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THE LONG WAR AGAINST TERRORISM IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Executive Summary

Title: The Long War against Terrorism in Saudi Arabia

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Thesis: Terrorism in Saudi Arabia is the result of criminal activity that uses violence to advocate its idealistic points of view against the Saudi government. This is a phenomenon that must be combated by the entire society. The terrorists' goal is to use fear to manipulate the people to destroy the economy and destabilize the government.

Discussion:

The government understands that this is a complicated problem that requires the use of more than just military force or police action. Saudi officials concentrated first on gathering intelligence against the terrorists, specifically in the areas of organization, finance, and operations. Once these areas were understood, the government put most of its efforts in the areas of education, social programs, economic incentives, and working with influential religious leaders.

The character of the terrorist threat in Saudi Arabia and the government's long term strategy to confront and end the ongoing threat to the Saudi people and the sovereign government, as well as how it applies to the worldwide threat, will be highlighted. Specific details show how the terrorists' organize and operate in Saudi Arabia amongst the populace to influence their opinion. In addition, the way they use the Muslim religions to further their cause and recruit members is discussed. This form of terrorism is foreign to the social structure of Saudi Arabia and is influenced from external sources. The type of organization is not popularly accepted in the country and is opposed to the normal way of life of Saudi Arabians. The behavior that they advocate and use is contrary to Islamic principles and, therefore, will never be legitimately accepted within the nation or by the government.

Saudi Arabia has seen terrorism morph into extreme acts of violence deliberately planned by some by small groups of zealots with specific religiously motivated political objectives meant to destabilize the Kingdom and bring about political change. The Saudi society is the target of these activities. The government has followed the policy of suppression and pressure on those activists by thwarting popular monetary support to these terrorists and the sources of spreading.

Conclusion:

The Saudi government has taken a holistic approach to combating terrorism in many fields of life: education, religion, intellect and tribal leadership. It is only through the combined efforts of civil and military operations that the Saudi Arabian government will rid itself of this phenomenon that is counter to the Saudi culture and the teachings of Islam.

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Preface

Terrorism in Saudi Arabia is the result of criminal activity that uses violence to advocate its idealistic points of view against the Saudi government. This is a phenomenon that must be combated by the entire society, because the terrorists' goal is to use fear to manipulate the people to destroy the economy and destabilize the government. The prevalence of this ideology affects the reputation of Saudi Arabia globally, and undermines its relations with other countries. Terrorist ideology promotes severing alliances between Saudi Arabia and western nations. Terrorist influence in Saudi Arabia also has profound social ramifications. Al Qaeda advocates resistance to the Saudi government among the Saudi Arabian people, and gains support from the population toward achieving their political agenda.

The government understands that this is a complicated problem that requires the use of more than just force or police action but also requires the involvement of the entire Saudi Arabian community. Saudi officials concentrated first on gathering intelligence against the terrorists, specifically in areas of organization, finance and operations. Once these areas were understood, the government put most of its efforts in the areas of education, social programs, economic incentives, and working with influential religious leaders.

This paper will explain how the government has been gaining support to fight the ideology behind the violence. The tactics and procedures used in Saudi Arabia can be applied to other environments and regions that face similar radicalized religious threats to win popular support for the government. This will deny the terrorist new recruits and support from the masses. The end result will be the complete denial of safe havens in Saudi Arabia for terrorism.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a universally destructive phenomenon that has affected the entire world. It devours countries and kingdoms environmentally, economically, and psychologically in ways that conventional wars do not. It impacts the innocent, who are often the targets of terrorist attacks. In fact terrorism tends to chase safety and peace out the back window when it enters the front door. The term terrorism is closely synonymous with ruin, unrest, disorder, and fear as it severely shakes the whole structure of the targeted society. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as criminal acts of arson, assassinations, and bombings. Regardless of the actual terrorist technique used, they all can be characterized as deliberate criminal acts conducted for the purpose of imposing fear and terror in its victims and target audiences. These criminal atrocities are supported by various terrorist foreign organizations which despise peace and human welfare. These organizations target humanity in general when they act on their diabolical plans. The countries that are affected by these acts are many, some more so than others.

One state that has suffered greatly in facing terrorism is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Despite its fame and position among the Muslim nations, it has been attacked many times by terrorists. Ironically, the Saudi Kingdom's leadership role in the Muslim world has done little to deter terrorism within its borders, requiring the Kingdom to exert tremendous efforts to combat this present phenomenon. Thus, it is worthwhile to look closely into the origins of terrorism in Saudi Arabia and to identify some of its causes. Additionally, it is essential to examine Saudi culture to gain an understanding of its history with terrorist activity. Islam has been accused by many, especially in the West, of being intimately involved in the support of terrorism. Thus, it is also prudent to delve into the origins of the Islamic religion and what it really believes with respect to terrorism and Jihad.

In reaction to the latest terrorist attacks, the Saudi government has taken measures and developed a new policy to defeat the terrorists and their attacks. To overcome this complicated problem, it has implemented reforms in Saudi education, religion, and tribal politics; the overall goal is to attain popular support among the Saudis citizenry. Additionally, the government has used military means as well. Saudi Arabia's military efforts have yielded remarkable results which have provided for real gains in security and safety. These successes have not come easy. The role of intelligence and its use by anti-terrorism units is vital yet extremely difficult to coordinate into effective anti-terrorism practices. Saudi Arabia's efforts in combating terrorism have been criticized, especially by the Western press. Regardless, the Saudi Kingdom faces a challenging task in dealing with terrorism within its borders and within the region due to its complex history and culture. As a Muslim state, it faces many different challenges than its U.S. allies in its fight against terror. The key to understanding its role in the global war on terrorism is an understanding of Islam in the Kingdom and an understanding of the Saudi people and their culture.

II. ORIGINS OF TERRORISM IN SAUDI ARABIA

The early religious teachings of Sheikh Mohammad Abdulwahhab have transcended time and remain a basis for many intellectual views and theories in the modern age. In the 19th century, Sheikh Mohammad Abdulwahhab founded the Wahhabi identity of Islam, which he called "true Islam". He looked at the history of Islam under the reign of the Caliphs who conquered much of the Middle East and North Africa. Sheikh Mohammad Abdulwahhab suggested Saudi culture could retain this greatness through the reformation of all aspects of secular life in Saudi Arabia. He called for a return to the Holy Quran and Sunna, traditional Islamic customs according to Hadith, applying their teachings and instructions to all aspects of life. Accordingly, he considered those who violated the Quranic and Sunni rules as enemies and dissenters. Unfortunately, some politicians observed that this religious attitude

could be used as a tool for achieving selfish political goals. As Anthony Cordesman wrote, "Wahhabism, or not, in essence is the phenomenon is one of groups and movements that employ religion as a tool of, and justification for, political opposition. The most extreme and violent groups expose extremist interpretations of some religious texts and shape their interpretations to fit their own points of view" ¹

Wahhabism has had an influential role in the world since its rise in the 19th century. Wahhabism, the Saudi Kingdom's branch of Islam, is fully embraced by the Al Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden. Abdel Bari Atwan described how he has strived to implement Wahhabism's puritanical religious measures and establish a return to the original Islamic State governed by the Islamic law Shari'a. Consequently, Osama Bin Laden rejects the Kingdom's foreign policy which has established relationships with those westerners whom he believes to be dissenters as they are non-Muslims. He has stated those dissenters are not allowed to exist in the land of the two holy mosques. Thus, he has waged a war of Jihad against both western countries and the Saudi royal family, striking domestic and foreign targets worldwide. Bin Laden labels the Saudi rulers secular because they have allowed non-Muslims to enter Muslim lands. Bin Laden stated, "We believe that America has committed the greatest mistake in entering a peninsula which no religion from among the non Muslim nations has entered for fourteen centuries."²

In reaction to this, the Saudi government has managed to extract a reluctant fatwa from the senior Ulama, Abdul Aziz bin Baz, approving the temporary existence of American forces in Saudi Arabia based on the U.S. defense of Islam in the region. Despite this fatwa, the Kingdom continues to face unrest and instability. As Atwan wrote, Bin Laden continues to garner support of radical Wahhabi clerics and scholars, especially since his return from Afghanistan after the defeat of the Soviet army. Bin Laden did not agree with bin Baz's fatwa allowing non-Muslims in Muslim lands. The Saudi government responded by exiling

some of Bin Laden's followers and Ulama supporters and imprisoned others. "Around 200 junior and senior Ulama were imprisoned between 1993-98, considered dissidents by the Al-Saud; they had preached jihad and condemned the US military presence."³ "The late 1990s have witnessed the simultaneous emergence on the Saudi Islamist scene of two trends, each of them willing to challenge the long time supremacy of Al-Sahwa Al-Islamiyaa (The Islamic Awakening), the main and most popular movement of the Islamic opposition [to the Saudi regime] of the early 1990s."⁴

This attitude was one of the early sources of doctrines supporting the Jihadi-Salafi movement in the Kingdom. The Jihadi-Salafi movement supported Usama bin Laden and criticized the Sahwa's new or modern conciliatory approach towards the west. The movement insisted on the importance of combining political with religious reform. The movement has been an identical echo of the emergence of radical Wahhabism that calls for retaining and establishing an Islamic state that rules all aspects of life.

A. Foreign Influence

Abdel Bari Atwan criticizes Saudi Arabian policies, saying that "the Kingdom has always been Al-Qaeda's prime recruiting ground, openly encouraged by the [Saudi Arabian] regime, up to 45,000 Saudis joined bin Laden's Mujahedin to expel the Soviet invaders from Afghanistan in the late 1980s."⁵ Because Soviet occupation of areas in the Muslim country of Afghanistan was seen as a threat to Islam in the region, the Saudi government initially supported Al-Qaeda's declaration of jihad against such occupation. The Saudi government issued visas for volunteer Saudis to fight for Islam and provided Al-Qaeda with significant financial support. Atwan further states that "the Saudi regime actively encouraged their young men to join the jihad and held bin Laden up as an inspiration. The Saudi media and mosques all over the kingdom joined the campaign to raise money and fighters for the effort in Afghanistan"⁶ Saudi Arabia, along with many countries including the United States,

provided manpower and material support to launch the attack on the communist forces of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan. This only halted their takeover of a strategically sensitive part of the world.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia continues to be an important ally of the United States in the war against terrorism. The kingdom's government and the armed forces are constantly busy seeking and hunting down the safe havens of the terrorists on the Saudi soil. In fact, the kingdom itself has been a victim of the terrorist acts simply because of the fact that Al-Qaeda and other groups see the people and the government as hurdles in their way. It is a well-known fact that the terrorists have been plotting to overthrow the government. They have made calls to the masses asking them to do the same because the government is helping the "infidels". It is true that Osama bin Laden is of Saudi origin, but it is also true that he is "Most Wanted" in the kingdom for his activities. In addition, although the hijackers responsible for 9/11 attacks were of Saudi origin, they were not supported by the government. The people and the government of Saudi Arabia do not support or condone extremism, fundamentalism, and acts of terrorism like suicidal bombings. It is nonetheless ironic that the Saudi volunteers, originally fighting against the Soviets, became the bases of Al-Qaeda's manpower and strength afterward.

After the victory of the Mujahedin and Jihadist in Afghanistan, bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia with his base of Saudi fighters to discover not only that non-Muslims were living in Saudi Arabia, but also that Western nations were interfering in state affairs, especially following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Atwan relates that Bin Laden opposed such foreign interference in the Arabian Peninsula. Additionally, he objected to the Saudi ruler despite the support the Saudi monarch provided in the Afghan War. They condemned US military presence in the Arabian Gulf and preached jihad against all Americans. Foreign organizations of fanatical Muslims in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries started to

provide funds and manpower to bin Laden in Saudi Arabia. Usama bin Laden then declared war against the U.S. military presence and Saudi government. He ignored the Ulama's fatwa of allowing such Western presence and denounced such religious Fatwas as secular. "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula had established an infrastructure of cells, safe houses, weapons and ammunition by the time the organization's first emir, Yusef Al-Aeri, launched a blitz within the Kingdom in May 2003." ⁷

Accordingly, the Saudi government has begun to take measures to prevent terrorist attacks against its citizens and infrastructure. Bin Laden, along with radical clerics, condemned the Saudi royal family for stealing oil wealth which rightfully belongs to the nation. As a result, the Saudi government has started to provide funding and security forces to the oil infrastructure in the Gulf to prevent bombings or suicidal attacks on them. Additionally, military operations and detention plans have been implemented to fight activist cells. Foreign organizations have tried to wage war and incite these fanatics by providing them with financial and physical support, but they have been met by a tough and suitable reaction by the Saudi government and support.

Foreign influence on terrorists in Saudi Arabia does not end at financial, material, organizational, and training support. It also takes the form of ideas, theories and teachings. The terrorists or religious fanatics have been influenced by extremist ideas found in some foreign Muslim scholars such as Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani, Muhammed Abdou and Rashed Reda. Their fanatical views bear similarity to Wahhabi puritanical ideas concerning the Islamic state and establishing Shari'a or Islamic law. Salwa Al-Khateeb writes, "This movement also calls for a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah of the prophet as the primary sources for the establishment of the Islamic state."⁸ Additionally, "the Egyptian and Muslim Brotherhood influence was further extended into the Saudi Fabric by the expulsion of the Brotherhood from Egypt and Syria in the 1960s and 70s. They found a refuge in Saudi

Arabia" and filled much-needed positions as teachers in Saudi schools.⁹ Thus, the Egyptian Brotherhood was a contributing cause of spreading terrorism in the Kingdom. Similarly, the ideology of Al-Qaeda was promoted by the expulsion of the Muslim Brotherhood and Saudis who then traveled abroad to the training camps where they were further trained in terrorist operations. All of the foreign organizations represented in fanatical extremism severely judge the West and the established Saudi regime. Thus, the Saudi government has viewed the problem as more of a political issue than a religious one.

B. Individual Corruption / Criminal Element

Terrorism and terrorist teachings corrupt individuals and societies. It causes great danger and destruction to those who perform acts of terror and terrifies all members of society. Terrorism is dangerous to its victims as well as its perpetrators. In his book, David Dumke writes, "Terrorism is defined, here, as violence against non combatants—civilians or military—to further a political cause."¹⁰ He describes terrorism as "random violence...spreading all around us like a pernicious disease, dumb and deadly."¹¹ Terrorists have no remorse or moral qualms about taking innocent lives, but rather feel they have done their duty to God. As Al-Khateeb further states, "Fanatics everywhere think that they are right and all others are wrong. They believe that the enemy should be smashed and destroyed."¹² The only right solution, to them, is the adaptation of an Islamic state of caliphs who applied Shari'a law. They interpreted any violation to Shari'a law as a transgression against Islamic principles. This is consistent with the beliefs of extremist groups who want to return to an Islamic state under Shari'a law which is at odds with the modern civilized world.

Extremism is a component of terrorism. Its "any means necessary" use of force and violence leads to severely inhumane criminal activities that are extremely damaging to civil society. It results in a corruption of individual restraint and a fanaticism that calls for overthrowing established regimes and complete social reform. The tactics of massive suicidal

attacks against foreign residential compounds have resulted in extensive casualties and aim to attract and mobilize public views against foreign presence in the region. An attack on the Muhaya compound had a double effect, as the only casualties were Muslims and Arabs. Takfir movements were the most dangerous because its members felt that they had a right to attack Saudi Arabian society and its citizens, which they criticized as non-Muslim.

These terrorists see themselves as inspired, true Muslims destined to be martyrs. As Charles Saint-Prot describes, Middle Eastern terrorists or suicide bombers were initially believed to be poor, uneducated, and psychologically damaged young men in their early 20s motivated by martyrdom and the eventual financial security of their families due to their service to the Jihad. Terrorist organizations use false intellectual claims, coercion, and criminal activity to corrupt individuals into absolute abidance and everlasting submission to the fanatics' principles with body, heart, and soul. Saint-Prot continues, "Reason must lead us to avoid assimilating the Muslim world with a handful of fanatics that hijack Islam for criminal ends. We must also make a distinction between terrorism and fundamentalist Islam."¹³ This fundamentalism calls for being a good true Muslim with all the merciful, cooperative, and friendly meanings or achieving the Shari'a found in the Holy Quran and Sunna.

Fanatical leaders that espouse these ideas possess, or aim to possess, the power to control the mind they achieve their ideological ends. "Sayyid Qutb is the mentor of contemporary extremist Islam."¹⁴ His ideas have penetrated Saudi fanatics' minds, inciting some individuals to launch various debates of ideas and theories against the social and political structure within the Kingdom. It is this ideological difference that must be addressed. Military action alone can not defeat terrorism. "We cannot fight terrorism by military actions only, but [only] with another ideology especially, if terrorists obtain their ideology from certain interpretations of Islam."¹⁵

III. SAUDI CULTURE

Saudi Culture has been accused of being extremist, fanatical, strict, and tough. It has also been reflected in their religious, educational, political, and literary views and theories. Suliman Al-Robei discusses how some western countries have criticized the Saudis' restrictions applied to deprive women from being educated and having jobs in public life like men. These critics have asked for more liberation or personal human rights. In fact, these restrictions do not emanate from extremism but are customs that cannot easily be changed. Every Saudi has been accustomed to following such a social culture whether willingly or not. Nowadays, women have a separate part independently of education, allowing them to keep up with modern technology. There are indeed female leaders with high social positions in many fields: spokeswomen, women of state, and representatives.

In the field of educational culture, the emphasis on compulsory subjects and critical thinking was secondary to religious faith and social expectations. The system of culture has called for memorizing, not thinking, observing, and analyzing. Fanatics have emerged from this closed atmosphere. Thus, Saudi culture has been charged with terrorist or strict measures in the field of education. In reality, the educational system was greatly influenced by Wahhabi puritanical nature and views, because Wahhabi scholars already had influence when the schools were established. Their views were heavily represented in their open funded schools in Saudi Arabia, called Madrasas. Graduates from these schools have become new fanatics calling for Jihad against the established policy and regime. In response, the government has done its best to stop popular monetary support for the schools, in order to prevent the spread of such Jihadi ideas or religious fanaticism. As Al-Robei states, the government has managed to limit, diminish, and control such cultural side. Consequently, there will be new generations of graduates who are accustomed to using modern useful ideas concerning happier better life away from blind fanaticism.

Indeed, Saudi people in general have started to provide themselves with modern culture to adapt this complicated technological life. They've realized the most dangerous and deadly consequences, calamities, and destructions adopted by these fanatics' terrorism. They have become more conscious and aware with valuable backgrounds and information of the true spiritual values of their religion. Islamic religion calls for learning and teaching, but the issue involves what is being taught. The Saudi culture has changed to improve the lives of the Kingdom's people in all fields, so it has proved its peaceful nature and regulated views. Al-Robei further notes that "Terrorism and extremism did not emanate from the factors that influenced the Saudi thinking and molded the attitude of Saudi Society. The religious, educational and social influences that are responsible for formulating the Saudi society are free from the blemishes of terrorism and extremism."¹⁶ This reflects its culture being struck by internal fanatic views that spoiled the established social values and ties. All the cultural forms are not responsible for terrorism and extremism views that emerge under the influence of radical Wahhabi and other fanatical religious trends. The western accusation has been incorrect.

A. Naturally Does Not Support Terrorism

Saudi culture rejects any kind of violence and terrorist actions and has participated in the war against terrorism. Atwan notes that, "After the events of September 11, 2001, the Saudis agreed to help the US launch its attack on Afghanistan. They froze the assets of suspected individuals and organizations, and shut down Islamic charities that could have been financing Al-Qaeda."¹⁷ It has attempted to reduce the influence of terrorism by waging economic and intellectual wars against it, stopping the charitable activities and funds that promote such terrorists and oppressing Ulamas that preach for young men to adopt extremist ideas. It has also succeeded in changing and replacing the previous public trends of Jihad

with the new tolerant and peaceful elements of Islam asking them to be cautious in order not to be affected by such brutal aggressive opinions.

B. Ideological Propaganda

The sacred religious position that the Kingdom occupies ties the outlook of all Muslims closely to the origin of the religion in the Kingdom. "Saudi Arabia is being targeted because it has great international influence, not only in Islamic and Arab countries, but also throughout the world. More than 1.3 billion Muslims look towards the Qibla to pray five times a day".¹⁸ The western presence in the Arabian Peninsula has raised outrage and fury from some Muslims all over the world. Some people believe that this was a sacrilege to the Holy places. Moreover, the Kingdom receives an enormous income from oil production because one fourth of the world's proven crude oil reserves and exports are found in Saudi Arabia. In developing positive relations with Western nations out of political and economic necessity, various cultural tensions have emerged. The Saudi government has unfortunately faced opposition to these changes. This is manifested in the opposition to the Kingdom's foreign policy and use of oil exports income which the fanatics describe as belonging to every Saudi. As Michael Prokop observes, "The Saudi regime and its western allies thus became the new focus of criticism and the new target against which jihad should be waged."¹⁹

These terrorists have used extremist religious instruction as a tool in striving to achieve their political and economic goals. Their practices remain brutal, extreme and unbounded by rules or restraints. In response, the Saudi government has turned to one of the most effective means of public education: the media. Terrorist ideology is complicated and must be countered with supportable government ideas. As a result, many Ulama figures have been consulted to issue fatwas stating that Western presence is permitted in the Arabian Peninsula under Islam and ordering the Saudi people to be obedient to the regime. Thanks to their audiovisual elements, media programs have been successful in reaching and affecting

the Saudi people. Newspapers, magazines and religious fatwas have also contributed to clarifying the true teachings and bases of religion and revealing the falsehood of so called reforms by extremist leaders.

Various terrorist cells have secretly established operative infrastructure within the society. These cells are concerned not only with recruiting individuals, but also with carrying out terrorist missions. In one instance, "Bin Laden activated "a sleeper cell" of Afghani veterans in Saudi Arabia, which bombed the US-operated National Guard Training Centre in Riyadh killing Seven."²⁰ The most tragic aspect of this attack was that seven Muslim victims were murdered in this terrorist strike. It showed bin Laden's complete hatred against the US existence and Saudi government. To counteract the prevalence of such deadly acts, the Saudi government must sponsor the expansion of media, press, newspapers and theological views throughout previously inaccessible areas of the kingdom. This policy would hopefully create a counter reaction among the public and raise objection to terrorist operations. As crown prince, King Abdullah encouraged and promoted royal campaigns for intellectuals and politicians to form a unified coalition to confront terrorism across Saudi society. "The numerous meetings King Abdullah, who was crown prince then, held with delegations of intellectuals and opinion leaders fall squarely under this heading."²¹ An intellectual and educational campaign, geared toward making life safer and better for Saudis, has been adopted and enhanced by the King's support. Expansion of the media, coupled with intellectual dialogue, has been instrumental in presenting a program to counter to that of terrorist extremists.

IV. ISLAM AND TERRORISM

After the events in New York and Washington, DC, in 2001, the Western media spread the idea that political terrorism was a feature of the Islamic religion. This disputes the fact that Islam is the religion of peace, mercy and brotherhood.²² Although Western

historians and scholars have now begun to emphasize that political terrorism has a very long history, their work is largely confined to intellectuals, scholars and researchers. The general public does not necessarily read such writing, which severely limits its effect on them. This also leaves them more susceptible to the daily media, which does not always give the most accurate picture of the situation.

Islam is the religion that prohibits and bans injustice and inequality in all fields of Muslim life and, as Omayma Al-Jalahema describes, "prohibits unfairness to others on account of their different beliefs."²³ Al-Jalahema, citing Thomas Arnold, emphasized the fairness of Muslim conquerors. He stated, "one of the important factors that made Islam spread all over the world was that non-Muslims saw the ideal morals and equitable dealings of Muslims who followed the guidance and instructions of their prophet as a supreme example"²⁴ Here, there is a western example of judgment showing the true face of Islam and its spiritual and moral rules that persuaded people to believe in it as the seal of all messages. Islamic tolerance and affability have resulted in numerous instances of conversion to Islam.

In addition to peace, Islam also means submission or surrender. And Muslims are those who submit themselves to the will of God. The Holy Quran and Sunna encourage all Muslims to have good qualities and manners: honesty, sincerity, fairness, obedience for parents, respecting people, solidarity, cooperation in good things and hospitality. Islamic religion calls for mercy and peace to all humanity.²⁵ It is not only a religion but a complete social system. The application of Islamic rules varies from one society to another and time in the same society as the interpretations of the Quran transition from one period to another. Islam is considered an ideal system to govern all aspects of life through the Quran and Sunna for all ages and societies.

A. Inconsistency of Terrorism with Islamic Beliefs

Terrorism has no relations or origins in Islam. For one, according to Islamic principle, no one can be forced to be a true Muslim. As Idris notes, "No one except God has any power over the hearts of human beings."²⁶ The prophet himself cannot make people accept Islam or the truth by force. All people can follow the doctrines they want freely. Secondly, it tells Muslims that they are allowed to eat the food of the people of the Book and marry their women as well. Can this tolerant religion tell them at the same time to kill them wherever they find them? The Islamic Shari'a has organized human relations between the Muslims themselves and other religions.

As a result, Islam rejects aggression and racism by Muslims or non-Muslims. A non Muslim can take his right share from a Muslim through Islamic justice. This religion is neutral and objective seeking to achieve public equality and social sufficiency. No personal interest, whimsical needs or instinctive persistence of human greed affect such religion as the terrorists act. But Islam is controlled by rules and duties every Muslim should have to be a true Muslim. Islam uses one-scaled balance with no changes or violations to its measures. So, terrorism is not an Islamic issue or phenomenon, but it is a general one that may exist in many different countries all over the world.

"Islam forbids people from killing innocent people. It is mentioned in the Quran that killing one person without a justifiable reason is like killing all mankind."²⁷ Islam only uses the word "Irhab" in the Quran not to kill innocents with terrorist hands but to warn and threaten the other enemies who think to attack Muslims and religion as well. This shows us that Muslims will never delay or stand immovably when they are asked or called for defending any aggression against the Holy Shrines or national resources. "In spite of all these good principles of Islam, people have been shocked to find out that in the last few years many terrorist attacks have been carried out by Muslims."²⁸ Therefore, Islam is contradicted

with the principles and targets of the terrorists. Islam has been used to justify opposition to the regime, but Islam imposes the obedience of the ruler; not their bloody leader.

"Terrorism is a universal phenomenon without a nationality or religion. It has become a major threat to world peace and stability of all nations. Terrorism is not a new phenomenon."²⁹ It is estimated that there are 370 terrorist organizations in the world living in 120 countries. So, it is not Islam that exports terrorists as many countries and westerners believe. They claim the primary factor of terrorism lies in the teachings of Islam and the Muslim culture. But there are different political, economic, social and cultural factors that combine together to produce those Muslim terrorists that are different from Islam and Muslim culture.

Finally, prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was sent in the name of mercy to all mankind regardless of the doctrine or kind of religion adopted. He was a symbol of true kindness to all people. He taught that a woman will enter hell for torturing a cat, and a man will enter paradise for giving water to a dog. Consequently, one can conclude that Islam is not involved in terrorism; but there are reasons that have facilitated the spread of terrorism among nations such as poverty, deprivation, the use of force and disrespect to human rights.

V. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO GAIN POPULAR SUPPORT

"As Al-Qaeda was established in Saudi Arabia, the first cell was headed by Turki Al-Dandani, the second by Ali Abdul Rahman Al-Fag'asi, another by a Yemeni named Khalid Al-Najj and the fourth by Abdul Aziz Al-Muqrin."³⁰ These four well disciplined terrorist elements and cells made up their own independent networks inside the Saudi Society, so the government has taken strict and tough measures to confront their expected brutal actions. These terrorists have been cautious and secretly created a fifth cell as a refuge for anyone of the other four cells in case they are compromised by Saudi security forces. It was difficult to discover those cells. To assist, the government used the most modern types of investigative

procedures and equipment to track these trouble makers and other suspected terrorists inside and outside the Kingdom. No doubt that there have been many successful terrorist attacks against the residential compounds provided to foreigners at the Muhaya compound. The victims have been both foreigners and Muslims. These actions have reflected how deadly, red-handed and brutal terrorists are.

A. Educational and Religious Leaders

"The educational system has helped in an indirect way in producing terrorism."³¹

This is due to the unbalanced distribution of university graduates. Most students in different schools, institutes and other universities have been concerned with the study of arts, social studies (Sciences) and Islamic studies while fewer students are enrolled in science. This curriculum has trained students to memorize information and ideas, but not to think, analyze and criticize on their own. Additionally, religious studies receive the majority of emphasis in elementary and secondary schools compared to more tradition education subjects.

"Approximately 30 percent of weekly hours in elementary school are dedicated to religious subjects, 24 percent in intermediate school and in secondary school around 35 percent for students in the Shari'a and Arabic branch, and approximately 14 percent for those in the technical and natural science branch. Failure in anyone of the religious subjects requires repeating the whole academic year."³² These tight compulsory elements have helped produce pure religious people who are more apt to fanatical indoctrination. Truly, "Education should awaken the spirit of Islamic struggle, fight our enemies, restore our rights, resume our glory, fulfill the mission of Islam and project the unity of the Muslim nation."³³ However, the education system has served the Saudis wrongly and has indirectly conditioned Saudis every non-Muslim is an enemy and that the west is a symbol of deterioration and decline.

"It is necessary to differentiate between the schools that provide education and religious teachings and those that use religion to incite hatred towards others."³⁴ Saudi

funded-schools or Madrasas have provided the curriculum dominated by Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. So, they have provided exactly the type of Jihadis who represent the most serious threat that the Saudi regime has ever encountered. Accordingly, the Saudi school curriculum, with its Wahhabi fanatic ideal views, has several defects and that there is a need for a complete reform of the educational system. In October 2002, the Saudi Foreign Minister stated that the government is working to remove parts of the education curriculum it considers objectionable. On the other hand, Imam at the Haram of Mecca declared that changing the context of religious education would be tantamount to high treason. However, the government has insisted on removing the books and resources that support and advocate Jihad and promote Wahhabism. They have managed to attain some fatwas from religious leaders supporting their efforts. They succeeded in changing the curriculum after dismissing more than 1000 Imams considered dissidents because of their severe explicit attitudes. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001, the issue of changing the educational curriculum has become an urgent need. "The state has begun to move in the right direction by adopting the initiative to reform education as well as encouraging religious preachers to promote the values of forgiveness and tolerance; two central Islamic concepts."³⁵ Moreover, the Saudi government has cut the flow of funds to the Wahhabi Madrasas, schools, and imposed some restrictions on preaching to avoid any fanatic clashes. This is due to the highest position of religious leaders and their direct effective influence on listeners; especially, the extremist terrorists. These efforts have managed to block two public roads that provided a free flow of volunteers to terrorist causes.

"[Education for girls] remain[s] under the supervision of Ulama until an incident in girls' school in Mecca in March 2002 that caused the death of at least fifteen students."³⁶ As a result, the Head of the General presidency for Girls' Education, Ali Ibn Murshid, was dismissed and the presidency [created] the ministry of education. In addition, "The third

National Dialogue forum in June, 2004 outlined steps to increase job and business opportunities for women."³⁷ In fact, the Saudi government has worked hard in reforming religious and traditional education achieving many significant reforms. They have actually changed the basic educational curriculum and set tough policies against extremist Imams and preachers in order not to affect negatively on the Saudi people. They have asked the moderate Imams to issue fatwas for Saudis warning them of the dangerous false ideas the terrorists espouse and making them aware of working for the sake of the Kingdom and its people.

B. Scholars

The government recognizes the importance of scholars' influence, and thus has done its best to equip these individuals to resist indoctrination to terrorist ideology. This ideology has helped increase the scope of knowledgeable people who work to advance the Kingdom's progress. They have been supplied with sources of information concerning religion and science. They have been provided with science forums and conferences in the field of policy, economy and literature. Missionaries and delegates have been sent abroad to study more, do research, and enrich the personal awareness and culture. They have also collected multi-national ideas reflecting many Arab customs and traditions in the eye-scope of the west.

The scholars themselves have played a great role in explaining and analyzing the complicated religious theories and outlooks to the public or ordinary people after the series of Knowledge courses offered to them by the government. So, the government has succeeded in winning the scholars' confidence and trust, and so it has supported them with necessary elements that can make them independent citizens. After this, the scholars have helped in increasing the public awareness of being neutral without any kind of fanaticism as they have been taught not to interfere in the foreign policy or state affairs. They have succeeded in transferring all these principles to ordinary people. Moreover, the government has expanded

the area of universities, higher education institutes and other teaching sources to widen the Saudi base of scholars and knowledgeable people.

C. Tribal Leaders

Most Saudi area is covered with deserts, mountains, hills, sand and valleys or plains. So, its landscape is almost pastoral in most Saudis' lives. In fact, Saudi tribes, with their simple lives, are primarily nomadic, rural people used to raising cattle, sheep and camels. Tribal leaders are representatives of state men, Saudi policy and government. The tribal chief is a symbol of a ruler, a governor or judge in his tribe. The government has consequently made its own plans and exerted efforts to gather all the tribal leaders to unify their words and attitudes against terrorism. The Saudi policy has sought to win tribal support and counter foreign terrorist influence. Therefore, governmental programs have been prepared to clarify such political, religious and economic fields and their differences. The tribal leaders' support has become a deadly blow to the terrorists as it has represented a siege or a barrier that hinders these secret hidden terrorist movements from taking refuges in the desert.

In this respect, King Abdullah has stated that the government has finished establishing King Abdel Aziz centre for National Dialogue in Riyadh. This building aims at fostering and advocating the dialogue between intellectuals, tribal leaders and state men. Moreover, in March 1992, King Fahd announced the decision to create the Saudi Consultative council (Majlis Al-Shura). All of these ideological meetings have tended to obtaining one unified mind, hand and word opposing terror and supporting the Saudi government against the same. The creation of an atmosphere of cooperation and harmony among different parties or sects of the Saudi society is make life better all of Saudi Arabia.

VI. SAUDI MILITARY

The various dimensions, several tracks and multi-theoretical plans of terrorism have raised a question for military assistance to support security forces. This is due to the fact that the military forces are actually well-trained to face suicidal operations in an efficient way. They are capable of facing clashes in different climates and using modern weapons. With the infiltration of many fanatic fighters and Jihadist across the borders has occurred recently, the need for military troops protecting the borders has been made urgently clear. Those terrorists have used this geographical nature as a way to mix with the Saudi and harden the task upon the public and Saudi police. Saudi Military assistance has played a significant role in bolstering the efforts of Saudi security forces.

"The authorities have done much more than crack down on the militant groups."³⁸

Along the Saudi borders and deserts, the security forces, enhanced by military forces, have launched surprise attacks and planned ambush against terrorists' leaders. The Saudi military has proclaimed its readiness and capacity to end this phenomenon using the modern military weapons and machinery. In one word, military and security forces have unified their efforts in combating terrorism and protecting Saudi citizens and infrastructure.

A. Intelligence

Investigations conducted by intelligence representatives have helped in understanding, analyzing and determining special mechanisms to react and prevent terrorist events. These investigators tour the cities, villages, tribes and towns in all directions to refute the false surrounding news and to ensure the public's peace and security. After continuous suicidal bombings against commercial, economic and foreign buildings, the task on intelligence personnel has become two-fold. They have swept all the regions of the Kingdom to discover hidden terrorist cells, arresting them and emphasizing the military's capability to respond to terrorist operations.

These intelligence officers have been well-trained in counter insurgency operations and maintain a strong grasp of the changes in technologies used by terrorist. Some delegates of the Saudi intelligence have been sent abroad for training and operational experience to better prepare them for use in time of need or relief in case of an emergency or terrorists' attacks. The Saudi intelligence record of the past two years is remarkable highlighting its efforts to root out terrorists' cells in Saudi Arabia by cooperating with the US intelligence and investigative services. The Saudi-American intelligence work has actually developed and strengthened the dynamic mechanism for stopping terrorists' spreading cells from practicing their activities. Moreover, these activists have been suppressed under siege and complete control. As a result, intelligence has assisted in achieve a large measure of internal security and safety. "Various intelligence services include those of Egypt, the US and Saudi Arabia now realized that Sudan had become a hotbed or lodge for militant radical Islamic and jihad groups."³⁹ Thus, there is a link between bin Laden and these terrorist groups.

VII. CONCLUSION

Terrorism is an explicit violence deliberately planned by fanatics who want to use religious means to achieve their political goals. Saudi society has been a target of these activities. The Saudi government has enhanced its approach to confront and combat terrorism through education, religion, intellect and tribal leadership. It has changed some educational curricula or criteria that create extreme theories or fanatic thinkers calling for Jihad. The government has followed the policy of suppression and pressure on those activists by cutting the funds offered to these terrorists and the sources of spreading.

The media has contributed to solving this complicated problem. The public need to unify the word of intellectuals has been successful to fight terrorism in many tracks. As a result, the Saudi approach is an efficient strategy in combating terrorism. Saudi culture has a

long history of dealing with the fanatic puritanical religion of Wahhabi; opposition to secular ideas is not new. When the Soviet Army occupied Afghanistan, Saudis waged war against this previous superpower to restore that Muslim country. Following the suicidal attacks and bombings targeted against Saudi society, however, Saudi policy changed its support of these groups and began to wage war against terrorists.

Terrorism is not the result of Saudi culture or their way of life, rather it is from an outside source. That origin has been represented in these fanatic Jihadis and Mujahedin who have returned to the Kingdom after the victory over the Soviet Army. This external influence has been shown in some of the extremist ideas adopted by some Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Egypt, Afghan leaders and Wahhabi theorists. After the tragic scenes of terrorist attacks, the Saudi population has cooperated in one line or group with the anti terrorism efforts to end the sufferings and death that result from the terrorist operations. All the Saudis have expressed their complete contempt and conviction towards such trouble makers and continue to support the Saudi government's efforts, in conjunction with its western allies, in the global war on terrorism.

In view of its integrated Islamic view and its historical experiment, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been among the first states to combat terrorism. Thus, the Kingdom has considered terrorism as a negative phenomenon that is hostile to religion, man and civilization. It was also aware that terrorism was a very complex phenomenon and that it could not be combated unless its causes were dealt with. As to the use of violence, this can only lead to more violence. Overt pursuit and declared war should be used only after the peaceful efforts have been exhausted, in which case direct confrontation would be the last resort against those who do not respond to peaceful overtures.

Given this comprehensive view, the Kingdom has been prompted to make great and numerous contributions in an attempt to put an end, as far as possible, to the causes of terrorism and to prevent its expansion. Therefore, it has always considered that action should be taken at the religious, intellectual, social, economic and political levels. Given this comprehensive view, the kingdom has undertaken many and varied actions throughout a whole century to confront terrorism, some of which may be summed up as follows: calling for resolving pending international questions as the best means to combat terrorism, executing international security treaties for combating terrorism, activating religion as the best method to combat radicalism and terrorism, punishing those who are proven to have been involved in terrorist activities, combating poverty and encouraging development, and calling for anew international, economic world system. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has placed a great many of its potentials, religious, economic and political, as well as its mass media in the service of security and peace, and the treatment of the causes that lead to the emergence of the terrorist tendency.

Appendix

Fatwas- Legal decisions of a Mufti

Irhab- Fear

Jihad- War against unbelievers in accordance with Shari'a. Also Applied to an individual struggle against baser impulses.

Jihadis- People who participate in a Jihad.

Jihadi-Salafi- Warrior that takes the Salafi ideology.

KSA- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Madrasas- School

Mujahedin- Muslim or Holy warrior.

Majlis Al-Shura- place to consult or have a conference.

PBUH- Peace be upon Him

Quran- "Discourse" or "recitation", the immutable body of revelations received by the prophet Muhammed.

Qibla- House of God in Mecca

Salam- Peace on you

Sahwa- Awakening

Shaikh- Religious leader

Shari'a- 'The path to a water-hole'; a name given to the sacred law of Islam which governs all aspects of a Muslim's life.

Sunnah- Custom sanctioned by tradition, particularly that of the Prophet enshrined in hadith.

Sunni- 'People of the Sunna'; those who uphold customs based on the practice and authority of the Prophet and his companions, as distinct from the Shi'ites and Kharijis.

Ulama- "Learned men", in particular the guardians of legal and religious traditions.

Wahhabi- Follower of the Wahhabism religious movement.

Wahhabism- Religious movement in the Arab Peninsula.

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