

American Foreign Policy Council

SAUDI ARABIA

QUICK FACTS

Population: 28,160,273 (July 2016 est.)

Area: 2,149,690 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Arab 90%, Afro-Asian 10%

Religions: Muslim (official; citizens are 85-90% Sunni and 10-15% Shia), other (includes Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh) (2012 est.)

Government Type: Absolute Monarchy

GDP (official exchange rate): \$637.8 billion (2015 est.)

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (January 2017)

OVERVIEW

Since 1744, when the first Saudi emirate was established by a pact between the emir of ad-Diriyah, Muhammad ibn Saud, and the religious scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the puritanical Islamic interpretation now known as Wahhabism has been the official and dominant religious discourse in Saudi Arabia. Although Wahhabism was generally confined to the Arabian Peninsula in its early years, it evolved into a transnational movement in the 1960s when the Saudi government attempted to fight the spread of communism and pan-Arabism that had begun to creep across the Middle East, threatening the region's monarchies.

By the 1970's, as oil prices surged, the Saudi government, headed by Faysal's successor King Fahd, was able to increase its contributions and its influence to Islamic centers and causes in other countries. These efforts enabled the Saudis to spread a puritanical version of Wahabism

that became known outside of Saudi Arabia as Salafism. A European Parliament report in 2013 estimated that the Saudi government has spent approximately \$10 billion to spread Salafism through charitable organizations, some of which have been linked to al-Qaeda's work and networks.¹ From the construction of madrassas (religious schools) in places such as Pakistan and Afghanistan to support of Sunni militants fighting in Iraq, both the Saudi Arabian government and wealthy private individuals in the Kingdom have contributed to the expansion of extremist Sunni Islam.

The Kingdom's ruling family, the al Sauds, have had to strike a precarious balance between the "desert traditions and the demands of the modern world," which has involved the maintenance of political stability, strong relations with the Kingdom's clerics, and the appeasement of the Kingdom's people.² Under the moderate and relatively progressive King Abdullah, the Saudi government pushed the country's religious elite to accept reforms to the sharia judiciary, the education system, and women's rights. To maintain stability within the kingdom during the Arab Spring, as protest movements rolled across the Middle East, King Abdullah responded immediately by pouring cash into religious organizations, low-income community housing, and the salaries of government employees. Due to their strong relationship with the monarchy, Saudi clerics across the political spectrum assisted in maintaining stability by standing behind the monarchy and affirming its legitimacy, which enabled the Kingdom avoid a major political crisis.

Since the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia has been forced to grapple with a shifting balance of power in the Middle East including the threat of the rise of the Islamic State terrorist group, a less-isolated and more assertive Iran, a devastating conflict with its neighbor, Yemen, and the death of King Abdullah which resulted in a complete transformation of its leadership. Islamist religious leaders and scholars—aligned with the government or in opposition to it—continue to play an important but shifting role in the state, the community and in Saudi Arabia's overall image as a global power.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Islamism in Saudi Arabia is characterized by competing intellectual traditions, which—while all conservative and fundamentalist—hold significantly different, and in some ways evolving, ideas about the relationship between Islam and society.

The Rejectionists

The “rejectionists,” a pietistic, lower-class Islamic intellectual movement that categorically rejects the legitimacy of the state and its institutions, opposes any role or voice for themselves in the life of the state and in the national political discourse, emerged during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Rejectionists believe in withdrawing from society and focusing solely on faith and ritual practice, repudiating all schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and relying solely on the unmediated sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*). They confine themselves to isolated, orthodox communities where they educate their children and pursue their distinctive lifestyle. However, they are not monolithic, and some have formed their own socio-political protest movements in spite of the trend’s original doctrine.

One of these movements is the *al-Jama’at al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba* (JSM), which formed in the 1970s and was inspired by the Syrian religious scholar Nasr al-Din al-Albani.³ In 1979, JSM, led by Juhayman al-Utaybi, orchestrated an armed takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Though the Saudis were initially reluctant to use force in one of Islam’s holiest sites, they eventually raided the Mosque and ended the siege. After the Grand Mosque incident, the remaining members of JSM fled to Kuwait, Yemen, and the northern Saudi desert, returning to a state of relative isolation. However, Juhayman’s ideas have continued to influence others in subsequent years. The JSM’s views allegedly influenced three men who were involved in the 1995 bombing in Riyadh, as well as “senior militants” who were part of al-Qaeda’s violent campaign in 2003.⁴

The Sahwa

Another intellectual tradition that developed during the 1950s and 1960s is the *Sahwa* (“Awakened”) movement, which, unlike the rejectionists, is pragmatic, political and elitist. The *Sahwa* clerics trace their roots back to the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members were well educated, and who established themselves in the new education and media sectors of Saudi Arabia. As a natural result of their interaction with Muslim Brotherhood members, the *Sahwa* clerics’ ideology became a synthesis of *Salafi-Wahhabi* theological teachings and the Brotherhood’s political activism.⁵ The spread of *Sahwa* teachings in Saudi universities would eventually lead to the group’s political reform efforts in the 1990s. However, the *Sahwa* is an extremely diverse faction that includes religious scholars, scientists, doctors, and academics. Its members are commonly divided into at least two main camps: those who follow Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood, and those who follow his more extreme ideological successor, Sayyid Qutb. Their ability to address issues—like politics—that were traditionally outside the purview of the official Saudi religious establishment originally garnered broad public appeal.⁶

The *Sahwa* became widely recognized in 1990 for their virulent opposition to Saudi King Fahd’s reliance on a non-Muslim military coalition, led by the United States, to defend the Arabian Peninsula after Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi army invaded Kuwait in

1990. Prominent *Sahwa* clerics believed that the legitimacy of the Al Saud leadership and the official Saudi religious establishment had been permanently destroyed by this collaboration with the West.⁷ Thereafter, the *Sahwa* called for greater Islamization of Saudi society and demanded a more prominent role in social and foreign affairs.⁸

In 1994, al-Odah, al-Hawali, and nearly 1,300 *Sahwa* affiliates were arrested for their vehement opposition to the Saudi regime.⁹ To the leadership's dismay, their five years in prison only cemented the clerics' standing in the eyes of their followers and granted them even greater popular legitimacy than the official *ulema*. When the men were released in 1999, the Saudi government confronted them with the choice of either withdrawing from the public eye or acquiescing to the authority of the state. They chose the latter, and the *Sahwa* splintered as a result. Some of its members have since joined other Saudi Islamist movements, including the jihadist trend, while others abandoned Islamism entirely. For a number of years the *Sahwa* took a more conciliatory tone with the Saudi Arabian regime, and rarely criticized the government.¹⁰ But during the Arab Spring, the split amongst the *Sahwa*, and the challenge they present to the Saudi Arabian regime, became more apparent. In early 2011, several petitions calling for government reform were signed by leading *Sahwa* clerics, but none of them supported calls for the open demonstrations in Riyadh a few months later.¹¹ For a few years some *Sahwa* and religious scholars remained critical of the regime, but on February 4, 2014, in response to domestic condemnation of the Saudi government's support of the overthrow of Egypt's President Morsi, the Saudi government issued a decree. The decree stated that anyone who provides support (defined loosely and in a variety of ways) to an organization categorized as extremist or defined as a terrorist group could face a prison sentence of 3 to 20 years.¹²

The jihadists

A *jihadist* trend exists in Saudi society, defined by the rise of Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, but it has faced considerable challenges with the rise of the Islamic State. From 1999 through 2001, conflicts in the Muslim world (Chechnya, Kosovo, and the Palestinian Territories) and a powerful recruiting network in Saudi Arabia enabled Bin Laden to attract a wave of Saudis to al-Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda's operations have been well-funded by Saudi individuals and organizations. In 2004, the 9/11 Commission reported that Bin Laden created an informal financial network of charities, including the Al Haramain Islamic Foundation and other non-governmental organizations, which allowed Saudi and Gulf financiers to send funds to Arabs fighting in Afghanistan and then later to al-Qaeda.¹³

In early 2002, between 300 and 1,000 Saudi al-Qaeda members returned to Saudi Arabia after the Taliban's fall compromised the network's base of operations in Afghanistan. Two independent cells subsequently formed, and the organization's operatives began preparing for operations by stockpiling weapons, renting safe houses, setting up training camps, and recruiting other "Afghan Arabs."¹⁴ Members were almost

entirely men, with the exception of a small number of women who were involved in logistics or the group's media campaign. Al-Qaeda militants were typically older than members of other Islamist groups, with an average age of 27, and most of them had only been educated to the high school level or lower.¹⁵ The cells consisted principally of Saudis, but maintained a small percentage of foreign nationals. The majority of al-Qaeda members were not from regions typically considered to be the most religiously conservative or impoverished rural areas. Instead, the overwhelming majority of the organization was formed by urbanites from Riyadh, most of whom shared previous combat experience in Afghanistan—first against the Soviets and later against the United States.¹⁶

The Saudi government's aggressive counterterrorism efforts eventually forced al-Qaeda's local branch to relocate across the border in Yemen. In January 2009, the Saudi and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda merged to become al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), with a number of Saudis assuming leadership positions in the new franchise.¹⁷ AQAP grew more dangerous in just its first year of operations; in August 2009, the organization nearly succeeded in assassinating then Saudi Deputy Interior Minister Prince Muhammad bin Nayef during a gathering at his home in Jeddah.¹⁸ Then, only months later, AQAP coordinated the attempted Christmas Day bombing—carried out by a Nigerian man with explosives in his underwear—of a Northwest Airlines flight traveling from Yemen to Detroit.¹⁹

In 2014, after AQAP attacked a remote Saudi-Yemeni border checkpoint, the State Department determined the organization has “continued its efforts to inspire sympathizers to support, finance, or engage in conflicts outside of Saudi Arabia and encouraged individual acts of terrorism within the Kingdom.”²⁰ Since then the Saudi government has taken increased action to prevent Saudis from traveling abroad to support extremist groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. However, after the January 2016 execution of a number of al-Qaeda suspects by the Saudi government, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri condemned the government and called for revenge.²¹

The Shi'a

Another Islamic intellectual trend in Saudi Arabia is rooted in the country's Shi'a minority, which is primarily located in the Eastern Province, and constitutes 10-15% of the total population.²² Having been branded as unbelievers (*kuffar*) since the time of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Saudi Shi'a are still severely marginalized in the modern state.²³ And while Shi'a Islamists have never been as organized as the *Sahwa*, or even the *jihadists* in Saudi Arabia, instances of Shi'a Islamist activity continue to play a significant role in Saudi society and the government's approach to dissent.

An early and frequently cited incident of Shi'a opposition took place in 1980, in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Radio Tehran's Arabic channel had been broadcasting propaganda against the Saudi regime to the Shi'a population. The propaganda sparked a riot in Qatif, during which citizens attacked the town's central market.²⁴ Since that time, the Saudi government has been extremely wary of renewed violence, as well as of Iran's influence in Saudi domestic affairs.

For a brief period, the Arab Spring rekindled opposition from Saudi Arabia's Shi'a population. Shortly after the outbreak of protests in Tunisia in December 2011, Shi'a Islamists in Saudi Arabia began to organize themselves through social media tools like Facebook and Twitter, issuing petitions for political and social reforms such as the transition to a constitutional monarchy and an end to sectarian discrimination. Violent protests erupted in July 2012 in the Eastern Province—which includes not only most of the Shi'a population but also most of the country's oil—after security forces shot and arrested a popular Shi'ite cleric Nimr al-Nimr for instigating “sedition.”²⁵ Shi'a anger continued to bubble in the weeks after Nimr's arrest, with Saudi authorities exacerbating the furor when they fatally shot two men during the demonstrations.²⁶ The protests in the Eastern Province escalated even further in October 2012, when tens of thousands of angry mourners carried the bodies of three young Shi'a men, slain by Saudi security forces, through the streets of Awwamiya while chanting “Death to al-Saud.”²⁷

Almost ten months after Saudi authorities arrested al-Nimr, in March 2013, he was put on trial for “sowing discord” and “undermining national unity.”²⁸ Between the trial and the autumn of 2014, Shia protests dissipated. But on October 24, al-Nimr was sentenced to death, along with his nephew, and protests erupted again.²⁹ A year and four months later, on January 2, 2016, al-Nimr was executed along with 46 other people the Saudi government had labeled “terrorists.” In response to the execution, protests erupted in Qatif in the Eastern Province, in Bahrain, and across the Middle East.³⁰ Angered by al-Nimr's death, Iranian activists attacked and set fire to the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, prompting the severance of diplomatic ties between the two countries.³¹

In response to rising sectarianism in the region and increasing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia executed 158 people in 2015, up from 90 in 2014.³² As of October 19, 2016, Saudi Arabia had executed 134 people.³³

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

With the exception of a brief “*Sahwa* Insurrection” in the early 1990s, Islamist opposition or reformist movements in Saudi Arabia have failed to garner enough societal support to mount a sustained or serious challenge to the ruling House of Saud. This is largely due to the government's use of oil wealth to appease citizens and to co-opt opponents, as well as the Wahhabi mandate of allegiance to the ruler (*wali al-amr*).

Since the rise of the Islamic State, however, there has been a renewed internal debate over the future of Wahhabism. Cole Bunzel, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has argued that there is a subtly emerging “correctionist” movement regarding Wahhabism within the liberal wing of the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia, and that it has been tolerated much more by society and the government in 2016 than it has in earlier years.³⁴ Such developments are partially due to the political leadership being preoccupied with consolidating power, but also because of the role that information technologies have played within the Kingdom.

As a social force, the *Sahwa* clerics rose in influence when they challenged the Islamic credentials of the ruling family and religious establishment between 1990 and 1994. Much to the Kingdom’s dismay, in some cases their subsequent imprisonment only increased their status and notoriety. Due to Saudi crackdowns and a successful campaign to blame the insurrection entirely on the external forces of the Muslim Brotherhood, the *Sahwa* clerics have since muted their criticism of the regime. Their theology has evolved to reject violence, and argues for civil society and democracy. As they have evolved, they have managed to remain very influential. In recent years, even struggling Arab dictators have sought out stamps of approval from *Sahwa* leaders. The Saudi-owned newspaper al-Arabiya reported on February 27, 2011 that Libyan leader Muammar al-Qadhafi’s sons, Seif al-Islam and Al-Saidi, pleaded with al-Odah and Aidh al-Qarnee to issue *fatwas* prohibiting demonstrations in Libya. Both clerics rejected the request, but the incident highlighted the enduring status of *Sahwa* clerics across the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Increasing modernization of information technologies have changed the way that the clerics have engaged with society, and expanded the cleric’s influence beyond the traditional Wahhabist/Salafi international network. Between 2011 and 2014, a number of *Sahwa* clerics gained increasing prominence through their use of the Internet. In 2011, *Forbes Middle East* ranked Salman al-Odah fourth on its list of top 100 “Twitterati,” who boasted more than 3.4 million Twitter followers, and by 2014 had garnered nearly 1.5 million more followers on Facebook. Today, al-Odah has 11 million followers on Twitter, and almost 7 million on Facebook.³⁵ Fellow Saudi clerics Muhammad al-Arife and Aidh al-Qarni have been even more successful than al-Odah on social media. Al-Arife, who is called the “Brad Pitt” of Muslim clerics, has 16 million Twitter followers—more than the total population of the Kingdom of Jordan.³⁶ Likewise, al-Qarni, a social media star who is known for his self-help book, “Don’t be Sad,” has 14.5 million Twitter followers.³⁷ After delivering a lecture in the Philippines in March 2016, al-Qarni was shot and injured in the shoulder, which only increased his notoriety.³⁸

The *Sahwa* clerics are not the only brand of Islamists in Saudi Arabia to utilize the Internet to propagate their views—clerics across the spectrum have circumvented traditional modes of religious communication with great success on social media. Their growing popularity could be cause for concern to the Kingdom’s leaders, however, as

some in the past have used their clout to advocate violence, as when the clerics mobilized Saudis to fight in Iraq against coalition forces in 2004, and when dozens of clerics (not affiliated with the government) signed an online petition calling for Saudi's to engage in jihad against Syria's government.³⁹

On the eve of the American siege of Fallujah, twenty-six prominent clerics signed an "Open Sermon to the Militant Iraqi People" that legitimized joining the Iraqi insurgency as part of a "defense *jihad*" against the "aggressor" coalition.⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter, the number of Saudis who went to Iraq to fight against Western forces peaked.⁴¹ In June 2012, a number of prominent clerics tried to organize a fundraising campaign for Syrian rebels fighting against President Bashar al-Assad's regime. However, one of the organizations facilitating the transfer of donations was the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society of Kuwait, a charity previously designated as a terrorist entity by the United States and UN for arming and financing al-Qaeda.⁴² More recently, despite the government's 2014 decree forbidding Saudi's from fighting against ISIS outside of Saudi Arabia, in the fall of 2015, 53 clerics and academics called for, "all those who are able, and outside of Saudi Arabia, to answer the calls of *jihad*" and fight against Russian forces and the Syrian government in Syria.⁴³

In addition to physical and intellectual resistance, Saudi Islamists have long been implicated in terrorist financing across the globe. Since the 1970's, Saudi Arabia has spent more than 4 percent of its GDP per year on overseas aid with "two thirds of that amount going to 'Islamic Activities'" in impoverished countries grappling with extremism, like Yemen, Sudan, Mauritania, Bosnia and Afghanistan.⁴⁴ After the events of September 11, 2001, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have been repeatedly criticized for financing terrorism abroad. In 2007, then-Undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey said that, "If I could somehow snap my fingers and cut off funding from one country, it would be Saudi Arabia."⁴⁵ Levey's comments were a consequence of the fact that Islamic charities are commonly singled out as the primary source of illicit funds in terror financing cases. Implicating wealthy Saudi's in terrorist financing cases with exact dollar amounts is extremely difficult due primarily to the fact that Saudis prefer cash transactions and donate anonymously. Since giving charitably (*zakat*) is one of the five pillars of Islam, such organizations receive significant donations anonymously and from all sectors of society.

The final report of the 9/11 Commission determined that there was no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution, or Saudi leadership as individuals, provided support to al-Qaeda, but the Commission noted that al Qaeda raised money directly from individuals in Saudi Arabia, and through "charities with significant government sponsorship."⁴⁶ This pattern of funding allegedly stretches back for the past 30 years. In particular, the 9/11 Commission noted the "Golden Chain," a network of Saudi and other Gulf financiers used by Osama Bin Laden to collect and channel funds for the anti-Soviet *jihad* during the 1980s in Afghanistan. The financiers used charities

and other NGOs as conduits for their donations to the *jihad*, and this network later became influential in the establishment of al-Qaeda's base in Afghanistan in the late 1990s.⁴⁷

Saudi charities have allegedly financed terrorist groups elsewhere as well. In 2004, families of terror attack victims in Israel filed two civil lawsuits with the U.S. District Court of New York against Arab Bank PLC of Jordan. The families sought \$2 billion in damages, accusing the "Saudi Committee for the Support of the Al Quds Intifada," a government-sanctioned charity, of funneling money through Arab Bank branches in the Palestinian Territories to provide "insurance benefits" to the families of suicide bombers and others who were casualties of conflict with Israel.⁴⁸ While Arab Bank denied that it had prior knowledge of payments to the families of suicide bombers through its branches, the Saudi Committee's executive manager stated: "We support the families of Palestinian martyrs, without differentiating between whether the Palestinian was a bomber or was killed by Israeli troops."⁴⁹

In another instance of illicit financing, the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* reported on a leaked 2008 cable from the U.S. Consulate in Lahore to the State Department. The cable alleged that financiers in Saudi Arabia and the UAE were sending nearly \$100 million annually to Deobandi and *Ahl-i-Hadith* clerics in southern Punjab. In turn, those clerics were targeting families with multiple children and severe financial difficulties for recruitment, initially under the pretense of charity. Next, a Deobandi or *Ahl-i-Hadith* *maulana* would offer to educate the children in his school and "find them employment in the service of Islam." During the education phase, the clerics would indoctrinate the children and assess their inclination "to engage in violence and acceptance of *jihadi* culture." Parents then received cash payments of \$6,500 for each son chosen for "martyrdom" operations.⁵⁰

Throughout 2016, partially in response to legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2015 as the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act ("JASTA") which narrowed the scope of the doctrine of sovereign immunity to enable families of the 9/11 victims to make civil claims against a foreign state in response to an act of terrorism, Saudi Arabia aggressively pursued the issue of illicit financing. In the summer of 2016, Daniel Glaser, assistant secretary for terrorist financing at the U.S. Department of Treasury, testified before Congress that Saudi Arabia had emerged as a "regional leader in targeted designations."⁵¹ Saudi Arabia's spokesperson for the Ministry of the Interior claimed that Saudi Arabia had prosecuted more than 240 suspects and froze and investigated more than 117 internal accounts.⁵² These activities by the government were also in response to the growing threat of ISIL throughout the region. According to recent polling data, it is estimated that about 5% of Saudi Arabia's population—or over half a million people—support ISIL.⁵³ And in July, 2016, three suicide bombing attacks bearing the hallmarks of the Islamic State were conducted across the country; an act CIA Director John Brennan described as "unprecedented."⁵⁴

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

Throughout the 20th century, the Saudi government and its official Wahhabi religious establishment utilized the principles of *hijra*, *takfir*, and *jihad* to strengthen Saudi political rule. *Hijra* (migration) required individuals to physically migrate to the land of the pious state (Saudi Arabia), which proved useful in settling and indoctrinating the nomads. Later, they used *takfir* (excommunication) to provide the religious blessing for wars against secular Arab leaders like Gamal Abd al-Nasser and Saddam Hussein, and *jihad* (struggle) to embolden young men towards armed conflict against Islam's enemies in Afghanistan and elsewhere.⁵⁵ One of the Saudis' central tactics for consolidating their powers is *da'wah* (proselytization). To conduct *da'wah* on a global scale, the Saudis have developed an extensive network to export and support *Wahhabism*.

Exporting Wahhabism

In 1979 the Monarchy witnessed the Grand Mosque takeover within Saudi Arabia's own borders, the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Shi'a protests in Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Shaken by what it perceived as serious threats to its security and power, the Saudi leadership quickly took drastic measures to assert its leadership in the Islamic world and to appease rising domestic extremism. They accomplished both objectives by increasing its existing exportation of a politicized form of *Wahhabism*, directed as a foreign policy tool against the Soviets and competing strands of Islam alike.⁵⁶

To bolster his legitimacy and to counter the threat of secular governance sweeping the Middle East, in the 1960s King Faysal established a policy of supporting Islamic institutions abroad. In 1962 he created the Muslim World League (MWL) to facilitate the spread of Wahhabi ideology. The MWL supported sects and organizations throughout the world that challenged "heretical" Muslim sects, and eliminated popular religious practices that are forbidden in the Wahhabi interpretation. The MWL supported the Deobandis, *Ahl-i Hadith*, and *Jamaat-e-Islami* in South Asia, while distributing religious literature and funding schools in West African countries like Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, and Guinea.⁵⁷

The Saudis also helped develop other religious organizations, including the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the Al Haramain Foundation, and the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), among others. From 1973-2002, the Saudi government spent more than \$80 billion on Islamic institutions and other activities in the non-Muslim world alone, contributing to some 1,500 mosques, 150 Islamic centers, 202 Muslim colleges, and 2,000 Islamic schools.⁵⁸ Thanks to Saudi financing in Asia, there are currently more than 10,000 Deobandi-run *madrassas* in

India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.⁵⁹ Saudi Arabia likewise has provided funding to build mosques all over the globe—from Sweden, to Chad, to South Korea, and Los Angeles.⁶⁰

With their unprecedented outreach campaign, the Saudis now sponsor nearly 80 percent of all Islamic institutions in the U.S. and Canada, even though, since 9/11, Islamic institutions in the U.S. have faced increasing scrutiny. Nearly 50 organizations and institutions that have been raided, shut down, or had their assets frozen because of suspected links to terrorism. Among those institutions connected to Saudi Arabia were the Muslim World League, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, the Al Haramain Foundation, the SAAR Foundation, the International Institute of Islamic Thought, and the School of Islamic and Social Sciences.⁶¹

Combating the jihadist threat at home

The Saudi government's approach to combating extremism and domestic terrorism is conducted through its "Security Strategy," which utilizes the security forces and members of the community, and the "Advocacy and Advisory Strategy" which utilizes counseling, advisory, and advocacy campaigns.⁶² The advocacy and advisory strategy's "soft" approach to the domestic terrorist threat involves utilizing every form of communication to identify sources of what the government calls "deviant" interpretations of Islam, to correct incorrect understandings of *sharia* law, and to try to convince extremists to follow the right path.⁶³

The new approach follows a major initiative pursued by the Kingdom after a series of terror attacks by al-Qaeda in 2003. Between 2003 and 2008, Saudi security forces successfully broke up al-Qaeda cells in the Kingdom by arresting and killing thousands of militants and collaborators suspected of planning terrorist attacks. The approach worked, but only for a time. There were very few attacks in Saudi Arabia until 2014, when the Islamic State staged a series of attacks targeting Shi'ite mosques and the security services.⁶⁴ Since then, the Islamic State has carried out over two dozen attacks within the Kingdom, killing several dozen people and injuring hundreds.⁶⁵

To combat the threat, the Saudi government runs two religious rehabilitation programs: a governmental Counseling Program and the independent but government-supported program called *Al-Sakina* (Tranquility).⁶⁶ Both rely on clerics, some of them also former radicals, who engage the "deviants" in theological discussions in an attempt to prove their faulty understanding of Islam. Prisoners who have not committed terrorist acts on Saudi soil, and can prove that they have renounced their extreme views, are released and assisted with jobs, government stipends for marriage, education, cars, and housing. Although the Saudis previously claimed a 100 percent success rate for their rehabilitation programs, after the U.S. Department of Defense noted the return to militancy of several Guantanamo Bay detainees who had completed the program, the Saudi government now claims a 10 to 20 percent success rate.⁶⁷

The Saudi government also utilizes a “Public Awareness Campaign,” which aims to “reinforce the true values of the Islamic faith and to educate Saudi citizens about the dangers of extremism and terrorism.”⁶⁸ According to the Saudi Embassy in Washington, DC, the campaign primarily promotes public service announcements that are broadcasted on Arabic satellite networks and Saudi television.⁶⁹ The Saudi government also leverages interviews with former militants, who have allegedly repented for their wrongdoing and are willing to denounce their former militancy. Among the first former radicals to renounce their views on television were several high profile clerics who were arrested in 2003 following al-Qaeda’s attacks in Riyadh.⁷⁰

The Public Awareness Campaign has not fully succeeded in de-radicalizing Saudis or persuading them against joining militant organizations. While Saudi clerics are part of the Kingdom’s de-radicalization efforts, at times they offer contradicting messages when they incite sectarian tensions and support fighting *jihad* in foreign countries. During the ongoing civil war in Syria, for example, clerics like Mohamad al-Arefe encouraged Syrian rebels to slaughter Bashar al-Assad’s supporters, which include Iran, Hezbollah, and the Syrian Alawite community.⁷¹ Even the Kingdom’s Grand Mufti, Abdulaziz Al al-Sheikh, jumped in to denounce Hezbollah, saying, “We urge all politicians and clerics to take substantial measures against this repulsive sectarian group (Hezbollah) and all those [who] back it so as to deter this aggression.”⁷² A year later, the Grand Mufti declared, “The ideas of extremism, radicalism and terrorism... have nothing to do with Islam and (their proponents) are the enemy number one of Islam.”⁷³ More recently, the opposition clerics and scholars who called for a *jihad* against the Syrian government and its backers, did not contradict the government clerics, but they also did not speak out against traveling abroad for *jihad*.⁷⁴

After the Arab Spring

Since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in late 2010, when massive protests overthrew longtime Saudi allies in Egypt and Tunisia and heralded the rise of Islamists to power, the Saudi government has worked to preempt similar demands for national reforms. As the protest movements rolled through Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, King Abdullah rushed to avert a crisis of power by issuing subsidy packages worth an estimated \$130 billion, creating a Facebook page for the population to tell him their grievances, and increasing the salaries of government workers. The king’s measures included 60,000 jobs at the Ministry of the Interior, 500,000 new houses, and a minimum wage for the public sector of 3,000 Saudi Riyals (\$800) per month—in contrast, the average private sector wage is only 1,000 SR per month.⁷⁵ The government also infused \$10.7 billion into its development fund, which offers Saudis interest-free loans to build homes, marry, and start small businesses. An additional \$4 billion was designated for the healthcare sector.⁷⁶

To maintain order, the Saudi government also relied on help from the state's clergy, sanctioned and unsanctioned alike, who criticized activists online on Facebook and Twitter, and who issued *fatwas* in support of the regime. On March 6, 2011, the country's highest religious body, the Council of Senior *Ulema*, called on "everybody to exert every effort to increase solidarity, promote unity and warn against all causes giving rise to the opposite," and further warned Saudis about "deviant intellectual and partisan [Shi'a] tendencies" that could threaten Saudi stability.⁷⁷ Other clerics threatened potential protesters with violence. Saad al-Buraik, a member of the government's Counseling Program for re-educating extremists, called for "smashing the skulls of those who organize demonstrations or take part in them."⁷⁸

The state's mix of subsidies and clerical advocacy, as well as its robust security deployments, successfully eliminated the threat of a popular uprising, but threats to the Kingdom remain. With the rise of the Islamic State, the increasing strength of Iran, the unruly nature of the Internet and online activism, and a significant power transition, Saudi Arabia continues to wrestle with how to maintain control and legitimacy in a rapidly changing geopolitical and security landscape. Unsanctioned clerics have carved out a substantial platform on social media that may prove difficult for the government to control. Because those clerics have generally played within the state's red lines, they have been largely unhindered in the messaging.⁷⁹

Current and Future Issues

Following the death of King Abdullah on January 25, 2015, his half-brother, King Salman bin Abd al Aziz, came to power and immediately began to assert his authority through various strategic policies. He changed succession plans (like replacing his half-brother Crown Prince Muqrin with his nephew, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef bin Abd al Aziz, the former Interior Minister and head of counterterrorism), released thousands of prisoners except those deemed a threat to security, increased the salaries of public sector employees, curtailed the power of the religious police, dismissed two influential officials who had opposed Wahabi clerics, and, in a nod to ultraconservative clerics, fired the Kingdom's only female Cabinet member.

King Salman's approach to geopolitical changes has been both ideological and practical, similar to his predecessors. As King Salman has leaned more heavily on the traditional cleric establishment to maintain legitimacy, he and his son, the new Deputy Crown Prince, have also moved to restructure the economy in the face of a shifting global energy landscape driven in large part by the United States' new oil independence.⁸⁰

Increasingly concerned with the threat of Iran and its proxies in Yemen, in recent years the Saudi government has also pursued a more aggressive foreign policy defined by its call for the resignation of President Bashar al Assad of Syria, and its military efforts in Yemen beginning in 2015. Three months after coming to power, following the ouster of the Yemeni transitional government in 2015 at the hands of the Houthi

rebels and backers of the former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, King Salman initiated military strikes in coordination with nine other Middle Eastern countries.⁸¹ Since then, despite a significant number of civilian casualties, Saudi losses, and increased tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the United States has supported the Kingdom in its efforts to reinstate President Hadi in the ongoing conflict.

In April 2016, Deputy Crown Prince Salman announced a long-term oil independence strategy for the country. Included among the radical economic proposals for the country was a commitment to a minor increase in the women's participation rate in the workforce—which will be raised from 22% to 30 % over 15 years. This modest proposal, according to the *Economist*, suggests resistance from the Wahhabi clerical establishment. For a country with a population that has been conditioned to expect oil wealth in exchange for loyalty, and a clerical establishment that is resistant to modernization, a National Transformation Program will be difficult to implement, and may rely entirely on the ability of the young and relatively inexperienced Deputy Crown Prince to move the country in a new direction.⁸² His power on social media will play a role, but so will his ability to co-opt the religious establishment and the population under the new terms of a decades-old deal.

ENDNOTES

[1] Daniel Byman, "The U.S.-Saudi Arabia Counterterrorism Relationship," Brookings Institution, May 24, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-u-s-saudi-arabia-counterterrorism-relationship/>

[2] "King Abdullah, a Shrewd Force, Who Reshaped Saudi Arabia, dies at 90," New York Times, January 22, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/23/world/middleeast/king-abdullah-who-nudged-saudi-arabia-forward-dies-at-90.html>.

[3] "Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who Are The Islamists?" International Crisis Group, September 21, 2004, 2, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saud/themes/backgrounder.pdf>.

[4] "Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia: The Story of Juhayman Al-'Utaybi Revisited," 117.

[5] Ondrej Beranek, "Divided We Survive: A Landscape of Fragmentation in Saudi Arabia," Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies Middle East Brief no. 28, January 2009, 3, <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB33.pdf>.

[6] Madawi al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[7] M. Ehsan Ahrari, "Saudi Arabia: A Simmering Cauldron of Instability?" *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Summer/Fall 1999, 220, <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/bjwa/archive/6.2/Essay/Ahrari.pdf>.

[8] Rachel Bronson, "Rethinking Religion: the Legacy of the U.S.-Saudi Relationship," *The Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 2005, 127, http://www.twq.com/05autumn/docs/05autumn_bronson.pdf

[9] Shmuel Bachar, Shmuel Bar, Rachel Machtiger and Yair Minzili, *Establishment Ulama and Radicalism in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, December 2006), 18, http://www.currenttrends.org/docLib/20061226_UlamaandRadicalismfinal.pdf

[10] When al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula attacked three foreign housing complexes in Riyadh in May 2003, killing 34 and injuring 200, al-Odah and al-Hawali issued a statement with nearly 50 other clerics, condemning the attacks and declaring the perpetrators ignorant, misguided young men. See "Saudi bombing deaths rise," *BBC* (London), May 13, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3022473.stm; Then, in December 2004, al-Odah, Aidh al-Qarni, and 33 other sheikhs signed a statement denouncing London-based Saudi dissident Saad al-Faqih's attempts to organize demonstrations against the regime. See Toby Craig Jones, "The Clerics, the Sahwa and the Saudi State," *Center for Contemporary Conflict Strategic Insights*, March 2005, 4, <http://www.nps.edu/Academics/centers/ccc/publications/OnlineJournal/2005/Mar/jonesMar05.pdf>. Subsequently, in January 2005, in response to a failed attack on the Ministry of Interior in Riyadh the previous month, 41 clerics issued a statement on al-Odah's website, *Islam Today*, warning against actions and discourse targeting the Saudi regime.

[11] Lacroix, Stephanie. "Saudi Arabia's Muslim Brotherhood Dilemma," *Washington Post*, March 20, 2014.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "The 9/11 Commission Report," July 22, 2004

[14] Thomas Hegghammer, "Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia," *International Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2008), http://hegghammer.com/_files/Hegghammer_-Islamist_violence_and_regime_stability_in_Saudi_Arabia.pdf

[15] Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Policy*, Winter 2006, 42, http://chenry.webhost.utexas.edu/usme/2007/Saudi-Terrorist_Recruitmen_87543a.pdf

[16] *Ibid.*, 45

[17] "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," *Al Jazeera* (Doha), December 29, 2009, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middle-east/2009/12/2009122935812371810.html>

[18] Margaret Coker, "Assassination Attempt Targets Saudi Prince," *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125144774691366169.html>

- [19] Anahad O'Connor & Eric Schmitt, "Terror Attempt Seen as Man Tries to Ignite Device on Jet," *New York Times*, December 25, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/26/us/26plane.html>
- [20] U.S. State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015*, April 2016. The report has included similar language since the 2013 report released in April 2014.
- [21] "Al Qaeda Chief Tells Jihadist Fighters in Syria: Unite or Die," *Reuters*, May 8, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-qaeda-idUSKCN0XZ00A>.
- [22] Graham, David. "Sheikh Nimr al Nimr and the Forgotten Shiites of Saudi Arabia," *The Atlantic*, January 5, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/01/nimr-al-nimr-saudi-arabia-shiites/422670/>.
- [23] Ahmad Moussalli, "Wahhabism, Salafism, and Islamism: Who is the Enemy?" *American University of Beirut*, January 2009, 6, <http://conflictsforum.org/briefings/Wahhabism-Salafism-and-Islamism.pdf>
- [24] Rachel Bronson, *Thicker than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 147-8.
- [25] "Two Die During Saudi Arabia protest at Shia Cleric Arrest," *BBC* (London), July 9, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18768703>
- [26] Toby Matthiesen, "Saudi Arabia's Shiite Escalation," *Foreign Policy*, July 10, 2012, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/07/10/sable_rattling_in_the_gulf
- [27] For videos of the protests in Awwamiya, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPLF5fGvYNA&feature=youtu.be> and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQsgTEBoH_E&feature=youtu.be
- [28] "Saudi Arabia: Cleric Who Backed Protests on Trial for His Life," *Human Rights Watch*, May 11, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/10/saudi-arabia-cleric-who-backed-protests-trial-his-life> .
- [29] Leila Fadel, "Saudi Cleric's Death Sentence Focuses Shia Anger on Ruling Family," *NPR*, October 18, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2014/10/18/357108117/saudi-clerics-death-sentence-focuses-shia-anger-on-ruling-family>
- [30] "Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr: Anger at Execution of Top Saudi Cleric," *BBC*, January 2, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35214536>
- [31] Ben Hubbard, "Iranian Protesters Ransack Saudi Embassy After Execution of Shiite Cleric," *New York Times*, January 2, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/03/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-executes-47-sheikh-nimr-shiite-cleric.html>
- [32] *Ibid.*
- [33] Ben Hubbard, "Saudi Arabia Executes a Prince Convicted in a Fatal Stabbing," *New York Times*, October 18, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/19/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-prince-executed-salman.html>

[34] Bunzel, Cole. The Kingdom and the Caliphate: Duel of the Islamic States, February 18, 2016. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/02/18/kingdom-and-caliphate-duel-of-islamic-states-pub-62810>.

[35] For Forbes Middle East's List, see www.forbesmiddleeast.com/arabic/; ارتيوت-لىع-اروضح-تيبرع-تيصخش-100-رثكنا; For Al-Odah's English Twitter Page, see http://twitter.com/Salman_Al_Odah; For his Arabic page, see www.facebook.com/DrSalmanAlOadah; For his Arabic page, see www.facebook.com/SalmanAlodah

[36] For al-Arefe's Twitter page, see <http://twitter.com/MohamadAlarefe>; For his Facebook page, see www.facebook.com/3refe

[37] For al-Qarnee's Twitter page, see https://twitter.com/Dr_alqarnee; For his Facebook page, see www.facebook.com/dralqarnee?sk=wall

[38] "Philippine Gunman Attacks and Injures Saudi Preacher," Al Arabiya (Riyadh), March 1, 2016, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2016/03/01/Saudi-preacher-injured-after-gun-attack-in-Philippines.html>

[39] McDowell, Angus. "Saudi opposition clerics make sectarian call to Jihad in Saudi Arabia," Reuters, October 5th, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-saudi-clerics-idUSKCN0RZ1IW20151005>

[40] "The House of Saud: The Fatwa of the 26 Clerics: Open Sermon to the Militant Iraqi People," PBS Frontline, February 8, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saud/etc/fatwa.html>

[41] Thomas Hegghammer, "Saudis in Iraq: Patterns of Radicalization and Recruitment," *Revue.org*, June 12, 2008, <http://conflicts.revues.org/index10042.html>

[42] Jonathan Schanzer and Steven Miller, "Saudi Clerics Funnel Cash to Syrian Rebels through Terror Group," *Weekly Standard*, June 12, 2012, http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/saudi-clerics-funnel-cash-syrian-rebels-through-terror-group_647141.html

[43] Al-Saleh, Huda, "52 Saudi clerics, scholars call to battle Russian forces in Syria," *Al-Arabiya*, October 5th 2015. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/05/Fifty-two-Saudi-clerics-scholars-call-for-fight-against-Russian-forces-in-Syria.html>.

[44] Graff, Corinne, *Poverty, Development, and Violent Extremism in Weak States*, Brookings Institution, 2010, p. 10. Accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2010_confronting_poverty.pdf

[45] Brian Ross, "U.S.: Saudis Still Filling Al Qaeda's Coffers," *ABC News*, September 11, 2007.

[46] Christopher Blanchard and Alfred Prados, "Saudi Arabia, Terrorist Financing Issues," Congressional Research Service Report, December 8, 2004, <http://fas.org/irp/crs/RL32499.pdf>

[47] Christopher Blanchard and Alfred Prados, "Saudi Arabia: Terrorist Financing Issues," Congressional Research Service Report, September 14, 2007, 6, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32499.pdf>

[48] Ibid., 8.

[49] Ra'id Qusti, "Saudi Telethon Funds Go Direct to Palestinian Victims," Arab News (Jedda), May 27, 2002, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=15591&d=27&m=5&y=2002>

[50] Qurat ul ain Siddiqui, "Saudi Arabia, UAE Financing Extremism in South Punjab," Dawn, May 22, 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/22/saudi-arabia-uae-financing-extremism-in-south-punjab.html>

[51] Wong, Kristina. "Treasury Official: the Gulf states moving to cut off terrorist financing," The Hill, June 6th, 2016. <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/282989-treasury-official-gulf-remains-important-source-of-terrorist-financing>

[52] Ibid.

[53] "Is Saudi Arabia to Blame for the Islamic State?" BBC, December 19th, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35101612>.

[54] "Attacks in Saudi Arabia bear hallmarks of Islamic State," Reuters, July 14th, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-saudi-idUSKCN0ZT-2CL>.

[55] Madawi al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[56] Ibid.

[57] Commins, David. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006.

[58] Alexander Alexiev, "The Wages of Extremism: Radical Islam's Threat to the West and the Muslim World," Hudson Institute, March 2011, 44, <http://www.hudson.org/files/publications/AAlexievWagesofExtremism032011.pdf>

[59] Alexander Alexiev, "The End of an Alliance," National Review, October 28, 2002, <http://old.nationalreview.com/flashback/flashback-alexiev112602.asp>

[60] Scott Shane, "Saudis and Extremism, Both the Arsonists and the Firefighters," New York Times, August 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/26/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-islam.html>

[61] Alexiev, "The End of an Alliance."

[62] Abdullah F. Ansary, "Combating Extremism: A Brief Overview of Saudi Arabia's Approach," Middle East Policy Journal XV, no. 2, Summer 2008, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/combating-extremism-brief-overview-saudi-arabias-approach?print>.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ben Hubbard, "Saudi Arabia, Blamed for Spawning Jihadists, is Again their Target," New York Times, July 6, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/07/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-isis-al-qaeda-jihadists.html>

[65] Ibid.

[66] Rabasa et al., *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists; Find the al-Sakina program online at <http://www.assakina.com/>*

- [67] Marisa L. Porges, "The Saudi Deradicalization Experiment," Council on Foreign Relations, January 22, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/radicalization-and-extremism/saudi-deradicalization-experiment/p21292>
- [68] Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia (Washington, DC), Information Office, "Initiatives and Actions to Combat Terrorism," November 2012, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/files/PDF/Reports/Counterterrorism.pdf>, page 5
- [69] "Initiatives and Actions to Combat Terrorism," 5-6.
- [70] Jones, "The Clerics, the Sahwa and the Saudi State," 4.
- [71] مالسإلأ خييرات يف فلصاف "ريصقلا" فلكرع م: يفيرعلا خيشلا، Al-Moslim, May 31, 2013, <http://www.almoslim.net/node/184327>
- [72] "Grand Mufti Urges Muslim World to Flay Hezbollah," Saudi Gazette, June 7, 2013, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20130607168855>
- [73] "ISIS Enemy Number One of Islam," Al Arabiya (Riyadh), August 19, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/19/Saudi-mufti-ISIS-is-enemy-No-1-of-Islam-.html>
- [74] "Saudi Opposition Clerics Make Sectarian Call to Jihad in Syria," Reuters, October 5, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-saudi-clerics-idUSKCN0RZ11W20151005>
- [75] Steffen Hertog, "The Costs of Counter-Revolution in the GCC," Foreign Policy, May 31, 2011, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/05/31/the_costs_of_counter_revolution_in_the_gcc
- [76] Jonathan Schanzer and Steven Miller, "How Saudi Arabia Survived – So Far," The Journal of International Security Affairs, May 14, 2012, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/how-saudi-arabia-has-survivedso-far/>.
- [77] For the full Arabic text of the fatwa, see <http://www.assakina.com/fatwa/6834.html>; For an English translation, see www.salafitalk.net/st/viewmesages.cfm?Forum=9&Topic=12255
- [78] Madawi al-Rasheed, "Preachers of Hate as Loyal Subjects," New York Times, March 14, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/03/14/how-stable-is-saudi-arabia/preachers-of-hate-as-loyal-subjects>
- [79] Jonathan Schanzer and Steven Miller, Facebook Fatwa: Saudi Clerics, Wahhabi Islam, and Social Media (Washington, DC: FDD Press, 2012) <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/fdd-releases-cutting-edge-study-of-saudi-social-media1/>
- [80] Ibid., 5.
- [81] "Saudi Arabia Launches Airstrikes in Yemen," BBC, March 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-32061632>
- [82] "Saudi Arabia's Post-Oil Future," The Economist, April 30, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21697673-bold-promises-bold-young-prince-they-will-be-hard-keep-saudi-arabias>

