Saudi Arabia and Post 9/11 Islamist Opposition

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Introduction

This is a paper on the contemporary Saudi Arabian dissident movement. The focus is on the leadership, their movements' message, and an analysis of the longevity of both. The most recent work of this kind was done prior to a number of significant events, namely the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the subsequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Bush administration's aggressive, reform minded foreign policy in the Middle-East. These three items change the context in which the opposition continues to operate, and call for a re-examination of the saliency of the opposition.

The current opposition to the ruling family, "Al-Saud" (The Saud), developed out of the crisis that confronted Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait posed a significant dilemma for Al-Saud. The Saudi military was not up to the task of defending the country, but public outcry would surely follow an entrenched presence of foreign non-Muslim, troops. Al-Saud appeared to be weak and incompetent rulers. This lead to a rise in criticism, and heightened profiles for some opposition figures. After the Gulf Crisis, Al-Saud faced an opposition presence that had grievances centered on the Gulf conflict and presence of U.S. troops. The presence of non-Muslim troops in the Holy Land is forbidden by the Sharia, (Islamic Law). For the opposition, the presence crystallized the image of a royal family beholden to outside interests.

Between 1991 and 2001, the Saudi opposition environment remained somewhat stable. The imprisonment of two popular outspoken clerics, and the relocation of the dissident movement outside the Kingdom changed the communication environment, but the underlying issues remained contentious for reformers. The major opposition groups began operating outside of the country to avoid persecution. The opposition chose London as their base of operations. The ex-

patriot status afforded them the freedom to reach Saudi citizens through the Internet and fax machines while avoiding repressive measures from Al-Saud. The grievances espoused and the proscriptions for reform were the same throughout the 1990's. Consideration will be given to the factors that have changed the environment in which they operate, and the implications of those factors will provide a format for evaluating the different movements.

This paper will examine two major methods currently employed by three groups. Usama bin Laden and his groups, the Advice and Reform Committee (ARC) and al-Qaeda, and Muhammad al-Mas'ari's Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) will be examined as part of the international Islamist movement. Sa'd al Faqih's Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia will be examined separately, as a movement strictly devoted to reform in the Kingdom.

Just Briefly:

In this report, there is the occasional term or concept which is specific to either Saudi Arabia, Islam or revolution and terrorism. For these items I have included an addendum titled "Definitions" in the last pages. This study employs these specific terms because they have a particular meaning that can not be duplicated in layman's terms. Please refer to the addendum if any terms or concepts are unclear.

The Opposition Groups: Leadership, Identity and Message

Usama Bin Laden, al-Qaeda & the Advice and Reform Committee

Usama bin Laden, as a leader of an international Islamist organization, enjoys the highest profile of any such leader in the world. His name is synonymous with terrorism, 9/11, but most importantly "jihad". This term, because of its extensive and sometimes irresponsible use since 9/11, needs some clarification. The term translates as "struggle" in Arabic, and the prophet Muhammad identified two forms of struggle, the greater and the lesser. The lesser jihad was that of the battlefield, while the greater was the individual's inner struggle. Bin Laden has flipped the order, so that violent struggle is a greater cause than the inner struggle. In point of fact, bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of Egypt's Jihad Group, has questioned the authenticity of that hadith.

To understand bin Laden's philosophy, it is first necessary for one to understand what has influenced him. Bin Laden grew up in a pious home. The bin Laden family settled in the Hijaz region of Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's holiest cities, Mecca and Medinah.[1] Despite the region's relative cosmopolitan culture, Mecca and Medinah are off limits to non-Muslims. Usama was in college at a very critical point to Middle East politics, and the Muslim World. It was 1979, the year that Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini returned triumphantly from exile as the Islamic Revolution achieved the overthrow of the Shah.[2] Also in that year, Saudi Arabia experienced two conflicts of its own. Taking thousands of hostages, a radical group of protestors lead by Juhayman al-Utaibi, took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca. In reaction to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Shia minority rioted in the Eastern Province. There was also the peace accord between Egypt and Israel over Palestine, and the invasion of Afghanistan - a predominately Muslim country- by the

Soviet Union. For a student in Saudi Arabia, a religiously strident country, the events of 1979 must have had considerable impact on bin Laden. Indeed, one of bin Laden's professors would go on to become a lead recruiter of Arabs to the Afghan jihad.

Abdullah Azzam

That figure, bin Laden's professor, was Abdullah Azzam, a figure whose influence on bin Laden one cannot overlook. Azzam was an active Palestinian Muslim Brother. The Muslim Brotherhood, perhaps the largest Muslim organization in the world, was a revolutionary group from Egypt. After Egypt began cracking down on the groups subversive efforts, many brothers fled their persecution and headed for Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Palestine among other places.[3] In 1973, after his service in the 1967 war against Israel, Azzam received a doctoral degree in Islamic Jurisprudence from Cairo's prestigious Al Azhar University. What is notable about his participation in the 1967 war is that very few Palestinian Muslim Brothers were interested in that effort. Instead, they preferred to continue the social service operation, a central component of the Brotherhood's activism. Azzam landed a teaching position in Saudi Arabia in the late 70's and began teaching at King Abdul Aziz University, where he taught Usama. Azzam had abandoned the Palestinian cause, presumably because he was unable to change the nature of the resistance from a nationalist movement to his vision of an Islamic Jihad.[4]

It was only after the seminal year of 1979, that Azzam saw an opening for his jihad program. The invasion of Afghanistan and the Muslim fighters who were operating there gave hope to Azzam, that he could recruit Arabs to fight and train in Afghanistan. Azzam was influential in setting up the recruiting effort, and established the Services Office. He called all Muslims to contribute to the jihad and framed it as a religious obligation. Those who were able but did not heed the call by providing financial support, serving as a soldier or in some substantive capacity,

were disobeying God's law. The Services Office provided information on how to obtain passports, transportation, and instructions for people arriving in Peshawar, the Pakistani base of the "Afghan-Arab" operation. Peshawar was home to many offices housing Arabs on their way to the front.

Despite his aggressive campaign to bring Arabs to the fight in Afghanistan, he said "Palestine is our beating heart, it comes even before Afghanistan in our minds, our hearts, our feelings and our faith."[5] Azzam, while operating the services office with bin Laden, was moonlighting as an intellectual liaison between the Afghan jihad and Palestine. In 1987, the intifada, or uprising of the Palestinians took on an Islamist identity, the original aspiration of Azzam. He has been credited with helping to cultivate the Islamic resistance in Palestine.[6]

Al-Qaeda's Baby Steps

Usama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam opened up the Services Office together in 1984. The operations were fundamentally a filter for Arabs going to Afghanistan. The Service Office would eventually be subsumed under Al-Qaeda, (The Base). Sa'd al-Faqih, another Saudi dissident and leader of the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia, has described the founding of al-Qaeda in response to the need to catalogue the names of missing Arabs for their families. Pakistani journalist, Jamal Ismail was a student in Peshawar in the 80's and has a different explanation for Al-Qaeda's foundation. He says that the Service Office leaders, out of fear that Arab governments had penetrated the Office, established the more secretive arm.[7] Al-Qaeda began as a secretive organization with impenetrable leadership, and it maintained that structure following the Afghan war.

In 1990, the Afghan jihad was over. The Soviet troops had withdrawn in 1989. Bin Laden went back to live in Saudi Arabia, but stayed involved in the outgrowth of al-Qaeda, which still

maintained several training camps in Afghanistan.[8] When Saddam Hussein invaded and occupied Kuwait on August 1, 1990, bin Laden was quick to offer his services and the service of his fellow "Afghan Arabs" to fight with the Saudi military. His services were denied and instead Saudi royals turned to U.S. forces to protect its borders. The situation was devastating for bin Laden, his country was occupied by "infidel" troops, which he perceived as an assault on Islam, and revealed the weakness of the Saudi military. He left Saudi Arabia for the Sudan in 1991, shortly after the arrival of U.S. troops. The flight from Saudi Arabia is one similarity linking bin Laden to other major Saudi dissident leaders.

Bin Laden, as a resident of Sudan continued to watch over the operations of al-Qaeda. He managed its finances, training operations, and presumably target selection process. With the help of the Sudanese government, he established and maintained contact with other Muslim extremist organizations, and embarked on a somewhat productive entrepreneurial career. The career was short-lived, however, because bin Laden was forced from Sudan, due to pressure from Egypt and the U.S. Egypt's Pakistani embassy had been the target of an al-Qaeda attack. Additionally, an attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak convinced the Egyptians they needed to focus on the growing threat of these groups. In the early nineties, the Pakistani government required Islamic militants to register their identity and nationality. Because such a high number of the Afghan Arabs had stayed in Afghanistan and Pakistan following the war, an inventory of extremists seemed logical for any government cautious of its domestic adversaries. That registration, despite its flaws, turned up some otherwise telling results: Egyptians 1,142; Saudis 981; Yemenis 946; Algerians 792; Jordanians 771; Iraqis 326; Syrians 292; Sudanese 244; Libyans 199; Tunisians 117; Moroccans 102.[9]

Egyptians not only make up a considerable portion of the rank and file, but also a much of al-Qaeda's top brass. Ayman al Zawahiri, a bin Laden deputy, is Egyptian. Ali Mohammed, a former Egyptian army major, helped bin-Laden transfer to Sudan in 1991 and trained al-Qaeda commanders in Afghanistan in 1992.[10] Another former Egyptian army officer, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, became bin-Laden's aide in the early 1990's.[11] Al-Qaeda, one could argue, is the creation of Zawahiri, and his Egyptian militant group "Jihad Group". The Jihad Group had been active prior to the Afghan war and was far more skilled in insurgent methods than bin Laden. Bin Laden had come into militant Islam through a massive guerilla war in a remote mountain region. Zawahiri and Egypt's Islamic militants were far more versed in the strategies necessary for operating in a less hospitable environment, like the urban neighborhoods of Cairo. Egypt produced a high percentage of the Islamic militants fighting in Afghanistan, and their history and experience gave them the credentials to assume leadership roles in the international jihad to which al-Qaeda would aspire following Afghanistan.

Al-Qaeda and Jihad Go Global

The quilt like pattern of nationalities that make up al-Qaeda is a reflection of the participation of roughly 30,000 Arabs in the Afghan jihad of the 1980's. Arabs throughout the Middle East answered the call to jihad and traveled to Afghanistan. Yet, the war was hardly won because of their efforts. The guerillas were financed with Saudi and American money, and annual Afghan forces have been estimated at as high as 250,000. But, the participation of 30,000 Arabs describes a dual identity of the Afghanistan jihad. It was indeed a jihad against the godless communists, but it also served as a training operation for a jihad against the west.

The diffuse nature of bin Laden's transnational organization and strategy directs his attention away from overthrowing the Saudi regime. The distribution of al-Qaeda's operations contributes to its schizophrenic character. To illustrate the point is an abbreviated list of successful attacks carried out by al-Qaeda: U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen in 2000, the World Trade Center attacks of 1993 and 2001, the discothèque bombing in Bali in 2002, attacks on Marines in Kuwait, French soldiers in Pakistan, a synagogue in Tunisia, a French oil tanker in Yemen, and the Madrid passenger train in 2004. Al-Qaeda also directly or "indirectly" perpetrates attacks in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan and Chechnya and Saudi Arabia, the higher profile citadels of jihad. Attacks instigated by al-Qaeda take place in multiple countries, often against the U.S. and the West. The "indirect" concept is premised on the idea that associates of al-Qaeda, in places like the Philippines, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Yemen and elsewhere are within the sphere of influence of a global movement like al-Qaeda. If we accept this premise, it would be a small step to posit that cooperation among these groups takes place, particularly when a shared target, i.e. U.S. interests, structures and images, are within reach. This illustration of al-Qaeda reveals a broad international reach, and a "new terrorism". But, as a prototype for global resistance al-Qaeda must be more resilient, which in part, means maintaining resource levels.

With the division of operations comes the division of finances. At the time that al-Qaeda had its main offices in Sudan, it sent fighters to Chechnya and Tajikistan at a cost of $1500 each and delivered $100,000 to associates in Jordan and Eritrea.[12] Gilles Kepel has argued that the resiliency of al-Qaeda stems from its amorphous features. Under intense pressure from NATO forces in Afghanistan, the group lost its base. U.S. and allied efforts have also resulted in the confiscation of data, the capture of al-Qaeda operatives, and, to some degree, the freezing of

financial accounts and networks. Yet, attacks continue to be perpetrated with an al-Qaeda signature. Kepel defines al-Qaeda not consisting "of buildings and tanks and borders, but of internet websites, satellite television links, clandestine financial transfers, international air travel, and a proliferation of activists ranging from the suburbs of Jersey City to the rice paddies of Indonesia."[13]

The Message

The entrance of the Gulf Arab satellite channels Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiyya, and countless others, increased the opportunity for al-Qaeda to spread its message in a more favorable way, while the internet remained an indispensable tool as well. Bin Laden has two agendas and consequently, two identities. He has one identity as the leader of an international jihad, and another as a leader of a movement to overthrow the Saudi royal family. The tentative charter for al-Qaeda was released in December of 2001. In the online document, titled "Knights under the Prophet's Banner", Ayman al-Zawahiri explained the rationale behind the attack on the World Trade Center. The message begins telling the story of Islamism's failed attempts to rally the masses following the success in Afghanistan. Al-Zawahiri refers to "near" and "far" enemies, the Middle-East apostate regimes and the West respectively. He views the West, particularly the U.S. as the perpetual bodyguard of the "near" enemy, and encroaching on the culture in an unacceptable way. In this context, with a population unsure of Islamist principles, and regimes with backing from the West, the perception of the balance of power needed to be manipulated. The best way to show that the Islamist cause was powerful and that the U.S. was weak was to produce a lasting image of this idea. The memorandum ensures that a strategy of attacking the West would not distract from the broader goal of reforming the Muslim world.

Reforming the Muslim world, with a population of over one billion, is a daunting objective to be polite, so why did bin Laden abandon the more finite task of overthrowing the Saudi regime? One explanation is that once he defected from Saudi Arabia, and set up his opposition operation outside the Kingdom, he was unable to maintain his focus. His participation in al-Qaeda, with its broader objectives, and mixture of transnational leadership brought his attention away from Saudi Arabia.[14]

The definitive message of bin Laden with respect to the Kingdom is found in several communiqués from his London-based Advice and Reform Committee (ARC). The group's grievances are outlined in the ARC's "Open Letter to King Fahd." These grievances include: "The lack of commitment of the regime to the teachings of Sunni Islam", in the tradition of Sheikh Muhammad bin al-Wahhab, the state's incompetent military industry and policy, the mismanagement of funds and reliance on a non-Muslim military for protection.[15] In numerous other communications from the London office of ARC, bin Laden criticized the regimes Islamic credentials, and expressed support for the Memorandum of Advice, a comprehensive critique of the Kingdom's shortcomings in respect to rule by Sharia.

Despite the supposed diminishing state of bin Laden's leadership capacity,[16] it is important not to dismiss the movement out of hand. If a leadership void occurs, it is not a stretch to say that others will rise from the ranks to fill that void. Indeed, the iconic status of bin Laden is surely a valuable asset to any Islamist leader who wishes to put his agenda as a priority. A claim to be the heir to bin Laden has its difficulties, but a carefully managed campaign to do so would bring many rewards for whomever succeeds.

Muhammad al-Mas'ari & the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR)

The Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) was formed in 1993 in response to what the religious scholars, clerics and judges felt was the decaying state of the Kingdom, and the repression of the voice of the religious legal scholars. It would be the repression of free speech that would lead them away from the Kingdom, and to re-posture themselves as an alternative to the Saudi regime. To strengthen their position, dissenters formed a coalition. The CDLR became the mouthpiece of the most high profile figures in the opposition movement. The clerical establishment and Islamists involved in drafting the movement's core documents had two major grievances: 1. The inability of the clergy to criticize the government; and 2. the lack of legitimate consultation.[17] In Islam, consultation with the people is a means to legitimacy.[18] The opposition movement headed by the CDLR in the early 1990's positioned itself as proprietors of consensus (in Arabic, "ijma"). Their demands- for further participation by the scholarly community in the decision making process were rejected by the regime, and by the Kingdom's official shoura (Consultation) council. The shoura council is made up of government appointed ulama. They are subject to the wishes of al-Saud, and rule in their favor on most matters. Although the movement originally centered on the clerical and scholarly community, gradually their demands for reform were directed at the general state of the Kingdom. While headquartered in Riyadh, the movement was structured somewhat diffusely, operating from the ground up. It wasn't until the formal declaration of the group, and the submission of the letter of demands and Memorandum of Advice, that a top-down model began to appear. The movement was mid-wifed with the help of two figures. The two well respected clerics, Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Auda, preached out against corruption and the problem of foreign influence. Their tape-recorded sermons spread throughout the Kingdom's mosque network.[19]

Muhammad Mas'ari and CDLR currently occupy a marginal place on the Saudi opposition scene. Several explanations have been offered as to why the movement lost headway. The CDLR relocated to London in 1993, after formally declaring its existence. In London, the group confronted an unfamiliar milieu. London was already home to a lively debate among ex-patriot Muslims about Islamism. Sa'ad al-Faqih, a founding member of the group, split with the CDLR not long after its relocation, and founded a separate movement, the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA). But, before explaining what caused the split, one should explore the transformation of the CDLR from its clandestine beginnings in Saudi Arabia to its relocation to London.

The Message

The group was active in the Kingdom prior to declaring itself as a formal organization. It constructed an identity as a human rights group, and drafted two letters to the royal family. The Memorandum of Advice became the more comprehensive document. It listed the grievances against the state, and suggested policy changes. The recommendations they claimed, were consistent with Sharia, thus implying that the regime's claim to rule by Sharia was based on false premises. Although publicly submitting advice to the king is considered confrontational in Saudi Arabia, neither the Letter of Demands nor the Memorandum of Advice revealed a political program or espoused revolutionary sentiment. The Memorandum was simply advice, without threat of recourse in case of inaction, or a call for revolutionary mobilization.

The submission of the Letter of Demands produced a calculated counter-reaction from the government and the establishment ulama. The Saudi royals masterfully placed the issue in the hands of the Grand Mufti and the rest of the council. The result was a debate between the older

and younger ulama generations, a confrontation among the scholarly community, and not a religious coalition against the Saudi royals. The council charged that the methods used were un-Islamic, because Sharia dictates that advice-giving be a private affair. The group then drafted the more comprehensive Memorandum of Advice. The Memorandum addresses ten areas in need of reform: The role of the ulama, laws and regulation, the judiciary and court system, people's rights, public administration, economy and finance, social services, the military, the information system and foreign affairs.

Memorandum of Advice

The role of the ulama, the CDLR argue should be more diffuse within the state apparatus. The government does not consult frequently enough with the ulama, and therefore it does not fulfill the requirements of consultation. The second category of criticism, Laws and regulation, they believe have been corrupted by the adoption of non-Islamic legal traditions. Jurisprudence, they believe, should only be conducted within the stricture of Sharia. All laws- regulating relationships between individuals, the family, the state, the state and society and the state and other states- that do not follow Islamic law should be replaced using Sharia. Of major concern are the privileges of "public office" and treaties with foreign governments that are not constructed using Sharia. For example, the Gulf Cooperation Council, which regulates foreign national labor, is not based on Islamic law. The third category of criticism is directed at the judiciary and the courts. Despite the state's Islamic court system, the presence of a separate, non-Islamic court system is inappropriate. Additionally, the lack of autonomy for the courts is in violation of Islamic law. The memorandum also plays down the performance of the Sharia courts, claiming their weakness undercuts their Islamic legitimacy. The fourth category of criticism, the rights of citizens refers to the right to trial and due process of law under sharia. The

memo cites specific instances where these rights have been violated, emphasizing unlawful police behavior regarding privacy laws, and discriminatory laws against Muslims regarding intermarriage with non-Saudis. The fourth category, regarding public administration, is perhaps the most confrontational. The memo posits seven steps to reform:

1. The system of administration does not cope with modernization.
2. The centralization of power in a few individuals even in simple matters is inefficient for it wastes the time of the senior officials.
3. The criterion for replacing officials is not based on merit and competence, as evidenced by the fact that there are aged and infirm who have been occupying their positions for decades despite the abundance of younger and more capable Saudis.
4. There is no reason for honorific titles for officials.
5. There has to be a fair distribution system for appointing officials that takes into account regionalism and various other categories.
6. Corruption must be exposed and nepotism eliminated.
7. The system must be reformed so all regions in the Kingdom from the same level of services.

The order in which the items are arranged waters down the agenda a little. Likewise, the placement of the public administration category fourth among ten also fosters the image that the document and its creators did not wish to focus their attack on the royal family primarily. The sixth item, Economy and Finance focuses on the practice of usury in Saudi banks. Usury, is prohibited in the Sharia. Additionally, improper taxation and the placement of Zakkat (Islamic almsgiving, one of the five pillars of the faith) in the Saudi Treasury are state economic offenses. The memo directly criticizes the Saudi royals for squandering state oil revenues with excessive salaries, state contract kickbacks, and royal access to the Treasury. The memo also takes issue with money spent in foreign markets and countries that do not adhere to Sharia. The economy, they argue, should be brought in line with Islamic teachings that would eliminate the corruption and poor planning. Social Services, the seventh category, addresses the need in the Kingdom for equitable wealth distribution. The memo states that Islam directs the wealthy to take care of the poor, sick and aging, and that the current state fails to provide for these groups.

The eighth item, The Saudi Military is very contentious for the movement and requires more detail. The Memorandum of Advice emerged after the first Gulf War. The incompetence of the royals to defend the Kingdom opened up a massive can of worms. While operating in the Kingdom, ulama forged a collective identity around the opposition to several major issues. A major concern was the weakness of the Saudi military. The irony- and a major point of protest for the opposition- was that Kingdom wasn't without the means. Since the early 1970's, large shipments of armaments and weapons had been sent from U.S. contractors to Saudi Arabia. The Secretary of State at that time was Henry Kissinger, who established the weapons for oil program. Toward the end of the 1990's, the total defense spending for Saudi Arabia entered the neighborhood of $100 billion.[20] The consumption of American-made weapons and artillery have made the Kingdom the number one foreign customer of the U.S. defense industry.

The dissidents reasoned that defense spending had become yet another way for al- Saud to dip into the Kingdom's treasury. The aggression from Iraq had revealed that even with exorbitant spending on defense, Saudi Arabia remained vulnerable to external threats. Despite the problems attributed to al-Saud incompetence, there was still a tendency to place much of the blame on the U.S. Safar al-Hawali, a cleric originally associated with the CDLR movement, argued that the U.S. was forcing the Kingdom's hand, telling them to purchase high priced defense technology to protect itself from Saddam Hussein. The logic was a result of the post Gulf War policy of the first Bush administration. The U.S. did not remove Saddam because keeping him in power would benefit U.S. defense contractors. If there was a hostile threat to Saudi Arabia or elsewhere in the Middle East, the U.S. defense industry would attract Mideast clients intent on building deterrent military capabilities.[21]

The ninth category, the Information Sector, focuses on the role of the media in broadcasting Islam to the people. According to CDLR the intention of the media should be to produce facts, reform public opinion and help people become better Muslims. The memo highlights the corruption of the media through the purchasing of Middle Eastern media outlets, which allows the royals control of what messages the public receives. Also of major concern are the satellite programs available to Saudis. The memo says the state should restrict access to programs and channels showing women unveiled and subject material incompatible with Islamic teaching, citing the specific example of American Christian fundamentalist broadcasts.

The establishment ulama argued that the Kingdom was ruled by Islamic law and that the edifices of Islamic law and justice were visible in the conduct of the state.[22] Still, the movement was far enough along not to be derailed by the Council of Higher Ulama's support for the regime. The next step the movement took was the formal declaration of the CDLR in May, 1993, a more threatening maneuver.

The CDLR moved to London, to much fanfare in western media circles. London was a haven for Islamist exiles, mostly from south Asia. The group entered the fray of the existing debate, the effect of which was to draw their attention toward a broader normative discussion of Islamic statehood. This trend frustrated the efforts of Sa'd al-Faqih, one of the group's founders, and officials in London. He argued for preventing CDLR from involving itself in pan-Islamism, in exchange for a Saudi focused opposition. Unable to persuade Masari and others, Faqih left CDLR to establish the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA). With the Arabia in the title of the movement, the group's name would serve as a reminder of the group's ultimate intentions.

Sa'd al-Faqih and The Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia
(MIRA)

Since September 11, 2001, Faqih has been able to attract media coverage of his campaign to oust the Saudi royal family. He contests the family's hold on power in a very confrontational manner, but claims to support only peaceful methods of regime change. His rhetoric, sometimes mistaken as revolutionary, is something which requires explanation. But first, I will turn to laying out what distinguishes Faqih from Masari, and consequently MIRA, from CDLR.

Al-Faqih reveals weak political instincts (He is a physician by trade) in a recent London interview. At one point, responding to a question about alleged Saudi attempts at kidnapping him, he confesses that Saudi security interrogations would draw out of him the identities of other "potential" leaders. But, answering a later question, he describes MIRA's following within the Kingdom as horizontal, with a weak vertical structure.[23] Faqih has been careful throughout his stay in London to stay within the legal bounds of British policy on free speech and press. But, more importantly, is the tone of his presentation. He does not position himself as a potential alternative to the regime. He has distanced himself from the violent methods of al-Qaeda. His rhetoric favors peaceful overthrow, and argues the effects of violence are only a means to chaos, and not a practical strategy. However, his purported contacts with Saudi military officers and security personnel suggest he hasn't ruled out using physical coercion.[24] As an ex-patriot dissident, Faqih has had to withstand the pressure the Saudis have placed on London to silence MIRA, and allow for Faqih's extradition. Despite Faqih's denial to be connected to extremism, at the end of 2004 the Saudis got their wish and the United Nations Security Council placed Faqih's name on their list of al-Qaeda operatives. The persecution of dissident leaders within the Kingdom, and the call for extradition of CDLR co-founder Masari in the mid 1990's, and Faqih more recently, suggests some level of alarm on the part of the Saudi royals. It is difficult to say

whether crackdown implies support, and if so, at what level. The use of technology to reach Saudi citizens in the Kingdom enables access to the group. The MIRA website explains their political program, and includes communiqués periodically, with responses to events in the Kingdom. Faqih claims to distribute pamphlets and material through fax machines to five hundred sites, from which the material is disseminated to followers and potential cadre. In late 2004, Faqih used both of these means to call for street demonstrations in the capital Riyadh, and in Jeddah, a major commercial hub. The demonstrations, he claimed, were to demand reform. The turnout was marginal, due to several factors. Saudi law outlaws public protesting and rallies. The day that the protests were scheduled to take place, the government placed security and police forces on the street to direct traffic, and prevent crowds from gathering. The strategy worked, and protest gatherings were weak. Yet, again, the need for the forces demonstrates a possibly significant following. Exactly what the people would be supporting if they were to show up needs clarification.

The Message

The MIRA political program, available on their website[25], lists eight categories in need of reform, titled respectively: Justice and Legitimacy, The Political Situation, Foreign Relations, National Security and Defense Policies, The Economic Situation, Social Conditions, Media and Information Policies, Protection of Individual and Community Rights. The eight categories or situations each have prescriptions for enacting reforms. There is an additional ninth section, titled How to Change, which prescribes how to adopt the entire program.

The New Environment

The dramatic effects of the plane hijackings of September 11, 2001 could be witnessed first hand with the replays of American Airlines flight 11, and United Airlines flight 175 crashing into towers one and two of the World Trade Center. The attack was the most destructive terrorist action in history, and paralleled the rise in destructiveness of global terrorism.[26] The reaction from the United States has been a redrawing of its foreign policy. The belief after 9/11 was that eliminating terrorism was only possible long-term if the countries that produced terrorists became democratic. At the very least, these sentiments were found in the Bush administration, and powerful elements within the Departments of State and Defense. In these departments a new ideology had gained influence. American's neo-conservative movement was poised to implement its foreign policy program. This group had been actively pursuing an aggressive U.S. involvement in transforming the Middle East. The neo-conservatives see Israel as the focal point of a policy to democratize the region. In the first Gulf War, they failed to convince George H.W. Bush to occupy Baghdad and remove Saddam and his Baathist regime. But, influenced by the "War on Terror", the 2001 Bush administration brought U.S. foreign policy in line with neo-conservative views.

Following September 11, a majority of Middle-Eastern countries were eager to cooperate with the U.S. to address the problem of terrorism. Indeed, the Islamist militant groups posed a threat to *their* existence. It seemed as though terrorism had become an autonomous industry, and its ominous global agenda would necessitate the combined efforts of states. Once the U.S. determined that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi nationals, pressure mounted on the royals to react. Since the attacks of 9/11, Saudi Arabia has experienced numerous attacks on its soil. Militants targeted the Western compounds in the Eastern Province and Saudi government

buildings in the capital, Riyadh, in 2004. Both attacks were successful based on the number of casualties and the level of destruction. These attacks clearly accelerated Saudi counterterrorism efforts. At the end of 2004, Saudi authorities claimed to have detained or killed three quarters of the al-Qaeda inspired operatives in the Kingdom, and dismantled their networks.[27]

Belief that bringing democracy to the Middle East would eventually defeat the social, economic and political conditions that produced terrorism was the premise for the invasion of Iraq. The invasion has had consequences both favorable and problematic for the War on Terror and the petroleum monarchs of the Persian Gulf. In Libya, the infamous Muammar Qaddafi renounced terrorism, abandoned his weapons of mass destruction programs and spoke of a pan-African union modeled after the European Union.

The Sudan took steps to appease the West, when the military placed the Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi under house arrest.[28] Turabi had welcomed Usama bin-Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri to the Sudan in the early 90's and held a conference for Islamic militant groups from around the world.[29] Sudan and Libya have emerged as a new source for oil and gas, and their desire to establish ties with the West and clean up their image coincides with their need for oil contracts. However, both India and China, with their rising energy demands, provide these countries with alternative clients, who will require less of this pro-west behavior.

Most recently, a new development in the Israel-Palestine conflict has produced a favorable direction for the West. The death of the iconic leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Yasir Arafat, and Israel's targeted assassination of the leadership of Hamas and Islamic Jihad were seen by the West and Israel as an opportunity to bring new leadership to the Palestinians. Elections were held, and the UN called the process legitimate. The Palestinians elected a former aide to Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas, formerly known as Abu Mazzin. Since taking

office, Abbas has pursued peaceful resolution to the conflict. He has increased diplomatic efforts with both the Islamic militant groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, but also with Israel. Abbas's efforts are accompanied by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, and gradually reduce military activity. The U.S. has re-entered the fold, pledging $350 million in aide, and training and equipping Palestinian forces.[30] Saudi Arabia, following suit, held the country's first elections on Thursday, February 10, 2005. The eligibility is restricted, banning women, males under the age of 21, and military personnel. The elected offices are also restricted to half the members of municipal councils. The arrangement places government appointees on the council with elected officials. Despite the high profile that the election was given internationally, the interest inside the Kingdom has been minimal. In the first phase of the election 149,000 men registered, out of an estimated pool of 600,000.[31]

The Saudi elections reveal one or two possible scenarios: a cautious regime, moving forward with reforms which merely toe the line, but intend to continue in the liberal direction. Or, alternatively we are witnessing the "window dressing" theory in action. Much hangs in the balance. The reform movement will have to compete with the image of western democracy, as the Iraqi factions and sectarian groups are each given a voice in Iraq's government. The balance of majority and minority politics in Iraq will influence the reaction of Saudi Arabia. Whether the people view the electoral process and reform as a devious creation of western society or as a local phenomenon, could encourage or discourage participation and the growth of the process. If the local movement, and for that matter, the government, can place the process within a local context, it raises their chances of success. Saudis will likely approve of reform measures if they perceive them to have a Saudi Arabian cultural origin, with legitimacy drawn from Islamic

teachings. The competition between the government and the dissidents will develop around this dynamic.

The images of prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq undercut attempts by the U.S. to win the hearts and minds of Iraqi citizens. But, the U.S. coalition was fighting an uphill battle from the beginning. The illegitimacy of the U.S. operations from the perspective of the international community was echoed by Iraqi resistance leaders' call to arms after the fall of Hussein. The war for the Iraqi heart and mind was complicated by the unilateral action taken by the U.S. Without the support of the UN or NATO, the U.S. has absorbed the financial, political and ideological costs.[32] The U.S. has suffered the loss of legitimacy in the eyes of Muslims worldwide. In the traditions and texts of Islam, the invasion of a predominately Muslim country by non-Muslims, justifies defensive action. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a group of fifty-six states, models itself as an Islamic United Nations. In early 2003, the Secretary General of the Conference issued a press release requesting a peaceful resolution to the Iraq question.[33]

Worldwide attention on the handling of prisoners followed the release of the pictures from Abu Ghraib. The pictures showed scenes of sexual, physical and psychological abuse at the hands of all too enthusiastic American soldiers. Similarly, the secretive operations at the detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba became a liability. Human rights organizations expressed hostility toward treatment of "enemy combatants", and received favorable press coverage.

The absolutist language used by the administration could be heard in Bush's State of the Union Speech after 9/11 where he said to viewers worldwide, "you are either with us or you are

with the terrorists." Framing the debate with cold war, zero sum thinking was continued with the use of Biblical themes of "good and evil."

Perhaps, one of the most important contemporary images of the United States is its increasingly religious orientation. The evangelical Christian community has seen a rise in congregants nationwide. The community's power does not lie in its numbers alone, but in their participation and efforts at the local level. The national networks of evangelical churches have established themselves as one of the most important voting blocks in the country. With such power concentrated in a religious group, politicians have begun courting these constituents with language and policy that reflects the evangelical community's values. The President has seemingly tried to blur the line between church and state. His faith-based initiative programs, along with his invocation of Christian doctrine to support prohibition of stem cell research, abortion and other initiatives, reinforce the image of a country with a strong Christian identity.[34] Bush, fatefully playing into the hands of extremist Islamist groups said the U.S. would go on a "crusade" against America's attackers, conjure up the image of the murderous campaigns of Christian Europe.

Usama bin Laden and his global jihad movement invoke the image of a crusading West to garner support for the movement. They attempt to parallel the current U.S. foreign policy with the historical image of the European Crusades. In this strategy, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict plays a central role. Jerusalem contains the third holiest site in Islam, the Haram Sharif (Noble Sanctuary), where it is believed that Muhammad briefly ascended to Heaven. The Palestinian uprising (in Arabic *intifada*) of 2000 was met with harsh repressive measures from Israel. Images of bulldozers plowing down the homes of impoverished residents of Gaza, (the most densely populated place on Earth), and the West Bank, provided substance to the Palestinian resistance.

Both the presence of the U.S. troops, and the investigations into Saudi "charities," have produced anxiety within Saudi Arabia. The ties between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia historically have been rooted in strategic interests in terms of security and oil, but also through cross-cultural contact between the two countries. Large numbers of upper class Saudis have been educated in the U.S. Their exposure to American ideals and society and years of social interaction within the U.S. has reinforced commitment to the strategic partnership. The U.S. educated Saudi elites would go on to be leaders in business, and politics in the Kingdom, while maintaining ties to the communities that welcomed them in the U.S. The private sector has also been a venue for cooperation. The Saudi Bin Laden Group has worked with U.S. construction firms on numerous projects in the Gulf. The oil industry has been the primary center of trade relations. During the early 1970's the Saudi budget began expanding at an extraordinary pace, and the royals invited U.S. contractors to help build 20th century urban infrastructure.

The U.S. attitude toward this partnership changed dramatically after inquiries into the Kingdom's role in the 9/11 attacks. Politicians, analysts and a majority of American citizens became skeptical of the relationship. In response to the terrorist activity in the Kingdom Sa'd Al-Faqih was featured on CNN in 2004 declaring the inevitable fall of the regime. The criticism from the U.S., focused on the fundamentalist "Wahhabi" doctrine. The terms fundamentalist and Wahhabi entered the vocabulary of Americans who were exhausted by the images of a culture that forbids women to drive, and holds public beheadings. Much of the debate was about the religious doctrine and the education. Extremist imams exalting violent jihad were presented out of context by the media and analysts. Americans polled by the *Washington Post* believed Saudi Arabia's was a state sponsoring terrorism.[35] The reality, however seems much different from post 9/11 commentary. The majority of Saudis oppose violence and terrorism, as witnessed by

their reaction to the outbreak of terrorism on the domestic front in May of 2003. It is a mistake to assume that anti-American sentiment automatically orients the majority of the people toward violence. Bin Laden and Zawahiri likely chose 15 Saudis as hijackers to foster the image of a Saudi sponsorship, when Egyptian al-Qaeda operatives likely equal Saudi membership in the organization. To be sure, the domestic environment in Saudi Arabia is problematic, and has produced grounds for recruitment for al-Qaeda. Western allies of Saudi Arabia should look more carefully at the circumstances that lead to the Saudi role in the outgrowth of al-Qaeda.

The current state of Saudi politics is in part, the result of reactionary measures taken over the course of the latter half of the 20th century. Cold war strategy played an important role in the development of the education system and religious development in the Kingdom. In the early 1960's Saudis faced the growth of Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism. Nasser's reforms of Al-Azhar University, Cairo's thousand year old institution of Islamic learning, were met with counter-measures from the Saudis. The Saudis reacted by raising the profile of their strain of Islam. Al-Azhar is widely accepted among Muslims as the intellectual center of Islam, where the best Muslim minds attend to the pressing matters of the faith. This contrasted sharply with the backwater image of the Kingdom and its lackluster intellectual credentials. To heighten their intellectual capacity, and therefore compete with Egypt for religious superiority, the Saudis welcomed Egypt's activist Muslim Brothers.[36] The Brothers brought with them a sense of civic duty, a trait cultivated in Egypt. However, the civic duty characteristic of Muslim Brothers was not tolerated in the Kingdom. They were provided an outlet for their creed in the 1980's, when Saudi Arabia, with the go-ahead from Washington, permitted the ulama and others to gather support for jihad against the Soviets. Once again, the spread of Saudi religious creed would help fend off the spread of Soviet communism. In South Asia, among other places, the royals shelled

out thousands of free copies of works by Ibn Taymiyya, the medieval preacher who influenced the Wahhabi doctrine.

It is necessary for one to scrutinize the Saudi education system, but criticism should be based on an accurate reading of the issues. In addition to the use of religion as a foreign policy tool against soviet communism, Saudi commitment to their religious creed was again reinforced in reaction to the events of 1979. Saudis used their Sunni religious doctrine against the Iranian's revolutionary Shia movement. In the first decade of its existence, the Islamic Republic of Iran had as a central pillar of their foreign policy, active support for Islamic revolution throughout the Middle East. Indeed, the antagonism of the Iranians had an active dimension. Agents of Iran detonated bombs during the 1989 hajj, killing dozens. The Saudis, to prevent the Islamic Revolution from spilling over into the Kingdom, awarded control of education to the ulama. Education had already been the domain of the ulama, but the hostile period of the 1980's expanded the presence of religious instruction in the classroom.

The education that Saudis receive within the Kingdom is primarily religious. Most students are not exposed to the kind of coursework necessary to be competitive in the job market. Instead, the education leaves citizens without the necessary tools for participating in an industrialized economy. The unemployment rate is, therefore, extremely high. Some have argued the unemployment is the result of a lack of job pull, or entrepreneurial activity. This suggests that Saudis, if presented with opportunities for employment, would willingly accept any job. I would say it has to be both the lack of the entrepreneurial class, and lack of work ethic among ordinary Saudis. There simply is not an entrepreneurial spirit outside the Kingdom's upper class.[37] Oil revenues have subsidized a welfare state, a tax-less society, for the better part of its existence. The royals have also chosen to employ ex-patriot workers from India and Pakistan, a low wage

workforce akin to that of the Mexican laborers in the U.S. Recent trends in population and GDP have destabilized the rentier state model. Reliance on the rentier model cannot stand in the face of decreased per capita income due to the sustained increases in fertility rates.[38] Attempts at reversing these trends are complicated by social custom in the Kingdom. The traditional means for lowering fertility rates: immigration, and putting women into the workforce are impractical for the Kingdom. Saudi law dictates that women are not allowed to leave the house without a male family member. Women are banned from being alone in the presence of men who are not family.

The measures taken by Crown Prince Abdullah toward diversifying the economy will need to be met with equal reform measures in the education of young Saudis. Growth in the private sector will require change in the attitude toward employment and work ethic, which education reform may foster.

Movement/Regime Longevity

The Salience of the Various Ideologies in the New Environment

Revolution empirically portrays a protracted struggle, with the aim of completely changing a society. A standard revolution replaces the society's method and role of government, leadership figures, class identities, the economy and social value system. Therefore, the protracted effort involves a lengthy amount of time and considerable destruction of old infrastructure and symbols of the old society to make room for the new society. Without going too deeply into revolutionary theory, we can conclude that this type of change is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to execute, much less organize. The change advocated by the Saudi dissident movement is not revolutionary. The political program of MIRA and CDLR call for reforms to the current system,

not complete change. Although they do argue for removal of the leadership, or a constitutional monarchy, their ultimate objective is to build on what's already there.

MIRA: Victory at the Cost of Existence

MIRA's ideology affords it relative ease in affecting specific change, as opposed to revolutionary change. But, what gives the movement its advantage is also what prevents its seizure of power. Political change will likely happen as a result of a leader who is able to separate his identity from that of the status quo. Appearing different, yet still containing the basic substance of the current leadership is the complex political tactic that the movement will need to employ. So far, the reaction of Saudi citizens to the post 9/11 environment has been to place their trust *cautiously* in the hands of the regime.[39] This is likely a reaction to fear of external threats, threats, that as suggested above include the U.S.

Perhaps al-Qaeda's greatest success has been to destabilize relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States. It is empirically observable that withdrawal of external support for a regime can open the way for opposition movements.[40] Yet, al-Qaeda seems out of touch with the long-term needs of Saudi Arabia. If the economy continues to weaken, the lack of a coherent political program will hurt al-Qaeda. In terms of a viable alternative to the regime, MIRA offers a political package, complete with a Shura council already in place. However, the regime currently appears as the better option with its control of public services. MIRA operating largely as an ex-patriot community, has restricted its ability to offer alternative services. Hezbollah of Lebanon and Hamas (to a lesser degree) of Palestine have made themselves indispensable to the community through the creation of social service networks. The network provides health care, education and basic provisioning for the worst-off of their constituents. Currently the Saudi

regime is in the best position to bring the country the right balance of economic and social reforms.

A major point of MIRA's opposition program is its hostility toward the use of non-Islamic law in specific aspects of the state's domestic and international policy. Their program calls for more participation by the ulama in the state apparatus, and a break in special relationship with the United States. In 1993, the creation of the Majlis al-Shoura (Consultative Council) responded to the demands of opposition leaders who clamored for more participation in the decision making process. Crown Prince Abdullah, who is the de-facto ruler since 1995, increased the number of council members in 1997 from 60 to 90. In 2001, in the third rotation of the council, Abdullah provided the council with another 30 seats. The council members have been recruited more from within progressive groups with graduate degrees.[41] Despite the higher profile given to the Islamist movement, progressives have been favored by the regime. Continuing this trend, the municipal elections add salience to the progressive position. If the Kingdom continues in this direction in terms of participation, MIRA's objective will seem more difficult to obtain. MIRA would prefer more participation for the ulama first and foremost, and is ambivalent about wide-scale political participation in the Kingdom. As more Saudis become acquainted with participation in social and political life, the ulama will have trouble reversing the trend.

In addition to the developments in participation, Saudi policy toward the West has been in transition under Abdullah. As someone who defers less to the West than his half-brother Fahd, Abdullah is more vocal and steadfast in opposing U.S. policy in Israel. These two things together weaken the MIRA program. It is no wonder that as these trends have unfolded, al-Faqih has become more assertive in tone, and adopted rhetoric that is closer in theme to that of the militant

Islamists. This maneuver will likely prove to be too little too late. Al-Qaeda has already cornered the militant market.

Al-Qaeda: The Present and Future Minority Voice

Al-Qaeda does not seem fit to confront the complex issues facing the Kingdom. It lacks a political program, and relies too heavily on violence. Al-Qaeda has attempted to be the first non-state, pan Islamist movement seeking Islamist government worldwide, attacking infidel regimes everywhere. Its model is unique, having both an international reach and orientation, but also a growing local component. Operatives from the Philippines receive training in al-Qaeda's military camps, then attempt to pass bomb-making and paramilitary skills to their fellow countrymen. The model has a few advantages. Having both the international and the local component gives al-Qaeda leverage in both venues. Bin Laden and Zawahiri can speak as the leaders of a particular local movement building the profile of that local group, and with equal authority can issue communiqués addressed as the leader of the worldwide Islamist movement. The strategic use of violence brings a higher profile to the movement, yet violence that serves as an end in itself will likely fail in Saudi Arabia. Despite the use of symbolic targets, the level of destruction and death needed to attract the media's attention (a result of the rise in destruction of terrorist methods) probably has a negative effect. Indeed, this was the case in the Morocco attacks, where a Casablanca operation killed only Moroccans, not the Jews it was intended for.[42] But, in Saudi Arabia government buildings and employees, western residential and commercial compounds and members of al-Saud have been the targets. This isolates the government and westerners as the enemy. The success of these attacks, and indeed a strategy of terrorism, make the government appear weak, and the movement powerful.[43] What al-Qaeda hopes to achieve is indiscriminate

crackdowns on Saudi citizens. Al-Qaeda has adopted the Maoist strategy of subordinating political organization to violent confrontation with the establishment. The Latin America guerilla commander Che Guevera was an earlier proponent of this strategy. He believed that not all the pre-conditions needed to be in place before action was taken against the state. In this model, violent action against the state eventually brings about the necessary conditions. The intended outcome is for repressive measures from the state to broaden the grounds for recruitment for the guerilla forces.[44] This has not been the outcome of increased violence in the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia, despite being known for its practice of public beheadings, has a history of apprehending dissenters in a discrete and discriminate fashion. This strategy seems to have survived the new wave of violence from al-Qaeda. As security spending has risen[45], it has not translated to a rise in indiscriminate violence or repression against innocent civilians. Indeed, according to one account the level of detainment and interrogation is more lenient.[46]

The terrorist activity in Saudi Arabia committed in 2003 and 2004 will likely decline in 2005. This can be expected for three reasons. First, the tracking of terrorist cells and subsequent detentions have resulted in the capture of the 26 most wanted al-Qaeda (and other militant) operatives. This is damaging to a cell, because interrogations of leaders can lead to the identities of other operatives. Secondly, the cells operating in these first two years are unlikely to have amassed new recruits. On May 12, 2003 a suicide bomber detonated a bomb that killed 35 in a residential complex in Riyadh. While nine of the victims were Americans, the attacks were considered a sign of instability in the Kingdom. Saudis felt the insecurity that Americans experienced 18 months earlier. In November of that year, another attack in Riyadh resulted in seventeen deaths, all of them Arabs. With the strategy of violence failing to produce its desired outcome, the movement is likely to have had a hard time recruiting. Thirdly, one word: Iraq. As

the local movement in Saudi Arabia has confronted heavy resistance from the Saudi state, it has likely become more appealing to participate in the resistance in Iraq. Iraq has become the new Afghanistan. Reports of Saudis leaving for Iraq to fight in the jihad against the U.S. occupation suggests that the local movement in Saudi Arabia has lost its appeal. There are two important implications for this trend. First, if al-Qaeda sympathizers in Saudi Arabia abandon the effort in their homeland for Iraq, their commitment to overthrow of al-Saud is questionable. Second, the alternative explanation is more frightening: Iraq is the new training ground for al-Qaeda. Instead of simply diverting attention from al-Saud, Iraq's proximity to Saudi Arabia might encourage participation from Saudis who were not attracted to the local movement in their homeland. In the new training center, the future generations of Saudi al-Qaeda commanders and rank and file are born. They receive the explicit and implicit indoctrination that fell upon jihad participants in Afghanistan nearly two decades ago.

The nature of the Iraq conflict is important to consider for the indoctrination of al-Qaeda operatives. In the fertile-crescent, Sunnis are fighting Shia, attempting to prompt civil war. Saudi Arabia and its Sunni neighbors will not benefit from a Shia dominated Iraq, where the likely product would be an Iranian/Iraqi alliance. Such an alliance would undoubtedly produce new fault lines in the Arab world, presumably shifting the balance of power from Sunni to Shia.

On one hand, the violence perpetrated by al-Qaeda linked militants has distanced al-Qaeda from the public, who oppose violence. However, as Saudis feel the pinching effects of a growing population and shrinking GDP, they may lose faith in their leaders. The Iraq situation also is a significant security risk. The survival of al-Saud will depend on its cohesiveness, crisis management, reform initiatives and ultimately its commitment to survival.

All Bets on Al-Saud

Saudi citizens have been socialized into a society that encourages loyalty to both the ulama and the royal family. However, the kind of loyalty the ulama receive is much different from that of al-Saud. Saudis do not view the royals as role models.[47] So long as offensive behavior of the royals is not in plain view, such loyalty is not a necessity. It is the ulama that serve as the moral and social advisers to the subjects of the Kingdom. Throughout the existence of al-Saud rule it is the alliance between the ulama and the royals that creates this dichotomy. The post 9/11 crackdowns on extremist elements of the ulama will likely push this minority deeper into its radical identity.

The Saudi Arabian monarchy has proven adept at crisis management. In the 20th century alone, they survived violent resistence from the Ikhwan (1928), a fanatical group of Islamist militants called the Ikhwan (Brothers), the Arab cold war, the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), and the trying period after the watershed year of 1979. They now confront new challenges, domestic and foreign. On the domestic front they face a demographic challenge, illustrated by the growth of the capital Riyadh. In 1930 the estimated population of Riyadh was 30,000. Between 1968 and 1974 the population went from 300,000 to 1.2 million. Again in 1998 that figure stood at 3.5 million. The Kingdom, several decades ago largely made up of pastoral nomads and coastal fishing villages, now has a population that is 85% urban.[48] However, this population is spread across territory the size of Western Europe.

The Royals have to remain a cohesive unit to stay in power. Unity is necessary for survival, which is likely the family's number one priority. The family's male members alone are estimated at or slightly below 10,000. The succession in the Kingdom has been based on merit, and status as a son of the late King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud (Ibn Saud). Succession based on this lateral

movement rather than passing on rule from father to son has likely prevented divisive rivalries. The current situation is complicated by the aging of the children of Ibn Saud, and the incapacitation of King Fahd. Both King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah are in their early 80's. In 1995 Fahd had a debilitating stroke. Since then, the Crown Prince has served as the de facto head of state. Fahd is a member of a group of full brothers called the "Sudayri seven", after their mother's family. Sudayris occupy important cabinet positions; Prince Nayef is Interior Minister, Sultan is Defense Minister. On the other hand, Abdullah is not a Sudayri and is without a full brother.

In spite of claims that he is a loner within al-Saud, the current status of Abdullah's regency is stable. He has been passing reform measures through the Sudayri dominated cabinet with relative ease. With Abdullah in power, al-Saud have redrawn their relations with the west and been more outspoken about the external issues that dominated the opposition's rhetoric. Abdullah used the political clout of Saudi Arabia to gather Arab countries for a cooperation summit on Israel and Palestine. Like his U.S. counterpart, Abdullah has been steadfast in maintaining his position on policies, which has reinforced the image of separation.

Another important measure has been Abdullah's aggressive courting of World Trade Organization (WTO) membership. The requirements of membership: liberalization of the economy, and the elimination of state subsidies will benefit al-Saud in the long term. Ostensibly, these two policies will remove some pressure from the state regarding economic performance.[49] I say "some", because market economies are directed by an ambiguous set of principles that the layperson generally does not grasp. Therefore, in industrial and post-industrial societies, the blame for downturns in the market is often placed on the state. We witness this in the U.S. and elsewhere, where elections are regularly determined by the state of the economy.

Abdullah's apparent skills as a leader could stem the growth of the resistance. In a address to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), he called upon Muslims to look to their internal situations. He cited a passage of the Qu'ran that says God will not change people unless they change their own conditions internally. The use of Islamic references to frame domestic reform initiatives will prevent liberal economic and political reforms from sounding and looking like they came from Europe or the U.S. Likewise, as one western commentator has proposed, Abdullah should package social reforms as part of economic reform. It is important at this point to appease the domestic constituents and then foreign observers, who will press hard for social reforms.[50]

With regards to Iraq, and the emerging power of the Shia majority, al-Saud should work to maintain the rapprochement with Iran, while using the image of a regional Shia coalition as a potential threat, thereby boosting "Saudi" nationalism. Indeed, it is the royal family's name that adorns the title of the country and gives Saudis their national identity. Were the Saudis to be removed from power, it would produce identity problems. Most likely, the regions under Saudi control would return to their pre-Saudi identities: The Southern regions with cultural connections to Yemen, the more liberal Western Hijaz region, an autonomous state until the 1920's, the northern regions with ties to Jordan, Syria and Iraq, the Nejd, the conservative central region where Riyadh is located, and the Eastern Province, the source of oil, access to the Persian Gulf, and the location of the country's long suppressed Shia minority.

With regards to the liberal movement, which recently proposed the Kingdom adopt a constitutional monarchy, al-Saud, despite its current policy of imprisoning these figures, may in the future try to raise their profile to have it compete with the Islamist movement. This liberal movement is ideologically in the minority, but consists of educated elites, many of whom have

economic clout. Becoming beholden to their interests might destabilize the moderate Islamists, encouraging them to turn to violence.

One security concern has been the military. Although weak in terms of cohesion, size and training, it would be the key to a coup. It would require enough personnel, both rank and file and high ranking officers to overthrow the Saud. Some instances have already suggested collusion between Islamist militants and the military. In late May of 2004, the attack of a western compound left 22 dead. Three of the four attackers were able to escape despite being confined to the walls of the compound which was surrounded by police and security forces at least 100 strong. Moreover, the military draws from a limited pool. Saudis have not been attracted to military service, and al-Saud have not imposed conscription. The southern region draws a disproportionate number into the various services. The region, being both densely populated and underdeveloped, is susceptible to instability.[51] Regionally it suffers from the highest unemployment in the Kingdom. However, one of the more cohesive and powerful branches of the military is the National Guard. Abdullah has presided over the guard since 1963.

Al-Saud have an extensive family, which has created an elaborate state apparatus. Together with other prominent Saudi families, al-Saud are entrenched in the various sectors of society. Their power does not come only from their monarchical center, but from the reaches of a family thousands strong. A massive shift in loyalty, away from the royal family will result if al-Saud cannot remain united while reforming the economy and the social fabric that has produced a parochial public, hostile to outside influences.

Conclusion

One threat to Saudi Arabia is the transnational jihad movement, known as al-Qaeda. The movement developed as a result of the efforts of a few Islamist militants. Two leading recruiters of the Afghan jihad, were Abdullah Azzam and Usama bin Laden. Azzam and bin Laden established halfway houses in Peshawar, Pakistan during the 1980's for Arabs on their way to the Afghan front. The houses in Peshawar served as a recruiting base for al-Qaeda. Arab [and other national] Islamist militants were able to establish networks, which survived the end of the Afghan jihad.

The collapse of the Soviet Union left a hole in the global ideological balance, which al-Qaeda and its transnational movement has attempted to fill. The movement operates on both the local and global levels trying to spread its Islamist ideology, while pushing back against Western powers. Al-Qaeda uses violence as its principle means of political action. So far, it has not demonstrated a desire to become a political and social organization, but rather facilitate the removal of "apostate", non-Islamic regimes. It considers the government of Saudi Arabia non-Islamic. Al-Qaeda's use of violence to affect political change seems not to have garnered much support within the Kingdom. But there is ground for recruitment in Saudi Arabia for fighting in Iraq. These fighters will eventually return home to Saudi Arabia, as their fathers and Uncles did in 1989. The security of Saudi Arabia currently benefits from the Iraqi resistance, but when the holy warriors return, they could be Saudi Arabia's biggest security threat.

The Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia is Saudi Arabia's other security concern. The group, since 9/11 has begun a more pro-active campaign to overthrow the regime. But, the MIRA approach has so far been to distance itself from the terrorist attacks inside the Kingdom. This allows the group to remain untouched by the U.S. War on Terror campaign, and to continue

operating out of its London base. Its London asylum allows it to continue disseminating anti-regime rhetoric through fax and internet communiqués. However, it has not been able to develop extensive leadership networks within the Kingdom. Consequently, the groups' detailed political program has not been accompanied by shadow government institutions ostensibly providing social services to people. Moreover, the group's identity has just now emerged as an alternative to the current regime. As it attempts to craft its identity as a potential leader of Saudi Arabia, it will have to frame its message in a way that does not attract attention to its ex-patriot status.

Both movements struggle with a lack of identifiable political leadership within the Kingdom. The royals have a number of leadership tools at their disposal. The high oil prices of 2004 gave the Kingdom a cushion to its fiscal problems. But, al-Saud need to be concerned with the future now more than ever. Various crises confronted in the 20th century caused al-Saud to react in a manner that compounded problems and led to future conflict with the people and with the ulama. The political situation requires reform not just formally in style and substance of government, but in national attitudes. The vast majority of Saudis are averse to change. From a western perspective, this is a difficult concept to understand, because we embrace change. Al-Saud can attempt to reform attitudes through education, which will likely become a contentious issue with the ulama. But, in the long term, a public campaign to encourage public participation could bring the balance of power away from al-Saud and the ulama. Another potential effect of public participation is that the ulama will direct their criticism away from the regime and toward the people, whose new civic responsibility will require guidance. Al-Saud have confronted crises, and has been successful because of its resilience and commitment to survival. Maintaining that attitude will likely ensure the survival of al-Saud.

Definitions

Several terms will be used which need some clarification. The royal family in Saudi Arabia are "al-Saud", which translated means "the Saud", for this reason I do not place "the" before their name. "Islamism" is the philosophy of some Muslims, that politics are not divorced from their religion. The Islamic Code is called Sharia in Arabic. It consists of the Quran, Islam's holy book, and the traditions of the prophet Muhammad found in the "sunna" and the "hadith". "Ulama" is the plural of alim, which means religious and legal scholar. The ulama are the authorities of Sharia. Fundamentalism, in the context of this paper, refers to the philosophy that Islam ought to be practiced in the way of Muhammad and his companions, and that religious texts likewise should be interpreted literally. Saudi Arabia's current regime is headed by a family whose rise to power was accompanied by the religious creed of fundamentalist preacher Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. Consequentially "Wahhabism", is the brand of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia. "Extremism" is the philosophy of the efficacy of violence in bringing about political and social change. A militant is another name for an extremist. Arab-Afghans refer to the Arabs who fought in the jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980's. They referred to themselves as Afghan Arabs to identify themselves with the Afghan cause, and to isolate themselves as a separate group in their homeland. Revolution is complete change of a society's fabric, including its social landscape, its economic system, and its method of government. Terrorism is a means to bring about some momentary political outcome, therefore a terrorist group is not by itself revolutionary.[52] I use the terms international and transnational to describe different things. I use international when multiple state actors are involved. In using transnational, I describe circumstances that involve non-state actors across nationalities.

The mosque is a place of Islamic worship. It is a house of prayer and also a communal preaching venue. In Saudi Arabia, and other predominately Muslim countries where the repression of free speech exists, the mosque becomes a place of public discourse. Preachers speak out against injustice, placing their rhetoric within Islamic teachings. In a predominately Muslim country the mosque networks can retain considerable freedom of speech when sermons are given within the parameters of the accepted Islamic teachings. States have a problem repressing this speech because its legitimacy is derived from the religion, which is a source of identity, pride and freedom. In Saudi Arabia, this is the context from which the opposition movement emerges. However, Saudi Arabia bans civic organizations, political parties and anything that looks like a coalition. So, while the free speech in the mosques persists, the words can not be put into action.

NOTES

[1] Bin Laden Interview with Al-Jazeera, June 1999.

[2] Bergen, Peter. Holy War Inc. 2001. Touchstone (Simon and Schuster), New York.

[3] The most in depth work on the Muslim Brotherhood is out of date, but still offers an impressive history of the group. Mitchell, Paul. *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, 1969, 1993 Oxford.

[4] Kepel, Gilles. Jihad, The Trail of Political Islam. 2002. Harvard, Cambridge, MA.

[5] Azzam, Abdullah. Jihad Sha'b Muslim. Beirut, Dar ibn Hazm. 1992. pg. 24

[6] Bergen, Peter. Holy War Inc. 2001. Touchstone (Simon and Schuster), New York.

[7] CNN correspondent Peter Bergen has traveled extensively throughout Afghanistan, Pakistan and London conducting interviews with former mujahedeen, Muslim Arab dissidents, journalists and bin Laden himself. Bergen, Peter. Holy War Inc. 2001. Touchstone (Simon and Schuster), New York.

[8] U.S.A. v. Usama bin Laden, testimony of Jamal al-Fadl, February 7, 2001. Fadl testimony includes reference to the training camps still operating in Afghanistan, "Khalid ibn Walid", and "al-Farouq", "Sadeek", "Khaldan", "Jihad Wal", and "Darunta".

[9] Yusufzai, Rahimullah. *The News* Pakistan. December 8, 1995.

[10] U.S.A. v. Usama bin Laden. Plea agreement of Ali Mohammed Oct. 20, 2000.

[11] Usama bin Laden biography, Yusufzai, Rahimullah. *Newsline*, Karachi, Pakistan. September, 1998.

[12] U.S.A. v. Usama bin Laden. Testimony of Jamal al-Fadl, February. 6-7 2001, testimony of L'Hossaine Kherchtou, February. 26, 2001.

[13] Kepel, Gilles. *The War for Muslim Minds, Islam and the West*. 2004. Belknap of Harvard.

[14] Mamoun Fandy went to Saudi Arabia and London researching Saudi dissident movements. His work is the most carefully researched on the Kingdom. He explains the different methods of the organized opposition groups. Bin Laden he says operates both in domestic and the transnational realms. See Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*. St. Martin's, 1999. p. 177-194.

[15] Advice and Reform Committee, Communique no.17 August 3, 1995.

[16] Mamoun Fandy addresses the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, also known as the 9/11 Commission. July 9, 2003, panel on al-Qaeda.

[17] Fandy, Mamoun. Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent. 1999. St. Martin's Press, New York. p. 118-119

[18] Abdal-Haqq, Irshad. "Islamic Law: An Overview of its Origin and Elements," *The Journal of Islamic Law and Culture,* 7, no. 1 (Spring- Summer 2002): 27-56.

[19] Fandy, Mamoun. Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent. 1999. St. Martin's Press, New York.

[20] Baer, Robert. Sleeping with the Devil, 2003. Crown, New York. p. 152.

[21] Fandy, Mamoun. Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent. 1999. St. Martin's Press, New York. p.71.

[22] Ibid.; author interview with Muhammad Mas'ari.

[23] Abedin, Mahan. "Interview with Sa'd al-Faqih" *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*. Vol. 5 no. 11, November, 2003.

[24] "Analysts: Iraq a Magnet for Al-Qaeda" *CNN Report*. August 20, 2003. Http://www.cnn.com

[25] Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA): www.yaislah.org, and www.miraserve.org, 2005

[26] Hoffman, Bruce. *Inside Terrorism*. 1998. Columbia University, New York. p. 201

[27] Macfarquhar, Neil. "Suicide Bomber Attacks Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry," *New York Times*, December 30, 2004.

[28] Kepel, Gilles. Kepel, Gilles. Jihad, The Trail of Political Islam. 2002. Harvard, Cambridge, MA.

[29] Hamas and Hezbollah leaders attended the "Islamic People's Congress" which enabled bin Laden to establish ties with both groups. Later, bin Laden would send al-Qaeda members to train in Lebanon under Hezbollah command. Bergen, Peter. Holy War Inc. 2001. Touchstone (Simon and Schuster), New York.

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[32] Nye, Joseph S. Jr. *Soft Power,* 2004. Public Affairs, New York. Former Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton Administrations, Nye elaborates on the concept of cultural attraction and its persuasive power.

[33] Secretary General of the OIC press release regarding the Iraq question, available at the OIC website, at http://www.oic-oci.org/ For more reading on the role that the OIC plays in the politics of the Muslim world see Bianchi, Robert. *Guests of God,* 2004. Oxford.

[34] PBS, *Frontline: The Jesus Factor.*

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