

CSIS

**Center for Strategic and International Studies
1800 K Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 775-3270
Acordesman@aol.com**

Saudi Arabia Enters The 21st Century:

IV. Opposition and Islamic Extremism

Final Review

**Anthony H. Cordesman
Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy**

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IV. Opposition and Islamic Extremism

Saudi Arabia does not face major political challenges from the mix of progressives, democratic reformers, human rights advocates, Arab socialists, Marxists or other secular political movements that shape the political debate in many other Arab countries. Saudi Arabia has political advocates in all of these areas, and some are quite active as individuals. There are many progressive Saudi individual businessmen, academics, journalists and technocrats who actively seek evolutionary reform. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia is one of the few countries in the world where the vast majority of politically conscious adult citizens are more conservative than a conservative regime.

Saudi politics still center around religious legitimacy, and the commitment of the Al Sauds to the teachings of Mohamed ibn Abd Al Wahhab, and to preserving the regime's religious legitimacy, is as important today as during the first rise of the Al Sauds to power. Much of Saudi political stability is shaped by popular perceptions of the aspect of the regime's commitment to Islam rather than the elections and pluralism that shape legitimacy by Western standards. Even the most reform-minded technocrats, businessmen, and members of the royal family normally make Islamic values part of all their decision-making, speeches, laws, decrees, and public life.

While the Saudi regime did face serious "popular" challenges from Nasser and Arab socialism in the past, there is little evidence that such movements retain any political strength today. Modern Saudi society is focused on the values of puritanical Islamic beliefs. While there are elements of Arab nationalism in this Saudi belief structure, they are bound by the traditions ingrained in Saudi society. As a result, most advocates of reform must work through the Saudi royal family, the government, and the Kingdom's technocrats. In fact, it is this elite that has led virtually all of the Kingdom's efforts to modernize and reform Saudi politics and society.

As one experienced observer, who served as a senior US diplomat in Saudi Arabia, puts it,

"Challenges to Saudi Arabia's rulers come...from an Islamic environment that the rulers themselves have created, shaped, and maintained. It is a remarkable Saudi phenomenon that a regime unrivalled across the

Islamic world in its conservatism presides over a body politic that for the most part is even more conservative.”

“Saudi society today is, and has been for several hundred years, built on the values of what we in the West call ‘Wahhabi’ Islam. Relative to Islamic cultures elsewhere, that of the Saudi Kingdom is strict, even harsh, in its insistence on public observance of fundamental principles of Islam. Our own history has a weak parallel, the age of the Puritans, but the extent of Puritan control never matched that of “Wahhabi” Islam in Saudi Arabia. Within the Saudi environment—and while seeking to keep it intact—Saudi royals and western-educated elites and technocrats lead efforts to reform and modernize their society, politics, education and the infrastructure of modern global development.”

“Within this environment too, there exists a culture that is inward-looking, traditional and insular, a culture itself challenged by world and regional events it cannot control or adequately understand. This is an environment that gives rise to shaykhs and men of religion who rebuke their leaders on Islamic grounds, and who assess the shortcomings of alien cultures by a peculiarly high standard of Islamic principle. It is an environment where young men who are true believers strain to see threats from outside through the lens of a strict Islam, and then dare to fight accordingly, even while violating precepts observed by Muslims everywhere.”

Working Within the System: The Role of Saudi “Modernizers”

Saudi Arabia does have its “modernizers.” Many Saudi princes, educators, technocrats, businessmen, Western educated citizens and more progressive Islamists have favored more rapid social change than has been possible in the face of from Saudi Islamic extremists and conservatives can influence large elements of Saudi society has often delayed progress. Such elements in Saudi society differ significantly over their vision of Saudi Arabia’s future, but most reject an ultra-conservative or radical interpretation of Islam. They support educational and economic reform, and Saudi Arabia’s opening to the outside world – both Arab and Western spheres. Many favor the creation of a more representative and active Majlis, and the eventual creation of an elected assembly. Many complain about nepotism and the abuse of power and legal rights by members of the royal family, other leading families, and officials.

Many also support the liberalization of current religious restraints on subjects such as commerce, the role of women, and soother practices. For example, such modernists and reformers petitioned the King at the time of the Gulf War, and Saudi women have carried out protests for women’s rights by driving their own cars.

Yet most Saudi “modernizers”—which include significant numbers of deeply religious Saudis—recognize that Saudi religious practices and traditions can only evolve slowly over time. A few businessmen, technocrats, and Western-educated professionals have been arrested, or have

had difficulties with the authorities, for such activities. However, such incidents are relatively rare. Most “modernizers” understand that the Royal family and Saudi technocrats offer a far more practical evolutionary road toward change than opposition to the regime. Intelligent “modernizers” understand they are in a minority, and must work within the system.

The Character and Impact of Saudi Puritanism

The Islamic practices of the vast majority of Saudis are puritanical, involve a conservative form of Hanbali jurisprudence, and are bound by conservative tribal social customs. The Saudi interpretation of Islam, and the actions Saudi clergy, reflect the teaching of Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a conservative and fundamentalist reformer who reshaped the worship and social practices of virtually all elements of Sunni society in the mid-1700s. Saudis generally regard Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab as the kind of key reformer called for in Islamic *Hadith* (tradition), who is called a *Mujaddid*. This is a voice that God sends at the head of each century to call upon Muslims to return to the true revelations of the Koran, and bring moral restoration to the *umma* (Muslim community).

Abd al-Wahhab’s descendents—the Al Shaykh—still have great influence in the clergy as well as in managing the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and pious endowments (*Awqaf*). They have also sometimes played a role in shaping the policies of key Ministries including Education and Justice. Abd al-Wahhab’s teaching about Islamic practices and legal interpretations dominate the legal system and must be considered in shaping virtually every major public policy decision. While Saudis generally do not use the name of a religious teacher or individual like Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab to describe such religious practices—in fact Al-Wahhab is one of the ninety-nine names of Allah—this has led outsiders to use the term Wahhabi Islam or “Wahhabism.”¹

Putting Saudi Wahhabi and Salafi Beliefs into Perspective

Saudi Muslims think of themselves as “Muwahiddun” or “Unitarians.” Muslims who believe Allah is the one and only one, and is the only legitimate derivation of correct Islamic beliefs. This consensus has been a basic part of Saudi society and culture since the founding of the first Al Saud state. Mainstream “Wahhabi” practices act as a binding force that holds Saudi Arabia together. Saudi Arabia is generally a remarkably non-violent and polite society, where hospitality and good manners are the rule in dealing with foreigners as well as fellow Saudis.

Mainstream Wahhabi preaching and thought rarely advocates the use of violence or terrorism in the name of politico-religious disputes. The only major exception has been Saudi support for the Palestinian cause in the Second Intifada.

Even mainstream “Wahhabi” religious practices do limit critical aspects of the Kingdom’s progress, such as modernizing the financial services sector, improving the quality of education, and expanding the role of women in the Saudi economy. Religious practices affect human rights and the modernization of the legal system as well. While there are progressive Wahhabi thinkers, there are others who find it difficult to think beyond the concerns of the Islam and Arab world, or to come to grips with the realities of modern science and technology. The Saudi inability to come to grips with population growth and birth rates is also at least partly a result religious conservatism.

More significantly, there are darker undercurrents in Saudi religious practices that advocate religious hatred and help encourage terrorism. Some Saudi sermons do preach hatred and xenophobia. Some Saudi textbooks and religious books attack Christians and Jews, and the practices of other Muslims. The fact that they rarely motivate the ordinary Saudi reader into action is no excuse for their existence – any more than there is an excuse for the similarly bigoted forms of Judaism or Christianity.

A minority of Saudi religious hard-liners and extremists go beyond words and either carry out terrorist and violent acts or support and fund them. Most such extremists not only are hostile to the outside world and non-believers, they oppose the Al Saud regime and virtually all efforts by Saudi technocrats and businessmen to modernize the Kingdom. They perceive the Saudi royal family as corrupt in religious as well as political and social terms, and as being hypocritical in its professed religious beliefs and claims to be the guardian of the Islamic holy places. They see Saudi technocrats and the more cosmopolitan members of the Saudi business community as near apostates from Islam and as being driven by Western or non-Islamic values. In fact, this minority of violent religious extremists currently poses the only serious political challenge to Saudi stability.

Many such extremists are strongly anti-Shi’ite, condemn many of the practices of Sunnis in other Islamic countries and fear that there are vast Judeo-Christian conspiracies against Islam.

For them, Western society is fundamentally corrupt, degrading, and leading Saudi society away from the true faith of Islam. It has spawned equally corrupt Arab secular political beliefs, all of which are betrayals of Islam regardless of whether they are right or left wing. To such extremists, the US is a co-conspirator with a Zionist enemy that has seized the third-most important Islamic holy place—the Temple Mount or Haram al-Sharif. These extremists also believe the US military is not securing Saudi Arabia but rather occupying it.

A number of different influences have helped politicize virtually all Saudi extremists, and give them a potential broader base of public support to draw upon. These influences include the Arab-Israeli conflict, the social costs of changes like hyper-urbanization, the educational system, the failure of Arab socialism and nationalism. They also include the long history of militancy that helped make the Iqwan, such a potent military force under Ibn Saud as well as the kind of marginal movement that led to the attack on the Grand Mosque in Mecca.

Other influences include outside groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, and the example of Khomeini and the Iranian revolution. More recently, they include the constant images in Arab media of Palestinian suffering as a result of the Second Intifada. So has the continuing US and British military presence in Saudi Arabia since the Gulf War and Liberation of Kuwait.

As has been the case in many other Islamic countries, the Saudi regime has inadvertently helped support such extremism even while it has made efforts to suppress it. The continuing need of the Saudi monarchy to maintain its political legitimacy by stressing its role as an “Islamic government” has led the royal family to try to prove itself to be a worthy inheritor of the Wahhabi legacy by fostering religious education, and by funding Islamic charities and Arab causes. Far too often, it has done so while paying little attention to what such educators, charities and causes are actually doing.

Fortunately for Saudi Arabia, most Saudi extremists have had little unity, although some have formed loose organizational links, and a few have created formal organizations, and even serious terrorist bodies like Al Qaida. Most leading extremist Ulema do little more than give sermons that attack the royal family and Saudi government—often by indirection. Extremist believers circulate cassettes, faxes, or sermons and other writings, or communicate through the

Internet. However, while such extremists often test the limits of government tolerance, only a few have even gone to plan or commit acts of violence.

It is difficult to define the goals of Saudi Islamic extremists in terms of the practical changes that wish to make in the Saudi government, society, and economy. There are many diverse voices, and most focus on what they oppose rather than what they want. However, many extremists do believe that the nation's wealth should be shared more broadly and that religious charities and taxes should be a key factor shaping Saudi society. Most claim that a true return to a "pure" faith requires laws and social standards that are far more stringent and demanding than are now the practice in Saudi society.

Saudi extremists also divide over how to deal with the West. Some openly reject the West. Others are willing to exploit Western concerns for human rights and "democracy" in seeking their own freedom of action without showing any concern for the rights of their opposition. The end result is more a matrix of critical ultraconservative voices, whose key members are known to each other and to most religious Saudis, rather than a coherent movement.

Charity and Extremism: The Flow of Money

Osama Bin Laden has shown all too clearly that the impact of Saudi religious thought can lead to extremism and violence outside Saudi Arabia as well as within it. However, once again, there is a need for perspective. The poorly controlled flow of Saudi money outside the Kingdom has probably done more to influence Islamic extremism outside Saudi Arabia than has Saudi religious thinking and missionary efforts. A clear distinction must also be made between the deliberate Saudi support of Islamic extremism and violence, and the fact that many Saudis have contributed to what appeared to be Islamic charities or gave money to what they felt were legitimate Islamic causes – such as the struggles in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Kosovo – without knowing the true character of the groups involved or where their money ultimately went.

One of the strengths of Saudi culture also proved to be a weakness. Saudi Arabia has a long tradition of public and private charity, much of which is given informally on a personal basis. Those Muslims that can afford it have a religious obligation to charity called "Zakat," which is a nominal 2.5% of their income producing assets, but their actual contribution is often

far higher and sometimes closer to 10%. In the case of public figures, charity is combined with patronage, and those in need or seeking funding for good causes make constant personal requests. In many cases, the money is given with minimal investigation, if any. Virtually any type of personal contact, petition, or reference is often enough. In the case of senior princes and wealthy businessmen, major contributions are often made to religious organizations outside Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom has long been seen as the key source of Islamic charity, particularly to conservative Islamic causes. These customs have aided many Saudis and legitimate causes outside the Kingdom. At the same time, they have made it easy to exploit the situation, and Saudi giving to charities, and freedom fighters in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Second Intifada has blurred the often uncertain distinction between freedom fighter and terrorist.

Very senior Saudis privately admit that the Saudi Ministry of the Interior, Saudi Foreign Ministry, and Saudi intelligence failed to properly characterize many of the “Islamic” causes that have received Saudi money. Even funds transferred to very reputable causes like the Saudi Red Crescent seem to have been misused in some cases. The Muslim World League is a heavily funded group whose missionary efforts are reported to have moved money to elements of Al Qaida and different extremists groups like Gamiat Islamiya and the Islamic Jihad in Egypt, and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. Money also went to causes with hard-line or extremist elements like the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan or Hamas in the Gaza.

Even though the Saudi government put strict controls on Osama Bin Laden’s over sources of funding after 1994, Senior Saudi officials admit that money went from members of the royal family and senior Saudi businessmen to charities and causes that were extremist in character. The Saudi government did not begin to properly analyze and control the flow of funds to movements like the Taliban and extremist groups in South Asia, Central Asia, and the rest of the world until 1998. Even after 1988, the flow of Islamic charity and funds, even from royal offices like those of King Fahd, was allocated with remarkable carelessness to what was really being funded – not only in terms of extremism but in terms of whether the money was properly being spent and managed and actually served the claimed purpose.

At the same time, at least some Saudi businessmen did fund such organizations knowing they were extremist or violent in character. The problem of controlling such funds was made still

worse by the fact that so much Saudi private capital is held and invested outside Saudi Arabia and is beyond the government's control.

Most Islamic Puritanism and Extremism is not “Wahhabism”

The West, however, has shown signs of its own form of extremism in reacting to the situation. Some Western writing since “9/11” has blamed Saudi Arabia for most of the region's Islamic fundamentalism, and used the term Wahhabi carelessly to describe all such movements. In fact, most such extremism is not based on Saudi Islamic beliefs. It is based on a much broader stream of thought in Islam, known as the *Salafi* interpretation, which literally means a return to Islam's original state, and by a long tradition of movements in Islam that call for *islah* (reform) and *tajdid* (renewal).

Blaming Saudi beliefs, or “Wahhabism,” for the views and actions of most of today's Salafi extremists is a little like blaming Calvin for today's Christian extremists or Elijah for today's Jewish extremists. In practice, it is more modern Islamist thinkers like the Egyptians Sayyid Qutb and Hassam al-Banna (the founder of the Moslem Brotherhood) who laid the foundation of modern Islamic puritanical politics and who called for *Jihad* (struggle) to achieve their goals. Other figures like Aiman al-Zawahiri and Muhammad al-Farag helped create movements like the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and an approach to violence that helped shape Islamic extremism in Afghanistan – although some Saudi clerics like Sheikh Abdul-Aziz bin Baz played a role.

No one can ignore the fact that Osama Bin Laden is a Saudi and Al Qaida has Saudi roots. Nevertheless, outside Islamists like Sheikh Abdullah Azzam—a Jordanian-born Palestinian and a bitter, violent critic of the Saudi regime—did more to shape the beliefs of men like Osama Bin Laden than mainstream Wahhabi thinking. So did figures like Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, who founded the Egyptian Islamic Group and helped transform modern Salafi beliefs into Islamic terrorism, and had a powerful influence on Bin Laden.²

The use of the word “Wahhabi” to describe Islamic extremist movements in other countries is equally misleading. The Deobandi seminary movement in Pakistan, and parties like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (Party of Religious Scholarship) did more to shape Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan than “Wahhabi” missionaries. While Saudi and US

money made much of the Afghan resistance possible, the Pakistani ISI controlled the flow of much of this money and helped fund Afghan extremists like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his Hizb-e-Islami, Pakistani intelligence then provided direct Pakistani support to the Taliban, although the initial rise of the movement led by Mullah Muhammad Omar Akhund seems to have been a largely Afghan phenomena with little ties to any outside Salafi movements.

Other Salafi movements have arisen in Yemen with few ties to Saudi Wahhabi beliefs and practices. These have included the Islamic Army of Aden, led by Zein Abu Bakr al-Mihdar (Abu Hassan). There have been Kurdish Salafi groups like the Jund al-Islam (Ansar al-Islam). The Syrian Muslim Brothers have been a significant political force in Syria in the past and are still active. Sunni Palestinian religious groups are equally independent of Saudi influence, as are most Sudanese and Somali groups and key figures like Hassan al-Turabi and the Sudanese Islamic People's Congress.

Iran's various hard-line Shi'ite groups have backed Saudi Shi'ites in carrying out terrorist acts in Saudi Arabia, but such movements have no ties to Saudi Sunni extremism. The most violent Islamic extremist groups in the world -- Algeria's Armed Islamic Group (AIG) and Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) --are homegrown products of Algeria's corrupt military junta and violent domestic political traditions. Virtually every country in Central Asia has its own Salafi movements and extremists, and while many have benefited from Saudi Arabia's careless funding of Islamic causes and charities, none are Wahhabi in any meaningful sense of being tied to Saudi teaching and tradition and virtually all of the Madrassas in South and Central Asia teach interpretations and practices that differ from mainstream Wahhabi teaching. Lumping all of these diverse elements together is like calling all Protestants Baptists.

Similarly, the fact some Saudi money has gone to Islamic extremists -- both indirectly and directly -- scarcely means that Saudi Arabia is the only or even principle source of such funding. The other Southern Gulf states have been equally careless in managing their charitable efforts in foreign countries and the flow of funds to "charitable" causes. A great deal of money from Muslims around the world that was intended to aid Muslims in Kosovo and Bosnia ended up in the hands of Bin Laden and other terrorist/extremist groups. Most of the extremist groups in North Africa are largely self-financing, and drug money, Iranian and Pakistani government funds and arms, have played a major role in supporting Islamic violence in Afghanistan, Central

Asia, and South Asia. The flow of money to the Palestinian cause since the beginning of the Second Intifada also presents the problem that for most Arabs and Muslims that Palestinian cause is legitimate, as are violent Palestinian tactics, while Israel is seen as a violent occupying power that attacks Palestinian civilians. This inevitably means that most Muslims and Arabs – including Saudis – do not see movements like Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or the Fatah Hawks as terrorists but rather as freedom fighters.

Islamic Extremism and Saudi Youth

It is difficult to discuss the level of support that Islamic extremists have achieved among Saudi youth without resorting to speculation and stereotypes. For example, it is possible to divide Saudi youth into groups like those who enjoy the favors and the success of elder generations, and young Saudis who lack such opportunities, but it is far from clear that those who become Islamic extremists do so because their lack of access to advancement and opportunities in society. One must also be careful about confusing words with actions. Talk is far more common than action among Saudi youth and some degree of verbal support for extremism is almost inevitable given the challenges and frustrations facing a new generation that is seeking to forge its own identity.

Figures like Osama bin Laden have shown, however, that some Saudi youths are influenced by the current lack of any compelling secular ideological and political alternatives in an Arab world where Nasserism, Socialism and Marxism have been such conspicuous failures, and where Western democracy and capitalism seems to deal with the Arab world largely in terms of self-interest and material values. Another is the feeling of frustration and impotence caused by an ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. It is also evident that for a growing number of Saudi youths, “traditional” Islam is the only ideological answer that society offers to a lack of clear career opportunities, the alienation produced by social change, and the search for a cultural identity—although it is far from clear that they agree on what “traditional” Islam really means or that what they want is really “traditional.”

As the following chapters show, the Saudi “patriarchal bargain” is slowly breaking down in the face of declining oil wealth. There is also little doubt that a growing number of Saudi youths perceive the Saudi royal family to be over-privileged, lacking in social conscience, and corrupt. These attitudes are symbolized by the comments of one Saudi youth, who stated that,

“There is no consistency in the law, and penalties that are set should be respected. The satellite (dish) is illegal but the king has the biggest satellite (dish) in Mecca.” Another youth commented that, “They (the government) should have more fear of God. On the one hand they pray but in the other they pick up the bottle.”³

Education and mass communications are transforming public opinion and turning it into a growing force. Resentment of the Second Intifada, Israel, US support of Israel, and the perceived US indifference to the suffering of the Iraqi people, are serious popular issues in Saudi Arabia. Since the spring of 2002, they have led to student-led boycotts of US products. There have been scattered popular demonstrations that the Ministry of Interior has been forced to tolerate because of the depth popular feeling.

At the same time, Crown Prince Abdullah is seen as a leader in the effort to halt Palestinian suffering, and these issues do not necessarily make Saudis anti-regime or even broadly anti-American. It is far from clear that any significant percentage of Saudi youths is so deeply alienated that they see violent and extreme political forms of Islam as offering answers to their economic problems. Surveys of Saudi public opinion have uncertain credibility, particularly when the questions do not distinguish clearly between Islamic extremism and hostility to US foreign policy. The failure of the American press to understand this point has contributed to at least some of the journalism that grossly exaggerates Saudi popular hostility to the US and sympathy for terrorist actions. This tendency is reinforced by a peculiar brand of Israeli rightwing and US neoconservative scholarship which seems dedicated to finding the worst examples of Saudi extremism and turning them into portrayals of mainstream Saudi thought, --a form of analysis which often acts as if the Second Intifada did not exist and influence Saudi opinion.

Zogby International has conducted what seems to be a highly credible survey of some 700 Saudis in the spring of 2002 – with good distribution in terms of age and background – and did so at a time when the impact of both the backlash from the Second Intifada and US treatment of Saudi Arabia after “9/11” were having a major impact. The poll found that 71% were still favorable to US science and technology, 58% were favorable to US education, 53% were favorable to American products, 52% were favorable to US freedom and democracy, and 54% were favorable to American movies and television. It also found that while a majority (51%) of

the Saudis had hostile feelings towards the American people, only 23% supported the US-led effort to liberate Kuwait, and only 30% supported the US war of terrorism.

Some, 69% if the Saudis polled did state that the Palestinian issue was the most important issue to them (with little or no change by age group, and 79% of those polled indicated they would be more favorable to the US if were to apply pressure for the creation of an independent Palestinian state (with a clear emphasis on a peace settlement over Israel's destruction).

These figures did not, however, reflect any polarization in favor of Islamic extremism or against the West among younger Saudis. The poll found that 54% of the Saudis in the age group of 18-29 were still favorable to the American people versus 45% in the age group from, 30-49, and only 35% in the age group from 50-64. Some 54% of the Saudis in the age group of 18-29 indicated they would be favorable to the US if it consistently applied its stated foreign policy values versus 39% in the age group from, 30-49, and 38% in the age group from 50-64. Furthermore, 37% of the Saudis in the age group of 18-29 were favorable to the US war on terrorism versus 29% in the age group from, 30-49, and only 14% in the age group from 50-64.⁴ This is scarcely evidence of strong Islamist tendencies or a youth that is more alienated than its parents.

An organization called NFO Middle East and Africa made another credible survey of media and market priorities of 3,150 Saudis in thirteen cities in March and April 2002 that reflected an evolving Saudi society with a similar focus on domestic concerns. It found that virtually all urban Saudis had access to satellite TV and 31% said they had online access to the Internet, but that only 12% watched highly polarized channels like Al-Jazeera and the figures for those who thought of themselves as modernists were 8% while those who thought of themselves as disaffected were 8%. Some 76% felt that "adhering to religious values was central to their personal beliefs and ways of living," but this did not mean alignment with Islamic extremism. Out of the 24% of the population that were youths, half indicated they were happy and comfortable living with their families, while most of those who called themselves disaffected were concerned with fights with their father, a lack of freedom for women, and issues like education and marriage.⁵

Those polled indicated that they still strongly supported Saudi rather than Western values and morality. They did so by 60% to 40% -- although 64% are worried about Saudi youth turning to Western values. Only 33% of all Saudis who regarded themselves as “disaffected” felt that religious observance was as important as it was 50 years ago versus 42% of all Saudis, 56% of those who thought of themselves as conservatives, and 69% of “conformists.” Some 38% indicated they had shifted purchasing patterns away from US products, but almost all did so because of the Second Intifada. Somewhat ironically, 98% of self-described “feminists”(12% of those sampled) indicated they always listened to and respected their fathers opinion, and 77% felt their father or husband should be the head of the family and make important decisions, although only 12% felt a woman’s place was in the home with her family versus 74% of all Saudis. If these polls are representative, they portray a Saudi population that is far less polarized and divided than that in many Western countries, rather than a population deeply concerned with most political issues or a youth deeply concerned with Islamic extremism.

Nevertheless, it is all too clear that Saudi religious extremists have gathered significant support among a large enough minority of younger Saudis to create a serious extremist and terrorist problem. Some experts feel this is particularly true in the areas around Buraida and Riyadh although there is little hard data to support this. Other experts feel such support is greater among Saudis who had only recently become urbanized, who lived in the Najd, and/or lived outside the mainstream economy. Yet, still other experts note that many extremists are descendants of established families, come from urban areas like Riyadh, are well educated, and/or are educated in secular rather than religious subjects.

It is also clear that the Saudi government long underestimated the seriousness of extremist feelings among Saudi youth, and was slow to address the broader educational, social, and economic problems created by its “youth explosion.” If anything, the government made the gap between Islam and modernism worse by encouraging a type of Islamic education that did little to prepare youth for economic reality but which allowed the teaching of relatively radical and hard-line views of Islam.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there have been an increasing number of alienated youth and student organizations since the early 1990s. Many circulate literature and poems that are far more critical of the government and royal family than all but the most extreme religious

figures. Some have organized informal cells, and have received paramilitary or terrorist training in Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, and elsewhere.

At the time, the numbers of true Saudi extremists seems small. Senior Saudi intelligence officials made an estimate following the Al Khobar bombing, however, that at least 12,000 young Saudi men had spent some time training or serving as paramilitary extremists or “Afghani,” and estimated that the number associated with such activities might have gone as high as 25,000. A few of these youth groups have received knowing funding from wealthy and sympathetic Saudi businessmen. Osama Bin Laden, is the most obvious case in point, although his family has disowned him due to his extremism.

Trying to Co-opt Islamic Extremism: The Rising at the Grand Mosque

Islamic extremism at the margins of Saudi society is scarcely a new problem. The Saud family rose to power by exploiting it against the Turks, and then against rival families in what became Saudi Arabia. King Abd al-Aziz carried out most of his conquests with a religiously inspired paramilitary force of Bedouin called the Ikhwan, and then had to actively suppress extremist factions that turned against him. Abd al-Aziz carefully controlled the Saudi clergy throughout his reign. His successors have had to place a number of religious figures under arrest over the years, and have had to suppress several small extremist movements.

The most dramatic post war example of Saudi problems with extremists before the rise of Osama Bin Laden was the “uprising” at the Grand Mosque in Mecca that took place in November 1979. Armed Islamists seized the mosque and forced the Saudi government to respond in ways that resulted in weeks of fighting and a siege of the Mosque that cost 177 rebel and 127 government lives. Nearly all of the 500-odd insurgents came from clandestine groups formed within the most puritanical Wahhabi tribes, such as the Otaibas and Qahtani, but the uprising also had support from individuals who had earlier shown sympathy for Nasser or radical Arab socialist movements.⁶

The insurgents were led by Juhaiman ibn Muhammed ibn Saif al-Otaiba, a would-be Mahdi. Al-Otaiba’s grandfather was an Ikhwan warrior who fought against King Abd al-Aziz and what he perceived the king stood for. Al-Otaiba accused King Fahd of corruption and reliance on the West and attempted to challenge the royal family by forcibly overtaking the

sacred mosque in Mecca.⁷ Otaiba, however, was scarcely a true “Wahhabi,” and the vast majority of conservative tribesmen and clergy immediately opposed him. He failed to win substantial popular support, partly because he chose to occupy such a holy site, and also because he had no credible goals, sought to give himself an absurd religious status, he had not earned through any form of preaching or scholarship. If anything, the Saudi government had to prevent traditional “Wahhabis” from carrying out their own attacks to free the mosque.

Nevertheless, the incident led the government to give more power to Saudi Islamists and to emphasize its commitment to Islamic education and the enforcement of strict “Wahhabi” social practices. The government did not change the Saudi curriculum and teaching practices to make them more Islamic and conservative, but it did fail to continue to modernize them. It also kept women’s education segregated and allowed lower teaching standards at the primary and secondary level. It gave the religious authorities more money, and there was “greater religious surveillance over the population, more power was granted to the Mutawwa’in (the Saudi “police” of public virtue), new constraints were placed on mobility and freedom of and on the process of reform.”⁸

Islamic Extremism and the Failure of Co-option in the 1980s and 1990s

Islamic extremism remained a problem throughout the 1980s, in spite of the government’s efforts to coopt Saudi Islamists and the powerful distractions provided by oil wealth. Saudi involvement in the war in Afghanistan had a powerful impact. So did the revolution in Iran. Although the revolution was Shi’ite, and led by clergy whose beliefs and practices differed sharply from those of Saudi Arabia, the revolution did show that a religious minority could seize power and the Arab-Israeli conflict provided another source of continuing tension.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union discredited the already weak socialist and Marxist movements in Saudi Arabia. While the failures of secular Arab nationalism throughout the Arab world made it steadily less attractive ever since Nasser’s defeat in 1967. Groups such as the Arabian Peninsula People’s Union and Voice of the Vanguard had never been a particularly important force in Saudi politics, but the combined impact of the defeat of Saddam Hussein, the

collapse of most Marxist governments, and Egyptian-Syrian cooperation with the US, left little place for oppositionists other than Islamic extremism.

The visible presence of Western forces in Saudi Arabia during and after the Gulf War gave Islamic extremists new reason to attack the “corrupt” Western influence over the Saudi government. After the Gulf War, low oil revenues and massive payments to other nations for the cost of the war reduced the government’s ability to make welfare payments and the Saudi economy’s ability to create new jobs.

Broadening the base of education, combined with population growth, and declining per capita income, meant that younger Saudis with better overall levels of education had to accept progressively less prestigious and well-paid positions. Furthermore, the conflict between the modernists and traditionalists was fueled by the spread of nearly one million satellite TV receivers, some 20 million VCRs, and growing use of the Internet. Censorship and government control over the media became far less effective, and new Arab media appeared that constantly attacked the West and Israel while the growing availability of Western media led to growing religious and conservative protests. These forces led various Islamic extremists to heighten their demands that Saudi Arabia conform to their particular definition of “Islam.” At the same time, they made the Saudi royal family and traditional and mainstream religious leaders, political, social, and economic forces that were changing Saudi society.

The Saudi government again responded by trying to defuse the rise of Islamic extremism in reaction to these events by increasing official and popular adherence to strict religious law and custom, and by strengthening the role of the religious police. Like the government’s long-standing failure to address the problems in the educational systems, such actions sometimes helped given the government some temporary support—but each new accommodation of extremist demands ultimately tended to strengthen the hands of extremists.

The Saudi government made things worse in the process by turning a blind eye to the increasingly violent and rigid actions of the religious police or Mutawwa’in and related actions by the civil police. The Mutawwa’in have always been a problem-- often going beyond religious custom and enforcing arbitrary interpretations of religious law. After the Gulf War, however, they increasingly were allowed to abuse women and foreigners, and detain and sometimes beat

and torture Saudi men. There were many sudden raids of private homes on the basis of suspicion alone, and use was made of “fallaqa,” or beating the soles of the feet, as well as the systematic beating of the body.

Although the situation improved somewhat after 1996, the Mutawwa’in continued detained suspects for more than the legal maximum of 24 hours for violations of behavior standards. There were reports of sleep deprivation and torture. While Saudi legal procedures required that a police officer to accompany the Mutawwa’in before the latter made an arrest, this requirement was often ignored. The Saudi government tolerated abuses by the volunteer auxiliaries of the Mutawwa’in and sometimes encouraged interpretations of Shari’a—or Islamic law—in civil cases that were designed to appease religious extremists rather than enforce the traditions of Islam.

The Saudi government did show, however, that it could get the support of key clerics in dealing with extremists when it really needed such support. One example was the statement of Sheik Abd al-al-Aziz bin Abdallah Abd al-Shaykh, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, on April 21, 2001, that Islam prohibits suicide terrorist attacks. The Saudi government clearly inspired him to make this statement, and he issued it despite the fact that it provoked considerable opposition in the Arab world.⁹ Some senior Saudi clerics—such as Sheikh Abd al-Aziz Bin Baz and Muhammad Bin’Uthaimin—had blessed Palestinian suicide operations in the past, and had defended such actions as an act of martyrdom permitted by jihad (istishhad).¹⁰ Their rationale was the assumption that all non-Muslims are infidels and Israel is a foreign entity in Muslim lands.

Education as a Self-Inflicted Wound

In retrospect, the most serious failure that resulted from the government’s efforts at cooption throughout the 1980s and 1990s was its failure to set proper educational standards, and carry out effective educational reform. In the process, cooption became a self-inflicted wound.

Many aspects of the Saudi curriculum were not fully modernized after the 1960s. Some Saudi textbooks taught Islamic tolerance while others condemned Jews and Christians. Anti-Christian and anti-Jewish passages remained in grade school textbooks that use rhetoric that were little more than hate literature. The same was true of more sophisticated books issued by

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the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Practices. Even the English-language Korans available in the hotels in the Kingdom added parenthetical passages condemning Christians and Jews that were not in any English language editions of the Koran outside Saudi Arabia. ¹¹The wound such cooption inflicted on Saudi Arabia was made worse by the fact that it had the practical impact of encouraging students to pursue patterns of education for which there were no real jobs. It also perpetuated the illusion that schools that emphasized religious instruction, low quality rote learning, a poor curriculum and teaching materials, and poor instruction, could use faith to substitute for economic realities. Inadequate education added to the problems in attracting investment and modernizing the economy described in the following chapters. It also made it more difficult for the Saudi government to reduce the Saudi birth rate, make fully productive use of female labor, reduce dependence on foreign labor, encourage labor mobility among the natives of the GCC, and integrate the economy of the Southern Gulf.

The resulting problem with Islamists interacted with other forces such as pressures on the Saudi budget. Until the events of September 11, 2001 forced the government to face these problems, the government neglected the quality of education and focused on “quantity,” and the need to deal with massive increases in the number of students. The need to rapidly increase the number and size of schools also led to a decline in the quality of the facilities involved, particularly for female students. Far too much teaching was left to relatively low quality instructors; and under-qualified or over-ideological young Saudis were hired as teachers in an effort to create jobs. At the same time, the system continued to focus on Islam without proper concern for developing career related skills and training the labor force to work. The Ulema were allowed to increase their influence over the curriculum, and to encourage more and more students to pursue Islamic studies of a kind that offered few real world career opportunities.

The Saudi domestic educational system not only relied on dated teaching materials, it relied on dated methods, and particularly on memorization and rote learning through the completion of high school. The focus of learning on memorizing remained the Quran and Hadith (the sayings and examples of the Prophet), and not on problem solving or creative thought. Approximately one-third of the curriculum is religious, one-third is Arabic, and one-third covers other subjects—often paying limited attention to the sciences and business. As a result, much of

the teaching at Saudi universities has to be remedial, and even some universities fail to put proper emphasis on independent reasoning and problem solving.

These problems are not apparent from Saudi Arabia's favorable educational statistics or budget, or from contacts with Saudi Arabia's sophisticated, Western-educated technocrats, academics, businessmen, journalists, and princes. Saudi Arabia spends roughly seven percent of its GDP on education, or roughly the same percentage as the world's high-income countries. It also claims a pupil to teacher ratio of 14:1 in its primary schools, one of the lowest ratios in the world.¹² Nevertheless, Saudi education lags in quality and relevance, and does so at the secondary school and university level, as well as at the primary level. There has been some change since September 2000. The Ministry of Education has been given responsibility for educating both women and men, and has begun to emphasize educational quality and to reform and restructure Saudi education accordingly. The fact remains, however, that far too much of Saudi Arabia's leadership elite is willing to admit that Saudi education is failing to meet the country's needs but is unwilling to take the required action.

A royal study group that was formed after "9/11" described some 5% of Saudi teaching material as clearly having such content and at least another 10% as "suspect." It also found that many teachers were of uncertain quality and taught their own hard-line views. It found that many aspects of Saudi teaching materials and methods did encourage extremism and it also found that even many Saudis with PhDs from Saudi universities received a relatively low-grade Islamic education.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia is still failing to create a native-educated elite that is competitive in skills with the output of secondary schools and universities in East Asia and other leading developing countries. Far too few students receive the kind of education that trains them to play a leading role in Saudi Arabia's economy. The futility of such education is exemplified by a glut of degrees in Islamic studies whose degrees are not taken seriously by Islamic scholars in other Arab countries and who have often become the opponents of the government that has educated them.¹³

Making Women Part of the Problem, Rather than Part of the Solution

The impact of Saudi Islamic practices and social customs on the role of women present another problem for internal stability and development. The role of women in Saudi society does not present the same problems as dealing with young males in terms of Islamic extremism and political unrest. However, there is a growing gap between the ongoing education of women and the effort to provide a more meaningful role for women in the Saudi economy. Women have the right to own property and are entitled to financial support from their husbands or male relatives. They account for roughly 20-25% of the commercial registrations in the Kingdom and they inherit a large portion of the nation's private wealth. They have access to free education through the university level, although teaching is always segregated from that of men.

As noted earlier, women make up 58 percent of all university graduates in a male dominated society, although they are excluded from studying such subjects as engineering, journalism, and architecture. Men are freely able to study overseas. In theory, women may do so only if accompanied by a spouse or an immediate male relative, although some young women in Western-educated families are simply escorted to the West and then study on their own.

The US State Department report on human rights indicates that women are subject to discrimination in Islamic law, which stipulates that daughters receive only half the amount of inheritance awarded to their brothers. In a Shari'a court, a woman's testimony does not carry the same weight as that of a man. Also, in a Shari'a court, the testimony of one man equals that of two women. Although Islamic law permits polygamy, it is becoming less common. Islamic law enjoins a man to treat each wife equally but in practice such equality is left to the discretion of the husband. Some women participate in al-Mesyar (or "short daytime visit") marriages, where the women relinquish their legal rights to financial support and nighttime cohabitation. Additionally, the husband is not required to inform his other wives of the marriage, and the children have no inheritance rights. The government places greater restrictions on women than on men regarding marriage to non-Saudis and non-Muslims.

Women must demonstrate legally specified grounds for divorce, while men may divorce without giving cause. If divorced or widowed, a woman normally may keep her children until

they become a specified age: 7 years for boys, 9 years for girls. Children over these ages are awarded to the divorced husband or the deceased husband's family. Foreign women are often prevented by their former husbands from visiting their children after divorce.

There are no active women's rights groups. Women, including foreigners, may not legally drive motor vehicles and are restricted in their use of public facilities when they are not accompanied by a mahram (relative with whom marriage is prohibited). Thus, women risk arrest by the Mutawwa'in for riding in a vehicle driven by a male who is not an employee or a close male relative. In addition, women may not be admitted to a hospital for medical treatment without the consent of their male relative. By law and custom, women may not undertake domestic and foreign travel alone. The US State Department has issued reports that women are no longer be issued business licenses for work in fields that might require them to supervise foreign workers, interact with male clients, or deal on a regular basis with government officials.

Despite these limitations, women do find ways to widen their role outside the home. In addition to separate businesses for women, women have made use of the Internet to manage and run their own businesses, and more than 20% of all commercial registrations are by women.¹⁴ The Majlis al-Shura has spent considerable time debating and studying the role of women and now allows women to attend Shura Council meetings.¹⁵ Women actually inherit more of the nation's wealth through matrilineal lines than Saudi law might indicate. Women hold a substantial amount of Saudi Arabia's private capital. Women are free to inherit and manage property, and women's banks play a growing role in handling assets, but they must do so through specialized financial institutions if they intend to keep their capital in Saudi Arabia.

Female participation in the labor force is still very low, even by Middle Eastern standards. Women earn less than men, and often do not get jobs that match their qualifications. However, the Saudi government has made efforts to create more jobs for women, and Crown Prince Abdullah has supported the expansion of women's rights in Saudi Arabia in spite of pressure from conservatives not to do so.¹⁶

All officially recognized work places are segregated, however, and women can only accept jobs in rural areas if they live with their families. Contact with male supervisors or clients are only allowed by telephone or facsimile machine and the level of segregation is growing

worse as the level of female education improves. The end result is to maintain a series of cultural barriers that limit the productivity of what is becoming the best educated half of the Saudi work force.

Regardless of how one feels about women's rights and feminism, it is far from clear that Saudi Arabia can afford to continue this sacrifice. There is no reason why Saudi society should treat women in exactly the same way as the West, but current Saudi restrictions on women have serious economic as well as social consequences. According to US State Department estimates, women now make up only 5 percent of the work force.¹⁷ They do not receive the same salary and other benefits as men and their primary goal in working is often simply to find some job or position in the private or public sector. Most employment opportunities for women are in education and health care, with lesser opportunity in business, philanthropy, banking, retail sales, and the media.¹⁸

Religious Extremism and Active Political Opposition

The government's problems with cooption have never meant that it has ignored the threat posed by active extremists. The ability of Saudi-based religious groups to threaten the Saudi regime has been sharply constrained by the actions the government has taken to repress their movements. Many have been arrested in the past and all such groups face future arrests if the government chooses to act. At the same time, the government has rarely overreacted with violence or imprisonment, and has preferred bribes, cooption, and "divide and conquer" tactics to repression. The regime recognizes that arrest and imprisonment often make martyrs of otherwise weak opposition figures. If criticism is not highly provocative, the government does continue to monitor such figures but rarely takes stronger action.

The end result is that no individual religious figure or group has yet exhibited enough power *inside* Saudi Arabia to directly challenge the government, although there have been scattered acts of low-level violence and terrorism. Nevertheless, the overall mix of different Islamic extremist advocates and groups inside the Kingdom does pose a serious cumulative problem in terms of the Kingdom's foreign relations and internal security, and it is likely that new leaders and figures will emerge if Saudi Arabia's economic, social, and demographic problems are not dealt with by serious reform efforts.

Only tenuous data are available on the background, character, and number of Saudi Islamic oppositionists and extremists, and they differ sharply by individual and movement. The forces at work can be illustrated, however, by examining the case history of several of the key Islamic opposition leaders and movements. These include peaceful oppositionists, but also political movements, such as the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR). They also included more serious threats like Bin Laden and Al Qaida. In both cases, external bases allowed such movements to act outside the range of Saudi control.

The CDLR was able to influence foreign relations between outside countries and Saudi Arabia by operating on foreign soil and using modern communications media. The CDLR also showed that it could exploit the West's concerns for human rights as a political tool. While it did not overtly support violence, it indirectly encouraged violence by showing its public "understanding" of terrorist incidents. It also found that it could simultaneously use extreme religious rhetoric, and conduct political attacks on democracy and human rights in Arabic while hiding behind a shield of English rhetoric about its concern for democracy and human rights.

Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaida, showed all too clearly that they could use external bases and sanctuaries to create a serious threat both inside the Kingdom and outside. The damage done to the Saudi Regime by such oppositionists in carrying out attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the USS Cole, and the World Trade Center and Pentagon, had a powerful impact long before "9/11." Each major incident of terrorism placed more political pressure on the Saudi government and deeply embarrassed it.

These case studies also show that far more is involved than Saudi security. The events of September 11, 2001 showed that terrorist attacks outside Saudi Arabia could exploit serious fault lines between Saudi Arabia and the US, and between Saudi modernizers and traditionalists. Targeting US and Western facilities, or facilities in which there is a joint Saudi and Western presence, allows extremists to use Western targets as a non-Islamic, non-Arab proxy for their ultimate target – the Saudi regime. The same is true of less violent attacks on Saudi modernization and reform that charge necessary change is non-Islamic or an affront to Saudi and Arab traditions. Attacking the West as an alien and foreign presence, exploiting the political backlash from the US alliance with Israel, and claiming that the regime has become a US tool

that threatens the Royal family's cultural and religious legitimacy. Such tactics offer extreme oppositionists their best hope for isolating the regime from the Saudi people.

Moderate Opposition: Religious Fundamentalism

Any case study examination of Saudi Islamist movements must recognize that religious opposition to the Saudi government can be loosely categorized into three major groups: intellectual non-violent criticism, non-violent political activism, and those individuals and groups that use violence to achieve their ends. Each such group presents a different level of threat to the Saudi regime. Some forms of Saudi religious and fundamentalist dissent are clearly peaceful and legitimate. While the government (and the West) may not like them, opposition by non-violent fundamentalists has the same legitimacy as any other form of peaceful opposition.

The "Memorandum of Advice," that 107 leading clerics circulated in 1992, symbolizes such opposition. The Memorandum called for the strict enforcement of Islamic law, the severing of relations with all non-Islamic countries and the West, and the punishment of all who gained wealth through illegal means, "whoever they are and without any exception of rank." It called for a majlis al-shura that was certain to be dominated by religious figures, a separate review body of Ulema to review every state regulation and edict to ensure compliance with the Shari'a, the creation of a religious supreme court with the power to invalidate any law or treaty found to be in conflict with the Shari'a, and making the Ulema a separate and co-equal branch of government with its own budget and sources of revenue.

The Saudi government quickly showed it could deal with such criticism, although scarcely using methods based on freedom of speech and pluralism. It responded to the memorandum by forcing other senior members of the Ulema to condemn it, and by stepping up surveillance of the Ulema by the security forces. In December 1992, King Fahd dismissed seven elderly religious leaders from the Supreme Authority of Senior Scholars, the most senior clerical body in the country. He did so because they would not join the other 10 members of the council in denouncing the "Memorandum of Advice."

King Fahd gave a speech in December 1992 that attacked the use of mosques for political proselytizing. He stated that, "The pulpit was only made for certain limited things." He then went

on to attack the role of Iran and Islamic fundamentalists from other countries in supporting Islamic extremism:

“Two years ago, we started seeing things unfamiliar to us that were non-existent here...Do we accept that somebody comes to us from outside our country and directs us? No...Has it come to the point where we depend on criticism and cassette tapes that do us no good?...We should not follow the path of foreign currents, foreign to our country.”¹⁹

The Saudi government went on to take a series of other actions designed to handicap opposition movements and took additional measures to deal with extremist organizations. The first of these involved an effort to impose limits on the funding of Islamic extremist movements outside Saudi Arabia. Long before September 11, 2001, the government recognized that while private and public Saudi money had played a key role in supporting the Afghan freedom fighters in their struggle with the Soviet Union, and in aiding the Muslims in Bosnia, it was now contributing to hard-line movements that opposed the Saudi regime and to violent Islamic extremist movements in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and the Sudan.

In April 1993, the Interior Ministry required Islamic civic and religious groups to obtain government authorization before soliciting funds. The Ministry actively started to prevent the flow of funds to groups that may have used Islam as their rationale, but who sought political power—sometimes with Iranian and Sudanese support.²⁰ This effort had some success, but it focused on those who directly challenged the Saudi regime and other Arab governments, ignored other Arab movements, and was only lightly enforced.

In addition, the Saudi government made systematic arrests of individuals suspected of supporting terrorists and extremists.²¹ For example, the government arrested Sheik Salman al-Audah and Safr al-Hawali, two radical clerics, in 1994. It did so even though their detention incited a rare instance of open civil unrest in the northern city of Buraida, and resulted in a large number of additional arrests. Many others were pressured, taken in for questioning, or briefly held in custody.

The government did find, however, that such measures had their limits. Hard-line religious opposition movements kept growing in spite of these measures, and that government could not control the flow of private money to elements of the Islamic opposition outside Saudi Arabia without far more drastic action than the government was then willing to take. Many of the

Saudis involved proved to have large foreign investments, or handle large flows of transfers as part of their business. The government did not make the level of effort necessary to clearly identify which movements were legitimate religious efforts, and which were cover organizations for more radical movements. It never created the necessary intelligence effort or financial controls.²²

Hard-line Peaceful Opposition: Sheikh Safar al-Hawali

A focus on well-known Saudi Islamists has its disadvantages. The situation in Saudi Arabia is fluid and constantly changing, and it is probably the Islamists no one has yet heard of that will emerge as the most future significant threat. Any abbreviated case study also tends to oversimplify the views and actions of those involved, and the religious and cultural issues being debated in the Kingdom. Nevertheless, Sheikh Safr bin Abd al-Rahman al-Hawali does provide a useful example of the challenges the government faces in dealing with peaceful opposition. He was born in 1950 in the al-Baha region, south of Taif. He comes from a minor, but reputable tribe. This, along with his credentials as an Islamic scholar, makes him the most mainstream of all critics of the Saudi regime. He is a graduate of prominent Islamic universities in Mecca and Medina.

Many of Hawali's lectures and writings reveal his belief that modernism and reform are a Western way of undermining Islamic society from within. According to Hawali, the most serious threat facing Saudi Arabia has been "the imposition of Israeli and American hegemony over the whole area." The Arab world is unprepared to meet this threat due to their political disunity and military and economic dependency on the West. Arabs and Muslims must unite in one Islamic cause to combat the Western threat, withdraw all assets from Western financial institutions and reinvest in Islamic countries, and more strictly control media and communications to prevent the weakening of Arab and Islamic culture by Western secularism. Hawali has been deeply distrustful of the policies and influence of the United States in the Arab world. He has stated his belief that the Gulf War was merely a means for the United States to subdue any regional power that opposed the West and to bind the region into a security arrangement based on dependency.

Hawali's ultraconservative views led to his arrest in 1994, and they were shared by many other Islamic figures in the Gulf region and elsewhere in the Arab world. Many Saudis resented

the fact that US forces remained in Saudi Arabia, did not understand why America continued sanctions that hurt the Iraqi people, and were confused by the cat and mouse game between Washington and Baghdad. To many, America's role in the Middle East and support of Israel and secular Arab rulers also supported Hawali's view of the West.

At the same time, Hawali and his supporters are more representative of Saudi religious nationalism than Islamic extremism. Their main grievances have not been based on direct criticism of the Saudi government and the royal family, but rather on external issues such as Western domination and neocolonialism. Hawali did not question the political or religious authority of the Saudi state, but criticized its subordination to "its enemy," the United States. In Hawali's view, Saudi Arabia did not do enough to propagate Islamic faith or preserve it from the onslaught of Western secularism and the kind of reform and modernism opposed by Saudi Arabia's religious traditionalists. Such ideas had support among many Saudis after 1991 and were echoed in newspapers all over the Middle East. His imprisonment was more the reaction of a government unaccustomed to public criticism rather than a response to a direct threat.²³

Non-Violent Islamist Opposition: Salman al-Auda

Sheikh Salman al-Auda (Awda) is another case example of the ideas that shape non-violent Islamic opposition in Saudi Arabia. He was born in the province of Qasim, a poor, conservative, agricultural area that has long been a fertile ground for religious discourse. His worldview is linked to the area's social, economic, and political problems. In his early taped sermons, his criticisms of the government were general and included no direct mention of the royal family. Al-Auda rose to prominence during the Gulf War, however, and like many similar Islamists, his sermons became more hostile towards the government. He used the Gulf War and the media's focus on Saudi Arabia to popularize his criticisms of the government and society at large.

Al-Auda preached that the political violence transpiring in Egypt and Algeria was the result of secular dictatorship and the muffling of counter opinion and voices of religious dissent. According to al-Auda, any government that is not based on justice and the Shari'a will eventually be overthrown. At the same time, his message was scarcely extremist. He also advocated a return to the original contract and alliance between the state and religious forces on

which the foundation of the modern Saudi state was based. Although al-Auda echoed other Islamists in disapproving of modern education and financial extravagance, he also mentioned the need for economic restructuring and privatization. He urged Saudi Arabia to speed the process of reform and dialogue, lest the country descend into violence.

Al-Auda did, however, advance claims to racial superiority, which had few serious precedents in Saudi revivalist thought. He claimed that the Saudi people were strong in physique and mental abilities because of environmental conditions and being part of an Arab nation was inherently superior because of superior nature of the language, its approach to reasoning, and emphasis on the ability to memorize.

Al-Auda was arrested in 1994 because he was considered to be one of the harshest open critics of the government, but he remained as much a Saudi nationalist as an Islamist. His views hovered between extremes. At one level, he believed that Saudi Arabia was heading towards much political violence and strife. At another level, he presented Saudi Arabia as a nation of peace, full of invincible people, willed by God to be unshakable. While he criticized the government, he also held the nation, as a whole, responsible for Saudi Arabia's problems.

Al-Auda was released from house arrest in 1999. Like some other Saudi Islamists in similar positions, he has since criticized the acts of terrorism that Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaida committed on September 11, 2001 as a "deviant understanding" of Islam, and a "deviant application of legitimate teachings."

Non-Violent Islamic Opposition: Sheikh 'Ayd al-Qarni

Sheikh 'Ayd al-Qarni is another example of an Islamist who reemerged as a "moderate" after "9/11." The Saudi government had not allowed Al-Qarni to conduct religious services and proselytizing activities for some time before September 11, 2001. Afterwards, he was allowed to do so, almost certainly because he stated that he shared the view of the Saudi government that they had to "unite ranks, unify Muslim discourse, call to God and avoid exaggeration" in religion.

He publicly criticized the rush to jihadist activities among Muslim youth, warned against actions that threatened national unity, and reminded Saudis of their obligation to loyalty to their

rulers. It is obvious that the Saudi government played a behind the scenes role in both cases, but such Islamists probably would not have spoken in this way simply because of government pressure. They are typical of powerful oppositionist preachers who gained considerable public support after the Gulf War, but they are also examples of the kind of fundamentalism that involves reasoned arguments rather than relies on subversion or force.²⁴

“Quasi-Violent” Islamist Opposition: The Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) and Mohammed al-Mas’ari

Other opposition figures have organized more formal opposition movements, and have obtained foreign as well as domestic support in making more direct challenges to the government. Some of these oppositionists have also come very close to crossing the line between non-violence and violence—and many have crossed it.

The Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) is a good case example of such efforts of what happens when Islamic opposition transcends from intellectual criticism to an organized movement. Six Saudi citizens established the CDLR in 1993. Their mission was to struggle for the elimination of injustices, the restoration of legitimate rights, and the guarantee of peoples’ right to express their opinions freely and to live in honor and dignity in an environment of equality and justice.²⁵ They were headed by Mohammed al-Mas’ari, a former physics professor whose interviews and writings indicate support for both fundamentalism and the far left, with little regard for human rights or democracy except as a rhetorical device to help achieve his goal of overthrowing the Saudi government.²⁶

While the CDLR claimed in the West that it was formed for the purpose of supporting human rights and democracy in Saudi Arabia, it supported a strict interpretation of the Shari’a and Islamic custom, opposed most rights for women, made strong anti-Shi’ite statements, opposed the Arab-Israeli peace process and denied Israel’s right to exist. It has never supported the need to protect the kind of human rights recognized in the West and took a rigidly Islamic fundamentalist approach in its Arabic writings and propaganda.²⁷

The initial success of the CDLR was another consequence of Gulf War. Once again, the presence of approximately 500,000 non-Muslim soldiers in Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom’s

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perceived lack of capability to defend itself, and the systematic assault on Iraq raised serious questions among nationalist Saudis.²⁸

The CDLR began to be treated as a serious opposition group after it openly criticized the Saudi government in the international press in 1993. The security forces detained 38 of its members, including al-Mas'ari, confiscated their passports, and forbade them to travel or speak publicly. Mas'ari was released in November 1993, but only after spending 6 months in detention. The security forces subsequently released the rest of the detainees, but only after they signed statements promising not to discuss the Government's policies or communicate with anyone outside the country by telephone or facsimile machine. The authorities also dismissed several founding members of the CDLR from their government jobs.²⁹

In 1994, al-Mas'ari secretly fled to the United Kingdom, where he sought political asylum and established an overseas branch of the CDLR. He continued to disseminate tracts critical of the Saudi government from the UK. He was particularly critical of King Fahd, the Interior Minister Prince Nayef, and the governor of Riyadh, Prince Salman. He continued to express opposition to peace with Israel and to Saudi support for the peace process. At least some of the CDLR's tracts had considerable impact, although perhaps as much for the novelty of such criticism and of an organized opposition movement as for the content of what the CDLR said.

After al-Mas'ari fled to England, the Saudi security forces arrested 15 to 20 of his relatives and supporters. The Saudi government released several of these detainees in late 1994, including Dr. Fouad Dahlawi, al-Mas'ari's brother, Lu'ay al-Mas'ari, and al-Mas'ari's brothers-in-law, Rashad and Nabil Al-Mudarris. However, the government did not publicly acknowledge its detention of CDLR supporters until 1995.

The CDLR responded during 1995-1996 by making repeated claims that more than 300 clerics were being detained for political reasons. Detentions on such a scale are impossible to confirm although the Saudi authorities did continue to detain Salman Al-Auda and Safar Al-Hawali, the Muslim clerics it arrested in September 1994 for criticizing the government. The Saudi government also continued to detain 27 men out of the 157 persons it had arrested for antigovernment activities in October 1994. While the Saudi government released thousands of prisoners and detainees, as part of the annual Ramadan amnesties in 1994-1996, these did not

seem to include major political dissidents. The US State Department reported in 1998, however, that the total number of political detainees could not be accurately determined but was probably less than 50.³⁰

Supporters of the CDLR responded by making occasional use of violence. The Saudi government announced in August 1995, that it had executed Abdullah Bin Abd al-Rahman Al-Hidaif for assaulting a security official with acid. At the same time, however, the government applied severe penalties for more peaceful opposition. It sentenced one Saudi man to five-years in prison simply for possessing leaflets and posters mentioning the CDLR, and another to three years in prison for attending meetings in support of the group and its exiled spokesman, Mohammad al-Mas'ari. Both were associates of Abdullah Bin Abd al-Rahman Al-Hidaif.³¹

These Saudi government actions led the CDLR to focus largely on activity outside Saudi Arabia. From 1994 onwards, al-Mas'ari issued a flood of faxes and press releases attacking the Saudi royal family and government from his new headquarters in Britain. He also did his best to make the CDLR appear like a Western-style democratic and human rights movement in order to win Western support. He down played the CDLR's Islamic extremism, and in the process the fact that "legitimate" in its title referred to religious legitimacy in Arabic.

Yet, during this same period al-Mas'ari expressed the CDLR's "understanding" of two fatal terrorist bombings of the US Air Force housing compound at Al Khobar and sympathy for the perpetrators—although the CDLR did say it played no role in such actions. These activities caused the Saudi government to put intense pressure on Britain to deport Mas'ari. The Conservative Party government of then Prime Minister John Major responded by trying to expel Mas'ari to Dominica, but Mas'ari appealed the decision in courts and was eventually granted permission to remain in the United Kingdom for four-years, with the option of applying for permanent residency at the end of that period.³²

As a result, the CDLR continued to criticize the Saudi government, using computers and facsimile transmissions to send newsletters back to Saudi Arabia. This led to a serious confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Britain in April 1996. The Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom stated that his government would withdraw from its large arms contracts for British weapons unless the United Kingdom expelled al-Mas'ari. No Saudi Government

retribution actually took place against the British government, but this may be because Saudi intelligence found other ways to deal with Al-Mas'ari and the CDLR. Al-Mas'ari was successful in avoiding deportation, but he could not afford the legal fees involved. As a result, he became 10,000 pounds in debt. A London high court declared him bankrupt on January 8, 1997, and the resulting judgment meant that donations to al-Mas'ari were assigned to his creditors rather than to the CDLR.³³

According to the US State Department report on human rights, the CDLR also suffered from internal problems that resulted in a major split. In March 1996, these internal tensions led some of the supporters of the CDLR to create a rival faction called the Islamic Reform Movement (IRM) or Movement for Islamic Reform in Saudi Arabia (MIRA). This faction was headed by Sa'ad Al-Faqih who was able to persuade most of the CDLR's major backers to support MIRA. As a result, the CDLR lost much of its funding.

By the end of 1996, the CDLR's activities had come to a virtual halt. The IRM did, however, continue at a much lower level of activity and it too implicitly condoned the two terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia—arguing that they were a natural outgrowth of a political system that does not tolerate peaceful dissent.³⁴ The IRM's mission statement, however, is more peaceful. It says that the movement seeks major reforms in Arabia; in particular, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the abolition of the Secret police units subverting political movements and activity. It says these reforms are a precondition for the political, judicial, economic and social reforms that need to take place, and the IRM has said in other statements that it will use all peaceful legitimate means including information, communication and political pressure to achieve these aims.³⁵

Violent Islamic Opposition: The Saudi National Guard Bombing

The threat from more violent militant Islamists has been far more serious, sometimes murderous, and provides case examples of a very different kind. The first major act of post-Gulf War violence took place on November 13, 1995, a 150-225 pound bomb, placed in a pickup truck, exploded outside the building housing the headquarters of the US Army Materiel

Command's Office of the Program Manager (OPM) for the Saudi National Guard. The OPM is the US program that provides training support to the National Guard.

The bomb was detonated at 11:30 a.m. when most Saudis would be at prayer and off the streets.³⁶ The blast killed seven people, including five Americans and two Indians, and wounded 60 others, of which 37 were American. The timing of the bomb indicated that it might have been directed primarily at Americans. In fact, none of the 67 casualties were Saudi citizens. The bombing was the first such attack on Western military forces in Saudi Arabia since 1991, when two Americans were wounded in an attack on a shuttle bus in Jeddah, clearly shocked both American and Saudi officials.³⁷

There still are some questions as to who was responsible. An extremist group called Movement for Islamic Change in the Arabian Peninsula-Jihad Wing claimed responsibility, as did two previously unknown groups calling themselves the Tigers of the Gulf and the Combatant Partisans of God. All demanded the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Saudi Arabia. The Combatant Partisans of God also demanded the release of Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman and Mousa Abu Marzouk from US custody. The CDLR, indicated it had never heard of these groups, and officially condemned the attack, but it was al-Mas'ari's equivocation in condemning the bombing prompted the British government to order his expulsion and led to the deportation proceedings mentioned earlier.³⁸

While Western and Saudi sources had no information concerning these groups, the third group, the Movement for Islamic Change, had faxed two previous warnings to the US Embassy in Riyadh in April and June, 1995. The statements demanded a withdrawal of all US forces from the Kingdom by July 1995. US Ambassador Raymond E. Mabus indicated that the earlier faxes were not taken seriously enough because, "of all the places in the world, [Saudi Arabia] was deemed one of the safest."³⁹ A US review of the faxes revealed phrases that suggested that the group adhered to mainstream Sunni beliefs and was likely to be indigenous to Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi government was initially unwilling to publicly acknowledge the possible involvement of indigenous opposition groups. The Saudi ambassador to the US, Bandar Bin Sultan Bin Abd al-Aziz, declared that, "dissidents did not cause the car bombing."⁴⁰ These public denials were partly the result of a Saudi belief that acts this violent had to have been conducted

by foreign groups and partly the result of an effort to discourage indigenous groups from copycat incidents. They also were affected by US intelligence reports that Iranian agents had carried out increased surveillance of US installations prior to the attack.⁴¹

At the same time, the investigation by the Ministry of the Interior focused on both foreign and indigenous opponents of the regime and on Saudis operating both outside and inside the country. The Saudi authorities sorted through the files of some 15,000 known Saudi “Afghanis” and Islamic extremists. Shortly after the blast, the Saudis released a sketch of one suspect and the Saudi and US governments offered a \$3 million reward for information regarding those responsible. The US assisted by providing technical expertise, and dispatched 19 FBI investigators and two State Department security officials to the site of the bombing within days after it occurred.

The first arrests indicated that Saudis outside Saudi Arabia might be involved. On February 1, 1995, Pakistan extradited an individual believed to match the sketch, a Saudi national named Hassan as-Suraihi, at the request of the Saudi government. As-Suraihi was known to have fought with Islamic groups in Afghanistan in the early 1990’s and to have supported Islamic militants in India’s Kashmir region. However, as-Suraihi was not charged with the attack. Instead, the Saudi government arrested four Saudis living in Saudi Arabia, and broadcast their confessions on April 22, 1996.

The four men were Abdulaziz Fah Nasser, Riyadh Harji, Muslih Shamrani, and Khalid Ahmed Said. The Interior Ministry announced that three of the four men were Saudi Islamic extremists that had joined the Mujahideen forces fighting in Afghanistan in the late 1980s, and the fourth had fought in Bosnia. They had smuggled in the explosives from Yemen, and had at least some ties to the Islamic Group in Egypt. Shamrani was an ex-soldier who had fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia, and was the son of an army officer. However, all four were part of the large class of Saudi young men with no real career prospects, family wealth, or connections. The four men said they had planned a much more extensive series of kidnappings and assassinations, but had given up their plans because they feared they would be caught as a result of the massive step up in security measures following the bombing.⁴²

The Interior Ministry did not indicate that any of the four men were part of the three groups that had originally claimed responsibility for the attack. It also issued press releases that vaguely linked the four men to a foreign power or foreign group. According to some Saudi sources, were an independent cell that was influenced by clerical extremists linked to the Islamic radical Hizb al-Tahrir or Liberation Party, which draws on the thinking from clerics based in Jordan. Other Saudi sources indicate, however, that Mas'ari and Osama Bin Laden may, have influenced them , and the Saudi government may have suppressed the details of their involvement in other groups. All four were beheaded on May 31, 1996.⁴³

Militant Islamist Opposition: The Al Khobar Tragedy

The next major case study in Islamic violence illustrates how diverse the problem of Islamic extremism can be even in a country dominated by one Islamic sect. This time the attack was committed by Saudi Shi'ites that may have had ties to Iran. The attack did not occur without warning. The success of the bombing of the National Guard Training Center had demonstrated the vulnerability of targets within the Kingdom to terrorist attacks. The end result was a series of intelligence indicators that further bombings were being planned and a major new attack on US facilities in Saudi Arabia were likely. These warnings were taken very seriously because there were approximately 30,000 Americans living in Saudi Arabia, many of whom were easy targets for terrorists.

In December 1995, the US Embassy released a statement in which it stated that the US had “unconfirmed information that additional bombings may be planned against Western interests in Saudi Arabia, including facilities and commercial centers occupied and/or frequented by Americans.” A similar statement was released by the State Department on January 31, 1995, a week prior to a scheduled visit by Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Saudi Arabia. The visit was then canceled, ostensibly because of scheduling conflicts, but actually because of the terrorist threats.

On March 29, 1996, Saudi border guards intercepted a new shipment of explosives at the Jordanian border. The possibility of additional attacks had also prompted concern by corporate contractors in Saudi Arabia as to the safety of their employees and dependents. New anonymous

threats were made against Americans in May 1996 prompting the US Embassy to ask Americans living in Saudi Arabia to keep a “low profile.”

On June 25, 1996, threats turned into a major tragedy. A truck bomb exploded outside a US military housing complex located in Khobar Towers, which was located in Al Khobar—a town located near the Saudi air base at Dhahran and where the US had a significant combat presence. While the US base commander had planned defenses against bombs up to several hundred pounds, the bomb weighed closer to five thousand and some estimates put it in the 10,000-25,000 pound category. It was placed in a large fuel tanker parked about 35 yards from the perimeter of the base, and was so large that the explosion could be felt in Bahrain. It toppled one of the apartment towers at the complex and the crater was approximately 85 feet across and 35 feet deep. The attack killed 19 US servicemen and injured 373 others. It was the worst terrorist disaster affecting the US since 241 Marines and sailors were killed in the bombing of a US barracks in Beirut on October 23, 1983.

In fact, the incident was so serious that the US responded by relocating most of the several thousand USAF personnel stationed in Saudi Arabia to an isolated Saudi air base at Al-Kharj, some 60 miles southeast of Riyadh, at a cost to the US and Saudi Arabia of several hundred million dollars. Unlike the Al Khobar area, the Al-Kharj area was virtually unoccupied, and could be made almost completely secure, to the point where the US even operated services like trash handling. The US restricted temporary duty in Saudi Arabia to Al-Kharj and other sealed, secured areas, and rushed in extensive new perimeter defense equipment, including advanced thermal imaging equipment for vehicles and fixed surveillance, and strengthened Force Protection Groups from the USAF. It also removed most of the USAF presence from the joint command center in the Saudi Air Force headquarters in Riyadh.

The Initial Course of the Al Khobar Investigation

The Al Khobar attack is one of the few case studies where considerable detail is available on what happened but the initial investigation did little to reveal the identity of the bombers. Large-scale arrests produced few results -- in part because Saudi Arabia rushed to arrest the “usual suspects” before it carried out a serious investigation. Saudi and US investigations of Mas’ari and Bin Ladin produced little indication they had direct responsibility. Both the US and

Saudi Arabia offered massive rewards, but no solid informer came forward like the Yemeni truck driver that had informed on those involved in the National Guard bombing.

By November 1996, however, there was growing evidence that the bombers were a different kind of threat from the Wahhabi extremists discussed earlier, and might be Saudi Shi'ites affiliated with a movement known as the Saudi Hezbollah. This group had made earlier claims to be responsible for the bombing, but its claims only became convincing as its ties emerged to the Hezbollah in Lebanon and to training facilities in Iran. It also became clear that the bombers might be linked to a series of much lower level Shi'ite attacks on the oil facilities and other targets in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province.

The Saudis arrested Shi'ite religious figures like Abdul Karim Hubail and Sheik Jaffer Mubarak, and conducted other arrests that indicated that the Saudi Hezbollah might have as many as 1,000 members, with a core of up to 250. There were indications that some members operated out of Syria or Lebanon, and that Iranian officials had been involved in the Al Khobar bombing. Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati formally denied Iranian involvement as early as December 12, 1996. He stated that such bombings were an internal Saudi matter and that, "We deny any involvement directly or indirectly. We are against any kind of terrorist actions against any country...There are some opposition groups in Saudi that have admitted they are involved in different blastings there. We don't want to support this kind of activity."⁴⁴

Unfortunately, at this point, the investigation was slowed by Saudi Arabia's policy of avoiding any public disclosure of its internal problems, and by tensions between the Saudi and US investigators and a "clash of intelligence and law enforcement cultures." The Saudis have always treated internal unrest as a virtual state secret, and had no desire for any American "help" that would directly interfere in their investigation or give the US access to Saudi Arabia's internal problems. The Saudi security forces have also focused largely on domestic human intelligence, networks of local informers, wire tapings and communications intercepts, and large-scale arrests of possible suspects who were held for long periods. They conduct direct, often forcible interrogation with limited regard to Western concepts of human rights. As a result, the Saudis were not used to working with foreigners, or relying on technical data, forensics, and intelligence. They had little experience in conducting complex technical law enforcement investigations with demanding chains of evidence of the kind common in the West.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation approached the Al Khobar investigation in a very different way. It rushed in teams of Americans with limited Arabic and little regional political background, and which were trained largely in forensics and highly technical methods of investigation. The FBI investigators gave the Saudis the impression they were trying to take over the Saudi investigation without really knowing anything about the various factions or movements they were dealing with or the political consequences of their actions. Things were then made even worse on the US side by poor interagency coordination. Some FBI agents also alienated US intelligence and State Department personnel as thoroughly as they alienated the Saudis. While professional counter-terrorists and US and Saudi intelligence experts, worked relatively well together, the US effort involved several other agencies that sometimes did little more than hold meetings, generate new rumors, and issue more requests for data from the field.

US-Saudi coordination was often poor. The Saudi investigators often seemed unable to open their mouths while the FBI investigators seemed unable to keep them shut and avoid posturing for the press and the Congress. Cooperation was minimal, with both sides trading countercharges and making little progress. Prince Naif, the Minister of the Interior, who was in charge of the Saudi side of the investigation, made it publicly clear that he resented some of the actions taken by the FBI. The FBI in turn, “leaked” complaints about the Saudis.

The politics of a possible Iranian role in the Al Khobar bombing made Saudi-US cooperation worse. Some US officials leaped ahead of the evidence to condemn Iran. The Saudis, however, were seeking a broader political rapprochement with Iran, and could not firmly decide if it was better to openly blame the Iranian’s for Saudi Arabia’s internal problems with its Shi’ites, or to minimize any publicity about possible Iranian involvement to avoid a crisis with Iran. The evidence also remained ambiguous. It did become clear that the Saudi Hezbollah had ambiguous relations with Iran, and with the Hezbollah in Lebanon, but the seeming involvement of a few Iranian officials could not be linked to direct orders for such an attack or to any direct involvement by the Iranian government. This made it difficult to separate Iran’s role of encouraging such movements ideologically, and with training or funding, from a direct involvement or sponsorship of terrorism acts like the bombing.

In March 1997, the investigation reached the point of tragicomedy. The media was already filled with rumors about Iran and possible US reprisals, when a Saudi named Hani Abdel

Rahim al-Sayegh was arrested in Canada on charges that he had driven one of the vehicles involved in the Al Khobar attack. In the months that followed, al-Sayegh was reported to have identified an Iranian Brigadier General, Ahmad Sherifi, as having directly encouraged him to commit attacks on US personnel in Saudi Arabia.

It then slowly became clear, however, that al-Sayegh was primarily concerned with avoiding possible deportation to Saudi Arabia. While he made an agreement to talk if he was deported to the US, this turned out to be little more than opportunism. Once al-Sayegh arrived in the US, he appealed his status in the US court system. He stated that his previous confessions were false, made under duress, and without due process of law. He also reiterated an earlier claim that he was in Syria during the actual bombing. He also discovered that the US press and courts to publicize the problems of Saudi Arabia's Shi'ites.

In September 1997 the Justice Department moved to drop the charges against al-Sayegh citing their inability to develop the requisite evidence. Al-Sayegh went on to seek immigration relief under the Convention Against Torture, but his appeal was denied in September 1999. He was deported to Saudi Arabia a week later, where the Saudi government initiated legal proceedings against him.

Serious Progress in the Khobar Investigation After May 1997

Tensions between Saudi Arabia and the US eased in May 1997, when US officials—including the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs—made it clear that they had no evidence of foreign involvement or sponsorship by Iran. There were also new reports that a Saudi Sunni group had now claimed responsibility for the bombing.

At the same time, it was far from clear that Iran was innocent. Al-Sayegh does seem to have tried to organize attacks against US citizens in Saudi Arabia during 1994 and 1995, and to organize such attacks after visits to Qum in Iran and a Hezbollah camp in Lebanon. Another Saudi Shi'ite who might have been involved in the bombing—Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmad Mughassil—was reported to have fled to Syria after the attack. Mughassil was then said to have crossed into Iran—although Iran denied it had given Mughassil shelter. Mughassil was particularly important because Saudi Arabia listed him as a leader of the Saudi Hezbollah and as a key conspirator.

Similarly, a Saudi Shi'ite named Jaafer Chueikhat was reported to have been involved in the bombing. Chueikhat was trained by the Hezbollah in Lebanon before the bombing, and then committed "suicide" in prison in Syria under conditions that made it look like his death might have been politically convenient to both Syria and Iran. Three of the 12 suspects in the Al Khobar bombing which the Saudis identified by August 1997, had clear ties to Iranian-connected organizations and several others were believed to be in Hezbollah camps in Lebanon.

Saudi and US differences over how to conduct the investigation also continued to surface. In late March 1998, Prince Naif, announced in Mecca that Saudi Arabia had finished the investigation and would announce the findings when the time is right, "All the facts of the crime are with us and our intelligence exerted huge efforts to discover everything about the incident and we will leave the announcement for its time." In contrast, State Department Spokesman James P. Rubin stated, "As far as we're concerned the investigation is still wide open. We do not believe it's over. We are continuing to pursue it and believe that at the end of the day those responsible will need to pay a price."

Both sides appeared to reach a compromise a few days later, but the result did little to clarify the situation. Rubin issued a statement that Saudi Arabia was still investigating details of the unsolved bombing. He said that, "We are continuing to have exchanges with the Saudi government and have had repeated and very high-level assurances of cooperation from them." He also said "it was not all that clear" that the minister meant the Saudis had closed the investigation. "On the contrary, [the Saudi minister] appeared to be saying that...there's nothing new and nothing new to find, but they're working on the details...Well, most investigations focus on the details, and from that, one can build out into understanding what might have happened...Let me say this. From the perspective of the United States, the Al Khobar bombing investigation remains wide open. We are continuing to have exchanges with the Saudi government and have had repeated and very high-level assurances of cooperation from them."

In spite of these problems, the Saudi and US investigation continued to make slow progress, and aspects of Saudi and US cooperation improved. The FBI and Saudi intelligence and security services, despite different cultural approaches to criminal and security investigations, and different political goals, gradually learned to work together more closely. Saudi Arabia and the US jointly identified 12 Saudi Arabian and one Lebanese suspect in the

bombing. FBI experts indicated in November 1999, that they had some degree of evidence of indirect Iranian involvement from Saudi and other sources.

At the same time, the nature of the organization or organizations involved remained unclear, as did their strength inside Saudi Arabia. The issue of Iranian involvement also remained open. Reports surfaced that Ahmad Sherrif, a senior official in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, was involved in the planning of the Al Khobar bombing. Ahmad Sherrif has been associated with covert Iranian special operations, and was identified in 1996 as an Iranian intelligence officer in the June 1996 trial of 15 Shia dissidents in Bahrain, convicted of bombing several hotels and restaurants in the Emirate. Six of the 16 Bahrainis confessed that Sherifi had recruited them in 1993 in a madrassa in Qom. Intelligence sources suspect that Sherifi may have first contacted al-Sayegh during the Saudi dissident's stay in Qom.⁴⁵ A major London-based Saudi newspaper, al-Hayat, claimed that two Saudis and one Lebanese, believed to have planned the bombing, were thought to have initially fled to Iran although later investigation indicated they were not there.

These reports presented growing problems for Saudi Arabia as it solidified its rapprochement with the Khatami government of Iran. It was doing so at a time when the US continued to impose sanctions on Iran and call it a terrorist nation. In 1999, Saudi Arabia did quietly ask Iran to provide background data on some aspects of the investigation. In 2001, however, Saudi officials publicly denied that the Al Khobar issue was a subject of formal discussions with Iran. The Saudi government never formally denied that Iran might be connected to the Al Khobar bombing, but it increasingly sought to avoid public debate over the issue. When a New York Times article appeared that linked Iran with the bombing, Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal stated that it, "is not a good thing to launch accusations here and there, reporting a matter on which the investigation has not been completed." The testimonies of two Saudis arrested for the bombing, Hani al-Sayegh and Mohammed Qassab, were never made public.

The US Issues an Indictment

All of those issues took on new importance on June 21, 2001 when a federal grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia, indicted 13 Saudi militants and a Lebanese chemist for the attack on the Al

Khobar Towers. US Attorney General John Ashcroft announced the indictment at an afternoon press conference, and stated that the 14 suspected terrorists were charged with murder, attempted murder of federal employees, conspiracy to commit murder, and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction in the bombing. Ashcroft explained that the indictment was issued because many of the charges might have become impossible to file under the statute of limitations after the fifth anniversary of the attack, which was June 25, 2001.

Nevertheless, the US put all US military forces in the Persian Gulf on the highest state of alert -- “Threat Condition Delta” -- on June 22. It ordered ships from the 5th Fleet in Bahrain to go to sea, and withdrew US Marines from an exercise in Kuwait. It linked this action to increased terrorist threats from Osama Bin Laden and his organization Al Qaida, but US officials privately made it clear that the US was equally concerned about Iran. Edmund J. Hull, the US Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen and the former US Department of State’s Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism, stated on April 30, 2001, “We have a very long memory and we have as long an arm as possible.”⁴⁶

It is striking in retrospect that indictment made no mention of the threat of Sunni extremism, Osama Bin Laden, or Iraq. Instead, the defendants included Abdel Karim Nasser, the leader of the Saudi Hezbollah terrorist organization; Ahmed Mughassil, the head of the group’s military wing, and members of terrorist cells in Saudi Arabia who planned and carried out the attack. Hani al-Sayegh, was identified as the driver of the vehicle used to scout the bombing site. The Saudi Hezbollah responded by issuing a statement denying its involvement in the bombing in November 1996.

The Role of the Saudi Hezbollah

The name “Hezbollah” is used by a number of Shi’ite extremist groups, principally the Lebanese Hezbollah. It is taken from the Koran, and literally means “Party of God.” It refers to active defenders of Islam. All of the various Hezbollah groups are linked by interpretations of Islam that make it legitimate to lie and conceal in the defense of the faith. The organizational ties between various “Hezbollah” groups are uncertain, although many train or meet together, and have some ties to Iranian and Syrian intelligence, and Iranian and/or Syrian sponsored training centers in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. The Lebanese Hezbollah, for example, has repeatedly denied

that it had ties to the Saudi Hezbollah since the Al Khobar bombing, but was named in the US indictment.

Saudi Shi'ites in the Eastern Province founded Saudi Hezbollah in the 1980s as a reaction to the harshness of Saudi treatment of what many Wahhabis regarded as a suspect branch of Islam. The organization sought support from Iran, which trained many of the Saudi Shi'ite clerics, and provided money and military training in Iran.

While the Saudi Hezbollah has focused primarily on attacking the Saudi regime, it is also strongly anti-American. It attacked the Saudi government for allowing US troops to remain in the Kingdom after the end of the Gulf War. Nevertheless, some reports indicate that the Saudi government allowed approximately 200 Saudi Shi'ites to return to Saudi Arabia in 1993, some of who may have included members of the Saudi Hezbollah.

The text of the indictment described the Hezbollah, the role of the attackers in the Hezbollah, and the role of Iran and other outside organizations as follows:

- “Hezbollah, or “Party of God,” was the name used by a number of related terrorist organizations operating in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Bahrain, among other places. These Hezbollah organizations were inspired, supported, and directed by elements of the Iranian government.
- “Saudi Hezbollah, also known as Hezbollah Al-Hijaz, was a terrorist organization that operated primarily in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and that promoted, among other things, the use of violence against nationals and property of the United States located in Saudi Arabia. Because Saudi Hezbollah was an outlaw organization in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its members frequently met and trained in Lebanon, Syria, or Iran.”

The indictment stated that the “regular gathering place for members of Saudi Hezbollah was the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine in Damascus, Syria, which was an important religious site for adherents of the Shi'ite branch of Islam.”⁴⁷ It also stated that “Saudi Hezbollah drew its members primarily from among young men of the Shi'ite faith who resided in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, near the Persian Gulf. Those young men would frequently have their first contact with Saudi Hezbollah during religious pilgrimages to the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine. They would then be approached by Saudi Hezbollah members to gauge their loyalty to Iran and dislike for the government of Saudi Arabia. Young men who wished to join Saudi Hezbollah then would be transported to Hezbollah-controlled areas in Lebanon for military training and indoctrination.”⁴⁸

The indictment indicated that the Saudi Hezbollah was organized in departments, or “wings,” headed by a Hezbollah member. Each department head reported to the leader of Saudi Hezbollah. At the time of the Khobar bombings, the leader was Abdelkarim Hussein Mohammed al-Nasser. The indictment went on to describe the role of the Hezbollah and the members who participated in the attack as follows:

- The “military wing” of Saudi Hezbollah was headed at all relevant times by Ahmed Al-Mughassil, aka “Abu Omran,” a native of Qatif, in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. In his role as military commander, Al-Mughassil was in charge of directing terrorist attacks against American interests in Saudi Arabia. Al-Mughassil was actively involved in recruiting young Saudi Shi’ite men to join the ranks of Hezbollah; arranging for those men to undergo military training at Hezbollah camps in Lebanon and Iran; directing those men in surveillance of potential targets for attack by Hezbollah; and planning and supervising terrorist attacks.
- Ali Al-Houri was a member of Saudi Hezbollah who served as a major recruiter for the Hezbollah party; scheduled party functions; and transported explosives for the party. He also acted as a liaison for the party with the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria, which was an important source of logistics and support for Saudi Hezbollah members traveling to and from Lebanon. Al-Houri was a close associate of Al-Mughassil and participated directly in surveillance, planning, and execution of terrorist attacks.
- Hani Al-Sayegh was a prominent member of Saudi Hezbollah. He was actively involved in recruiting young Saudi Shi’ite men to join the ranks of Hezbollah; arranging for those men to undergo military training at Hezbollah camps in Lebanon and Iran; assisting in the surveillance of potential targets for attack by Hezbollah; and carrying out terrorist attacks. Al-Sayegh also spoke fluent Farsi and enjoyed an unusually close association with certain military elements of the Iranian government.
- Ibrahim Al-Yacoub was a prominent member of Saudi Hezbollah, actively involved in recruiting young Saudi Shi’ite men to join Hezbollah, and in planning and carrying out terrorist attacks. He also served as a liaison between Saudi Hezbollah and the Lebanese and Iranian Hezbollah organizations.
- Mustafa Al-Qassab was a Shi’ite Muslim from Qatif, Saudi Arabia. He joined Saudi Hezbollah in the late 1980s after traveling from Saudi Arabia to Iran and meeting Al-Mughassil and others. Over time, Al-Qassab came to play an important role in the military affairs of Saudi Hezbollah.
- Sa’ed Al-Bahar was a Qatif native who first became associated with Hezbollah in 1988, when Al-Yacoub arranged for him to travel to Iran for religious study. He also spent time with Al-Yacoub in Damascus. In Damascus, he met and became close friends with Al-Sayegh, who introduced him both to Hezbollah and to elements of the Iranian government. In Qom, Iran during 1989 or 1990, he also met Al-Houri, who accompanied him to military training sponsored by the Iranian government in southern Iran.
- Abdallah Al-Jarash was recruited into Hezbollah at the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine in Damascus. At the time of his recruitment, Al-Jarash met Al Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Yacoub, and Al-Sayegh, all of whom were important party members.
- Al-Jarash learned that, as a member of Hezbollah, he would need to be loyal to the party and to Iran; he also learned that the goal of the party was to target foreign interests, American in particular, in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. In about 1989, Al-Jarash was sent to Lebanon in a Mercedes supplied by the Iranian embassy in Damascus for military training provided by Lebanese Hezbollah members. After being trained, he was assigned to recruit others who felt a strong connection to Iran.

- Hussein Al-Mughis was a native of Qatif, Saudi Arabia who came into contact with Hezbollah in about 1990, when he traveled to the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine in Damascus and met Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, and Al-Sayegh, among others. With Al-Mughassil's support, Al-Mughis underwent religious training in Qom, Iran, where he met Al-Yacoub. Then, in about 1992, Al-Mughassil arranged for Al-Mughis to spend two weeks in Lebanon receiving weapons and explosives training. At that time, he filled out a Hezbollah membership form provided by Al-Mughassil and learned that Hezbollah Hijaz and Lebanese Hezbollah were both part of Iranian Hezbollah. After this training, Al-Mughassil directed Al-Mughis to secretly recruit others for Hezbollah.
- Ali Al-Marhoun was another Shi'ite Muslim from the town of Qatif in Eastern Saudi Arabia. His first contact with the organization came in about 1991, when he met Al-Yacoub at the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine in Damascus. After Al-Marhoun discovered that both he and Al-Yacoub wished to be martyrs for Islam, Al-Yacoub introduced Al-Marhoun to Al-Mughassil, who arranged for Al-Marhoun to travel to Lebanon for Hezbollah training and indoctrination.
- Saleh Ramadan and Mustafa Mu'alem were recruited into Saudi Hezbollah in approximately 1992 by Al-Marhoun, whom they knew from their common hometown of Qatif, Saudi Arabia. Ramadan was chosen because he was very religious and a great admirer of Ayatollah Khomeini, the former Supreme Leader of Iran. Both Ramadan and Al-Mu'alem agreed to join Hezbollah and form a "cell" under Al-Marhoun. After being recruited by Al-Marhoun, Ramadan and Al-Mu'alem traveled to Lebanon for military training, where they met Al-Mughassil, who had them fill out written applications for Hezbollah membership. Fadel Al-Alawe was a Qatif native who joined Hezbollah in about 1992 at the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine in Damascus. He was recruited by Al-Qassab, who introduced him to Al-Mughassil. Shortly thereafter, Al-Mughassil arranged for Al-Alawe to undergo military training in Lebanon.
- John Doe was a member of Lebanese Hezbollah who assisted Saudi Hezbollah with the construction of the tanker truck bomb used to attack the American military residences at Khobar Towers. He is described as a Lebanese male, approximately 175 cm tall, with fair skin, fair hair, and green eyes.

The Detailed History of the Attack

Other parts of the indictment provided additional details on the attack. It stated that the terrorist activities leading to the 1996 Khobar blast began as early as 1993. At this time, Ahmed Ibrahim al-Mughassil, who was identified as the Hezbollah leader in charge of attacks against Americans in Saudi Arabia, ordered three of the other defendants to look for possible targets in Saudi Arabia, while other members of Saudi Hezbollah began "extensive surveillance to find American targets in Saudi Arabia." These reports were sent to Mughassil and Iranian officials, and described possible targets like the American Embassy in Riyadh and locations in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, including Khobar Towers apartment complex.

The indictment stated that an Iranian military officer directed several of the other defendants to search for alternative potential terrorism sites along the coast of the Red Sea in 1995. It also says that Mughassil told another defendant that he sustained ties with Iranian officials and that they provided financial support for Hezbollah. It maintains that Mughassil

decided in the fall of 1995 that Khobar Towers would be the site of the attack, which would serve Iran by driving Americans from the Persian Gulf region.

Mughassil then instructed another defendant to transport explosives by car from an unidentified member of Lebanese Hezbollah in Beirut to hiding places in eastern Saudi Arabia in the vicinity of Khobar Towers in early 1996. . The conspirators then bought a tanker truck and converted it into the truck bomb used in the attack. The resulting bomb was larger than the one that destroyed the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995 and more than twice as powerful as the one used at the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983.

The indictment gave the following detailed history of the attack:

- In about 1993, Al-Mughassil instructed Al-Qassab, Al-Yacoub, and Al-Houri to begin surveillance of Americans in Saudi Arabia. As a result, Al-Qassab and Al-Yacoub spent three months in Riyadh conducting surveillance of American targets. Al-Sayegh joined them during this operation. They produced reports, which were passed to Al-Mughassil, then on to Saudi Hezbollah chief Al-Nasser, and to officials in Iran. At the end of their mission, Al-Mughassil came in person to meet with them and review their work. Also in about 1993, Al-Yacoub assigned Al-Jarash to conduct surveillance of the United States Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and to determine where Americans went and where they lived. Also at Al-Yacoub's direction, Al-Jarash and Al-Marhoun conducted surveillance of a fish market frequented by Americans, located near the US Embassy in Riyadh. They reported the results of their surveillance to Al-Yacoub. In early 1994, Al-Qassab began conducting surveillance, focusing on American and other foreign sites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, an area that includes Khobar. He prepared written reports, which were passed to Al-Nasser and Iranian officials.
- In about Fall 1994, Al-Marhoun, Ramadan, and Al-Mu'alem began watching American sites in Eastern Saudi Arabia at Al-Mughassil's direction. They passed their reports to Al-Mughassil, who was then spending most of his time in Beirut, Lebanon. At about the same time, Al-Bahar began conducting surveillance in Saudi Arabia at the direction of an Iranian military officer. Khobar Towers was a housing complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, which the United States, among other countries, used to house military personnel assigned to Saudi Arabia. Building #131 was an eight-story structure within the Khobar Towers complex that United States Air Force personnel, among others, used as their place of residence while serving in Saudi Arabia.
- In late 1994, after extensive surveillance in Eastern Saudi Arabia, Al-Marhoun, Ramadan, and Al-Mu'alem recognized and confirmed Khobar Towers as an important American military location and communicated that fact to Al-Mughassil. Shortly thereafter, Al-Mughassil gave Ramadan money to find a storage site in the Eastern Province for explosives. During the course of the cell's surveillance, Al-Mughassil reported to Al-Marhoun that he had received a phone call from a high Iranian government official inquiring about the progress of their surveillance activity.
- In 1995, Al-Bahar and Al-Sayegh conducted surveillance at the direction of an Iranian military officer from the area of Jizan, Saudi Arabia, located on the Red Sea near Yemen; they also surveyed American sites in the Eastern Province. Their goal was to gather information to support future attacks against Americans. Al-Sayegh took their surveillance reports and passed them to the Iranian officer.
- In about April or May 1995, Al-Marhoun attended four days of live-fire drills sponsored by Hezbollah in Lebanon. While he was there, he met with Al-Mughassil at his Beirut apartment. During that meeting, Al-Mughassil explained to Al-Marhoun that Hezbollah's goal was to expel the Americans from Saudi Arabia.

Al-Mughassil also explained that he had close ties to Iranian officials, who supplied him with money and gave him directions for the party. Al-Mughassil then gave Al-Marhoun \$2000 in \$100 United States bills to support Al-Marhoun's cell in their surveillance activity in Saudi Arabia. Al-Marhoun used the money to finance a trip to Riyadh with Ramadan to look for American sites.

- In about June 1995, the Hezbollah cell composed of Al-Marhoun, Ramadan, and Al-Mu'alem began regular surveillance of Khobar Towers at Al-Mughassil direction. Shortly thereafter, Ramadan traveled to Beirut to brief Al-Mughassil, who instructed the cell to continue surveillance. At about the same time in 1995 that Ramadan went to Beirut to update Al-Mughassil on surveillance activities, Al-Alawi was summoned to Beirut by Al-Mughassil. Although Al-Alawe did not see Ramadan, he noticed surveillance reports from Ramadan on Al-Mughassil's desk. During their meeting, Al-Mughassil explained to Al-Alawe that explosives were going to be used against Americans in Saudi Arabia and he instructed Al-Alawe to drive a vehicle he said contained explosives from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia. Al-Alawe did so, only to discover that the car held no explosives; Al-Mughassil explained that he had only been testing him.
- In about October 1995, an unknown man visited Al-Alawe at his home in Eastern Saudi Arabia and delivered a map of Khobar, saying Al-Mughassil wanted Al-Alawe to check its accuracy. A short time later, the same man retrieved the map and left a package weighing about one kilogram. Al-Alawe kept the package until Al-Mughassil called and told him to deliver it to another man unknown to him. Al-Alawe did as instructed and did not look inside the package.
- In the late fall of 1995, Ramadan brought more surveillance reports to Al-Mughassil in Beirut. It was then that Ramadan, Al-Marhoun, and Al-Mu'alem learned from Al-Mughassil that Hezbollah would attack Khobar Towers, using a tanker truck loaded with a mixture of explosives and gasoline. At the end of 1995 or the beginning of 1996, Ramadan again returned to Beirut, where he and Al-Mughassil again discussed the planned tanker truck attack on Khobar Towers and the fact that Ramadan, Al-Marhoun, and Al-Mu'alem would each have a role in the attack. Al-Mughassil said they would need enough explosives to destroy a row of buildings and that the attack was to serve Iran by driving the Americans out of the Gulf region. In January or February 1996, Al-Mughassil traveled to Qatif, in the Eastern Province, and instructed Al-Marhoun to find places to hide explosives. In about February, at Al-Mughassil's direction, Ramadan met Al-Mughassil in Beirut and drove back to Saudi Arabia with a car loaded with hidden explosives. He delivered the car to a man in Qatif who wore a veil over his face.
- In March 1996, Al-Mughassil summoned Al-Alawe to Beirut and again outfitted him with a car that was to contain explosives. Al-Alawe drove the car from Lebanon, through Syria and Jordan, to the Al-Haditha border crossing in northern Saudi Arabia. There, on March 28, 1996, Saudi border guards discovered 38 kilograms of plastic explosives hidden in the car and arrested Al-Alawe. Saudi investigators then arrested Al-Marhoun, Al-Mu'alem, and Ramadan on April 6, 7, and 8, 1996, respectively.
- After the arrests of Al-Alawe and the Al-Marhoun cell, Al-Mughassil went back to Saudi Arabia in April or May 1996 to continue the planning for the Khobar attack. On or about May 1, 1996, Al-Mughassil appeared unannounced at Al-Jarash's home in Qatif, explaining that he had come as part of a pilgrimage and was traveling on a false passport. Al-Mughassil told Al-Jarash of the plot to bomb Khobar Towers, gave him a forged Iranian passport, and asked for his help. He told Al-Jarash that Al-Alawe and Al-Marhoun had been arrested. He also showed him a map of Khobar and described a plan in which Al-Houri and Al-Qassab would be involved; he told Al-Jarash to be ready for a call to action at any time.
- Three days later, on about May 4, 1996, Al-Mughassil showed up unannounced at Al-Mughis' home in Qatif to tell him of a plan to attack an American housing complex. Al-Mughassil explained that Al-Jarash, Al-Houri, Al-Sayegh and a Lebanese Hezbollah member would help. Al-Mughassil then gave Al-Mughis a timing device to hide at his home.
- Also during the first half of 1996, Al-Houri arrived at Al-Mughis' home on at least two occasions and enlisted Al-Mughis' help in hiding large amounts of explosives. They buried 50-kilo bags and paint cans filled with explosives at various sites around Qatif, near Khobar.

- In early June 1996, Al-Mughassil and the Lebanese Hezbollah member, John Doe, started staying at Al-Mughis's home in Qatif. Also in early June, a conspirator purchased a tanker truck from a car dealership in Saudi Arabia, using stolen identification. The conspirator paid about 75,000 Saudi riyals for the truck. Over the next two weeks, the conspirators worked at a farm in the Qatif area to convert the tanker truck into a large truck bomb. Present at the farm were Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Sayegh, Al-Qassab, and John Doe. Al-Mughis assisted by returning the timing device and retrieving hidden explosives, while Al-Jarash supplied tools and wire to the group. During the bomb construction, Al-Mughassil also discussed plans to bomb the United States Consulate in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.
- Between June 7 and June 17, 1996, key members of the conspiracy attended a meeting at the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine in Damascus. Present were Al-Nasser, Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Yacoub, Al-Sayegh, Al-Qassab, and other high-ranking Saudi Hezbollah leaders. At that meeting, Al-Nasser, the head of Saudi Hezbollah, discussed the bombing with, among others, Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Yacoub, Al-Sayegh, and Al-Qassab; Al-Nasser also confirmed that Al-Mughassil was in charge of the Khobar attack.
- On the evening of June 25, 1996, Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Sayegh, Al-Qassab, Al-Jarash, and Al-Mughis met at the farm in Qatif to review final preparations for the attack that evening. The group then executed the bombing plan. Shortly before 10:00 p.m. on the evening of June 25, 1996, Al-Sayegh drove a Datsun with Al-Jarash as his passenger. The Datsun entered the parking lot adjoining Khobar Towers building # 131 as a scout vehicle and parked in the far corner. Next to enter the parking lot was the getaway car, a white four-door Chevrolet Caprice that Al-Mughis had borrowed from an acquaintance. The Datsun containing Al-Sayegh and Al-Jarash signaled that all was clear by blinking its lights. With that, the bomb truck, driven by Al-Mughassil, with Al-Houri as passenger, entered the lot and backed against a fence just in front of Al Khobar Towers building # 131.
- After parking the truck, Al-Mughassil and Al-Houri quickly exited and entered the back seat of the white Caprice, which drove away from the lot, followed by the Datsun from the corner. Within minutes, the truck bomb exploded, devastating the north side of building # 131, which was occupied by American military personnel. The explosion killed nineteen members of the United States Air Force and wounded 372 other Americans.
- As planned, the attack leaders immediately left the Khobar area and Saudi Arabia using a variety of false passports. Only Al-Jarash and Al-Mughis remained behind in their hometown of Qatif. Al-Sayegh reached Canada in August 1996, where he remained until his arrest by Canadian authorities in March 1997.
- In May 1997, Al-Sayegh met with American investigators at his request. Among other things, Al-Sayegh falsely denied knowledge of the Khobar Towers attack and falsely described a purported estrangement between Saudi Hezbollah and elements of the Iranian government. After he was transported to the United States in June 1997 on his promise to assist American investigators, Al-Sayegh reneged on that promise and unsuccessfully sought political asylum in the United States.

The Role of Iran and the Threat of An American Follow-Up

Attorney General Ashcroft went on to publicly link the Al Khobar bombing to Iranian government officials. He attested that “the indictment explains that elements of the Iranian government inspired, supported and supervised members of Saudi Hezbollah. In particular, the indictment alleges that the charged defendants reported their surveillance activities to Iranian officials and were supported and directed in those activities by Iranian officials.”⁴⁹

While the indictment did not name any Iranians as criminal defendants, Ashcroft did note that the case brought against the 14 defendants was limited to those dependents because “as with any criminal case, [this] is what we believe we can prove in a court of law.”⁵⁰ He also stated that the US would pursue further indictments. The text of the indictment also stated that members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security “continued to be involved in the planning and execution of terrorist acts and continued to support a variety of groups that use terrorism to pursue their goals.”⁵¹

President Bush stated that, “For the last five-years, the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have conducted an intensive investigation of this deplorable act of terrorism...I applaud the work of the Department of Justice and the FBI who have spent countless hours pursuing this case. And I want to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their assistance in this investigation.”⁵² The Acting US Attorney, Kenneth Melson, prosecuting the case gave a press interview stating that he was looking forward “to working with our Saudi partners and law enforcement around the world to apprehend the fugitives and to bring all these defendants to justice.”⁵³

Shortly thereafter, however, FBI Director Freeh gave a press conference that was far more controversial. He was careful to praise Saudi Arabia for its help and thank the Saudis involved, but he also stated that the investigation would remain open and the FBI would pursue it “to ensure that all those responsible are ultimately brought to justice.” Freeh commented that some of the Saudis indicted that day were in jail in Saudi Arabia. While the US did not have an extradition treaty with Saudi Arabia, efforts were made to bring the defendants to the United States. When Freeh was asked if the Saudis had agreed to extradite the suspects, he said only that “I am very confident that they will be brought to justice, and hopefully in the United States, some of them, at some point.”⁵⁴ He refused to comment on why no charges were brought against Iranian officials, but stated, “everyone who could be charged based on the sufficiency of the evidence has been charged. That does not mean, however, that our investigation is over or that this indictment can’t be amended or superseded if we reach the threshold of evidence which would be required to address additional subjects.”⁵⁵

The Saudis React with Denials

These events pushed the Saudis into the position of having to deal with the public exposure of internal dissent within Saudi Arabia, the problem of preserving their rapprochement with Iran, and with the fact the US was indicting a group that was largely Saudi for crimes inside Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Naif, gave a statement indicating that the US had not consulted with Saudi Arabia before issuing the indictment, and asserted Saudi Arabia's jurisdiction over the issue. According to Prince Naif, "The trials must take place before Saudi judicial authorities and our position on this question will not change...No other entity has the right to try or investigate any crimes occurring on Saudi lands." Naif went further and denied the very existence of the "Saudi Hezbollah."⁵⁶

Saudi Minister of Defense, Prince Sultan, publicly agreed with Prince Naif in that the US should not have interfered in Saudi affairs. According to Prince Sultan, it was an issue that should only concern Saudi Arabia. "The American side should send all the documents, complete proof and a list of names of the accused to us, because Saudi authorities alone are concerned with this case. We are glad to know of any country that has any background or information about any person who has a clue or was involved in [the bombing] and we will cooperate."

At the same time, Iran's state radio accused the United States of trying to undermine the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement by implicating Tehran in the bombing. Iran quickly responded by denying any involvement. It stated that the US indictments were an act of interference in Saudi internal affairs and would stir "more hatred in the Arab world" against the US military presence in the Gulf. According to Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid-Reza Assefi, "The US judiciary has leveled charges against Iran which have no legal and judicial basis. The charges are only supplemental to the ceaseless efforts of the United States to pressure the Islamic Republic."⁵⁷ Assefi claimed that the US charges were the result of the "the Zionist lobby and its influence."⁵⁸

Sunni versus Shi'ite

These events illustrate weaknesses in the Saudi approach to terrorism, as well as in the US approach to dealing with Saudi Arabia, that were apparent long before September 11, 2001.

At the same time, they show that serious terrorist threats exist that have nothing to do with Sunni extremism or Bin Laden. Saudi Arabia must continue to deal with another type of religious extremist threat and with regional friction between traditionalists in the coastal cities and conservative traditionalist “Wahhabis” in the Najd, and between the Shafii and Shi’ite immigrants in the Hijaz. In addition, it may have to deal with vestigial tensions between the followers of Ibn Saud in the Najd and the North and the citizens of the Hijaz around Mecca and Medina, which date back to the time King Abd al-Aziz drove the Hashemites into exile.⁵⁹ There are also many long-standing tribal resentments and feuds, some of which predate the rise of King Abd al-Aziz.

The divisions between Sunni and Shi’ite are more serious, however, and affect both Saudi internal security and the region with most of Saudi Arabia’s oil reserves. The Shi’ites make up about 5-6% of Saudi Arabia’s total population, and something under 10% of its native population—although some estimates go as high as 15%. They probably number between 400,000 and 700,000, although one estimate goes as high as two million. They clearly make up a substantial part of the native population of the oil-rich Eastern Province—possibly as much as 40%.⁶⁰ Saudi Shi’ites have some current and historical ties to the Farsi-speaking Shi’ites of Iran, but they are traditional Arabs who have occupied the coastal area and towns like Qatif, and the inland oasis of Al-Hasa and its city of Hofuf, for centuries. They are the original town dwellers and farmers in the Eastern Province; it was the nomadic Bedouin who were Sunni.

The tension between Saudi Shi’ite and Sunni is especially intense because Saudi “Wahhabis” actively reject all veneration of a man, even the prophet. At one point they even attempted to destroy Mohammed’s tomb in Medina. In contrast, the Saudi Shi’ites are “Twelvers,” a branch of Shi’ite Islam that venerates the Prophet’s son-in-law Ali, and believe that the leadership of Islam must pass through Ali’s line. They venerate each of the past Imams, and make pilgrimages to their tombs. Their religious practices included self-flagellation and a high degree of mysticism. All of these practices are abhorrent to “Wahhabis.”

As a result, the Shi’ites have long been largely excluded from any political role in Sunni-ruled areas, and have been treated as second-class Saudi citizens. There has been little intermarriage or social contact between Shi’ite and Sunni, and Shi’ite economic opportunities have been severely restricted. These “Wahhabi” pressures on Saudi Shi’ites diminished during

the Turkish interregnum from the 1870s to 1913, but Abd al-Aziz's reconquest of Arabia again made them a reality from the 1920s onwards.

Ironically, this discrimination was a factor that led many Saudi Shi'ites to go to work for ARAMCO once oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia. For the most part, they had few other major opportunities even though they were a more stable and better-educated work force than most Sunni Bedouin. The Shi'ites also showed more interest in secondary and technical education than did most Bedouin. As a result, Shi'ites made up 30%-40% of the ARAMCO work force from the 1950s to late 1970s, often rising to relatively senior positions. Most of ARAMCO's security personnel were Shi'ite until the mid-to-late 1970s, and many of the residents of key "oil cities" like Abqaiq, Dammam, Dhahran, and Ras Tanura areas were Shi'ite.

Saudi Shi'ites exhibited little separate political identity until after World War II, although the Shi'ite clergy were relatively well organized by Saudi standards and the Shi'ite elders did furnish a traditional political framework at the local level. The main points of political friction occurred between the Shi'ite community leaders and the leaders of the Jiluwi tribe, which provided the governors and senior officials of the Eastern Province from the 1920s to the late 1970s. The Jiluwis ruthlessly suppressed any dissent, and prevented demonstrations or efforts at political organization beyond the local level.

Things began to change, however, in the late 1940s. ARAMCO and higher education exposed local workers to union labor, in part because of the wave of anti-colonial, "anti-imperial" rhetoric sweeping the developing world, and in part due to Pan-Arabism and Nasser. At the same time the increases in Shi'ite education and wealth encouraged Shi'ite political development. A short-lived Shi'ite uprising—led by Muhammad ibn Hussein al-Harraj—took place in Qatif in 1948 and was followed by growing unrest in the region. Much of this labor unrest was more pro-Nasser and pro-labor than sectarian, but the Shi'ites did begin to organize more effectively at the community level.

Shi'ite resentment of the Jiluwi governors, the occasional Wahhabi crackdowns on Shi'ite religious ceremonies, and the economic and educational discrimination practiced by the Saudi government increased steadily during the 1950s and 1960s. The Jiluwis did little to develop Qatif and Hofuf, and a series of governors continued to be harsh and repressive.

Abdullah Jiluwi and his son Saud were particularly disliked, although Abd-al-Mushin Jiluwi attempted to ease tensions when he became governor in the 1970s.⁶¹ The Saudi government did appoint a Shi'ite Minister of Agriculture and a Shi'ite director-general of the Royal Commission at Jubail, but this tokenism did not help develop career opportunities in the Eastern Province and new economic problems began to emerge.

Shi'ites began to be excluded or removed from jobs in ARAMCO, or denied promotion. They were also excluded from student offices at the University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran although they comprised more than half of the student body. The Jiluwis arrested any Shi'ite who threatened to organize other workers or strike, and increased their surveillance over Shi'ite religious leaders. In 1970, riots occurred in Qatif that were so serious that the town had to be sealed off for a month. Severe riots again occurred in 1978, and were followed by 50 arrests and several executions.

The situation exploded December 3-5, 1979—shortly after the Ayatollah Khomeini rose to power in Iran. The excuse was the Ashura, or 10th of Muharram, which is the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hussein, the prophet Mohammed's grandson. This is the holiest day in the Shi'ite calendar and the fall of the Shah meant that Iranian Shi'ites could openly celebrate the day with self-flagellation for the first time in decades. Saudi Shi'ites reacted to Khomeini's victory by organizing protests and demonstrations in Qatif and in Khafji, calling for a more equitable sharing of the nation's wealth and for the Saud family to support the Iranian revolution. The government sent in the National Guard, a key Guard commander panicked, and at least five demonstrators were killed and several hundred were arrested.

The Saudi crackdown that followed was severe, partly because the governor and National Guard greatly exaggerated the seriousness of the riots that occurred shortly after the uprising at the Grand Mosque. The government feared the loss of oil production and the destruction of oil facilities. In addition, Ayatollah Khomeini denounced the Saudi royal family and called for its overthrow and death.

As time went on, however, it became apparent to the leaders of the royal family that neglect, discrimination, and the Jiluwis had been responsible for much of what had happened. As a result, the royal family shifted to a policy of conciliation. Development funds were poured into

Qatif and Hofuf, and new schools, hospitals, and housing developments were announced and rushed into construction. Political prisoners were freed. Prince Ahmad, Prince Naif's younger brother and Deputy Minister of Interior, toured the area in early 1980 and promised reforms. This visit was followed by a series of "flying Majlises" in the Shi'ite towns and cities, and by a speech by Crown Prince Fahd that called for Islam without discrimination. The king made a ten-day visit in November 1980. The Jiluwi governors were bypassed and replaced by Muhammad bin Fahd, a son of the King, in 1983. The government of the Eastern Province was then modernized and fully integrated with that of the rest of Saudi Arabia.

These steps helped but scarcely ended the problem. Although there were few public incidents, a number of Shi'ites remained in exile. In addition, several loosely organized Shi'ite groups and cells were set up to oppose the government—some with Iranian support. A major new wave of arrests took place in 1981, and a long series of incidents of petty sabotage followed. Shi'ites were slowly excluded from ARAMCO's security forces, and from many sensitive jobs. There were few incidents involving real violence, but there were recurrent arrests of students and workers, and some arrests of Shi'ite religious figures. Saudi officials also indicated that there was some cooperation between Saudi Shi'ite extremists and Iranian pilgrims throughout some of the Iranian protests during the hajj.

Prior to 1990, the government continued to prohibit Shi'ite public processions during the Islamic month of Muharram and restricted other processions and congregations to designated areas in the major Shi'ite cities. The authorities have since permitted marches on the Shi'a holiday of Ashura, provided the marchers do not display banners or engage in self-flagellation. Commemorations of the Ashura have gone on peacefully in the Eastern Province since that time. The government, however, still left religious problems for the Shi'ites. For example, it seldom permits the private construction of Shi'ite mosques. Yet, the Shi'ites decline government offers to build state-supported mosques because Shi'ite motifs would be prohibited in them.

Religious tensions then interacted with the decline in Saudi Arabia's oil wealth during the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s. Shi'ite towns received less investment, and less money went to Shi'ite areas after 1990, and housing loans became harder to get. Shi'ites increasingly complained about discrimination in admission to advanced education, job hiring, and even medical treatment. This led to new political problems. New Shi'ite protests took place, and some

Shi'ite groups began to publicly attack the US military presence in the Eastern Province as a mercenary force that was aiding Saudi royal family in occupying the area, which controlled it on behalf of the Sunnis, and which was supporting Zionism and preparing to attack Iran.

The Saudi government tried to deal with these problems by improving economic and educational opportunities and by co-opting Shi'ite leaders rather than repressing them. It allowed a number of Shi'ite leaders to return from exile in 1993, and promised them additional benefits and government projects. However, the government no longer had the money or job opportunities to buy its way out of its problem. It also could not compromise too much or too publicly with the Shi'ites without creating additional problems with its Sunni Islamic extremists.

The revival of Sunni Islamic fundamentalism after the Gulf War, in turn, convinced many Shi'ites that they could only be second-rate citizens in their own country. The fact that the government increasingly restricted the jobs open to Shi'ites in an effort to reduce any Shi'ite threat to key petroleum and economic facilities did not help.

Even so, extremist Shi'ite movements like the Saudi Hezbollah probably have less than 1,000 members of any kind and less than 250 hard core members. Most Saudi Shi'ites still are not militant and even most Shi'ites in exile advocate peaceful change.⁶² The Al Khoei Foundation and Shi'ite Reform Movement are two examples of such Shi'ite groups. The Shi'ite population of Saudi Arabia is also too small to succeed in any kind of uprising or separatism. It is, however, large enough to present a significant source of social tension in the world's most important oil producing area. This has been demonstrated by the fact there have been recurrent, minor incidents of sabotage of oil facilities.

The Saudi security services cannot deal with this problem beyond suppressing individual movements like the Saudi Hezbollah. It is unlikely that repression can ever be a workable solution. There are still cells of radical Shi'ites in the Eastern Province that have obtained some support from Iran, and the improving relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran do not mean that young Saudi Shi'ites do not continue to train in Iran and Lebanon. There continue to be occasional incidents between Shi'ite groups and the government, while the arrest of younger Shi'ite clerics like Abdul Karim Hubaillast and Sheik Jaffar Mubarak still continue.⁶³

Militant Saudi Extremists: Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaida

Osama Bin Laden was Saudi Arabia's best known violent militant long before September 11, 2001, and had sponsored or supported major acts of terrorism like the attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the USS Cole. Bin Laden had already emerged as the one Saudi extremist competent and charismatic enough to have a major influence outside Saudi Arabia. Since September 11, Bin Laden has become so well known that there is little reason to repeat his history in depth. It is important to note, however, is that Bin Laden became a problem for the Saudi government long before he became a threat to the US, that his beliefs and ideology were shaped by forces from outside Saudi Arabia as well as within it, and that his organization—Al Qaida—is far more transnational than Saudi.

In brief, Bin Laden joined the Afghan resistance almost immediately after the Soviet invasion in December 1979. He did so as a “secular” Saudi trained in engineering and without formal religious education. According to Saudi and US experts, he played a significant role in financing, recruiting, transporting, and training Arab nationals who volunteered to fight in Afghanistan. During the Afghan war, Bin Ladin founded al Qaida (the Base) to serve as an operational hub for like-minded extremists, and to train and organize his own terrorist and military groups. He initially used this network not only to “track friends and fellow mujahadeen fighters,” but also to be able to “give answers to families with missing loved ones and friends who were out of touch.”⁶⁴

Soon after Iraq invaded Kuwait, Bin Laden began expressing his dismay that Saudi Arabia sought the help of western governments, particularly the United States, during the Gulf War. Bin Laden was so enraged that he decided to leave the Kingdom and move to Pakistan. Not long after he arrived in Pakistan, Bin Laden moved back to Afghanistan and struggled to bring the opposing factions together while also soliciting support for a new “Jihad.”⁶⁵ After his attempts failed, and several assassination attempts were made on his life, he fled to the Sudan.⁶⁶

In 1993 the Saudi government froze all of Bin Laden's financial assets and in 1994, the government publicly revoked his citizenship. Soon thereafter, Bin Laden's family officially disowned him. It has been speculated that while Bin Laden was living in the Sudan, the Saudi

government went so far as to make several failed assassination attempts on his life and Saudi intelligence officials have claimed they tried to have him forced over to the US.⁶⁷ International pressure on the Sudanese government then forced him to move back to Afghanistan in 1996.⁶⁸

Upon his return to Afghanistan, Bin Laden issued several public statements, including a *Declaration of Jihad*, and several “fatwas” calling for all Muslims “to kill Americans and their allies, civilian and military, [as] an individual duty.”⁶⁹ In addition, he helped set up training camps in Afghanistan where members could be trained in various military and terrorist skills, including those necessary to conduct a “Jihad” against the United States.⁷⁰

Bin Laden became progressively more openly anti-Saudi government after he had to leave the Kingdom. His main public grievances against the Saudi regime included a “lack of commitment to the teachings of Sunni Islam, the state’s inability to conduct a viable defense policy, the mismanagement of public funds and squandering of oil money, and the state’s dependence on non-Muslims for protection.”

Bin Laden and Al Qaida played a major role in the bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on August 7, 1998. Bin Laden had made a series of public threats to drive the United States and its allies out of Islamic countries before the attacks, and issued a fatwa” on February 23, 1998 under the name “World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders.” This kind of “fatwa” is personal, and has no religious legitimacy according to Wahhabi religious practices. Neither does its assertion that it is a religious duty for all Muslims to wage war against US citizens, both military and civilian, anywhere in the world.

In December 1998, Bin Laden gave a series of interviews in which he denied direct involvement in the East Africa bombings but said that he “instigated” them by calling for attacks on US citizens worldwide in retaliation for the strikes against Iraq. The US has blamed Bin Laden and Al Qaida for these attacks, and for playing a major role in the attack on the *USS Cole* in October 2000. Several Saudi nationals, including Mohammed Omar al-Harazi, have been arrested in connection with these attacks. Al-Harazi was identified by Jamal al-Badawi as a chief financier of the *USS Cole* attack,⁷¹ while other sources have identified him as the

“operations leader” of the attack.⁷² Al-Harazi established the first Al Qaida cell in Saudi Arabia, and was involved in a failed attack in January 2000 on the US warship, *USS The Sullivans*.⁷³

The tragic events of September 11th are now too well known to merit detailed discussion, but it is important to note that Bin Laden and Al Qaida continue to pose a threat to Saudi stability as well as to the US and other Western states. While their primary target has been US and Western influence in the Arab world, they have consistently called for the overthrow of the Saudi royal family and government as part of a broader effort to destroy what it deems corrupt—Western-oriented governments in predominantly Muslim countries. In the process, they have also posed a challenge to Saudi Arabia’s traditional religious practices, its Ulema, social and educational reforms, and economic modernization.

As has been discussed earlier, Bin Laden has no formal religious training or status in Saudi religious terms, and Al Qaida is scarcely a purely “Saudi” organization, although 15 of the 19 attackers on the World Trade Center and Pentagon had Saudi passports and many of Al Qaida’s members are Saudi. Most of Al Qaida’s senior leaders have been North African and non-Saudi. Moreover, many—if not most—of Al Qaida members in other terrorist attempts and attacks have been non-Saudi. For example, the suspects identified after the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania included Egyptians, one Comoran, one Palestinian, one Saudi, and US citizens.⁷⁴

Bin Laden has established serious liaisons with a wide range of other groups including many whose version of Islamic extremism has little to do with Wahhabi practices and teachings. He uses money he has inherited and obtained from business interests and contributions from sympathizers in various countries. He has obtained support from allies such as the Egyptian and South Asian groups that have signed his fatwa. He funds, trains, and offers logistic help to extremists not directly affiliated with his organization. Al Qaida has sent trainers as well as to Tajikistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen as well as Afghanistan. It has trained fighters from numerous other countries, including the Philippines, Egypt, Libya, Pakistan, Eritrea, and the Occupied Territories in Gaza and the West Bank.

Al Qaida has, however, sought to set social and political goals for Saudi Arabia as well as for the Gulf, and the entire Islamic World. It has four major aims: to eliminate the US and

Western presence from the region; to eradicate all forms of non-Islamic rule and apply the Islamic teachings to all aspects of life; to achieve true Islamic justice and eradicate all forms of injustice; to reform the political system and purify it from corruption and to “revive” a system to make it possible for citizens to bring charges against state officials. At the same time, Al Qaida believes that all means to bring about an Islamic state are legitimate as long as they conform to Islamic teachings. Essentially, this viewpoint contends that violence is legitimate whenever deemed necessary.

Bin Laden lacks many of the personal qualities that are normally needed to have credibility and importance within Saudi society. He is the 17th son of a wealthy businessman whose family has become a leading force in the Saudi construction business, but which has a marginal status in terms of tribal genealogy and place of birth. Although he was born in Riyadh, his family comes from the Hadhramaut region of Yemen. In spite of his family’s wealth, he is still considered a non-Saudi and is looked down upon by many in the intensely tribal Najdi heartland. He issues personal fatwas in spite of a lack of any Saudi religious credentials or right to do so. In addition, his criticism of royal corruption seems somewhat hypocritical because most of Bin Laden’s money has come from his family’s connections to the royal family. When Bin Laden was declared an opposition figure, his family chose to disown him rather than let their relationship with the royal family suffer. Bin Laden, however, has never disowned its money.

There is no way to predict exactly how much of Al Qaida’s organization and affiliates the US will destroy as a result of its war on terrorism, whether Bin Laden will be imprisoned or killed, and how many supporters of Al Qaida will emerge in new movements of continue to be violent opponents of the Saudi regime. It is all too clear, however, that other “new men” like Bin Laden can and will suddenly emerge as serious threats to the Saudi regime and its ties to the other states. It is equally clear that nothing the Saudi government does can control the flow of funding to extremist movements, as long as so much Saudi capital is held outside of the Kingdom. Even if the world does hear the last of Bin Laden, it seems doubtful that he will be the last violent Sunni extremist to come out of Saudi Arabia.

Militant Saudi Extremists: Other Threats

There may already be emerging cadres of such extremists. The Saudi government rarely reports publicly on internal security problems, and when they do become public, it tries to deal with them as criminal rather than political activity. While it has arrested as many as 300 men involved in religious extremism since September 2001, a significant number of whom do not have ties to Bin Laden or Al Qaida, it has done so as quietly as possible. When it does have to deal with internal security problems publicly, it usually focuses on foreign suspects and does not mention or downplays the role of Saudis. It also tries to avoid public reporting on internal violence that does not involve foreign targets.

There were scattered indications of violence against foreigners long before September 11, 2001. The Saudi government has arrested a Briton, Canadian, and Belgian, among others, for what it claims were criminal attacks related to the smuggling of alcohol and drugs. These include bombings on November 17 and 22, 2000 that killed one British man and injured five other foreigners. Another bombing took place on December 15, 2000. The Saudi government did not publicize any details of this conspiracy when it announced the arrests on February 4, 2001. On May 2, 2001, a parcel bomb injured Gary Hatch, an American physiotherapist at Saad Medical Center, and on October 6, 2001 Ayman bin Mohammed abu Zinad, a Palestinian dentist at a private clinic in Riyadh, injured four expatriate workers and killed himself and an American citizen when he set the bomb off. On September 29, 2002, a German man was killed by a car bomb.⁷⁵

According to Prince Nayef, the Minister of the Interior, none of these attacks had political motives. However, US and other experts believe that they may well have had such motives and that a number of small Saudi extremist attacks on Saudis and Saudi targets, both by Sunni extremists and Saudi Shi'ites, continue to go unreported. Most such attacks seem associated with small Islamic splinter groups and do not seem to pose a serious threat. However, there was a significant attempt to attack US military aircraft in 2002, and there have been unconfirmed reports of serious terrorist attempts on Saudi targets.⁷⁶

It may be possible to defeat a man or an organization, but it is unlikely that the Saudi government can defeat an idea or ideology that will inevitably attract a minority of Saudis. It

only takes a comparative handful of Saudis to create both internal and external problems, and only minor financial resources are involved. As long as a combination of social turmoil, demographic pressure, Islamic extremism, and the backlash from the Second Intifada continue to put pressure on Saudi society, new violent extremists will continue to emerge.

Opposition, Extremism, Terrorism and Saudi Counterterrorism

Nevertheless, Islam is still far more of a stabilizing force in Saudi Arabia than a threat to the Al Saud regime. Conservative practices do constrain Saudi Arabia's social and economic development but the Kingdom has so far managed to modernize many aspects of its society and economy in evolutionary ways that have avoided social conflict. This progress is slower than in many parts of the Arab world, but it has generally been fast enough to meet Saudi needs. The two exceptions are education and the role women can play in the Saudi economy, and these areas are where faster evolution is needed although some change is already underway.

Saudi Islamic extremism is both an internal and external threat. Of the two, the internal threat seems least important. Terrorists do exist, as well as religious bigots that threaten Saudi relations with the outside world. There will almost certainly be more attacks on Saudi government facilities and Westerners inside the Kingdom. In broad terms, however, there is little evidence of a broad political consciousness that is hostile to the regime, and less evidence of major popular support for Islamic extremism. There is little evidence that support for violence goes beyond a small minority. The emerging forces of public opinion seem more focused on domestic issues like jobs, education, and health care than political causes. The one exception is broad popular support for the Palestinian cause, and Saudi public opinion does see the Palestinians as "freedom fighters" and the Israelis as "terrorists." This has already created broad popular resentment of the US, and has been made worse by the mutual mistrust and misunderstanding that has developed since September 11, 2001. While Islamic extremists have tried to capitalize on the issue, however, they seem to have had limited success. The same may well be true of the new tensions that arise over the US confrontation with Iraq.

The role Saudi Arabia has played in exporting Islamic extremism, and funding terrorist actions, has had more serious effects. The heritage of Saudi funding for the Afghan Mujahideen

in their struggle with the FSU, funding for Islamic fighters in Bosnia and Kosovo, and funding for the Palestinian Islamic movements has been to aid extremist and terrorist movements that cannot be described as freedom fighters. Saudi charitable funding has been very poorly controlled, and Saudi Arabia has often provided money to Islamic movements and schools in other countries that are not “puritan” or “Unitarian” in any legitimate sense, but rather highly politicized forms of Islam or political movements that have cloaked themselves in Islam. The end effect has been seriously destabilizing in South and Central Asia and has indirectly aided movements like Al Qaida in a number of Middle Eastern, Western, and Southeast Asian nations. The fact that this has little to do with “Wahhabi” movements in any classic sense, and has been more careless than deliberate, does not mean that the Kingdom does not need to take blame when blame is due and take the necessary action to put an end to such practices.

Fortunately, Saudi Arabia has taken a much stronger stand towards all forms of Islamic extremism since “9/11.” While Saudi senior officials initially dealt with the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon with an awkward mix of sympathy and denial, they have since taken a more realistic approach. They have stepped up intelligence cooperation with the US, arrested a wide number of suspects, and systematically tighten control over the flow of money to domestic and foreign extremist groups from within Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷

Saudi officials have reported that the Kingdom has taken a wide range of new counterterrorism measures designed to control Islamic extremism and terrorism since September 11, 2001. US intelligence experts have informally confirmed the existence of these measures, and by November 2002, they involved a wide range of actions in several key areas.⁷⁸

International Cooperation

Saudi Arabia has stepped up its support of many international and regional efforts through multilateral and bilateral agreements in the fight against terrorism and has begun to work more closely the US, European, Asian governments and the United Nations to ensure that information is shared more quickly and effectively. This has included the following specific actions:

- Maintaining a Counter-Terrorism committee with the United States comprised of intelligence and law enforcement personnel who meet regularly to share information and resources and to develop action plans

to root out terrorist networks. Saudi Arabia has sought to strengthen cooperation between the Kingdom and the United States through reciprocal visits.

- Encouraging Saudi government departments and banks to participate in international seminars, conferences and symposia on combating terrorist financing activities. Saudi Arabia has hosted seminars, conferences and symposia on combating terrorism and is a member of the GCC Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- Completing and submitting the Self-Assessment Questionnaire regarding the 40 recommendation of the FATF. Saudi Arabia has also submitted the Self Assessment Questionnaire regarding the 8 Special Recommendations of the FATF.
- Having the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) exchange information on money laundering related activities with other banking supervisory authorities and with law enforcement agencies. SAMA has created a Committee to carry out a self-assessment for compliance with the recommendations of the FATF and these self-assessment questionnaires have been submitted. Saudi Arabia has invited the FATF to conduct a Mutual Evaluation in April 2003.

Arrests and Questioning of Suspects

Saudi intelligence and law enforcement authorities have been working closely with the United States, Interpol and other countries to identify, question, and when appropriate, arrest suspects. It has taken the following actions:

- Saudi Arabia has questioned over 2,000 individuals. Many of these people fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion as well as in Bosnia and Chechnya.
- Saudi intelligence and law enforcement agencies identified and arrested a cell composed of seven individuals linked to Al Qaida who were planning to carry out terrorist attacks against vital sites in the Kingdom. The cell leader was extradited from the Sudan. This cell was responsible for the attempt to shoot down American military planes at Prince Sultan Airbase using a shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile.
- Detaining about 200 suspects for questioning and interrogation.
- Successfully negotiating with Iran for the extradition of 16 suspected Al Qaida members. These individuals are now in Saudi custody and are being questioned. The Iranian authorities handed over the Al Qaida fugitives, all Saudis, knowing that whatever intelligence was obtained from them during interrogation in Saudi Arabia would be passed on to the United States for use in the war against terrorism.
- Asking Interpol to arrest 750 people, many of whom are suspected of money laundering, drug trafficking, and terror-related activities. This figure includes 214 Saudis whose names appear in Interpol's database and expatriated who fled Saudi Arabia.
- Helping to identify a network of more than 50 shell companies that Osama Bin Laden used to move money around the world. The companies were located in the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. A sophisticated financial network that weaved through more than 25 nations was uncovered and virtually shut down.

Legal and Regulatory Actions and Freezing Terrorist Assets and Combating Money Laundering

The Kingdom has taken the following specific actions to prevent the financing of terrorism, which include a wide range of legal and regulatory measures:

- Signing and joining the United Nations Convention against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances in 1988.
- Freezing assets of Osama Bin Laden in 1994.
- Establishing Anti-Money Laundering Units at the Ministry of Interior, SAMA and Commercial Banks in 1995.
- Having SAMA issue “Guidelines for Prevention and Control of Money Laundering Activities” to Saudi Banks to implement “Know your Customer Rules,” maintain records of suspicious transactions, and report then to law enforcement officials in SAMA in 1995.
- Identifying and freezing all Saudi banks assets relating to terrorist suspects and entities per the list issued by the United States government on September 23, 2001. Saudi banks have complied with the freeze requirements and have initiated investigation of transaction that suspects linked to Al Qaida may have undertaken in the past.
- Investigating bank accounts suspected to have been linked to terrorism. Saudi Arabia froze 38 accounts belonging to 4 individuals that total about \$3,722,180.00.
- Establishing a Special Committee with personnel from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Intelligence Agency and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) to deal with requests from international bodies and countries with regards to combating terrorist financing.
- Reorienting the activities of the GCC Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to deal with terrorism and creating a Committee to carry out a self-assessment for compliance with the recommendations of the FATF.
- Joining Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the G-20 in order to develop an aggressive action plan directed at the routing out and freezing of terrorist assets worldwide.
- Having the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) instruct Saudi banks to promptly establish a Supervisory Committee to closely monitor the threat posed by terrorism and to coordinate all efforts to freeze the assets of potential terrorists. The Committee is composed of senior officers from banks responsible for Risk Control, Audit, Money-Laundering Units, Legal and Operations. The committee meets regularly in the presence of SAMA officials.
- Requiring Saudi banks to put in place mechanisms to respond to all relevant inquiries, both domestically and internationally, at the level of their Chief Executive Officers, as well as at the level of the Supervisory Committee. To ensure proper coordination and effective response, all Saudi banks route their responses and relevant information via SAMA.
- Having the Ministry of Commerce issue Regulation #1312 aimed at preventing and combating money laundering in the non-financial sector. These regulations are aimed at manufacturing and trading sectors and also cover professional services such as accounting, legal and consultancy services.

- Creating an institutional framework for combating money laundering, including the establishment of Anti-Money Laundering units, with a trained and dedicated specialist staff. These units work with SAMA and law enforcement agencies. The government has also encouraged banks to bring Money-Laundering related experiences to the notice of various bank committees (Chief Operations Officers, Managing Directors, Fraud Committee, etc.) for exchange of information and joint actions.
- Creating specialized Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) in the Security and Drug Control Department of the Ministry of Interior. This unit is specially tasked with handling money-laundering cases. A new liaison group dealing with terrorist finances has been established between SAMA and the Ministry of the Interior.
- Carrying out regular inspection of banks to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. Any violation or non-compliance is cause for serious actions and is referred to a bank's senior management and the Board. Furthermore, the government has created a permanent Committee of Banks' compliance officers to review regulations and guidelines and recommend improvements, and to ensure all implementation issues are resolved.
- Freezing bank accounts suspected of links to terrorists.
- Supporting UN resolutions, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1368 to limit the financing of terrorist activities.
- Working with the US and other countries to block more than \$70 million in possible terrorist assets in Saudi Arabia and other countries.
- Providing data on suspect private Saudi accounts in Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Sweden.
- Directing SAMA to issue rules "Governing the Opening of Bank Accounts" and "General Operational Guidelines" in order to protect banks against money laundering activities in May 2002. For instance, Saudi banks are not permitted to open bank accounts for non-resident individuals without specific approval from SAMA. Banks are required to apply strict rules and any non-customer business has to be fully documented.
- Carrying out regular inspection of banks to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. Any violation or non-compliance is cause for serious actions and is referred to a bank's senior management and the Board. Creating a Permanent Committee of Banks' compliance officers to review regulation and guidelines and recommend improvements, and to ensure all implementation issues are resolved.
- Making significant new efforts to train staff in financial institutions and the Security and Investigation departments in the Ministry of Interior as well as others involved in compliance and law. Special training programs have been developed for bankers, prosecutors, judges, customs officers and other officials from government departments and agencies. Furthermore, training programs are offered by the Prince Naif Security Academy, King Fahd Security Faculty and Public Security Training City.
- Establishing a Permanent Committee of representatives of seven ministries and government agencies to manage all legal and other issues related to money laundering activities.
- Directing SAMA to organize a conference with the Riyadh Interpol for the First Asian Regional meeting in cooperation with law enforcement agencies and financial institutions on January 28-30, 2002.
- Having the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry in cooperation with SAMA conduct and International Conference on Prevention and Detection of Fraud, Economic Crimes and Money Laundering on May 13-14, 2002.
- Directing Saudi banks and SAMA to computerize reported cases to identify trends in money laundering activities to assist in policymaking and other initiatives.

Actions Taken in regard to Charitable Organizations

Since September 11, Saudi Arabia has conducted a thorough review of its charitable organizations and has taken a number of steps to limit the use of funds for terrorism:

- Working with the US Treasury Department to block the accounts of the Somalia and Bosnia branched of the Saudi Arabia-based Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation in March 2002. While the Saudi headquarters for this private charitable entity is dedicated to helping those in need, the US and Saudi Arabia determined that the Somalia and Bosnia branched of Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation engaged in supporting terrorist activities and terrorist organizations such as Al Qaida, AIAI (Al-Itihaad Al-Islamiya), and others.
- Taking joint action with the United States to freeze the assets of a close Bin Laden aide, Wa'el Hamza Julaidan, a Saudi fugitive, who is believed to have funneled money to Al Qaida. Julaidan served as the director of the Rabita Trust and other organizations.
- Establishing a High Commission for oversights of all charities, contributions and donations is in the final process of setting up Operational Procedures to manage Contributions, Donations to and from the Charities.
- Auditing all charitable groups to ensure there are no links to suspected organizations since September 11, 2001.
- Issuing new guidelines and regulations, including financial control mechanisms to make sure terrorist and extremist organizations cannot take advantage of legitimate charities.
- Requiring that charitable activities outside Saudi Arabia be reported to the foreign ministry.
- Setting up the Higher Saudi Association for Relief and Charity to oversee the distribution of donations and guarantee they are channeled to the needy.
- Strengthening the role of the Saudi Arabia and US counter-terrorism committee comprised of intelligence and law enforcement personnel who meet regularly to share information and resources on the misuse of charities and charitable funds and develop plans of action to root out terrorist networks.
- Requiring that charitable activities that extend outside Saudi Arabia be reported to the Saudi government and are routinely monitored.
- Freezing bank accounts involving the flow of charitable funds that are suspected of being linked to terrorism.

Other Initiatives Related to Fighting Terrorism

Saudi Arabia has publicly improved its cooperation with various international efforts to combat terrorism. These include:

- Signing a multilateral agreement under the auspices of the Arab League to fight terrorism.
- Participating in G-20 meetings and signing various bilateral agreements with non-Arab countries.
- Preparing and submitting a report on the initiatives and actions taken by the Kingdom, with respect to the fight against terrorism, to the UN Security Council Committees every 90 days.

- Establishing communication points between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representative to the United Nations.
- Supporting and meeting the requirements of various UN resolutions related to combating terrorism:
- Freezing funds and other financial assets of the Taliban regime based on UN Security Resolution 1267.
- Freezing funds of listed individuals based on UN Security Council Resolution 1333.
- Signing the International Convention for Suppression and Financing of Terrorism based on UN Security Council Resolution 1373 on reporting to the UN Security Council's committee regarding the implementation of the Rules and Procedures pertaining to 1373.
- Reporting to the UN Security Council the implementation of Resolution 1390.

It has also made new efforts to reform the educational system. Key religious officials like Tawfeeq al-Sediry, the Deputy Minister of Islamic Affairs, have made it clear that Saudi mosques and religious teaching must be reformed to remove anti-Jewish and anti-Christian references, and that the Ministry is, “concerned about hiring moderate preachers who have a moderate outlook that represents the true Muslim path.”⁷⁹

Looking Towards the Future

Many Saudi actions have come too late, however, and much still needs to be done. The volume in this series that deals with Saudi national security addresses the strength and weaknesses of the Saudi internal security system in depth, and it is still a system that clearly needs further major improvement. The Kingdom cannot deal with Islamic extremism and terrorism without a more effective internal security effort, and must act accordingly.

Even with such efforts, it is nearly certain that Americans and Westerners will continue to be targets at some level of activity. Attacking US citizens—particularly the US military—allows Saudi extremists to attack proxies that are non-Islamic, and to obtain foreign sanctuary, if not foreign support. Attacking non-Saudi targets defuses some of the resentment that follows attacks on Saudi citizens. It also furnishes a way in which extremists can indirectly attack the Saudi family by attacking its strongest ally. Such proxy attacks are hardly safe, but they do not provoke the kind of extreme action that would follow an attack on a prince. It is scarcely surprising, that the US Embassy has issued a steady stream of alerts since the Al Khobar bombing and “9/11,” and further attacks and bombings seem almost inevitable.⁸⁰

It is equally unlikely that the Saudi government can shut down all of the flow of funding to extremist and terrorist movements outside Saudi Arabia.

- First, there is a fundamental difference of perspective between Saudis and other Arabs and Americans and many others in the West over the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. Saudis see Israel's methods and tactics as being extremist and terrorist in character, and this inevitably means a flow of money to Hamas and other Palestinian causes.
- Second, the Saudi royal family can police its own funding activities and the Saudi government can control the flow of money within the Kingdom and across its borders, but there are many financial instruments in the Arab world that bypass the banking systems and moving funds to other Gulf countries is easy.
- Third, the bulk of private Saudi capital is still held outside the Kingdom in Europe and other countries where the government cannot monitor or control the flow of such funding; and
- Finally, Saudi charity is still highly personal and informal. Controls can be improved, but many will still give without checking the exact nature of the person or the cause they give to, and extremism and terrorism are relatively cheap. The Saudi government already fully understands this, as do most Western counterterrorism experts. It is far less clear that Western politicians, reporters, and experts outside of government are equally aware of what is and is not possible.

Repression is clearly not an effective answer to the challenges the Kingdom faces. The pattern of arrests following "9/11" has been very similar to the kind of "rounding up the usual suspects" that the Saudi security services have used since the time of Nasser and did little to solve that threat. It is similar in some ways to the arrests of religious figures, academics and staff members at King Saud University in the early and mid-1980s—arrests that probably did just as much to alienate many of those involved as it did to suppress them.⁸¹ Counterterrorism means focusing on real terrorists, not a convenient list of suspects.

The danger also exists that the US will ignore the broader causes of terrorism and extremism in Saudi Arabia, and push the Kingdom to focus on counter-terrorism without regard for the need for broader forms of reform. The US and some other Western states have already grossly exaggerated the level of Islamic extremism in Saudi Arabia, while their politicians and much of their media have exaggerated Saudi Arabia's role in supporting and funding terrorism and extremism outside the Kingdom. The political problems in cooperating on counter terrorism are bad enough at the best of times and the West does not help by making broadly based-attacks on every aspect of Saudi society, the Regime and Saudi practices. Neither, however, do those Saudis that deny the seriousness of the Kingdom's problems rather than try to solve them.

Both Saudi officials and outside governments must recognize that the key to any lasting Saudi success in dealing with Islamic extremists and terrorists must be political, economic, and social reform. The Saudi government still needs to do more to modernize Saudi society and the role of Islam within it. In spite of its progress to date, the Saudi government still needs to fundamentally reevaluate its educational policy. It needs to firmly tie its educational policies to its economic policies. It needs to face the fact that it has allowed “Islamic” education to become a societal dead end that encourages further unrest. As later chapters help document, the failure to address these realities is particularly troubling because the Saudi economy already is failing to absorb the more than 170,000 males that enter the labor force each year, and has no clear policy for dealing with the roughly similar number of educated women.

Reform also means more successful governance. The Saudi government must put an end to corruption and the abuses of the royal family and officials, successfully manage and reform the economy and the distribution of wealth, respect the core values of Islam, demonstrate that Saudi military efforts are cost-effective and show that Saudi security ties to the US and the West serve the national interest.

Finally, the Saudi government must make the teaching of tolerance a major goal. The following statement by Crown Prince Abdullah stresses exactly the right priorities:

“Ours is a tolerant and temperate faith and we must conduct ourselves accordingly. There is no room for extremism or compulsion in Islam. In fact, it violates the tenants of our faith and the traditions of our prophet...wisdom and reason must guide your statements and actions; you must not let your emotions sway you. It is your responsibility, when you return to your nations, to counsel people to employ wisdom, patience and reason in dealing with issues.”⁸²

Endnotes

¹ The reader should be aware that much of this analysis draws heavily on work by Jeffery D. Leary who helped research and edit this book, and who has done extensive additional research on Salafi extremism.

² For a good summary of Bin Laden and Al Qaida's history, and tensions with the Saudi regime, see Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, The Age of Sacred Terror, New York, Random House, 2002, particularly pp. 95-219; for good field research in this area, see Peter L. Bergen, Holy War, Inc., New York, The Free Press, 2001.

³ Yamani, Mai. Changed Identities: The Challenge of the New Generation in Saudi Arabia Royal Institute of International Affairs: London 2000, pp. 39.

⁴ "The Ten Nations Impressions of America Poll," Zogby International, 1760 Genesee Street, Utica, NY 13502, April 11, 2002. pp. 14, 15

⁵ The full survey does not seem to be publicly available, but a summary is available the Review Section of the Arab News, Vol. 9, Issue 11, September 26, 2002.

⁶ See Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, Boulder, Westview, 1984, pp. 228-243.

⁷ Gwenn Okruhlik, "Networks of Dissent: Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia," Social Science Research Council Website, Available from: <http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/okruhlik.htm>, Accessed on August 26, 2002.

⁸ Gwenn Okruhlik, "Networks of Dissent: Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia," Social Science Research Council Website, Available from: <http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/okruhlik.htm>, Accessed on August 26, 2002.

⁹ The International Policy Institute For Counter-Terrorism, "The Saudi Fatwah against Suicide Terrorism, Reuven Paz, May 2, 2001.

¹⁰ Reuven Paz, "The Saudi Fatwa Against Suicide Terrorism," Peacewatch, No. 323. May 2, 2001; Agence France Presse, May 9, 2001, 0651; Bloomberg, May 9, 2001, Cairo.

¹¹ The author found these passages in a Koran in the Riyadh Marriot in October 2002. The passages in textbooks and religious books referred to are based on the research of Jeffery D. Leary.

¹² World Bank, World Development Indicators, 1997, p. 60, 68; UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook, 1996.

¹³ For more background, see Milton Viorst, "The Storm and the Citadel," Foreign Affairs, Jan/Feb. 1996, pp. 98-99; F. Gregory Gause, Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1994; Augustus R. Norton, "The Future of Civil Society in the Middle East," Middle East Journal, Spring, 1993; Mary Tetrault, "Gulf Winds," Current History, January 1996; and Michael Collins Dunn, "Is the Sky Falling?" Middle East Policy, Vol. III, No. 4, 1995.

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¹⁵ Reuters, October 4, 1999.

¹⁶ Petroleum Economist, "Playing it by Ear on Western Upstream Investment in Oil," July 29, 1999. Accessed through Lexis-Nexis.

¹⁷ US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights, 2001, Internet edition, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.htm>, accessed May 3, 2002.

¹⁸ US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights, 2001, Internet edition, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.htm> accessed May 3, 2002.

¹⁹ New York Times, December 22, 1992, p. A-10.

²⁰ New York Times, May 1, 1993, p. A-4; US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, GPO, February, 1995, pp. 1165-1173; Internet version for 1996, downloaded April 5, 1996, and Internet version for 1996, downloaded August 11, 1997.

²¹ Los Angeles Times, November 14, 1995, p. A-6; US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, GPO, February, 1995, pp. 1165-1173; Internet version for 1995, downloaded April 5, 1996, and Internet version for 1996, downloaded August 11, 1997; and 2001 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, March 4, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.html>.

²² Los Angeles Times, November 14, 1995, p. A-6.

²³ Fandy, Mamoun. Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

²⁴ This section draws heavily upon Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent by Mamoun Fandy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). It also draws on the work of F. Gregory Gause III, the Director of the Middle East Institute and Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Vermont.

²⁵ "Communique Number 3," CDLR *Yearbook* '94-'95, pp.9-10

²⁶ For example, see the report on Mas'ari in the Independent, May 23, 1995.

²⁷ Los Angeles Times, November 14, 1995, p. A-6; Washington Post, November 14, 1995, p. A-1.

²⁸ Kechichian, Joseph. Succession in Saudi Arabia. 2001, pp.109-110.

²⁹ US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, GPO, February, 1995, pp. 1165-1173; Internet version for 1995, downloaded April 5, 1996, and Internet version for 1996, downloaded August 11, 1997; and 2001 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, March 4, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.html>.

³⁰ US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, GPO, February, 1995, pp. 1165-1173; Internet version for 1995, downloaded April 5, 1996, and Internet version for 1996, downloaded August 11, 1997; and 2001 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, March 4, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.html>.

³¹ US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, GPO, February, 1995, pp. 1165-1173; Internet version for 1995, downloaded April 5, 1996, and Internet version for 1996, downloaded August 11, 1997; and 2001 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, March 4, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.html>.

³² Washington Post, April 19, 1996, p. A-31.

³³ Jane's Pointer, August, 1996, p. 2; March 1997, p. 5;

³⁴ US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, 1997; and 2001 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, March 4, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.html>.

³⁵ The Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia, www.miraserve.com, July 9, 2001.

³⁶ Los Angeles Times, November 15, 1995, p. A-7; Washington Times, November 15, 1995, p. B-11.

³⁷ Los Angeles Times, November 14, 1995, p. A-1.

³⁸ Boston Globe, November 15, 1995, p. 2; Jane's Defense Weekly, November 25, 1995, p. 5; Jane's Intelligence Review Pointer, January 1996, p. 6; New York Times, January 11, 1996, p. A-8; New York Times, November 15, 1995, p. A-7; Washington Post, November 14, 1995, p. A-15.

³⁹ Washington Times, November 16, 1995, p. A-13.

⁴⁰ Wall Street Journal, December 26, 1995, p. A-7.

⁴¹ Philadelphia Inquirer, November 16, 1995, p. A-11.

⁴² New York Times, April 26, 1996, p. A-13;

⁴³ Washington Post, April 23, 1996, p. A-13; Chicago Tribune, November 15, 1995, p. I-3; Jane's Defense Weekly, November 25, 1995, p. 23; New York Times, January 11, 1996, p. A-8; Washington Post, February 5, 1996, p. A-22, June 1, 1996, p. A-19; Los Angeles Times, April 23, 1996, p. A-2; Boston Globe, April 23, 1996, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Reuter News Service, "Latest Denial from the Iranian Ministry of Defense," posted on iran-news@roostam.neda.com, December 12, 1996.

⁴⁵ Jane's Intelligence Review, June 2001, pp.34-35.

⁴⁶ US Department of State, Phillip T. Reeker, Acting Spokesman; Edmund J. Hull, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Briefing Upon the Release of the Report "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000," Washington, DC, April 30, 2001, Full text available from: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2001/2571pf.htm>, Accessed on December 18, 2002.

⁴⁷ United States District Court Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division, "Indictment: June 2001 Term at Alexandria," Full text available from: <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel/khobar.htm>, Accessed on September 3, 2002.

⁴⁸ United States District Court Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division, "Indictment: June 2001 Term at Alexandria," Full text available from: <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel/khobar.htm>, Accessed on September 3, 2002.

⁴⁹ Attorney General John Ashcroft statement, June 21, 2001, Available from: <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2001/June/275ag.htm>, Accessed on September 5, 2002.

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⁵¹ United States House of Representatives, Eric Cantor, Chairman, "Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare," October 16, 2001, Available from: <http://cantor.house.gov/terrorism/terrorism-2.htm>, Accessed on September 5, 2002.

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⁵³ United States Department of Justice, Press Release, June 21, 2001, Available from: <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/khobar.htm>, Accessed on September 5, 2002.

⁵⁴ CNN correspondent, "Khobar Towers Indictments Returned," June 22, 2001, Available from: <http://europe.cnn.com/2001/LAW/06/21/khobar.indictments/>, Accessed on September 5, 2002.

⁵⁵ CNN correspondent, "Khobar Towers Indictments Returned," June 22, 2001, Available from: <http://europe.cnn.com/2001/LAW/06/21/khobar.indictments/>, Accessed on September 5, 2002.

⁵⁶ Adnan Malik, "Last of U.S. Troops in Jordan Leave as U.S. Military on Alert," *North County Times*, June 24, 2001, Available from: <http://nctimes.net/new/2001/20010624/62953.html>, Accessed on September 5, 2002.

⁵⁷ John Ward Anderson, "Iran Rejects Allegations of Bombing Role," June 23, 2001, Section A, p. 22.

⁵⁸ John Ward Anderson, "Iran Rejects Allegations of Bombing Role," June 23, 2001, Section A, p. 22.

⁵⁹ The reader should be aware that this often leads to exaggerated reports of tension and corruption. Anyone who has lived in Saudi Arabia becomes aware that royal family rumors, and rumors of internal conflicts, are almost a national sport. The Hijazi are masters of this sport, although sometimes surpassed by whatever businessman who has just suffered in a deal with one of the princes. It is far harder for a Westerner to understand the pressures building up

within the Islamic fundamentalists, but the movement does affect a significant number of Saudi youths, and often has intense support at the university level. Cassettes are circulated nationally, and many very well educated Saudis, as well as many traditionalists, support fundamentalism.

⁶⁰ These estimates are based on interviews with US and Saudi experts, work by Michael Dunn summarized in The Estimate, , and Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, Boulder, Westview, 1984, pp. 228-243. Figures referring to 60%-70% Shi'ite do not seem to be correct. See US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, GPO, February, 1995, pp. 1165-1173, on-line edition for 1999; and 2001 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, March 4, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.html>.

⁶¹ See Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, Boulder, Westview, 1984, pp. 228-243.

⁶² Washington Post, November 4, 1996, March 29, 1997, p. A-12.

⁶³ Washington Times, September 11, 1996, p. A-13; Reuters, July 1, 1997, 2045; Chicago Tribune, July 11, 1997, p. I-5; Washington Post, November 4, 1996, February 26, 1997, p. A-7; Philadelphia Inquirer, November 3, 1996, p. A4; New York Times, July 10 1997, p. A-14.

⁶⁴ Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network. NY: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2001.

⁶⁵ Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network. NY: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2001.

⁶⁶ Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network. NY: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2001.

⁶⁷ Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network. NY: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2001.

⁶⁸ The analysis of Bin Laden's recent role in terrorism and violence draws heavily on the US State Department Report on Global Patterns in Terrorism, 1999, Washington, <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1999report/mideast.html#Arabia>, April 2001. Also see Associated Press, May 5, 2001, 1803.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Fact Sheet: The Charges Against, op.cit., in Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network. NY: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2001.

⁷⁰ Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network. NY: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2001.

⁷¹ Al-Bab.com, "Attack on the USS Cole," Yemen Gateway, December 12, 2001, Available from: <http://www.al-bab.com/yemen/cole7.htm>, Accessed on August 26, 2002.

⁷² Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2001, p. 19.

⁷³ Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, Usama Bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2001, p. 19.

⁷⁴ Reuters, May 29, 2001, 1508.

⁷⁵ The Times, May 3, 2001, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Dow Jones, October 15, 2002, 0029.

⁷⁷ See Maurice R. Greenberg, William F. Webster, and Less S. Wolosky, Terrorist Financing, New York Council on Foreign Relations, October 17, 2002; PR Newswire October 17, 2002.

⁷⁸ This list was prepared with the help of US and Saudi officials in October and November 2002. It draws on Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Summary Report on Initiatives and Actions in the Fight Against Terrorism, August 2002, www.saudiembassy.net. PR Newswire October 17, 2002; Reuters, October 22, 2002, 1605, and additional materials provided to the author.

⁷⁹ Associated Press, October 14, 2002, 0725; Arabnews.com, October 14, 2002.

⁸⁰ For typical reporting, see Philadelphia Inquirer, November 3, 1996, p. A4; New York Times, July 10 1997, p. A-14.

⁸¹ The author has encountered many of these attitudes during his visits to Saudi Arabia. For typical US reporting see the Baltimore Sun, July 28, 1991, p. 11-A; Security Intelligence, February 10, 1992, p. 8; New York Times, January 30, 1992, p. 3 and March 1, 1992, p. 8; Amnesty International 1994, pp. 254-256; US State Department, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, GPO, February, 1995, pp. 1165-1173; and 2001 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, March 4, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.html>.

⁸² Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, “Crown Prince Abdullah Urges Muslims to Shun Extremism in Islam,” Press Release, November 2, 2002.