yamamah weapons contract was consolidated, and the Afghan War financed, had become unpopular because

he had invited the U.S. military forces to the Muslim Holy Land of "Al-Haramain" (Saudi Arabia) in 1990 to help expel Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion. The U.S. established a permanent air base near Al-Khobar, which gradually became the target of fanatic sections in the Wahhabi clergy and factions of the Al-Saud family.

One Osama bin Laden, a former CIA-MI6-backed asset in the Afghan War against the Soviets, established an office in London for an advocacy group called the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR). In 1994, the CDLR started lobbying for support and signatures targeting the Saudi-American cooperation and King Fahad. While the office of the CDLR was manned by Western-clothed political activists Saad Al-Fagih and Mohammad Al-Masaari—two political refugees granted asylum and protection in Britain—along with bin Laden's close friend Khalid Al-Fawwaz, the manifestos and press releases calling for the overthrow of the King, forcing the U.S. armed forces out of the Holy Land, and establishing a true Wahhabi state, were all signed by bin Laden.

All Saudi attempts to convince the British government to shut down the CDLR offices or expel its members from Britain failed. At the time, Britain was fighting legal charges from dozens of countries in Asia and North Africa for hosting all types of terrorist groups which were actively planning, recruiting for, and funding massacres and terror-bombings throughout Asia and North Africa. The British government and Parliament's official defense line against these charges was that the British Empire's laws allow such activities on British soil as long as these terror activities do not harm British interests!

On Nov. 13, 1995, a car bomb killed five U.S. and two Indian citizens at the offices of the Saudi National Guard in Riyadh. This car bombing led the U.S. forces stationed at Khobar Towers to raise the threat condition alert.

In spite of that pre-warning and state of alert, a massive truck-bomb attack on the U.S. Air Force base on June 25, 1996, killed 19 U.S. servicemen. This led many intelligence analysts to suspect that a faction in the Saudi family, specifically active in the National Guard under Crown Prince Abdullah, was behind the attack, or at least facilitated it. The Saudis misled the U.S. into believing that the Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon was behind the attack, allegedly managing to smuggle a truckload of explosives across the borders of four countries with tight security, from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia!

It was revealed later in FBI chief Louis Freeh's memoir, *My FBI*, that it was Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, who suggested that Iran and Hezbollah be investigated as the possible culprits. Bandar made this the leading issue in the mind of Freeh in a private meeting in Bandar's residence the day after the attack. Then Bandar personally, along with Saudi intelligence, constructed a long trail of false evidence to lead Freeh and FBI to the conclusion that Iran was behind the attack.

Interestingly, President Bill Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno did not buy this story pushed by the Saudis. It was not until George W. Bush was in the White House that an indictment against a group of allegedly Hezbollah-affiliated Saudi-Shia citizens and a Lebanese, was issued on June 21, 2001, by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Freeh went on later to become Prince Bandar's lawyer to help whitewash him of charges related to the Al-Yamamah corruption and bribery case in the U.S. As documented thoroughly by *EIR*,<sup>1</sup> Al-Yamamah was the Anglo-Saudi arms deal which created the slush funds to finance the mujahideen fighters around the world, and even the 9/11 hijackers, by Bandar and his wife, personally.

Suicide attacks against U.S. targets in Saudi Arabia continued all through the 1990s, up to the most bloody attack on the Vinnell Company compound in Riyadh in May 2003, in which 35 civilians were killed and 200 wounded.

Eventually, and conveniently, the U.S. air base was moved to the tiny and protected state of Qatar, where the As Sayliyah Army Base served as the air operations center for the next American war against Iraq, in March 2003.

Bin Laden, who, in 1994-96, was not known inter-



*Osama bin Laden, pictured in an Al-Jazeera report on Nov. 3, 2010. Bin Laden, in the mid-1990s, was advised by Saudi intelligence to move from Sudan to Afghanistan and enjoy the protection of the Saudi-assets, the Mujahideen, and later, the Taliban.*



*These two anti-Saudi press releases were sent by bin Laden from London in 1994-95, where he established an office for the Advise and Reform Committee (ARC), later, the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR). Bin Laden's signature appears above the group's address in London.(below)*



1. Jeffrey Steinberg, "Scandal of the Century Rocks British Crown and the City," *EIR*, June 22, 2007.

nationally, struck a deal with the Al-Saud family (reportedly through Prince Turki bin Faisal, the director of Saudi Intelligence at the time) to prevent him from being extradited from Sudan, where he resided until 1996, to either Saudi Arabia or the United States. The Sudanese government was willing to cooperate with the U.S., but was told to let bin Laden leave, to travel to Afghanistan. He was advised by Saudi intelligence to go there and enjoy the protection of the Saudi assets, the mujahideen, and later, the Taliban.

In the meantime, bin Laden changed the nature of his operations to target only U.S. interests instead of the Al-Saud regime. This was inaugurated with the twin car bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in August 1998, and the official announcement of the creation of al-Qaeda. This paved the way for the next British move, forcing the United States into “a permanent war against terrorism,” rather than dealing with other urgent issues, such as the collapsing financial and economic system.

At the same time, the British brought the Saudis more into line with their policies, succession fights aside, after giving them a lesson in who is the master who can pull the strings of the different players. Terrorism and media control were two essential instruments in the game.

### **Back to BBC Arabic**

Following the first terrorist attacks in Riyadh in 1995, the BBC Arabic began, in early 1996, to broadcast regular interviews with bin Laden’s CDLR office managers Al-Fagih and Al-Masaari, as “experts” on Saudi affairs, giving them ample freedom to attack the Al-Saud family, and to give marching orders to the opposition inside the country. This enraged the Saudi royal family, who themselves were financing BBC Arabic. The British government and the BBC waived the station’s “independent editorial policy” in the face of the Saudi objections. So, instead of presenting obsolete legal arguments, the Saudis simply turned off the switches at the Orbit satellite service provider of BBC Arabic on April 21, 1996.

It is not clear yet how the decision to move BBC Arabic to Qatar to create Al-Jazeera was made, and which British and Qatari officials were involved in the deal. But one thing is clear: The British helped the new Qatari Emir, who was in a propaganda war against the Saudis and Egyptians, to stay in power and to boost his ego. The propaganda from Al-Jazeera was targeting

Saudi Arabia and Egypt specifically, and therefore, it had to bring the most viral opponents of these regimes on air. This meant bin Laden and his sympathizers, and the Egyptian Islamists.

But in order to acquire popularity in the eyes of the large Arab population in the Middle East and North Africa, Al-Jazeera started criticizing the government and leaders of these regions. This was taboo in these countries, where the mass media was totally controlled by the regimes. Of course, the only government which was not criticized was the Qatari government itself, which was investing enormous amounts of financial resources in the Al-Jazeera satellite TV.

However, the largest boost in popularity for Al-Jazeera was due to its anti-American and anti-Israeli propaganda. While it is clear that the U.S. and Israel have had a terrible, and often criminal record of abuses against the Arab nations, especially the Palestinians and Iraqis, little attention was paid to the British origins of the political crises in the region. Al-Jazeera’s mission seemed to be to paint a world dominated by American imperialists who are controlled by the Zionist Lobby.

As long as the U.S. behaves as a dumb giant who tramples on everyone and everything in its way, and not as the republic the U.S. Founding Fathers meant it to be, the British will always come out on top. The CIA cannot run the world; it cannot even defend the soil of the U.S., as was evident in the 9/11 events. To be good at killing large numbers of people (the majority of whom turn out to be innocent civilians) does not make a great intelligence agency.

Missing is the legendary “human intelligence” which relies on understanding history, culture, and science. British intelligence is a master of this, but only the dark side of the matter, and therefore, the world will not be rid of this plague as long as the U.S. is led by either Republicans or Democrats with a weakness for monarchist-oligarchical systems. British intelligence is like the Venetian Iago Shakespeare and Verdi warned us of. “*Credo in un Dio crudel*,” says Iago in Verdi’s *Otello*: “I believe in a cruel God.” The Qataris, Saudis, and Americans are merely the Othellos, Cassiuses, and Desdemonas, who are being manipulated by the false friend Iago.

It is often the ironies and paradoxes which reveal the truth. While Qatar-owned Al-Jazeera was sympathizing with and propagating the ideology of bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and overtly supporting the Saddam Hussein regime, American bombers were taking off from Qatar’s As Sayliya base to bomb Iraq and Afghanistan.



While Al-Jazeera was defending the Palestinians, Qatari leaders were playing the peace-makers and friends of the Israeli government, who were killing the Palestinians in Jenin and Gaza.

Now that the British drive for a world war assumes the highest priority, all assets have to be directed towards the same goal. Therefore, Al-Jazeera, and Qatar behind it, have been mending their relations with the Saudis. The 19 Saudis who were waiting for death sentences or life imprisonment in Qatar were pardoned and released in 2011, and Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani reaffirmed his state's commitment to the teachings of the extreme Wahhabi sect when he inaugurated the Imam Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab Mosque in Doha in December 2011, as a gesture of good faith towards the Saudis.

### Exploiting the 'Arab Spring'

Now the Saudi and Qatari media machines have joined their efforts, exploiting the Arab Spring revolts to help in the violent regime-change operations of the British and NATO. Qatari foreign policy, and its military and financial resources, are fanatically geared

toward this operation, as was evident in the war in Libya, and now in Syria. Qatar is currently in a hysterical drive to assert itself as a military and economic "superpower." The hubristic leaders of Qatar may not realize that they are being prompted to play that role for the moment, but in the event of a regional or global war, this tiny state can be trampled by the real superpowers. The financial resources, and previously excellent diplomatic position and initiatives the Qatari state was undertaking, have been exchanged for a luxurious suite on the sinking *Titanic* of the British Empire.

Further such expansion of this war policy to target Iran, which is not in the interest of Qatar or the Arab nations, will lead to the destruction of the whole region. This is a tragedy for everyone, but which can actually be prevented, if real "intelligence" replaces the weird notions of what intelligence policy consists of, and what the aim of intelligence operations is.

*Executive Intelligence Review* and its founder Lyndon LaRouche have laid out the foundations of such an intelligence function within the republican form of society, as opposed to the oligarchical principle of Empire and its hatred of beauty and human creativity.

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