Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who are the Islamists?

Thomas Hegghammer, Stéphane Lacroix

SAUDI ARABIA BACKGROUNDER:

WHO ARE THE ISLAMISTS?

21 September 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SAUDI ARABIA BACKGROUNDER: WHO ARE THE ISLAMISTS?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saudi Arabia is at a critical stage in both its struggle against terrorism and its on-again, off-again efforts at reform, and Islamism is at the heart of both. The success or failure of the moderate Islamists in providing social, religious and political responses to the country's predicament will, probably as much as anything, determine the ultimate fate of their radical rivals.[1]

On the evening of 15 March 2004, Saudi security forces killed Khalid al-Hajj, the alleged leader of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and a coordinator of the violent campaign that began in May 2003. The following morning, the police arrested eleven prominent reformist intellectuals, including several Islamists who had been pressing for political reform and trying to establish an independent human rights organisation. Together, these events capture the two faces of Islamism in contemporary Saudi Arabia: a militant, violent one bent on destabilising the Kingdom and forcing its foreign backers to flee, and a moderate, progressive one, intent on promoting political, social and religious reform. While the former has grabbed most headlines, the latter holds the greater potential for reshaping the Kingdom.

In an earlier report on how Saudi Arabia approaches the reform issue, ICG concluded:

Dealing with longer-term challenges and keeping violent opposition marginal requires repair to a legitimacy that has been severely battered by the closed and arbitrary nature of the political system, the concentrated power and wealth of the royal family, and the record of financial corruption and profligacy of many of its members. This necessitates broadening political space, giving more citizens a voice and a stake in the system, allowing them to organise freely, strengthening political institutions, creating a sense of accountability and cracking down on corruption.[2]

The findings of this briefing, which examines the genealogy of Saudi Arabia's various Islamist groupings and is based on dozens of interviews in the country between March and May 2004, strongly support that conclusion.

Beneath the all-encompassing Wahhabi influence, Saudi Islamism developed over several decades a wide variety of strains. These included radical preachers, who condemned what they considered the regime's deviation from the principles of Islam and its submission to the U.S.; social reformers, convinced of the need to modernise educational and religious practices and challenging the puritan strand of Islam that dominates the Kingdom; political reformers, who gave priority to such issues as popular participation, institution-building, constitutionalisation of the monarchy, and elections; and *jihadist* activists, for the most part formed in Afghanistan and who gradually brought their violent struggle against Western -- in particular U.S. -- influence to their homeland.

By the late 1990s, the Islamist field was increasingly polarised between two principal strands. Among the so-called new Islamists, political reformers sought to form the broadest possible centrist coalition, cutting across religious and intellectual lines and encompassing progressive Sunni Islamists, liberals, and Shiites. More recently, they have sought to

---

[1] In the usage adopted by ICG, "Islamism" is Islam in political rather than religious mode. "Islamist movements" are those with Islamic ideological references pursuing primarily political objectives, and "Islamist" and "Islamic political" are essentially synonymous. "Islamic" is a more general expression, usually referring to Islam in religious rather than political mode but capable, depending on the context, of embracing both.

[2] ICG Middle East Report N°28, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* 14 July 2004, p. ii. The recommendations from that report are reproduced in Appendix B below.

include as well elements of the more conservative but highly popular *sahwa,* the group of shaykhs, professors and Islamic students that had come to prominence a decade earlier by denouncing the state's failure to conform to Islamic values, widespread corruption, and subservience to the U.S. Through petitions to Crown Prince Abdallah -- the Kingdom's de facto ruler - they formulated demands for political and social liberalisation. Their surprising ability to coalesce a diverse group prompted the government -- which initially had been conciliatory -- to signal by the arrests cited above that there were limits to its tolerance.

The other, *jihadi*, face of Saudi Islamism has manifested itself most prominently since early 2003, when a network of hardened militant Islamists operating under the name of "Al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula" (QAP) began a violent campaign targeting Western and in particular U.S. interests. Large-scale terrorist operations and lower-level violence against Westerners have undermined the traditional sense of personal security among expatriate workers, prompting an unknown number to depart. In the process, militants have been drawn into a full-blown confrontation with the government and its security forces. While its ultimate outcome is unclear, there are strong indications the government has gained the upper hand; despite highly visible attacks in May and June 2004, the militants appear to have suffered significant setbacks that leave them both operationally weaker and politically marginalised. Their remaining core of fighters may well retain the ability to exploit weaknesses in Saudi security and counterterrorism capability, but they have not come close to triggering a broader Islamist insurrection or threatening regime stability.

But victory over the QAP would not mean the defeat of violent Islamism, which feeds on political, social and economic dissatisfaction that preceded the rise of that group and will undoubtedly outlive it. Ferment within the Islamist arena, growing strength of a progressive, reformist outlook and the deepening rift between violent and non-violent activists present an important opportunity to address these underlying sources of anger.

In order not to lose that opportunity, the regime should:

❑ build bridges to the centrist coalition, allowing progressive Islamists to express their views more openly, including on national television and radio;

❑ release promptly the reformers arrested in the March 2004 crackdown;

❑ continue the National Dialogues, initiated in 2003, enlarge them to embrace a greater number of reformist Islamists, and start a serious discussion over a gradual political opening leading to a constitutional monarchy, including expansion of the powers of the appointed consultative council (*majlis)*; and

❑ combine such political steps with a sustained effort to fight corruption, poverty and exclusion (especially in peripheral, under-developed regions such as Asir) as the best guarantee against violence and for long-term stability.

Amman/Riyadh/Brussels, 21 September 2004

SAUDI ARABIA BACKGROUNDER: WHO ARE THE ISLAMISTS?

I. A SURVEY OF SAUDI ISLAMISM[3]

A. WAHHABISM

The term Wahhabism refers to the religious revivalist movement initiated in Najd (central Arabia) in the early eighteenth century by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Denouncing Islam's perversion over the centuries and Muslim societies' renewed descent into the state of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) that characterised the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam, he preached a return to *tawhid* (exclusive worship of God) and the early practices of the "pious ancestors" (*al-salaf al-salih*).[4] The remedy, he argued, was to bypass Islam's centuries-old legal and theological interpretive legacy and rely instead on the Qur'an, the Sunna (accounts from the Prophet's life) and the consensus of the pious ancestors. Practically, this meant eradicating all forms of popular Islam, including Sufism, saint worship and Shiism, and imposing ritual austerity on believers.[5]

In seeking to spread his *da'wa* (preaching), Abd al-Wahhab found an ally in Muhammad Ibn Saud, head of the small town of Dir'iyya (near modern-day Riyadh). Their pact in 1744 marked the foundation not only of the first Saudi state,[6] but also of a local religious establishment entrusted with developing and spreading Abd al-Wahhab's beliefs. After decades of relative autonomy, the religious establishment was relegated to secondary status; today, more often than not, it rubber stamps official decisions, issuing religious rulings to validate the regime's political stands.[7] Among these, the fatwas authorising the presence of foreign troops (in 1990)[8] and peace with Israel (in 1993)[9] cost the establishment much credibility to the extent that many Saudis now view it as a mere extension of the regime. Still, it continues to provide indispensable legitimacy to the Al Saud's rule and acts as guardian of the country's official Wahhabi doctrine.

The influence of Wahhabism extends far beyond the religious establishment's official role. Since the state's foundation, it has shaped its religious culture, education, and judiciary.[10] As a result, it has had -- to a greater or lesser degree -- an impact on all the Kingdom's Sunni Islamist trends.

B. THE MULTIPLE ORIGINS OF SAUDI ISLAMISM

1. The reformist strain: *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya*

The term *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Awakening) refers to the ferment of religious activism and enthusiasm that gripped Saudi universities in the 1970s

---

[3] For a brief review of Saudi rule, see ibid, pp. 3-4.
[4] Referring to the Prophet, his companions and their successors until the third century of the Islamic calendar.
[5] For more on Wahhabism and the history of Saudi Arabia, see Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London, 2000) and Madawi al-Rasheed, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, 2002). The term Wahhabi is now "overused and devoid of analytic significance, serving to describe disparate groups and (individuals) across time and space, so long as they adhere to an austere or conservative view of Islam". ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* op. cit., p. 3. n. 8.
[6] Although both the first (1744-1818) and second (1823-1891) Saudi states eventually collapsed as political entities, the alliance between the Al Saud and the Wahhabi preachers remained the basis for the formation of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

[7] The nomination of Shaykh Ibn Baz as the head of the Wahhabi establishment in 1967, under the reign of King Faysal (1964-1975), may be considered the turning point in its subordination to the regime.
[8] This first ruling was given in August 1990, a few days after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, by the Council of Senior Ulama (*hay'at kibar al-ulama*), the highest institution in the Wahhabi religious establishment.
[9] This ruling was provided by the Kingdom's top *mufti*, Shaykh Ibn Baz himself, on 13 September 1993.
[10] Wahhabism is by no means the only Muslim denomination in Saudi Arabia. In fact, the country's population is one of the most diverse in the Middle East in this respect: Saudi Arabia has Sunnis belonging to all four jurisprudential schools, Sufis and separate branches of Shiism.

and 1980s but its roots lie deeper. From the 1960s onwards, Saudi Arabia gradually expanded its contacts with the outside world, exposing its citizens to broader political debates at a time of regional radicalisation and politicisation. Moreover, the Saudi regime gave shelter to a large number of Syrian and Egyptian Muslim Brothers, who were persecuted in their home countries by Baathist and Nasserist regimes. Pragmatic considerations were one reason: Saudi Arabia urgently needed well-trained professionals at a time of rapid, oil-induced modernisation. Muslim Brothers came to play a key role in the new and expanding administration, especially in education where they designed school and university curricula and were the bulk of the faculty.

Regional politics were another reason: Riyadh used the Muslim Brothers' politicised version of Islam as a weapon in its political-ideological dispute with Nasserist and Baathist neighbours. According to a Saudi Islamist who was then a student, "most of the books that could be found in bookshops in the 1970s were written by members of the Brotherhood".[11] That said, some Saudi intellectuals tend to exaggerate the role of Egyptian and Syrian Brothers within the country in the politicisation of Saudi Islam,[12] which also resulted from broader regional dynamics.

Ideologically, the young *sahwa* Islamists espoused a blend of the traditional Wahhabi outlook (mainly on social issues) and the more contemporary Muslim Brotherhood approach (especially on political issues). They distinguished themselves from the Wahhabi establishment by their willingness to discuss issues of contemporary significance rather than concentrate on abstract theological debates. Unlike their official counterparts, they also were open to modern technology such as the cassette tape, which rapidly became their principal means of communication.

The 1979 take-over of the mosque in Mecca by the charismatic Juhayman al-Utaybi -- prompted to a large extent by anger at the royal family's perceived moral depravity -- was a turning point in the *sahwa's* evolution. Rather than use the opportunity to initiate long overdue political and social change, the regime chose to strengthen the religious establishment and pour additional money into religious institutions as a means of co-opting its critics and bolstering its legitimacy. The unintentional result was to strengthen the *sahwa*, which used its strong presence in the educational sector to take advantage of the increased funds

Sahwa clerics increasingly participated in public debates. They took issue with both liberals, accused of undermining Saudi society through secularisation,[13] and the Wahhabi establishment, criticised for its lack of interest in contemporary issues and, albeit still in veiled terms, unconditional support for the regime. By the 1990s, the clerics would go further, denouncing the state's failure to conform to Islamic values, corruption, and subservience to the U.S., while condemning official clerics for their silence on all the above The most widely known *sahwa* preachers who rose to prominence in the late 1980s include Salman al-Awda, Safar al-Hawali, Ayidh al-Qarni and Nasir al-Omar.

Broad common features aside, however, the *sahwa* preachers did not present a united front. From the outset, there were a variety of undercurrents, some closer to Wahhabism, others to the Muslim Brotherhood. Among the latter are sub-divisions between so-called Bannaists and Qutbists.[14] Today, such divisions are manifested in conflicting positions on issues such as relations with liberal reformers, Shiites or Sufis, and attitudes toward al-Qaeda and other violent Islamists.[15]

2. Rejectionist Islamists

Rejectionist Islamists (sometimes referred to as neo-salafists) have for the most part been either neglected by analysts or confused with the *sahwa*. Unlike *sahwa* reformers, they focused on questions of individual faith, morals and ritual practices, as opposed to broader social, cultural or political issues, and were hostile to the very concept of the nation-state, seeking not to modify it but to break with it -- most often through withdrawal but at times through revolt. Whereas reformers were dominant in schools and universities, rejectionists avoided official education altogether, seeking religious teaching elsewhere.

It would be wrong, however, to speak of the rejectionists as forming a homogenous social or political movement. Indeed, there was far more diversity among them in approach and organisational structure than among the *sahwa*. Saudi rejectionist

---

[11] ICG interview, Riyadh.
[12] See for example *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 13 September 2002.

[13] The 1980s were marked by the so-called "modernism" debate, which opposed a group of writers and poets calling for a reform of Islamic literary tradition and the *sahwa*, which accused them of trying to destroy the foundations of Saudi society. See Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (Baginstoke, 1999), p. 48.
[14] Bannaism and Qutbism refer to the two main ideologues of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. See ICG Middle East Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity*, 20 April 2004.
[15] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

Islamism has been variously represented by organisations such as the one led by Juhayman al-Utaybi, which seized Mecca's Great Mosque in 1979; fringe communities, which typically withdrew from society and adopted a very conservative, puritan lifestyle; and informal religious study circles, which rejected both the mosque-based Wahhabi and the school and university-centred *sahwa* teachings.

The rejectionists' most visible and organised manifestation was the *al-Jamaa al-Salafiyya al-Muhtasiba* (JSM) movement, which arose in Medina in the mid-1970s. Inspired in part by the views of Nasr al-Din al-Albani (1909-1999), a Syrian scholar, it rejected all schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh)*, including Wahhabism, insofar as they involved a degree of human judgment, adhering instead to a literal reading of the *hadith* (traditions of the Prophet's life) as the sole source of religious truth.[16] Disagreements with the Wahhabi establishment initially turned on ritual questions; over time, however, JSM evolved into a full-fledged socio-political protest movement whose significance has been vastly underestimated by commentators.

This is explained partly by the fate of the 1979 uprising, in which a radicalised faction of JSM under the leadership of Juhayman seized the Mecca mosque. He and his companions were either executed or imprisoned, leading many to equate the JSM with a short-lived and relatively insignificant, marginal group of messianic extremists. In fact, although the JSM as an organisation disappeared after the Mecca events, the bulk of its basic ideas, notably the critique of social corruption and moral decadence in Juhayman's writings, outlived him.[17] The significance of the mosque take-over itself is often misunderstood. While some of Juhayman's followers were persuaded that his companion, Muhammad al-Qahtani, was the Mahdi (the Islamic equivalent of the messiah), and the Mecca operation would bring about the end of the

world, many others took part in order to precipitate radical political and social change.[18]

In the 1980s, JSM remnants sought refuge in Kuwait, Yemen, and northern Saudi desert regions.[19] A decade later, groups of young Islamists who called themselves "students of religious knowledge" (*talabat 'ilm*) and viewed themselves as direct JSM heirs still could be found seeking out remaining Juhayman companions among desert Bedouins. Shunning mosques and universities, they formed religious study groups in their homes.[20] Although they typically lived in Riyadh, often in shared flats, they had for all practical purposes withdrawn from a society they deemed sinful and from its various outgrowths. They regarded the state as illegitimate, the *sahwa* as overly interested in politics, and the *jihadists* as ignorant on religious affairs.

3. *Jihadists*

The origins of the current *jihadism* can be traced back to the participation -- actively encouraged and facilitated by the regime at the time -- of thousands of Saudis in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. In addition to logistical and financial assistance offered by the regime to prospective mujahidin -- for example, subsidised flights to Pakistan -- the official religious establishment declared it a collective duty (*fard kifayah*) for Muslims to fight in Afghanistan.[21] For most of them -- typically teenagers -- participation was purely symbolic; the trip seldom lasted more than the summer holidays, and many never made it across the border from Pakistan to Afghanistan. But for those who stayed, the experience was profoundly transformative, as they became part of the romanticised culture of violent resistance that flourished within the Arab contingent of the Afghan mujahidin war.

Two consequences followed. First, these militants developed a highly militaristic, violent worldview; secondly, they experienced their initial political awakening outside their country. Saudi *jihadists* came to Afghanistan with low politicisation and little if any domestic agenda or ideological basis for opposing the Saudi state; their discourse and

---

[16] Born in 1914, Nasr al-Din al-Albani was a Syrian scholar of Albanian origin, who founded a school of Islamic thought that views the *hadith* as the sole basis for religious decisions. Al-Albani taught at the University of Medina in the late 1950s but was compelled to leave due to his many disagreements with Saudi scholars, notably on ritual issues. Nevertheless, he maintained close ties to Saudi Arabia, and particularly to the city of Medina, until his death in 1999. ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[17] While living in the desert, Juhayman wrote a series of articles known as "the Seven Letters of Juhayman", as well as much religious poetry. He also made tape recordings of his speeches, some of which still circulate in Saudi Arabia. ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[18] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[19] One of those introduced to Juhayman's writings in Kuwait was Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who in the 1990s became a leading ideologue of the so-called *salafi jihadi* trend. For more on that trend, see fn. 49 and Section III below.

[20] ICG interviews, Riyadh and Jeddah.

[21] Abd al-Aziz bin Baz, the Mufti of Saudi Arabia at the time, issued a fatwa decreeing jihad in Afghanistan a collective duty.

activism were almost entirely shaped by and oriented toward the international arena. As a result, they have had only limited contact with their reformist and rejectionist counterparts. In contrast, militant Islamists in countries such as Egypt originally were politicised at home and so developed a locally-focused political program, even if they subsequently fought in Afghanistan.[22] Also in contrast to counterparts from Egypt, Syria and elsewhere -- where participation in the Afghan war often meant burning all bridges to their homeland -- Saudi *jihadists* were virtually free to travel in and out of their country during the 1990s.[23] They thus retained a home base and were in a position to influence Saudi youth upon their return. This coming-and-going of Saudi *jihadists* played an important role in the 1990s and 2000s.

By the end of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union, an international *jihadist* culture had already spread to many Saudi Islamist circles but young Saudis continued to leave their country in search of military training and combat experience throughout the 1990s, particularly once al-Qaeda had established a training camp infrastructure in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s.[24] It is difficult to characterise the motivations of those who joined, though they appear not to have been driven by a particular political project or religious beliefs.[25] In hindsight, former friends and acquaintances describe the *jihadists* as "impatient" individuals who "could never sit down to read a book", or "delinquents and school drop-outs who thought it sounded cool to carry a gun".[26] Both reformers and rejectionists are at pains to distinguish themselves from those they refer to as *jihadists*. [27] That said, and as illustrated below, instances of rejectionists gravitating toward

jihadi circles and their activism occurred with increasing frequency from the early 1990s onwards.

4. Shiite Islamists

Although reliable data is unavailable, Saudi Shiites are generally estimated to be roughly 10 per cent of the total population. They are concentrated in the Eastern Province, which is also where most oil resources are. Since the integration of the region in the Saudi state, Shiites have complained about not being allowed to practice their faith freely and being treated as second-class citizens.

Shiite Islamist organisations began to emerge in the Eastern Province in the 1970s, but the process accelerated with the 1979 Iranian revolution. Angered by their social and political situation and invigorated by that uprising, thousands celebrated Ashura[28] despite the official ban. The ensuing heavy-handed response led to violent confrontations and a revolt that was brutally crushed by the National Guard.[29] Few Shiite activists remained in Saudi Arabia, and those who did were silenced by the regime; most fled to Syria, Iran, Great Britain or the U.S. By the late 1980s, many had moderated their views, distancing themselves from Khomeini-type agendas and embracing principles of political pluralism and democracy.[30] In 1993, the Saudi government reached an agreement with the exiled activists, pursuant to which many returned.[31] Until recently, they had a relatively low profile.

C. THE GULF WAR'S IMPACT (1990-1996)

The 1990-1991 Gulf war was the most critical event in the history of Saudi Islamism and helps explain subsequent domestic politics. Riyadh responded to Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait by inviting a U.S.-led multinational force to be stationed on its territory, a decision that unsettled the nation's already fragile internal balance and set off the *sahwa*'s further politicisation and radicalisation. Reformist preachers no longer restricted their criticism to liberal intellectuals or the Wahhabi establishment but began directly to target the state and its institutions

---

[22] Even when in Saudi Arabia, *jihadists* seldom mingled with the *sahwa* or Islamist rejectionists. ICG interviews, Riyadh and Jeddah.
[23] So long as they were not involved in domestic militant activities -- and with some notable exceptions such as Osama bin Laden -- they were rarely prosecuted. Saudi officials acknowledge this; see "Interview with Jamal Khashoggi", 7 July 2004 at www.jamestown.org/images/ pdf/tm_002_014-ftinterview.pdf.
[24] In addition to attending training camps in Afghanistan, Saudis fought as international *mujahidin* in places such as Bosnia and Somalia in the early 1990s and in Chechnya in the late 1990s.
[25] There is still no satisfactory comprehensive analysis on the motivations and socio-economic background of the Saudis who went to Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s.
[26] ICG interviews, Jeddah.
[27] ICG interviews, Riyadh and Jeddah

[28] A Shiite festival.
[29] See Madawi al-Rasheed, "The Shi'a of Saudi Arabia: a Minority in Search of Cultural Authenticity", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, n°1, 1998.
[30] ICG interviews, Eastern Province.
[31] See Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

The *sahwa* clerics Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali delivered fervent sermons criticising the state for allowing an army of infidels on Saudi soil; their popularity skyrocketed and huge numbers of their tapes circulated throughout the country.[32] Openly defiant of the regime, they capitalised on popular discontent and enjoyed far greater popular credibility than the official clerics. Universities -- from the outset *sahwa* strongholds -- were rich recruitment grounds for political dissent. Intellectuals would gather in small groups organised by Islamist professors to discuss the nation's affairs.[33] In March 1991, several wrote a "Letter of Demands", which eventually was signed by over 400 religious intellectuals -- among them, members of the official establishment and all prominent reformist preachers -- and sent to King Fahd. In September 1992, 107 religious scholars prepared a similar "Memorandum of Advice". Islamists formulated two sets of demands: for rule of law, political participation and respect of human rights (as defined by the *shari'a*); and for strengthened control by religious institutions over state and society.

The Islamists' 1993 decision to establish the "Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights" (CDLR) prompted a government crackdown, which culminated in 1994 with the arrests of al-Hawali and al-Awda. Their followers' reaction -- a protest rally in al-Awda's hometown of Burayda[34] -- triggered another wave of arrests. Most CDLR members were imprisoned; two, Muhammad al-Mas'ari and Sa'd al-Faqih, fled to London where they established a branch of the movement in exile.

This process of politicisation affected the Islamist arena as a whole, in particular the rejectionists who in the 1980s had largely eschewed political involvement.[35] By thrusting national and international politics on to their doorsteps, the Gulf crisis made their self-imposed isolation and apolitical stance far more difficult to sustain.[36] The government's repression of the *sahwa*

generated political discussions among them,[37] which, according to a former member of a rejectionist study circle in Riyadh, focused on whether certain aspects of the state's behaviour warranted *takfir* (denunciation as impious or an infidel). After the *sahwa* submitted its "Memorandum of Advice" in 1992, debate centred on whether the ruling family were infidels.[38] In 1994 -- after Burayda -- the question extended to the divisive issue whether official religious scholars also had behaved in un-Islamic fashion. The most radical members of the study circle, who concluded that they had, broke with other rejectionists and joined *jihadist* ranks in early 1995.[39] Also instrumental in the politicisation of some rejectionists was Issam al-Barqawi (aka Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi), a radical Islamist ideologue of Jordanian origin.[40] Based in Peshawar (Pakistan), he had ties to the remnants of Juhayman's movement and regularly visited Saudi Arabia.[41]

Jihadists-- in particular Osama bin Laden, their undisputed leader since the 1980s -- were also deeply influenced by the Gulf War. Ideologically, bin Laden originally was at heart a *sahwist*, whose views were

---

[32] For portraits of Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali in the early 1990s, see ibid.

[33] ICG interviews, Riyadh

[34] This is often referred to as the *intifadat Burayda* or Burayda uprising. Calling it an uprising may be an overstatement since only a few hundred people took to the streets but the country had witnessed nothing like it since the 1960s.

[35] Juhayman's group had political aspirations but the followers who survived the 1980 crackdown for the most part retreated into isolated, introspective lifestyles and did not have any identifiable political project.

[36] Due to their extreme social conservatism, many rejectionists avoided television, newspapers and radio, all of which they considered sinful.

[37] ICG interviews, Riyadh. Bin Laden himself commented: "when the Saudi government transgressed in oppressing all voices of the scholars and the voices of those who call for Islam, I found myself forced, especially after the government prevented Shaykh Salman al-Awda and Shaykh Safar al-Hawali and some other scholars, to carry out a small part of my duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong". Cited in Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York, 2002), p. 108.

[38] ICG Interview, Riyadh

[39] Among those who left this rejectionist study circle were Abd al-Aziz al-Mu'tham and Saud al-Utaybi. Al-Mu'tham was convicted and executed along with three others for carrying out the November 1995 Riyadh bombings. Al-Utaybi is currently a prominent member of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP).

[40] Born in 1959 to Jordanian parents of Palestinian origin in Kuwait and raised there, al-Maqdisi came under the influence of exiled JSM members around 1980. He spent two years studying religion in Medina in the early 1980s, before departing for Afghanistan. His 1984 book *The Creed of Abraham* (*Millat Ibrahim*), which developed a doctrine of jihad based on nineteenth century Wahhabi theologians, established him as a prominent *jihadi* ideologue. During the latter half of the 1980s, he was based in Peshawar, where he played a key role mobilising Arabs for the Afghan jihad; he also regularly visited JSM members in the Saudi desert. In 1990 or 1991 he published *The Clear Exposures of the Infidel Nature of the Saudi State*, which was widely circulated in Saudi Arabia and earned him the wrath of the Al Saud. In 1992 he moved from Peshawar to Jordan, becoming a leader of the radical *Bay'at al-Iman*. He has more or less continuously been imprisoned since 1996.

[41] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

shaped by al-Hawali.[42] But the invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia's rejection of his suggestion that mujahidin be called upon to defend the country against Iraq, and, especially, the deployment of U.S. troops, constituted a triple jolt and wake-up call. With his criticism of the Saudi regime and its alliance with the U.S. gaining in intensity, he moved to Sudan in 1991 and, in 1994, was stripped of his Saudi citizenship. Bin Laden was moving in directions far from his early *sahwist* orientation, seeing in the U.S. the primary obstacle to political change in the region and even a direct military threat to the Islamic *Umma* (the global Muslim community). Criticising individual regimes no longer sufficed; by the mid-1990s, he concluded that a direct, global confrontation with the U.S. was needed.[43] In short, the Gulf war triggered a process whereby *jihadists* became both more critical of the Saudi regime and more openly hostile to the U.S.

The most spectacular signs of violent Islamism occurred in the mid-1990s with attacks on U.S. targets. On 13 November 1995, a car bomb exploded at a Saudi National Guard facility in central Riyadh, killing five Americans and two Indians and injuring 60. On 22 April 1996, four suspects confessed on Saudi television; they were executed a month later. Three were *jihadists* with combat experience in Afghanistan and Bosnia; the fourth was a former rejectionist-turned-*jihadist*, who left his rejectionist study circle in Riyadh in late 1994.[44] Neither claimed membership in any particular group or organisation, though they said they had been influenced by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Muhammad al-Mas'ari and bin Laden. To date, there is no hard evidence of bin Laden's involvement; the widespread assumption that al-Qaeda was involved appears to be based essentially on the fact that he praised the militants in subsequent interviews.

The June 1996 bombing of the U.S. barracks in Khobar that killed nineteen Americans and injured almost 400 people of various nationalities is shrouded in even greater mystery. Although Saudi authorities claim to have sentenced several individuals in connection with it, the perpetrators' identities have never been established, and considerable debate remains over whether it was carried out by an al-Qaeda affiliate or an Iranian-sponsored Shiite group. There is little doubt, however, that both events were

landmarks in the radicalisation of Islamist dissent that began with the 1991 Gulf war.[45]

D. IMPRISONMENT AND EXILE (1996-1999)

Saudi authorities won their battle against the *sahwa* by drawing on a two-track strategy of repression and division. By mid-1995, virtually all the most influential *sahwist* leaders had been imprisoned or forced into exile in the UK. The "London-based Opposition" maintained some influence on politics, distributing leaflets and books through an underground network; over time, however, it suffered from internal wrangling and its distance from the country. In 1996, al-Masari broke with al-Faqih and set up the Movement for Islamic Reform in Saudi Arabia (MIRA). Today, their influence is hard to measure, and their in-country presence a matter of dispute.[46] Regardless, Saudi authorities have accused the London-based opposition of ties to the current terrorist campaign and have repeatedly requested the UK to extradite both leaders.

In the early 1990s, the regime also sought to split *sahwa* ranks by promoting the *Madkhalism* movement, named after Shaykh Rabi al-Madkhali. Its views closely mirrored the Wahhabi establishment's: unconditional submission to religious and political authority and condemnation of the politicised, heretical *sahwa* clerics. Taking a page from the *sahwa*, however, al-Madkhali's disciples used tapes, conferences and, later, websites to convey their message, thereby countering their foes more effectively than the religious establishment. By 1994, the *Madkhalists* reportedly had converted a number of former *sahwists*, including in their Burayda stronghold.[47]

Rejectionists reacted diversely to the crackdown. Some again withdrew from politics altogether, reverting to their original focus on social conservatism and puritanism. Upon their release from prison, the

---

[42] Even as late as 1995, his notorious "Open Letter to King Fahd" sought to persuade -- not coerce - the Saudi regime to change its policies.

[43] In 1996, he issued his "Declaration of War on the United States".

[44] ICG interview, Jeddah.

[45] See J. Teitelbaum, "Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition", Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 2000 for a discussion of these attacks.

[46] On 14 October 2003, MIRA's leader, Saad al-Faqih, called on his followers to demonstrate in front of the Mamlaka tower in Riyadh, site of a human rights conference. Several hundred people reportedly joined the rally, surprising observers and leading some to conclude that the organisation's presence in Saudi Arabia was stronger than previously believed. ICG interview with Saudi analyst, London, July 2004. Others disagree, noting that not all who attended had come for that purpose, that protesters mentioned neither MIRA nor al-Faqih's name, calling instead for the liberation of political prisoners, and that many participants were relatives of detainees.

[47] ICG interviews, Riyadh

more politicised and prominent rejectionists mostly either joined the *jihadists* in Afghanistan or became central players in the more moderate, liberal Islamist movement of the late 1990s. Finally, many *jihadists*, while keeping a recruitment and fundraising network in Saudi Arabia, [48] chose voluntary exile in Afghanistan, to where bin Laden had returned in 1996 to re-establish training camps. They did not return until the November 2001 fall of the Taliban.

E. RECOMPOSITION OF THE ISLAMIST FIELD (1999-)

As part of a more general -- albeit modest -- regime liberalisation, most imprisoned Islamists, reformers and rejectionists alike, were released by the late 1990s, including, in 1999, al-Hawali and al-Awda. Media restrictions were relaxed, the internet was permitted, and public political debate, silenced since the mid-1990s, slowly resurfaced. These developments coincided with a recomposition of the Islamist field:

Several rejectionists (such as Mansur al-Nuqaidan and Mishari al-Zaydi) and reformers (including Abd al-Aziz al-Qasim and Abdallah al-Hamid) openly discussed and criticised their old ideas, proposing more liberal interpretations of sacred texts in a process of *muraja'a* (revision). Despite significant differences, they formed the core of a "new Islamist" outlook.

Al-Awda, al-Qarni and al-Hawali, all former *sahwa* leaders, toned down their criticism of the state, and the regime began to view them more tolerantly. Indeed, with the official religious establishment largely discredited, *sahwist* cooperation was considered highly valuable by rulers in desperate need of religious legitimacy.

A new radical Islamist trend -- often referred to as *salafi jihadi*[49] -- emerged around former *sahwist* scholars such as Nasir al-Fahd, Hamud al-Shu'aybi and Ali al-Khudayr. Primarily based in Buraydah, they attracted a following among young *jihadists* and rejectionists. After his 1997 release from prison, their leading ideologue, al-Fahd, attracted wide attention.

Opposing the *sahwa* leaders' evolving moderation, they branded many Saudi liberals as infidels, called for *jihad* against "Jews and the Crusaders," praised and justified the 11 September attacks, and sanctioned use of weapons of mass destruction against "infidels". The regime sought to silence them in 2002-2003 when their criticism turned explicitly against it.

The 11 September events occurred when these processes were already well underway but they accelerated and intensified them. Each trend saw added reason to continue on its path: "new Islamists" concluded that a more progressive, "enlightened" reading of sacred texts was more necessary than ever; former *sahwa* leaders were determined to mediate between regime and radical Islamists; *salafi-jihadist* preachers read in the attacks and their aftermath more justification for violent anti-Western rhetoric, and, in time, for renewed assaults on Western targets in Saudi Arabia.

---

[48] Yusuf al-Ayiri, the alleged al-Qaeda coordinator in Saudi Arabia who was killed in May 2003, never left the country after his return from Sudan in 1994, despite repeated imprisonment. He is said to have played an important role as a fundraiser and recruiter.

[49] *Salafi jihadi* is a loose description used to designate an outlook that invokes Wahhabi theology to advocate resort to violence. In effect, it provided Saudi *jihadists* with a more sophisticated theological framework for their activism.

II. ISLAMISM AND REFORM

A. THE "NEW ISLAMISTS"

From the late 1990s, the new Islamists -- also called liberal Islamists -- have been increasingly active, both politically and in the media. They can roughly be divided into two groupings.

1. Social reformers

For the most part, social reformers are former rejectionists who turned into vehement critics of Saudi social and religious conservatism. Over time, they have had access to the influential local newspapers, such as *al-Watan* and *al-Riyadh*. The best known, Mansur al-Nuqaidan, established his name in the U.S. with his November 2003 opinion piece in *The New York Times* when he was being sought by the Saudi justice system for "anti-Islamic" views. According to him, Wahhabism has bred dangerous religious extremism and is directly responsible for the culture of intolerance and repression that pervades Saudi Arabia.[50] His indictment extends beyond the official establishment to encompass its informal counterparts such as the *sahwa*, guilty in his eyes of promoting a closed, puritanical version of Islam rather than the more open, modernist interpretations suggested by Muslim reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In May 2003, only days after the Riyadh attacks, Khalid al-Ghannami -- another social reformer with an activist Islamist past -- published an article denouncing the religious inspiration behind the *jihadists*, taking particular aim at Ibn Taymiyya, a key intellectual source for Wahhabism.[51] Mishari al-Zaydi arguably has become the most prominent -- and provocative -- social reformer, staking out controversial positions in his weekly *al-Sharq al-Awsat* column.

Focusing on social rather than political change is, for these commentators, vital. Political reform in the absence of fundamental social and religious modernisation, they argue, would have disastrous consequences. Opposing early national elections, al-Nuqaidan explains that "Saudi Arabia is culturally unripe for such an experiment....Elections today would only strengthen Wahhabism and tribalism".[52] In the same vein, Mishari al-Zaydi explains:

I don't see political participation as the first step. That's why I am not enthusiastic about elections.... There has to be some kind of political opening up, but our society still thinks along tribal and religious lines. Its political consciousness has not developed to the point where it would elect the most efficient.[53]

While social reformers' views have been given widespread coverage in the West, their impact in Saudi Arabia is far more uncertain. Breaking the taboo against anti-Wahhabi criticism has undoubtedly been important; yet, numerous interviews suggest they do not enjoy significant social influence except perhaps among the intellectual elite. Even there, their youth (most are in their 30s) and relatively slight education limit their credibility; not a few of their elders suspect they merely seek quick fame in the West, mimicking what the U.S. in particular desperately wants to hear.[54] Such accusations were levelled against Mishari al-Zaydi when he appeared to back the highly unpopular French law prohibiting conspicuous religious signs (and therefore barring Muslim women from wearing headscarves) in public schools.[55] Although social reformers continue to proclaim their Islamic credentials and have consistently attacked Wahhabism from an Islamic point of view, this is becoming increasingly hard to sustain in the public eye, and many are now considered traitors by the bulk of Saudi Islamists.[56] Even moderate Islamist figures with whom they once were close, such as al-Qasim, now tend to distrust them.[57] Increasingly isolated, social reformers have sought ties with more liberal thinkers, such as Turki al-Hamad, who for years has developed his own

---

[50] See *al-Riyadh*, 11 May 2003.

[51] Referring to those who perpetrated the attacks, he wrote: "Why did they raise the banner of jihad*?* Because Ibn Taymiyya, the `*jihadist* theoretician,' decreed that when the Prince does not fulfil his duty by promoting virtue, preventing vice and proclaiming jihad, it is the ulema's duty to do so.We have to say things as they are: these words are a mistake and a genuine catastrophe that threaten national unity. To speak candidly, today it is with Ibn Taymiyya himself that we have a problem". *Al-Watan*, 22 May 2003.

[52] ICG interview, Riyadh**.** That said, al-Nuqaidan has strongly backed the January 2003 petition to Crown Prince Abdullah, which called for deep political reforms designed to transform Saudi Arabia into a state based on "constitutional institutions" and advocated elected regional councils. See ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* op. cit. Since then, however, he appears to have modified his views and adopted a more sceptical attitude toward early political reform.

[53] ICG interview, Jeddah**.** See also ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?*, op. cit.

[54] ICG interviews, Riyadh and Jeddah**.**

[55] *Al-Sharq al-Awsat,* 20 January 2004.

[56] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[57] ICG Interview, Riyadh.

secular critique of the prevailing social order but this has only deepened Islamist suspicions.[58]

From the outset, relations with the regime have been ambiguous. Although the internet gives them a degree of independence, social reformers rely on the media to attract notice and so remain largely at the mercy of the government-controlled press. The regime's relatively tolerant attitude makes sense: social reformers can be effective critics of the *jihadist* outlook they once embraced; they can offset the power of the Wahhabi establishment (or, at a minimum, be used tactically to keep the religious establishment from challenging the regime); and they are seen as less menacing than those clamouring for political change.[59] (Indeed, those among the royal family reported to be most sympathetic to reform -- including the Crown Prince and Foreign Minister -- reportedly consider a rapid political opening akin to "national suicide".[60]) Even so, there are red lines that, if crossed, bring swift retribution: Mansur al-Nuqaidan has three times been barred from publishing after writing articles deemed provocative.[61]

2. Political reformers

Originally, most political reformists belonged to the *sahwa,* though several are former rejectionists. Abdallah al-Hamid and Abd al-Aziz al-Qasim have been prominent in the dissident Islamist movement since the 1990s. After their releases from prison, the first in 1995 the second in 1997, they set out to develop a more progressive Islamist theory built around civil society, popular participation and democracy -- all, of course, within the context of Islamic law.[62] Aiming to reconcile popular sovereignty and respect for *shari'a*, they also urge religious reform to relax some of the more stringent legal requirements of Wahhabism and make room for interpretation where scripture is vague (*ijtihad*). They also support social reform, though with strong residual conservatism, in particular on women's issues.[63]

Together with liberals such as Muhammad Said Tayyeb and Matruk al-Falih as well as Shiites like Ja'far al-Shayeb, these Islamist political reformers

produced in 2002 a diverse centrist coalition. Preaching gradual political transformation within the context of Islam and the monarchy, this loose network of progressive Sunni Islamists, liberals and Shiites, spearheaded the petition lobby.[64] The January 2003 document described a package of reforms, including a constitutional monarchy, rule of law, an elected parliament, an empowered civil society, respect for human rights, and an end to discrimination, in particular against Shiites.[65] Striking a delicate balance, the petitioners carefully framed their demands in a religious context, from repeated references to sacred texts to the requirement that reforms conform with *shari'a.*

For some liberals, this alliance with progressive Islamists is essential:

It enables us to exit from the impasse in which we have perpetually found ourselves, providing us with the Islamic credentials we've been lacking. Plus, what is the problem about working together? After all, we are all Muslims and patriots.[66]

Not all agree. A minority fears that the political reformers profess adherence to liberal ideas while remaining committed to the ideal of an Islamic state.[67] Conversely, some Islamists -- in particular more radical members of the *sahwa* -- believe they are "providing religious legitimacy to a project that is un-Islamic".[68]

Relations with the regime have evolved. In January 2003, Crown Prince Abdullah met with petition signatories, indicating receptivity to their message of political modernisation. Other steps -- convening National Dialogues and announcing local elections -- likewise signalled an open-minded approach.[69] Frustrated with the slow pace of change, however, petitioners sharpened their demands and, in a December 2003 document, requested a three-year process to draft and adopt a constitution. This more radical demand, as well as fear of an alliance between centrists and *sahwists* and the rise in violence prompted a tougher regime response.[70] The

---

[58] ICG interview, Riyadh.
[59] ICG interviews, Riyadh.
[60] ICG interview with government advisor, Riyadh.
[61] Al-Nuqaidan was dismissed from *al-Watan* in late 2000; in May 2003, after a series of articles in *al-Riyadh* denouncing links between Wahhabism and *jihadism*, he was barred from writing for two months; since September 2003, he has not been able to publish in Saudi newspapers.
[62] ICG interviews, Riyadh.
[63] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[64] See ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* op. cit*.,* pp. 13-15.
[65] See *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 30 January 2003.
[66] ICG interview, Riyadh.
[67] ICG interviews, Riyadh.
[68] ICG interviews, Riyadh.
[69] For more detail, see ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself,* op. cit., pp. 13-15.
[70] The regime's tougher response was not typical; traditionally, and when possible, it has opted for negotiation and co-option over repression. For example, it waited until

reputedly hard-line Interior Minister, Prince Nayif summoned signatories to his office, accused them of being unpatriotic and threatened them with prison. One participant explained that:

During the hours that followed my return home, I was convinced that the police were on their way to arrest me. Nobody who had witnessed the anger on Prince Nayef's face could have believed otherwise.[71]

In March 2004, renewed activism by centrist reformers -- in particular plans to establish an independent human rights organisation -- triggered regime fears that the initial steps toward a political party were being taken.[72] A dozen were arrested, including three of the coalition's most active Islamists: Abdallah al-Hamid, Tawfiq al-Qusayyir and Sulayman al-Rashudi.[73]

B.   THE SAHWA AND REFORM

1.   Moderation and co-option

As mentioned, most former *sahwa* leaders tempered their views after release from prison in the late 1990s. Some even closed ranks with the regime; Ayidh al-Qarni, for example, took an official role, getting three extremist preachers (Nasir al-Fahd, Ali al-Khudayr and Ahmad al-Khalidi) to recant on national television their *fatwa* urging Saudis not to help the authorities seize wanted militants and to reverse their accusations of government apostasy. Others, such as al-Awda, while keeping a distance from the regime, participated in the first National Dialogue sponsored by the Crown Prince. During the 2003 war on Iraq, both refused to call for jihad and urged Saudi youth to avoid any action that could disturb domestic peace.[74] A third *sahwa* trend, personified by al-Hawali, has been more critical of the regime, albeit within bounds -- refusing to attend the

National Dialogue because Shiites were there, and alternating understanding for the motivations of *jihadists* with condemnation of their acts.

The onset of terrorist attacks in May 2003 was a principal trigger of the *sahwa* preachers' political realignment and the clear division within Islamist ranks. It forced Islamists to choose sides, and a broad segment invoked religious arguments to condemn the *jihadists* unequivocally.[75] This lent religious legitimacy to the regime's struggle in a way the official establishment no longer could.[76]

2.   The struggle against social reform

Importantly, many *sahwa* preachers have (for now at least) given up the hopes they entertained in the early 1990s of spearheading a political reform movement. Their sermons avoid frontal attacks against the regime, particularly on sensitive questions like corruption, lack of representation or the absence of civil rights. Instead, they seem most intent on protecting the status quo from pressures for social reform, an endeavour for which they have found natural allies in the official religious establishment. For instance, after the second National Dialogue recommended modernising educational curricula "in order to guarantee a spirit of tolerance and moderation and the development of cognitive capacities", 156 religious scholars, principally *sahwa* professors and judges, issued a statement condemning this as "contrary to the path the State has called for and which it needs more than ever: strengthening loyalty to the requirements of faith".[77]

In similar fashion, *sahwa* preachers reacted with alarm at suggestions that the status of women ought to be revised. The attendance without a veil of Lubna al-Ulayan (the wealthiest and most prominent Saudi businesswoman) at the Jeddah economic forum, much like the subsequent picture in `*Ukaz* showing 27 unveiled female participants, triggered heated reactions from the official religious establishment and the *sahwa*.[78] The third National Dialogue in June

---

1994 to arrest al-Hawali and al-Awda, whose harsh criticism had begun several years earlier.

[71] ICG interview, Jeddah.

[72] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[73] Al-Qusayyir and al-Rashudi were released some two weeks later, after pledging not to be involved in politics. Al-Hamid refused to make a similar commitment, and he remains incarcerated, along with Matruk al-Falih, a liberal activist, and Ali al-Dumayni, a Shiite leader. Their public trial opened on 9 August 2004.

[74] In March 2003, al-Awda coordinated a statement entitled "The Internal Front and the Current Challenge: A Legal Viewpoint", which argued that jihad could only be proclaimed by established religious authorities. See www.islamtoday.net.

[75] The first such manifesto, published on 16 May 2003 on al-Awda's website, www.islamtoday.net, was signed by al-Awda, al-Hawali and al-'Umar; a second, with the same signatories, was distributed a few days after the 21 April 2004 attack on the al-Washm police station.

[76] While the Council of Grand Ulemas also issued fatwas condemning the attacks, they had less impact than the *sahwa* manifestos.

[77] See www.islamonline.net and ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* op. cit., p 25.

[78] Several days after these events, Abd al-Aziz Al Shaykh, the Kingdom's Grand Mufti, stated: "we have followed what occurred at the Jeddahh Economic Forum, and we must

2004 devoted to women, prompted repeated warnings by *sahwa* preachers. A result has been the emergence of a group of Islamist women, close to the *sahwa* preachers, most notably Nura al-Sa'd, who have defended the veil and gender segregation.

In stark contrast to the 1990s, the *sahwa* appears on the defensive, silent about political reform and vehemently opposed to social change. However, its position is not entirely monolithic. Thus, al-Awda warned against "Western-inspired" curriculum changes but refused to join the 156 signatories. He also is open to dialogue with Shiites, a position that distinguishes him and several others who view a political alliance with the centrist/reformists as a real possibility from the more conservative *sahwists*.[79]

3. A possible alliance with the centrist coalition?

In contrast to the January 2003 petition, that of December 2003 was signed by roughly twenty *sahwists*, notably Muhsin al-Awaji, a former CDLR activist once close to al-Hawali. Al-Awda also is reported to have implicitly backed the text.[80] Their participation came at a price: the consensus document calls for broad political reform but is couched in a far more religious tone. For centrists, who enjoy only limited popular appeal, the benefit from an alliance with credible *sahwa* preachers and their transformation from a purely intellectual to a social movement would be clear.[81] For *sahwists*, too, there would be potential benefit, allowing them to resume political activism while moderating their image -- a goal very much on their minds since the 11 September attacks.[82] An alliance between centrists and moderate members of the *sahwa* clearly concerns the regime, whose sharp response to the December 2003 petition arguably is explained by the significant number of *sahwist* signatories.

---

condemn it and refute it….I therefore condemn as strongly as possible these acts which I declare contrary to Divine Law, and I warn that they will have serious consequences". *Elaph*, 20 January 2003. Al-Awda backed the Grand Mufti, while seeking to calm things and urging that there be no retaliation against the women.

[79] According to some reports, al-Awda invited Shaykh Hasan al-Saffar -- the long-time leader of the Shiite movement -- to pursue discussions.

[80] ICG interview, Riyadh.

[81] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[82] For example, a large number of *sahwa* preachers, including al-Awda and al-Hawali, published an open letter to 60 American intellectuals in April 2002 expressing their desire for peaceful coexistence with the West.

C. SHIITE ISLAMISTS

Shiite Islamists take a two-track approach. On the one hand, they periodically express community grievances. Thus, in April 2003, three weeks after the fall of Iraq's Baathist regime, they joined 450 Shiite activists in signing a letter to the Crown Prince requesting an end to religious discrimination and establishment of a Shiite religious authority to regulate their affairs in Saudi Arabia.[83] On the other hand, they are at pains to make clear their loyalty to the nation, their hostility to any alliance with an outside power, and -- in an effort to pre-empt an obvious regime concern -- their determination not to take advantage of the situation in Iraq.[84] Some explicitly deny existence of a "Shiite question", insofar as "the problems affecting Shiites are those that affect the Saudi nation as a whole".[85]

By adopting this clear nationalist stance, some fifteen Shiite intellectuals, mainly Islamists, were able to join the centrist coalition that issued the January 2003 petition. Among them were Jaafar al-Shayeb, a long-time campaigner for Shiite rights and Muhammad al-Mahfuz. Hasan al-Saffar, the long-time leader of the Saudi Shiite Islamist movement, welcomed the initiative.[86] Even when some liberals balked at the December 2003 petition's overly "Islamist" overtones and the presence among signatories of prominent Sunni Islamists from the *sahwa*, Shiite Islamists remained. This represents a significant evolution in Saudi Islamism, insofar as *sahwists* and Shiite Islamists had traditionally considered each other enemies and avoided any cooperation on political projects.

Anxious about the centrists, but far more fearful of any potential Shiite separatism, the regime appears to view the centrist/Shiite rapprochement as the lesser of two evils. This explains why it has for the most part spared Shiite Islamists during the recent crackdown: none of their leaders has been arrested, and the only Shiite who remains in jail, Ali al-Dumayni, is a liberal activist who has not formulated his political demands within a Shiite framework.

---

[83] *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 1 May 2003.

[84] ICG interview, Eastern Province.

[85] ICG interview, Eastern Province. In this spirit, Shaykh Hasan al-Saffar claimed that he had "participated in the National Dialogue not as a representative of any particular community or region, but rather as a simple member of the national elite that gathered to discuss national issues". *Majallat al-Jusur*, vol. 9, May 2004.

[86] ICG interview, Riyadh.

By most accounts, community leaders such as al-Saffar have persuaded the vast majority of the Shiite movement of the wisdom of this conciliatory approach. More radical factions have in effect been silenced. Modest as they may be, the achievements of the Shiite community -- most notably the right to celebrate Ashura in relative freedom, gained in March 2004[87] -- strengthened al-Saffar and the moderate leadership while winning over some residual sceptics.

D.   THE STATE OF ISLAMIST REFORM

Since the late 1990s, Saudi Islamism has given rise to two powerful and dynamic groupings of moderate reformers. Resorting to petitions and other forms of public pressure to move toward a more open, constitutional system, political reformers have aimed at a broad, pluralistic gathering of intellectual and religious strands. They have been largely successful, rallying important Shiites and liberals. Their most recent effort -- to attract *sahwa* leaders such as al-Awda -- would be the most significant, as it could herald their transformation into a popular movement. To promote that goal, they have had to make their rhetoric more Islamic, though core demands have remained basically unchanged since January 2003; their success and the fear of a broadened coalition likely caused the regime's attitude to harden in late 2003. The incarceration of three leaders -- Abdallah al-Hamid, Matruk al-Falih and Ali al-Dumayni -- has seriously handicapped the movement.

Hostile to a swift political opening, social reformers emphasise the need to reform and curb Wahhabism; in this, they have found allies among Riyadh intellectual circles and even some royal family members. But their adversaries in the religious establishment and most of the *sahwa* are no less powerful. In other words, their potential political support is inherently limited. They also could trigger an unwelcome backlash: the more (and the more provocatively) they push for social reform, the fiercer the *sahwa's* opposition, the more likely its alliance with the Wahhabi establishment, and the greater the ensuing polarisation of national politics.

III.   VIOLENT ISLAMISM

A.   A CHRONOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

The recent spate of terrorist attacks is an escalation in the campaign militant Islamists launched in mid-2003. While acts of violence are hardly unprecedented, this sustained wave followed by direct confrontation between regime and insurgents is. Despite the attack in Riyadh in 1995 and against Khobar in 1996 as well as occasional violent outbursts in the 1990s and early 2000s, militant Saudi Islamists on the whole had focused their activities outside the Kingdom until 2003.[88]

Several factors explain this new domestic focus. Its immediate origins lie in the return of hundreds of militants from Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in late 2001, some apparently with orders from bin Laden to prepare attacks on U.S. targets on Saudi soil. Indeed, there is some evidence that operational preparations began as early as 2002.[89] Returning Afghan veterans also found inspiration and legitimacy in the radicalised and emboldened views of *salafi jihadi* scholars such as Nasir al-Fahd and Ali al-Khudayr. The build-up to the Iraq war and escalation on the Israeli-Palestinian front provided added political, religious and emotional fuel and likely facilitated recruitment. The Saudi regime's crackdown on radical Islamists in February and March 2003, designed to pre-empt possible militant action during the Iraq war, likely triggered the decision to carry out operations under the QAP name.

The 12 May 2003 attacks. On 18 March 2003, a bomb exploded prematurely in a Riyadh house,

---

[87] Reuters, 3 March 2004.

[88] That said, there had been a steady stream of low-level terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia since mid-2000. See Peterson, J.E., "Saudi Arabia: Internal Security Incidents Since 1979", Arabian Peninsula Background Note, no. APBN-003, January 2004. Radical Islamists may well have been behind some of these attacks against Westerners for which there have been no explanations and no claims of responsibility.
[89] Several accounts published in the *jihadist Sawt al-Jihad* relate conversation between Saudi *jihadists* and bin Laden prior to their return to Saudi Arabia. The obituary of Fahd al-Saidi, who died in the 18 March 2003 explosion, recounts his departure from Afghanistan in late 2001 as follows: "He sent a two-line-letter to Shaykh Abu Abdallah (Osama bin Laden) asking permission to leave and carry out operations abroad. The Shaykh agreed and asked Khalid Shaykh (Muhammad) to coordinate the departure for 'the Lion' (al-Saidi) and his brothers to go and strike at the American rear bases in the Arab Peninsula". *Sawt al-Jihad* 16, p. 45.

leading to the uncovering of a massive arms cache.[90] On 6 May, the police raided another house in Riyadh, prompting a gun battle with militants, who escaped. The following day, authorities published the pictures and names of nineteen wanted militants. On 12 May, twelve suicide bombers carried out three near-simultaneous attacks on residence compounds in Riyadh, using explosives-laden cars, killing 30 people and wounding nearly 200. This was the most significant violent operation in recent Saudi history and marked the onset of an all-out confrontation between authorities and the QAP.

May-October 2003. Over the next six months, large-scale clashes between police and militants occurred throughout the country. While the number of killed and arrested militants remains unclear, a review of police activity suggests that ten or more cells -- mostly five to twenty militants each, in safe houses in Mecca and Medina (west), Riyadh and the Qasim region (centre) and Jizan (south) -- were likely dismantled.[91] Nearly all safe houses had large stockpiles of arms, explosives and other equipment, though it is unknown how many plots might have been under way. The QAP lost many mid-level operatives, as well as its then-leader, Yusuf al-Ayiri, who was killed on 31 May 2003.

November-December 2003. The militants struck back on 8 November 2003 with their second major offensive. Two suicide bombers dressed as police officers and driving an explosives-packed van forced their way into the al-Muhayya residential compound. The explosion killed seventeen and wounded over 120. Because many victims were Arab and Muslim, including many children, the operation triggered a public backlash. Two weeks later, police in Riyadh seized a van packed with explosives, foiling a large-scale, potentially more murderous attack.

In December, a faction called the Haramain Brigades initiated a new campaign targeting high-level Saudi officials. A car bomb reportedly was defused near the

Saudi intelligence services headquarters, and a leading counterterrorism official was shot and wounded. According to rumours, an attempt also was made on Prince Muhammad bin Nayif, the interior minister's son. On 29 December, a small bomb was detonated in the empty car of an intelligence services official.

January-March 2004. Although gunfights between police and militants persisted, the pattern of arrests and confrontations changed. Aside from one major clash at a Riyadh safe house on 29 January, militants seldom were found in groups of more than three and were discovered on the road far more often than in houses. Such incidents and arrests tended to be in the Riyadh area. On 15 March 2004, police killed the new alleged militant leader, Khalid al-Hajj.

April-June 2004. The period since April 2004 saw a surge in gunfights on roads and at checkpoints, with militants increasingly initiating the action. Police also reported that militants used heavier weaponry, including rocket-propelled and hand grenades. On 21 April, a car bomb exploded in front of the traffic police headquarters in central Riyadh, killing six and wounding almost 150. The operation highlighted a growing schism among militants on whether to attack domestic, official targets. While the Haramain Brigades claimed responsibility, a QAP leader, Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin, denied involvement and insisted that "the Jews, the Americans and the Crusaders in general" remained priority targets.[92]

As if to underscore al-Muqrin's message, four militants infiltrated the headquarters of ABB, a Swiss company in Yanbu (west coast) on 1 May, killing five employees and raising fears that the QAP once again was expanding its geographic reach and going after the oil industry. The Yanbu operation was followed by a similar one on 29 May in which militants infiltrated a residential complex in Khobar (east coast) and, going room to room, killed Westerners while sparing Muslims. When the drama ended nearly 24 hours later, 22 people were dead, while several militants managed to flee. From late May onwards, militants began killing individual Westerners around Riyadh, filming the murder of one American in his own house and posting it on the internet. Several weeks later, the beheading of another, Paul Johnston, was also posted.

June-September 2004. On 19 June 2004, police killed four senior militants, including their new presumed leader Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin. Four days later, the government offered a limited amnesty to

---

[90] A series of terrorist attacks against government targets in the northern Jawf Province already had been launched in February and March 2003 and continued into April. It remains unclear whether they were connected to the QAP campaign.
[91] This estimate is based on a detailed review of police activity in 2003: in Medina in late May 2003, Mecca on 15 June and 3 November, Riyadh on 21 July, 10 August and 6 November, various unidentified locations in the Qasim region on 28 July, 5 and 8 October, and Jizan on 15 August. Saudi authorities claimed that the QAP consisted of six cells in May 2003 and that all but one had been dismantled by mid-2004. See articles in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* around these dates; *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 June 2004.

[92] www.aljazeera.net, 22 April 2004; *The Guardian*, 28 April 2004.

those who surrendered within a month, promising they would not be executed and leaving the decision to prosecute in the hands of victims' families. The QAP rejected the offer, and reportedly only six militants, none a key operative, turned themselves in.[93] The brutal wave of kidnappings and violent attacks came to a momentary (and relative) halt in the months following al-Muqrin's death. In July and August, only three shootouts between militants and police were reported -- on 1 and 20 July in Riyadh and on 11 August in Mecca -- in the course of which five more militants were killed; on 2 August, an Irish engineer was murdered in his Riyadh office, the first such attack in Saudi Arabia since mid-June.

The lull may well have been only a strategic pause, as militants regrouped. *Jihadist* magazines such as *Sawt al-Jihad* and *Muaskar al-Battar* have continued to appear with the same frequency, and new ones such as the *jihadi* "women's magazine" *al-Khansa* have been launched, suggesting militant activism persists. There also has been a recent upsurge in militant activism, including gunmen firing at a U.S. diplomatic vehicle on 30 August, shootouts in Burayda on 3, 4, and 5 September, which left five policemen dead, and two explosions near Western-linked banks in Jedda on 11 September.

Still, there is reason to believe that the loss of safe houses and arrest or death of key personnel -- successive QAP leaders, *Sawt al-Jihad* editor Isa Al Awshan and leading ideologue Faris al-Zahrani -- has done more than temporary damage to the QAP. Its presumed new head, Salih al-Awfi, enjoys a lesser reputation than his predecessors, in terms of experience and leadership skills.[94]

B. AL-QAEDA ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA (QAP)

The information on Saudi Islamist militants is unusually extensive. Much comes from the militants themselves, who have promoted their cause through publications and high-quality videos, both well-distributed via the internet.[95] Saudi authorities also have been particularly forthcoming with data on

militants (though this needs to be treated with some scepticism), while local newspapers have been given some leeway to carry out investigations.

1. Organisational structure

QAP has a loose structure, with militants operating in largely separate and insulated groups but viewing themselves as part of a single, overarching movement. Their collective, organisational awareness is maintained by strong fraternal bonds acquired in Afghan training camps or through shared experiences as fugitives and rebels in Saudi Arabia; a common ideological outlook, focused on the need to eliminate the U.S. presence on the Arabian peninsula; and a sophisticated media apparatus that provides political cohesion and boosts the morale of field operatives.

From the outset, QAP has operated on the basis of small cells. Security forces typically find no more than twenty militants, often far fewer, in their own safe houses and with their own weapons and equipment.[96] Names used by the militants -- such as Falluja Squadron, al-Quds Squadron and Haramain Brigades -- most likely designate cells or subgroups which over time developed separate identities and slightly different strategies and tactics.[97] While QAP considers Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri its supreme guides, lines of communication with the distant leadership in all likelihood have long been broken.[98] Over time, various militants have been identified as leaders, though how much command and control over the rest of the network they truly exercise is far from clear.[99] There is some evidence

---

[93] *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 23 July 2003. Seeking to maximise the impact of the amnesty, officials linked it to the July extradition of 27 Saudi terror suspects from other Arab countries to the Kingdom. In fact, there is no evidence these events were connected.

[94] ICG interview with Saudi observer and analyst, Riyadh.

[95] The public relations operation conducted since late 2003 by Saudi militants arguably ranks among the most extensive and professional campaigns by a terrorist group.

[96] The militants occasionally use the word "cell" (*khaliyya*). See for example *Sawt al-Jihad* 15, p. 27.

[97] The Haramain Brigades, which claimed responsibility for anti-government attacks in December 2003 and for the attack on the traffic police headquarters in April 2004, appear to have split from the QAP in late November 2003 over the issue of whether to target Saudi objectives. Other cells appear to have adhered to the overall QAP strategy and to have focused on Western targets, but have developed distinct tactical specialties. The infiltration operations in Yanbu and Khobar on 1 and 29 May 2004 were allegedly carried out by the al-Quds Squadron, while responsibility for the random attacks on foreigners in Riyadh in early June 2004 has been claimed by the Falluja Squadron.

[98] There are very few if any recent indications of communication. In early June 2004, *Sawt al-Jihad* published a "Letter to Osama bin Laden", purportedly written by a participant in the May al-Khobar operation and handed to al-Muqrin who, in turn, was to pass it to bin Laden. While one cannot exclude that this kind of contact occurred, it is at least as likely that the account was meant to boost QAP morale.

[99] Until his death on 31 May 2003, Yusuf al-Ayiri was widely considered the QAP leader by militants and Saudi authorities;

that QAP has specialised committees or sub-groups responsible for instruction/training, media strategy/ production, and religious affairs.

Despite frequent official denials, the militants' own accounts suggests that QAP has had access to training camps and instruction centres on Saudi territory, generally but not always in remote areas. Most probably have been uncovered and dismantled in the past year.[100] The majority of original QAP members attended al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan in the 1980s or 1990s, but with the Taliban's collapse, alternative locations were needed. Saudi *jihadists* -- probably led by Yusuf al-Ayiri -- sought to establish camps in the Kingdom long before May 2003.[101]

QAP's highly professional media bureau appears to be one of its most important and best protected units. Notwithstanding the group's repeated setbacks and loss of personnel, it has published since late September 2003 the bimonthly *Sawt al-Jihad* (the Voice of Jihad) and since December 2003, a second bimonthly, devoted to military affairs, *Mu'askar al-Battar* (the Camp of the Sabre). Some 40 issues have appeared, each approximately 40 pages, as well as two lengthy and high quality films.[102] By all accounts, *Sawt al-*

Jihad has been instrumental in maintaining links to key field operatives while escaping the reach of Saudi intelligence services, no mean feat.[103] Evidence also suggests that editors possess an impressive archive of texts, video clips and sound recordings, going back over twenty years.[104] While it is uncertain where and how the magazines are put together, they more than likely are edited at separate locations by two staffs.[105] There is little information concerning the identity or organisation of the editorial committees.[106]

QAP militants also emphasise the role of religious scholars for recruiting and propaganda.[107] After prominent *salafi jihadi* scholars such as Nasir al-Fahd were arrested in May 2003, the organisation apparently turned to two lesser known figures, Faris al-Zahrani and Abdallah al-Rushud, both of whom subsequently were detained or killed.[108]

Questions surround QAP's purported international ties. According to some reports, several attacks were

---

his immediate successor is not known. Ali al-Ghamdi, who allegedly surrendered on 26 June 2003, and Sultan al-Qahtani, killed in Jizan on 23 September 2003, both have been described by the Interior Ministry as "key" or "senior" operatives, though it is not clear whether they were the QAP's formal leaders. By late 2003, Saudi analysts had identified Khalid al-Hajj, a Yemeni national, as the new QAP head. Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin who purportedly took over after al-Hajj was killed on 15 March 2004. Shortly after al-Muqrin's death on 18 June 2004, the QAP released a statement declaring Salih al-Awfi its current leader. He is the only militant from the government's original list of nineteen suspects still at large.

[100] Some houses used for instruction were found in cities. Associated Press, 15 January 2004. QAP militants who were shown repenting on Saudi television in January 2004 "described how recruits went to a resthouse in Riyadh where they learned to handle and clean guns, and how they were taken out to the desert for 'training'. Some went to the holy city of Mecca where they spent three or four days in a camp learning to assemble and fire weapons with the militants". Reuters, 12 January 2004.

[101] The importance of training and preparation is repeatedly stressed in the militants' publications. The stated purpose of publishing *Muaskar al-Battar* is to encourage "home training" for potential recruits. Khalid al-Sabit's obituary claims that he trained in a camp in a remote area of Saudi Arabia under al-Ayiri's instruction long before the May 2003 operations. *Sawt al-Jihad*, 15, p. 28.

[102] The first film, released on 5 December 2003, was entitled *Martyrs of the Confrontations in Bilad al-Haramayn;* the second, *Badr al-Riyadh*, was released in early February 2004. *Martyrs* shows various attacks carried out in Saudi Arabia over the years and pays tribute to those involved. The 90-

minute *Badr al-Riyadh* depicts the entire process of preparing and executing the 8 November 2003 attacks on the Muhayya compound.

[103] Each issue of *Sawt al-Jihad* contains articles in which militants relate their personal experiences in recent incidents.

[104] *Badr al-Riyadh,* for example, features recordings of speeches by the radical clerics Abd al-Rahman al-Dosary (who died in 1979) and Abdallah Azzam (who died in 1989).

[105] *Sawt al-Jihad* appears to have a relatively large and fluctuating group of contributors, while articles in *Mu'askar al-Battar* seem to have been written broadly by the same set of people from the beginning.

[106] According to some Saudi sources, Isa Al Awshan edited *Sawt al-Jihad* until his death on 20 July 2004. See *The New York Times,* 22 July 2004. Others maintain that QAP's overall media director is Saud al-Utaybi. See *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 4 July 2004. Still others speculate that the communications department is led by a group of four composed, in descending order of importance, of Faris al-Zahrani, Abdallah al-Rushud, Saud al-Utaybi and Isa al-Awshan. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 22 July 2004. Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin also appears to have played a central role. In its first five issues, the lead article of *Sawt al-Jihad* was written by a Sulayman al-Dosary; from issue six onwards, it was signed by al-Muqrin, who was a regular contributor to both magazines until his death. Saudi intelligence sources claim that many of al-Muqrin's articles were written by others, but signed by him in an effort to heighten his credentials as a theoretician. See "Interview with Jamal Khashoggi", op. cit.

[107] In an article about how to plan and carry out operations, Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin wrote: "Important notice:….It is also important to keep the scholars apart and protect them, because they have a key role in recruiting young people and collecting money, as well as their important social influence and their role in inciting the general public". *Muaskar al-Battar* 6, p. 20.

[108] Faris al-Zahrani (aka Abu Jandal al-Azdi) was arrested on 5 August 2004; Abdallah al-Rushud reportedly died in the spring of 2004 from wounds suffered in a shootout with the police in April 2004.

planned by al-Qaeda operatives in Iran,[109] while Saudi authorities have implicated the London-based opposition.[110] Saudi and international media have tended to depict QAP as a constituent part of a worldwide al-Qaeda network headed by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. None of these allegations has been proved. Accusations about Iran and the exiled opposition usually come from unidentified "intelligence sources" and appear politically motivated. The link to al-Qaeda is firmer, as the majority of QAP militants went through Afghanistan and may well have met with top al-Qaeda leaders before late 2001. The militants, as the name of their organisation suggests, most likely see themselves as part of the global al-Qaeda movement, and there are indications that in late 2001 the latter's leadership encouraged attacks in Saudi Arabia by returning Afghan veterans. But ideological and even personal affinity is one thing, operational association another. It is highly questionable that al-Qaeda leadership is in touch with QAP militants and dictates specific operations.

2. Size

Estimates of the number of active Islamist militants vary, a function both of secrecy and of definitional differences (i.e., whether to include operatives only, or also those who provide logistical and political support). The two lists of wanted militants published in May and December 2003 include 40 individuals in all, 30 of whom have been killed or arrested, though sources close to Saudi intelligence acknowledge the existence of a secret list and suggest that its names probably number closer to 500.[111] In May 2003, U.S. and Saudi sources independently put hardcore militants at between 200 and 400;[112] aggregating the number of militants mentioned over the past year by Saudi officials or in the *jihadists*' own publications, one reaches approximately 140 to 150. Others make higher estimates. How many active militants remain is yet another question, a function of the effectiveness both of Saudi security operations (in mid-2004, official sources claimed approximately 70 per cent of hard-core QAP militants had been killed or arrested) and of militants' recruitment efforts.

3. Ideology and strategy

Al-Qaeda distinguished itself from familiar *jihadi* thinking by focusing primarily on the "far enemy", the "Jews and Crusaders" and principally the U.S. Although the "near enemy" -- local regimes in the Muslim world -- are considered corrupt, repressive and un-Islamic, and therefore ought to be overthrown, "the power that propped up these illegitimate rulers and desecrated the holy soil of Arabia ... was ... the preferred target".[113] In contrast, and while it undoubtedly views itself as part of the same international movement and professes admiration for al-Qaeda's historical leadership,[114] QAP represents a relative return to the emphasis on the national level. Its publications, for example, concentrate primarily on domestic matters; *Sawt al-Jihad* and *Mu'askar al-Battar* mention Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Kashmir but often in passing only.[115] The inclusion within QAP of former Saudi rejectionists helps to explain why it is openly hostile to the Saudi regime in ways that go beyond bin Laden's attitude.[116] That said, so far the focus on Saudi Arabia has been more rhetorical than practical, insofar as the militants - the Haramain Brigades excepted -- still concentrate their attacks on foreign targets. As seen, the QAP has sought to limit attacks against Saudi targets, an issue that has split the *jihadists*.

Tensions between domestic and international agendas has played out most prominently with regard to Iraq. In the eyes of many militant Islamists, resisting the U.S. occupation there is a far worthier cause -- and theologically safer -- than fighting the Saudi police in Riyadh. Some have accused QAP of undermining the Islamist effort by detracting attention from Iraq, and a number of Saudi militants apparently have opted to carry the fight there. The debate prompted *Sawt al-Jihad* writers to argue strongly that -- for Saudis at least -- fighting the U.S. locally took precedence over joining the jihad in Iraq.[117]

---

[109] Reuters, 23 November 2003.

[110] Associated Press, 4 May 2004.

[111] See "Interview with Jamal Khashoggi" op. cit. Five people who appear on the May 2003 list of nineteen also appear on the December list of 26, for a total of 40 individuals.

[112] *The New York Times*, 20 May, 2003.

[113] Benjamin and Simon, op. cit., p. 118.

[114] *Sawt al-Jihad* published a series of articles on the al-Qaeda leadership, including bin Laden, Abdallah Azzam, Abu Ubaida al-Panshiri and Abu Hafs al-Misri.

[115] A notable exception was extensive coverage of the treatment of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghrayb prison. More recent issues of *Sawt al-Jihad* and *Muaskar al-Battar* also include a column with more intensive international coverage.

[116] Although bin Laden certainly considers the Saudi regime un-Islamic, he rarely refers to outright *takfir* of the royal family in his writings and speeches.

[117] In an interview published in *Sawt al-Jihad*'s first issue, Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin explained: "I did not go to Iraq, and I will not go to Iraq. I swore to clear the Arabian peninsula of polytheists. We were … born in this country so we will fight

4.   Member profiles[118]

Evidence suggests three waves of QAP militants: veterans of the 1980s Afghan war; participants in al-Qaeda training camps, principally in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001; and those recruited and possibly trained in Saudi Arabia since 2001. For core members, the most important common denominator and a key to understanding QAP, is the shared Afghan experience either as mujahidin or in training camps.[119] This experience left them with a common ideological orientation, military culture and technical expertise.[120] It is far from certain, however, whether and to what extent these can be passed on to new recruits.

Militants mostly have a low education level: the majority appear to have left school between the ages of fifteen and twenty; only a few seem to have a university degree. In some cases, dropping out of school was dictated by ideological conviction or social pressures rather than intellectual failing.[121] The average age of militants on the government's list is relatively high (around 30), though newer and younger recruits are unlikely to be included.[122] While most members are men who left wives and children behind, *Sawt al-Jihad* has paid attention to the role of women, and several articles were written by

women.[123] Finally, and though it has been speculated that economically and politically marginalised areas of the country, principally the Asir, [124] are overrepresented in QAP, militants come from all regions, their names suggesting wide geographic and tribal diversity[125]

---

the Crusaders and the Jews in it until we have expelled them …", *Sawt al-Jihad* 1, p. 23, 2003. Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Salim wrote an article entitled "Do not Go to Iraq" in *Sawt al-Jihad* 7, p. 23, 2004, while Salih al-Awfi (the presumed current QAP leader) called on followers not to go to Iraq. *Sawt al-Jihad*, 8, p. 25.

[118] This section is based on background profiles of approximately 50 militants mentioned in Saudi police statements and in *jihadist* publications collected by ICG.

[119] The most senior also at some point fought in other parts of the globe in the 1990s, such as Bosnia, Somalia and Chechnya.

[120] Articles in *Sawt al-Jihad* and *Muaskar al-Battar* demonstrate impressive knowledge on the part of QAP's leadership concerning asymmetric warfare and ways of maximising the psychological impact of violent operations. Of particular note are those written by Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin and Sayf al-Adil for *Mu'askar al-Battar*.

[121] Turki al-Dandani is described as an excellent student who had planned to focus on medicine before he turned to religion and left school. *Sawt al-Jihad* 7, p. 33. Saudi commentators point to the remarkable eloquence and religious knowledge of Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin, who left school for Afghanistan at seventeen. Telephone interview with Saudi terrorism analyst, June 2004.

[122] The approximately ten militants who appear on *Badr al-Riyadh* (the 90-minute video that documents the 8 November 2003 attacks) all look quite young, possibly between seventeen and 25.

[123] In mid-August 2004, militants published the first issue of *al-Khansa*, a *jihadist* magazine for women and a sister publication of *Sawt al-Jihad*. *Sawt al-Jihad* 13, p. 14. The role of women has long been a subject of interest in Saudi *jihadist* circles. See Yusuf al-Ayiri, "The role of Women in the Jihad Against the Enemies", available at www.almaqdase.com; for articles written by women, see *Sawt al-Jihad*, issues 4-12.

[124] Ten of the fifteen Saudi participants in the 11 September 2001 attacks originated from the country's southern regions of Baha, Asir and Jizan.

[125] See *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 9 December 2003.

IV. CONCLUSION

The onset of the violent campaign immediately gave rise to Western speculation about regime stability. The challenge is in many ways unprecedented, and militants have undermined the sense of security of most Westerners and not a few Saudis. But threat assessments have been largely overblown, a result of understandable concern over the fate of a key oil producing state and the mystery that often shrouds events in the Kingdom.

Overall -- and in strictly military terms -- the regime clearly has the upper hand. As of August 2004, the militants' terror operations had resulted in over 70 deaths and hundreds of wounded. An unconfirmed number of police and security forces also had been killed. In response, security forces since May 2003 have been fully mobilised: training has improved, as has the supply of anti-terrorism equipment; police wages have significantly increased;[126] and cooperation with the U.S. has intensified.[127] (There is, unfortunately, also strong reason to believe the authorities increasingly have resorted to torture for interrogation purposes.[128]) Heightened protection is visible across the country, leading some Saudis to complain that the many checkpoints and armed guards are giving rise to a militarised society.[129] This process is likely to deepen, given the June 2004 announcement that foreigners and private security companies could carry guns.

Security forces have conducted countless operations and raids and arrested between 600 and 1,000 individuals, including operatives and many well-known radical preachers.[130] All but one suspect on the government's May 2003 list of nineteen has been killed or arrested, as have sixteen of 26 on its December 2003 list.[131] Recent low-intensity operations (such as drive-by shootings and targeted assassinations) may well have been carried out by sympathisers as opposed to hard-core operatives, indicating relative QAP success in inspiring young Islamists to act independently. But they may also suggests that the leadership cadre -- all Afghan veterans and hardened fighters -- has been depleted and that the crackdown has made far more difficult sophisticated operations requiring prior training, safe houses, and the like.[132] Loss of safe houses also probably means loss of money, arms and supplies. Moreover, there is no evidence of a QAP leader recruited and trained exclusively in Saudi Arabia.[133]

Saudi counter-terrorism weaknesses, however, were on display in the upsurge in militant operations in the second quarter of 2004. The Khobar attack in particular generated widespread criticism of Saudi effectiveness. The police took a significant time before intervening, and three militants escaped despite the siege. In hindsight, Saudi counterterrorism measures appear to have been geared principally to the threat of large-scale car bombings in urban areas and ill-prepared for the tactical and geographical shift the Khobar and Yanbu attacks represented.[134] Repeated police slip-ups and militant possession of police and army equipment have fed speculation that QAP has support within the security forces or has infiltrated them, a charge difficult to verify.[135]

---

[126] BBC News Online, 26 April 2004

[127] The U.S. has praised Saudi Arabia's anti-terrorism efforts and "unprecedented level of cooperation". BBC News Online, 30 April 2004.

[128] Although not an impartial source, *Sawt al-Jihad* contains many references to police torture of Islamists from 2002 onwards. Amnesty International admits not being able to "assess the scale of torture used against those arrested", because the organisation is not allowed access to Saudi Arabia.

[129] Checkpoints and armed guards were not common prior to May 2003. The heavy police presence is seen by many Saudis as alien to their culture and paradoxically contributes to a sense of insecurity. ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[130] According to the liberal Islamist Abd al-Aziz al-Qasim, between twenty and 30 clerics have been arrested.. A list of twelve clerics who have been detained was posted on *al-Qal'ah*, an Islamist-run web-based message board, on 23 July 2003.

[131] Four of those killed appear on both the May list and the December list. These lists do not include the names of some of QAP's most important operatives. Between 600 and 1,000 individuals currently are being held in connection with the anti-QAP campaign. Many of these have not been directly involved in militant operations but are accused of belonging to a wider network of sympathisers. See "Interview with Jamal Khashoggi", op. cit.

[132] Recent gunfights have taken place on roads and checkpoints rather than in or around buildings, suggesting that QAP may have lost most of its safe houses. Some training camps are said to remain, particularly in the south western regions, but it has almost certainly become more difficult to establish them around the large urban areas in the Najd and Hijaz where recruitment potential presumably is greatest.

[133] According to a Saudi with strong connections to the security services, "99 per cent of the people arrested [in connection with the terrorist campaign] were recruited before May 2003". See "Interview with Jamal Khashoggi", op. cit.

[134] Other signs of incompetence include the frequency with which militants have escaped unharmed from police sieges and gun battles. ICG interviews, Riyadh,.

[135] See *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 June 2004. QAP militants have claimed that Saudi security forces assisted them in preparing for Paul Marshall's kidnapping. *Sawt al.Jihad* 19, p. 18. According to their version, they were provided with police equipment to set up a fake checkpoint.

This bloody balance sheet aside, the real question is whether violent Islamist militants can attract new sympathisers, and whether the Saudi regime will implement a strategic approach, both political and military, to defeat them.

To some degree, the regime has understood this, diversifying its tactics beyond the strictly military. Whereas in November 2003 it categorically ruled out all dialogue (including an initiative spearheaded by al-Hawali and three other Islamists to mediate between government and armed militants),[136] it gradually moderated its position. In May 2004, Muntasir al-Zayyat, a well-known Egyptian Islamist lawyer, arrived seeking to "open channels of dialogue with the extremists";[137] in late June 2004, the government offered an amnesty to those who surrendered within a month. In July, Safar al-Hawali allegedly was used as a mediator or "contact person" for militants wishing to surrender. Shortly thereafter, the government announced a two-month period during which illegal weapons could be handed in without prosecution.[138]

The regime also launched a campaign aimed at delegitimising the militants by:

❑   mobilising the leading *ulama* from the official religious establishment to preach against the militants and condemn their behaviour on religious grounds.[139] The effectiveness of this tactic is dubious, however, given the ageing clerics' feeble credibility;[140]

❑   turning the militants' own ideologues against them -- as noted, three prominent *jihadi* clerics recanted on camera in November and December 2003;[141]

❑   encouraging *sahwa* preachers such as al-Awda to condemn the acts of violence;[142]

❑   highlighting the suffering of innocent victims on state-controlled media. Televised pictures of wounded and blood-stained victims have been very explicit, and newspaper articles have focused on bereaved families and children killed in terrorist attacks.[143] This is believed by some to have had a powerful impact on public opinion;[144] and

❑   enlisting the help of outside Islamists over whom the regime has some influence -- many saw a Saudi hand behind Hamas's condemnation of the Khobar attacks in late May 2004.[145]

More generally, the regime has taken initial steps to curb extremist influence, for example by purging textbooks of lessons inculcating hostility toward Christians and Jews and initiating poverty-reduction plans.[146]

The regime can build on a receptive base. Gauging Saudi public opinion is an inexact science at best, hobbled by the absence of credible polls.[147] Still, ICG interviews and other evidence suggest widespread distaste for the violence, particularly acts aimed at Saudis, even while many support the militant Islamists' rhetoric and worldview. Most appalling to ordinary citizens were the 8 November 2003 attacks against the Muhayya compound, whose victims were primarily Arabs and included many

---

[136] See ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* op. cit., p 24.

[137] www.arabicnews.com, 20 May 2004.

[138] BBC News Online, 24 June 2004; Reuters 29 June 2004.

[139] See, e.g., Associated Press, 21 April 2004; *The Washington Post,* 5 June 2004

[140] One Saudi stated that, "people actually listen to the shaykhs out of fear of doing something that is wrong on religious grounds", ICG interview, Riyadh. Another dismissed their impact altogether. "Nobody really listen to the shaykhs. Just look at them, they are so old". ICG interview, Riyadh,.

[141] Ali al-Khudayr appeared on 19 November 2003, Nasir al-Fahd on 22 November and Ahmad al-Khalidi on 13 December. The impression among Saudis is that while al-Khudayr genuinely apologised for his earlier pronouncements, al-Fahd and al-Khalidi did not. ICG interviews, Riyadh. One of QAP's leading ideologues, Abdallah al-Rushud, criticised al-Khudayr for retracting his views. See "Hashim al-Taraju'at" [Crushing the Retractions], published in December 2003 on the *Sawt al-Jihad* website. This perception is borne out by a close reading

of transcripts of the interviews, and it almost certainly reduced the impact of their words among militant Islamists. On 12 January 2004, Saudi television also aired pictures of a group of militants under arrest who were discussing their recruitment into QAP and repenting their crimes.

[142] Five religious scholars (Abd al-Rahman al-Barrak, Abdallah al-Jibrin, Safar al-Hawali, Salman al-Awdah and Abdallah al-Tuwayjiri) issued a joint statement in June 2004 condemning the terrorist attacks. See *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 14 June 2004.

[143] Sample headlines include "Lebanese Yassir Kanan: 'I started helping the wounded but I became confused and started weeping when I saw my own daughter among the victims'", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 23 April 2004; "The mother of Wajdan, the victim of the al-Washm explosion in Riyadh: No one can imagine the amount of pain that Rami's family is going through right now", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 1 June 2004.

[144] ICG interviews, Riyadh.

[145] Reuven Paz, "Hamas vs. al-Qaeda -- the Condemnation of the al-Khobar Attack", *PRISM Special Dispatch* 3, 2, 1 June 2004.

[146] See ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* op. cit., p. 25; *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 January 2004; *Los Angeles Times*, 16 May 2003.

[147] One exception is the survey conducted by Nawaf Obaid and discussed in ICG Report, *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?,* op., cit., p. 2. n. 1.

women and children. Terrorist attacks and confrontations between police and militants in 2004 seemed to reinforce this perception. Virtually all Saudis ICG interviewed used the word "terrorist" (*irhabi*) to describe militants, an unusual designation in the Arab world which hints at weak popular standing.[148] Through their tactics, in short, the militants have largely marginalised themselves.

But with anti-regime feelings running high -- fuelled by the closed, arbitrary political system; the privileged status of the royal family; widespread financial corruption and waste -- violent militants undoubtedly retain the ability to attract new supporters, particularly among young, radicalised Islamists in urban areas, religiously conservative locations (such as the Qasim), and areas that traditionally have resisted the central state (in the south).[149] Many of these currently belong to the QAP's lower ranks and may within a decade rekindle the fight and boast of having participated in the first jihad on the Arabian peninsula. Another potential recruitment source will be returnees from the struggle against the U.S. in Iraq. Unless there is a sustained effort to mend the Kingdom's serious political fault-lines, the militants' appeal will rise as the regime's capacity to confront them falls.

A key test will be whether the regime can unify the nation behind a sustained program of political and economic reform while continuing to drive a wedge between violent and non-violent Islamists. Its attempts to coopt *sahwa* leaders, the convening of the National Dialogues, and the announcement of municipal elections are tentative steps in this direction but more is needed. Overly sensitive to the putative political threat presented by the centrists' broad coalition, the regime has sought to silence the one movement with the potential to bridge the gap between Western-orientated and liberal elements on the one hand and Islamists and religious conservatives

on the other as well as to inspire political opening and economic modernisation in tune with the Kingdom's underlying culture and identity.

The terrorist attacks unintentionally promoted a sense of national unity, whose most discernible political manifestations have been popular revulsion at the violence and the formation of the loose centrist coalition of progressive Sunni Islamists, nationalists, liberals and Shiites. The regime should not waste this opportunity to implement a genuine reform program.

Amman/Riyadh/Brussels, 21 September 2004

---

[148] "Terrorist" is a highly charged word in the Arab and Islamic world, seen as a label used by Israel and the West to discredit the Palestinian resistance. Words such as "extremists" (*mutatarrifun*) or "fundamentalists" (*usuliun*) are generally favoured in this context. In another possible indication of popular alienation from the militants, Saudi counterterror specialists claim that 90 per cent of their intelligence comes from "disgusted locals". See *The Observer*, 20 June 2004.

[149] See *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 22 May 2004. There also is reason to believe that public support for the militants would rise were attacks directed exclusively against foreigners. A young Saudi told ICG: "All the violence against Saudis is not good, but if they only attacked American targets that would be fine with me". ICG interview, Riyadh.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF SAUDI ARABIA

Courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

APPENDIX B

RECOMMENDATIONS OF ICG MIDDLE EAST REPORT N°28, *CAN SAUDI ARABIA REFORM ITSELF?*, 14 JULY 2004

To the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

1. Commit to a program of gradual, deliberate and transparent political reform by:

   (a) publishing a comprehensive and detailed reform agenda, including benchmarks and a timetable for implementation;

   (b) enacting legislation providing for legalisation and regulation of civic, social, and cultural organisations and associations, and in particular allowing the establishment of an independent human rights organisation and freely elected professional unions;

   (c) holding local elections according to the announced timetable;

   (d) pursuing efforts to promote national unity, dialogue and tolerance between Shiites, Sunnis and other Muslim groups in the Kingdom;

   (e) expanding the National Dialogue by making it more inclusive, outlining and promoting their agenda, and permitting citizens to meet and discuss key issues outside government-sponsored gatherings; and

   (f) lifting restrictions on petition writers, releasing those under detention and permitting public discussion in the media and elsewhere by those calling for non-violent change.

2. Strengthen institutions and work to distribute and check power by:

   (a) expanding the law-making authority of the *Majlis al-Shura* and its oversight over financial and budgetary matters, and granting it authority to review and approve cabinet appointments and the unrestricted ability to invite and question ministers;

   (b) establishing a transparent mechanism for all government financial and business affairs, specifically by publishing and abiding by a clearly defined national budget with a precise breakdown of sources of state revenue and expenditure, subjecting public expenditures to independent oversight, and

listing those in the royal household entitled to public funds and publishing such royal allocations;

   (c) cracking down on corruption and abuse of state power, in particular by members of the royal family; and

   (d) increasing accountability by gradually separating the royal family from day-to-day running of the government, appointing qualified professionals rather than royal family members to executive positions and splitting the functions of King and Prime Minister.

3. Accelerate economic and social reform by:

   (a) Intensifying steps to join the World Trade Organisation and attract investments in the non-oil sector;

   (b) strengthening technical and vocational training;

   (c) continuing efforts to better balance the education curriculum between religious study and professional or technical training; and

   (d) actively implementing the decision to expand employment opportunities for women and abolishing the requirement that women obtain permission from a male guardian to access jobs, health and educational services.

To Saudi Reformers:

1. Continue to promote reform by:

   (a) emphasising shared national interests and avoiding inflammatory language;

   (b) emphasising inclusion and promoting affiliations that cut across geographic, tribal and sectarian lines; and

   (c) seeking to broaden participation in reform efforts beyond professionals or members of the elite.

To the U.S. Government and Other Western Governments:

1. Urge the Saudi government to adopt reforms that permit broader political participation;

2. Place the issue of human rights violations and restrictions of civil rights on bilateral agendas;

3. Avoid overemphasising socially and culturally sensitive issues, such as education and the role of religion; and

4. Support and encourage efforts toward economic reform.

APPENDIX C

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 100 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. ICG also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a 12-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.icg.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates nineteen field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogotá, Cairo, Dakar, Dushanbe, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kabul, Nairobi, Osh, Port-au-Prince, Pretoria, Pristina, Quito, Sarajevo, Seoul, Skopje and Tbilisi) with analysts working in over 40 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents. In Africa, those countries include Angola, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Rwanda,

Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia and the Andean region.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governmental departments and agencies currently provide funding: the Agence Intergouvernementale de la francophonie, the Australian Agency for International Development, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Luxembourgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the New Zealand Agency for International Development, the Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan), the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Foundation and private sector donors include Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Sarlo Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, the United States Institute of Peace and the Fundação Oriente.

September 2004

APPENDIX D

ICG REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS ON MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA SINCE 2001

ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

A Time to Lead: The International Community and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Middle East Report N°1, 10 April 2002

Middle East Endgame I: Getting to a Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement, Middle East Report N°2, 16 July 2002

Middle East Endgame II: How a Comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian Settlement Would Look, Middle East Report N°3; 16 July 2002

Middle East Endgame III: Israel, Syria and Lebanon – How Comprehensive Peace Settlements Would Look, Middle East Report N°4, 16 July 2002

The Meanings of Palestinian Reform, Middle East Briefing, 12 November 2002

Old Games, New Rules: Conflict on the Israel-Lebanon Border, Middle East Report N°7, 18 November 2002

Islamic Social Welfare Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Legitimate Target?, Middle East Report N°13, 2 April 2003

A Middle East Roadmap to Where?, Middle East Report N°14, 2 May 2003

The Israeli-Palestinian Roadmap: What A Settlement Freeze Means And Why It Matters, Middle East Report N°16, 25 July 2003

Hizbollah: Rebel without a Cause?, Middle East Briefing, 30 July 2003

Dealing With Hamas, Middle East Report N°21, 26 January 2004 (Executive Summary also available in Arabic and in French)

Palestinian Refugees and the Politics of Peacemaking, Middle East Report N°22, 5 February 2004 (also available in Arabic and in French)

Syria under Bashar (I): Foreign Policy Challenges, Middle East Report N°23, 11 February 2004 (also available in Arabic and in French)

Syria under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges, Middle East Report N°24, 11 February 2004 (also available in Arabic and in French)

Identity Crisis: Israel and its Arab Citizens, Middle East Report N°25, 4 March 2004 (also available in Arabic)

The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: Imperilled at Birth, Middle East Briefing, 7 June 2004 (also available in Arabic)

EGYPT/NORTH AFRICA[*]

Diminishing Returns: Algeria's 2002 Legislative Elections, Middle East/North Africa Briefing, 24 June 2002

---

[*] The Algeria project was transferred from the Africa Program to the Middle East & North Africa Program in January 2002.

Algeria: Unrest and Impasse in Kabylia, Middle East/North Africa Report N°15, 10 June 2003 (also available in French)

The Challenge of Political Reform: Egypt after the Iraq War, Middle East Briefing, 30 September 2003 (also available in Arabic)

Islamism in North Africa I: The Legacies of History, Middle East and North Africa Briefing, 20 April 2004 (also available in Arabic and in French)

Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity, Middle East and North Africa Briefing, 20 April 2004 (also available in Arabic and in French)

Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page, Middle East and North Africa Report N°29, 30 July 2004

IRAQ/IRAN/GULF

Iran: The Struggle for the Revolution's Soul, Middle East Report N°5, 5 August 2002

Iraq Backgrounder: What Lies Beneath, Middle East Report N°6, 1 October 2002

Voices from the Iraqi Street, Middle East Briefing, 4 December 2002

Yemen: Coping with Terrorism and Violence in a Fragile State, Middle East Report N°8, 8 January 2003

Radical Islam in Iraqi Kurdistan: The Mouse That Roared? Middle East Briefing, 7 February 2003

Red Alert in Jordan: Recurrent Unrest in Maan, Middle East Briefing, 19 February 2003

Iraq Policy Briefing: Is There an Alternative to War?, Middle East Report N°9, 24 February 2003

War in Iraq: What's Next for the Kurds?, Middle East Report N°10, 19 March 2003

War in Iraq: Political Challenges after the Conflict, Middle East Report N°11, 25 March 2003

War in Iraq: Managing Humanitarian Relief, Middle East Report N°12, 27 March 2003

Baghdad: A Race against the Clock, Middle East Briefing, 11 June 2003

Governing Iraq, Middle East Report N°17, 25 August 2003

Iraq's Shiites under Occupation, Middle East Briefing, 9 September 2003

The Challenge of Political Reform: Jordanian Democratisation and Regional Instability, Middle East Briefing, 8 October 2003 (also available in Arabic)

Iran: Discontent and Disarray, Middle East Briefing, 15 October 2003

Dealing With Iran's Nuclear Program, Middle East Report N°18, 27 October 2002

Iraq's Constitutional Challenge, Middle East Report N°19, 13 November 2003 (also available in Arabic)

Iraq: Building a New Security Structure, Middle East Report N°20, 23 December 2003

Iraq's Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise?, Middle East Report N°26, 8 April 2004

Iraq's Transition: On a Knife Edge, Middle East Report N°27, 27 April 2004 (also available in Arabic)

Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?, Middle East Report N°28, 14 July 2004 (also available in Arabic)

Reconstructing Iraq, Middle East Report N°30, 2 September 2004

OTHER REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS

For ICG reports and briefing papers on:
- Asia
- Africa
- Europe
- Latin America
- Issues
- *CrisisWatch*

please visit our website www.icg.org

APPENDIX E

ICG BOARD OF TRUSTEES