

The Two Faces of Saudi Arabia

Mai Yamani

The Saudi Arabian regime, aided by oil money and custodianship of Islam's holiest sites, has in recent years emerged as one of the most active and creative diplomatic players in the Middle East. It was a key covert supporter of the United States' decision to invade Iraq, of efforts to achieve a comprehensive negotiated settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian dispute, and especially of efforts to counter Iran's hegemonic ambitions. In February 2007, the Palestinian government of national unity, albeit short-lived, was created at a summit in Mecca. In March, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad met with King Abdullah in Riyadh. In April, a summit was held in Riyadh to reactivate the Arab–Israeli peace process through Abdullah's Arab initiative, with the Saudis holding back-channel negotiations with 'the reliable enemy', Israel.

Yet the regime's imaginative interventions in foreign affairs contrast starkly with its immobility in the face of deepening divisions at home. The Saudi rulers have viewed the country, since its inception in 1932, as culturally uniform, and themselves as rulers over a conservative society. The ruling Najdi family of the first Saudi ruler, Abdul Aziz Al Saud (1876–1953), aspired to identify strongly with their subjects, creating an image of themselves as the benevolent 'fathers of the nation'. But that image masks diversity and even schism. Saudi Arabia's regions, tribes and sects have preserved their cultural diversity, unrecognised by the regime, which instead has made successive attempts at national integration, all of which have failed.

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The al-Saud are divided by two competing views of the form that national integration should take. The first, aggressively homogenising, view envisages all Saudis following the dominant sect, Sunni Wahhabism (a stark and austere reading of Islam derived from the teachings of eighteenth-century theologian Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab), and adhering to the dominant tribal values of the Najd region, from where the al-Saud originate. The second approach implies a pluralist strategy that acknowledges diversity among Sunnis and between Sunnis and Shi'ites.

King Abdullah came to the throne in 2005 after serving as regent for his half-brother, the ailing King Fahd, for ten years (all five kings since 1953 have been sons of Abdul Aziz). He seems to hold the pluralist view, favouring limited, cautious accommodation of popular demands for inclusive reform, and has made repeated attempts to broaden political representation, harking back to King Faisal's temporarily successful national integration policy from 1965 to 1975. King Faisal acknowledged his country's religious and cultural diversity, which includes the predominantly Shia Ahsa in the east; the Asir in the southwest, with tribal affinities to Yemen, especially among the Ismaili tribes of Najran and Jizan; and the Kingdom of the Hijaz, with its capital Mecca. He included non-Wahhabi, cosmopolitan Sunni Hijazis from Mecca and Jeddah in the Saudi government. However, after King Faisal was assassinated by a member of his own family, a nephew, in 1975 for being a moderniser, discrimination based on sect, tribe, region and gender became the order of the day. The al-Saud and their Wahhabi clerical partners set about organising the complete domination of society through the deployment of state power.

Abdullah's strategy is one of political decompression: to make just enough concessions to appease Saudi Arabia's subordinate and disheartened peoples and relieve pressure for reform. He appears to be constructing a centrist political alliance equipped to compromise between demands for diversity and Saudi homogeneity.

Reform and anti-reform

Attempts at reform have been marked by various forms of resistance – including spoiling tactics by senior members of the al-Saud. Abdullah,

head of the largest royal family in the world, with 22,000 members, faces the recalcitrance of dozens of half brothers and thousands of male cousins and nephews, and especially of the Sudeiri brothers, sons of Abdul Aziz and his most favoured wife, Hassa bint Ahmad Al Sudeiri. Previously known as the 'Sudeiri seven', since Fahd's death in August 2005 they have been reduced to *al-Thaluth* ('the trio'): Crown Prince Sultan, who is also defence minister, Prince Naif, the interior minister, and Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh. There are also rearguard actions by official Wahhabi clerics, with whom the al-Saud princes live in wary co-existence, dominating different spheres of influence.

Educated professional Saudis from every corner of the country formed a coalition to lobby for reform at the end of 2001. Their demands included political and civil rights, gender equality, government accountability, anti-corruption measures, an equitable distribution of state resources, the creation of a supreme constitutional court, an independent judiciary and, above all, regulation of the Wahhabi religious establishment's power, forcing them to conform to the rule of law.¹

The state's response was schizophrenic. Whereas Abdullah met the petitioners in his Riyadh palace on 22 January 2003,² Naif had 11 of the figureheads imprisoned on 16 March 2004. Three remained in jail until 2005, when Abdullah freed them.³ The proposal for a constitutional monarchy, in particular, met with Naif's ire. Abdullah freed the liberal reformists a few days after his accession to the throne, but their voices and those of other reformists remain stilled through the confiscation of their passports, a ban on travel and public pronouncements, and measures taken by the Wahhabi clerical establishment and their partner princes to suppress the development of a civil society among the educated middle class.

By early 2007 there were wide expectations that Abdullah would reshuffle the cabinet, a move expected to symbolically reflect a redefinition of the Saudi nation and its future.⁴ There was even hope for representation of marginalised groups, including the appointment of the first Shia cabinet member, and for action against the corruption of the longest-serving ministers. In March, however, the king announced that the time for change had not yet arrived,⁵ maintaining long-standing government inertia.

Saudi Arabia's peculiar inertia goes beyond the cabinet. The judiciary, led since 1983 by Sheikh Salih al-Haidan, remains entirely controlled by the Wahhabi religious establishment. All judges (over 700) are Wahhabi, and the minister of justice is always a senior member of the Wahhabi hierarchy. The courts subject all legal decisions to a narrow and selective interpretation of the Koran and the Sunna, based solely on Wahhabi scholars' interpretation of al-Wahhab and of wider Hanbali Islamic thought. Abdullah's tinkering

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reforms have been met with stubborn and effective resistance from al-Haidan, who continues to have cordial and mutually beneficial relations with the hardline Naif.

Moreover, despite domestic pressure, King Abdullah has not appointed a second deputy as successor to Crown Prince Sultan, as is the custom for Saudi kings. Abdullah appears to be unable to appoint a non-Sudeiri. Crown Prince Sultan remains minister of defence, a position he has held since the 1960s. Abdullah has thus been unable to shift the internal balance within the royal family, or to skip a generation in grooming a successor for Sultan. As a result, the Saudi people do not know who will become king when their octogenarian rulers finally leave the scene. Seeking a compromise in resolving the dilemma of succession, Abdullah has formed a royal committee. But the committee itself has a limited chance of surviving if Abdullah dies before the crown prince.

Meanwhile, the Wahhabi clerics are continually indulged as the kingdom's de facto rulers. The Wahhabi establishment controls not just the judicial system, but also the Council of Senior Ulama; the General Committee for Issuing Fatwas, Da'wa, and Irshad; the Ministry of Islamic Affairs; the Supreme Headquarters for the Council for International Supervision of Mosques; and the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prohibition of Vice. The latter includes the *mutaw'a* (religious police), whose head is a government minister. The Wahhabis also control all religious education, which comprises half of the school curriculum; Islamic universities in Mecca, Medina, and Riyadh; the Ministry of Hajj (pilgrimage); and the Ministry of

Religious Endowments (*Awqaf*). Moreover, they influence the Ministry of Finance through control of *zakat* (the religious tax department), and control magazines, radio stations and websites, as well as exercising power over the military through religious indoctrination.

Potemkin democracy

Reform in Saudi Arabia is a bizarre compromise between the opposing forces of the al-Saud's dominant wings and the forces of the official Wahhabi religious establishment. Plagued by contradictory attitudes, consensus is seemingly impossible, and formation of any coherent policy to meet the nation's needs appears beyond reach. One result has been pseudo-democracy. Municipal elections were held in 2005, but they were only partial, heavily managed, and of no consequence.⁶ Likewise, the *shura* ('consultative council') is toothless, comprises more than 50% Wahhabis, and is headed by a Wahhabi cleric. Appointed by the king, the *shura* is unable to legislate, debate the budget, or discuss resource allocation and public expenditure, and will remain un-elected for the foreseeable future. Sultan confirmed that decision in 2005 in order to end a debate, initiated by liberal reformers, about the possibility of an elected *shura*, arguing 'Saudi Arabia is not ready to have an elected parliament because voters might elect illiterate and unqualified candidates'.⁷

Abdullah constructed a similar institutional façade, called the 'National Dialogue', in 2003. Salafi-Wahhabis, Shi'ites, Ismailis and Sufis were brought together in a room for televised encounters and asked to talk. However, the official Wahhabi establishment did not legitimise the National Dialogue, and it changed nothing in everyday life. Indeed, a Shi'ite still cannot give testimony in court, become a butcher (since the meat he cuts is not considered halal), or marry a Sunni, prohibitions that further deepen social boundaries.⁸

Nevertheless, despite the absence of any practical measures, one redeeming feature of the dialogue has been to spur an informal confidence-building process that has led to informal initiatives by people who had never before talked to each other (or, indeed, even saw this as a possibility). Reflecting a real desire for dialogue unsupervised by constraining authorities, there are

now a plethora of Internet forums for Shi'a, Salafi–Wahhabi, and other Sunni participants, although some of the more liberal websites have been banned.

Likewise, newspapers increasingly carry debates on national and international issues. Indeed, the government established the first syndicate for journalists in 2004, including two female journalists among the nine-member board. Even so, freedom of expression remains tightly limited, with journalists who breach the red lines of censorship subject to a growing range of punishments, including dismissal and threats of flogging (and even death). These threats are also directed against important intellectuals – for example, Hamza al Mazini, Mansour al Nuqaidan, and Turki al Hamad.

The regime's approach to human rights has been similarly Janus-faced. In 2004, the government approved the establishment of the Saudi National Organisation for Human Rights. Yet, despite visiting prisons and raising concerns over better treatment and representation of prisoners, workers from the organisation avoid involvement in issues such as freedom of expression and political detention. Interestingly, another state body, the Saudi Human Rights Agency, whose members are appointed by the king, was founded in 2005 and focuses on implementing Islamic teachings. Rather than championing reform, the primary purpose of both organisations appears to be to provide cover for the state's human-rights record, recognised internationally as poor.⁹

The vulnerability of petro-Islam

Reform has also become more difficult due to the politicisation of ethnic, tribal and sectarian identities in the face of increasing levels of exclusion and repression during the three decades since Faisal's death. Repression from the top, coupled with falling oil prices and inequities of resource distribution, hardened and sharpened communal divisions, while the institutional corruption of earlier decades, especially during King Fahd's reign, is so deeply entrenched that current high oil prices are insufficient to foster reconciliation. On the contrary, as Saudis put it, 'the greater the money, the greater the corruption'.

Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism is addicted to oil, and its strength depends on oil prices. With high oil prices, the al-Saud, custodians of the holy places,

have exported the Wahhabi doctrine throughout the world, and the Saudi state has remained coherent and strong. But if prices drop again, Saudi Arabia will face dramatic challenges. Latent separatist tendencies persist, posing a threat to Saudi national identity and territorial integrity.

The decision to keep the structures of the state frozen in stasis reflects pressure on the government to maintain the façade of homogeneity, ignoring the country's real diversity in favour of continued reliance on patrimony, force and repression. But the traditional patrimonial model is increasingly vulnerable not only to the inherent uncertainty implied by dependence on oil revenues, but also to a population explosion and the accompanying need to reduce unemployment. The kingdom's population is now more than 22 million (including expatriates), while 50% of Saudis are under 15 years old.¹⁰

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The royal sphere is also expanding rapidly, with the ratio of royals to commoners at one to a thousand (compared to one to five million, for example, in the United Kingdom). This has intensified the challenge of managing princely privileges, salaries and demand for jobs. For example, royal perks include lifetime jobs and domination of the civil service, which enable the princes to award contracts and receive commissions on top of their salaries. Princes, especially important ones, also compete against indigenous merchants for contracts.

High oil prices are only a temporary solution to the 'Sudeirisation' of the state and the concentration of patrimonial power. To be sure, globalisation and membership of the World Trade Organisation have been a source of countervailing pressure to extend the scope of the free-market economy and separate political and economic power. However, demands for an equitable distribution of wealth from outside the royal patrimonial system continue to be met with force and repression.

Demands for civil rights and an equitable distribution of wealth are especially critical to Saudi Shi'ites, who constitute a majority in the country's oil-rich regions. If such demands are not met, they could opt for their own state, resulting in Shia control of oil resources. For the moment, the Shi'ites are content to rely on dialogue to achieve their aims.

Other groups regard dialogue with the regime as futile. On 27 April 2007, the Ministry of Interior announced the arrest of 172 'terrorists' whose aim was to attack official government buildings and oil installations – perhaps the most serious threat to the Saudi regime in decades.¹¹ Indeed, the plan may have been an attempted coup d'état, as 61 of the detained are widely believed to have connections with military personnel, including colonels and generals (a fact not directly mentioned in official statements). Among the detainees were Saudi pilots who had been trained abroad, and whose aim was to take control of military bases, especially the Dhahran airbase.¹² Saudi Arabia's armed forces, especially the air force, exclude Shi'ites, and the number of Hijazis has been kept to a minimum since the 1979 Juhaiman incident in Mecca's Great Mosque. But this latest security 'incident' shows that the Saudi regime faces threats not only from minority groups, but also from within.

For the time being, at least, such incidents may strengthen the position of the Wahhabi clerical establishment, which is one of the main forces of repression. In May 2007, the *mutaw'a* launched an aggressive offensive, raiding houses and locking up individuals for days, with some tortured and others beaten to death.¹³ The al-Saud are unable to stop this state-sponsored violence, which many Saudis perceive as a form of official terrorism. Responding to renewed demands by Saudi professionals to bring the *mutaw'a* to justice, Naif instead praised them, linking their mission to the fight *against* terrorism.¹⁴

Despite the hardliners' efforts, social and political order is nonetheless also being undermined by exposure to the outside world through travel, satellite TV and the Internet, which has increased popular demand for political rights, including the democratic representation that state paternalism has historically denied. The kingdom's borders cannot be sealed to ideas and strengthened against the desire for change, with people avidly watching al-Jazeera (officially banned in Saudi Arabia) as it reports on democratic debates in neighbouring Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman. The Saudi regime's strategy has been to argue that other countries are different, because they do not include Mecca and Medina, and that reform must be carefully calibrated to meet the unique blessing and awesome responsibility

of custodianship of the holy places. Globalisation, however, has not recognised selective sanctity, and is having a devastating impact on the kingdom's definition of tradition and religion.

The Shia 'threat'

Compared to the frustrated heirs of the Sunni Arab nationalist dream embodied by Gamel Abdel Nasser's Egypt and the Ba'athists of Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Hafez al-Assad's Syria, Saudi Arabia is the region's most consistently 'moderate' regime. Riyadh has become even keener to promote this image of moderation in the face of the Iranian-led 'Shia crescent' – a term first articulated by Jordan's King Abdullah in 2003,¹⁵ after the fall of Saddam's Sunni regime, although he was simply echoing his Saudi neighbour's anxiety.

The Shia threat is primarily ideological, as the Wahhabi sect from which the Saudi state derives its legitimacy is itself a minority in the country.¹⁶ The Shia revival thus threatens to expose the erosion of legitimacy and the increasing gap between the Sunni Wahhabi rulers and their people. Ageing Arab Sunni rulers, especially the Saudis, recognise that the emerging Shia powers hold a fascination for young Arabs, who are attracted to the rising generation of outspoken leaders such as Ahmadinejad and Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hizbullah. These younger Shia leaders have the ability and vitality to mobilise the Arab street, including young Saudis, irrespective of sect.

Sefr al-Hawali, a prominent Saudi Wahhabi cleric, had alerted Muslims in the region to the perceived danger of *al-Qaws al-Rafidi* (the 'Shia Arc') as early as 1991,¹⁷ following the Shia intifada in southern Iraq. 'Rafidi-rejectionists' is the Salafi-Wahhabi term for Shias, regarded as heretics and apostates. In the clerical vision of the 'arc', the Shia in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the Alawis in Turkey and Syria, are grouped with the Shia of southern Iraq and Lebanon. Al-Hawali feared this ideological force could influence the Shia in the Gulf, especially in Saudi Arabia, and that *tashiu'* ('Shiasation'), would contaminate the Sunni domain.

While Abdullah assumes an energetic leading role in the region's turbulent affairs and uses the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' to put a non-sectarian

spin on his various initiatives to contain Shia Iran, he is incapable of narrowing Saudi Arabia's acute democratic deficit in comparison to its neighbours, especially with respect to an inclusive policy for the Shia population, which comprises 75% of Saudi Arabia's oil-rich eastern provinces. Abdullah has met and held hands with Ahmadinejad, but such reassuring images are impossible to generate at home, where reaching across the sectarian divide would be unacceptable.

Abdullah is unable to stop the Wahhabi satellite TV station al-Majd broadcast from the United Arab Emirates from denouncing the Shia 'heretics', or the hundreds of Wahhabi websites that call for the outright elimination of the Shi'ites. (The religious guidance is that killing a Shia Muslim merits more *ajr*, or reward in heaven, than killing a Christian or a Jew.¹⁸) In short, Abdullah's problem is not with Ahmadinejad or Nasrallah, but with his own local Wahhabis. Shia sectarianism is presented by the al-Saud as a regional threat, but the al-Saud's own brand of Islam is as much or even greater a threat to the kingdom, to the region, and internationally.

The revival of foreign policy

Given these internal divisions, the energy of the kingdom's foreign diplomacy is rather impressive. Abdullah has a much freer hand to develop foreign policy alliances, which he is using to an extent not seen since Faisal's reign. Indeed, Abdullah has come to be seen as a leader of the region's moderates, alongside Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan. For the United States, these leaders have come to represent a Middle East triumvirate, with Mubarak and Jordan's Abdullah assuming the role of static moderates while Saudi King Abdullah actively organises a regional Sunni resistance front to Shia Iran.

This is all the more remarkable given that, following the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, the kingdom suffered a series of blows to its prestige. On the one hand, it became identified with Islamic extremism and terrorism; on the other hand, its ally and protector, the United States, brought down the Taliban and Saddam Hussein – both Sunni regimes and buffers against Iran. As a result, from 2001 to 2006 the kingdom was left out in the cold, and Saudi foreign policy, too, was put on ice, reflected in its

indecision regarding Iraq, its hesitant role in Lebanon, and its lack of focus on the Israel–Palestine conflict.

But the deeper the chaos in the Middle East, the greater the opportunity for Saudi Arabia to reassert its position. With the empowerment of the Shia in Iraq, the ascendancy of Hizbullah in Lebanon, and the rise of Hamas in Palestine – all of which have benefited from Iran’s political support and financial backing – the Saudi rulers saw an opportunity for diplomatic enterprise. As US foreign policy reverts from the ‘war on terror’, with its lofty goal of spreading democracy throughout the Middle East, to its traditional emphasis on support for the region’s moderate regimes in the interest of order and stability, Saudi Arabia is re-emerging as the Islamic world’s strategic stronghold. The kingdom’s use of Mecca as a tool of foreign policy since 2006 has reinforced this status; the city is a symbol unavailable to potential rivals, including not just Shia Iran but also key Sunni Arab states such as Egypt and Jordan.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia’s main concern, to contain the Iranian ‘Shia threat’ and the rise of a ‘Shia crescent’ extending from Iran to Lebanon, dovetails with US interests. Riyadh has backed Fouad Siniora’s Lebanese government both politically and financially in an effort to undermine pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian forces, particularly Hizbullah. Saudi Arabia even lent tacit support to Israel in its war against Hizbullah in 2006 by condemning Nasrullah¹⁹ – the first Arab state to do so.

To be sure, in view of the al-Saud’s domestic alliance with Wahhabi hardliners, Saudi Arabia’s stated vision of a region calmed by a ‘moderates’ peace’ lacks credibility. Yet, by promoting the belief that the Shi’ites pose the gravest threat to Middle East stability, the regime successfully defused the perception, born of the 11 September attacks, that Sunni Wahhabi militants are the real problem. Although al-Qaeda and other Sunni groups remain a real threat for the kingdom as well as the region, the Saudi rulers dismissed the terrorists they created as bearded men, mouldering in damp caves.

This political manoeuvre was successful partly because of America’s unhealed wound inflicted by Ayatollah Khomeini’s 1979 Islamic revolution

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in Iran and Iran's designation of the United States as the 'Great Satan'. In due course, Ahmadinejad's accession to power, accompanied by his bombastic rhetoric about wiping Israel from the map, gave the Saudi rulers the opportunity to become exemplary moderates, hosting peace summits and even shaking hands with Ahmadinejad in order to control him.

Moreover, Iran's nuclear programme has provided a potent symbol of the growing Shia threat. One result is likely to be a regional arms race, as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the other Sunni Arab states, supported by massive weapons acquisitions from the United States, seek to offset Iranian Shia influence.

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Burdened by domestic challenges and threats, the Saudi regime has embraced a bold and assertive foreign-policy agenda. The kingdom's ruling elite has taken psychological comfort from the high price of oil, using it to boost its confidence as it struggled to overcome the trauma of 11 September and rebuild its relationship with the United States. With echoes of the Nixon doctrine, Washington, tied down in Iraq and unable or unwilling to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been only too happy to let Saudi Arabia pursue its strategy of regional diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh has, in a small way, filled the diplomatic vacuum as the US State Department's energy drained into Baghdad. This poses dangers for both Washington and Riyadh, similar to those the Shah of Iran, using regional excursions to deny deep-rooted domestic political problems, came face to face with in 1979.

Possession of oil and custodianship of Islam's holy sites do not provide the basis for genuine long-term security. On the contrary, continued reliance on these resources to avoid addressing domestic challenges will exacerbate Saudi Arabia's external vulnerability. If the regime is to minimise the threat it perceives from Shi'ites in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, the most sensible course is not to pursue a tacit anti-Shia alliance with the United States and Israel. Instead it would be wise to improve the social and political conditions for the Shi'ites at home. This would require confronting the Wahhabi clerical

establishment head-on. The danger is that this could fatally undermine one of the pillars of al-Saud rule. The regime is faced with an unenviable choice. King Abdullah could vigorously pursue a policy of political decompression, even liberalisation, trusting the Saudi population with greater freedom of expression and influence over government. This would certainly rally the nation to his side. But the regime appears fated to opt for continued immobility, engaging in largely symbolic regional diplomacy in the hope that this will somehow buy it credit at home.

Notes

- 1 Petition entitled 'A vision for the present and the future of the nation', January 2003, http://member-alhewar.com/forum.php?action=view&id=359&cat_id=40.
- 2 'Prince Abdullah Crosses the Path of the Security Apparatus by Receiving the Reformers at his Riyadh Palace on 22 January 2003' [in Arabic]; <http://www.saudiaffairs.net/webpage/sa/issue01/article01r/issuo1rt01.htm>.
- 3 'The Detention of a Group of Activists and Intellectuals' [in Arabic]; <http://www.rasid.com/artc.php?id=1148>; 'Saudi Arabia: Bush Should Call for Dissidents' Release – Credibility of President's Call for Mideast Reform at Stake' [in Arabic], <http://hrw.org/arabic/docs/2005/04/24/saudia10536.htm>; Mai Yamani, 'Empty Promises: Arrests make Mockery of Saudi Reform Talk', *International Herald Tribune*, 23 March 2004.
- 4 Mai Yamani, 'Saudi Arabia's Theater of Reform', Project Syndicate, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/yamani16>.
- 5 'Saudi Cabinet Reshuffle sees the Continuity of Ministers in their Positions' [in Arabic], <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=1&issue=10342&article=411880>; see also Reuters, 'No Change in Saudi Cabinet', 23 March 2007.
- 6 Half the office-holders were elected and half appointed. The entire female population was excluded from the vote. The percentage of the total population voting in each region was Najd, 4.6%; Hijaz, 3.9%; Al-Hasa & Qatif, 8%; S. Region, 3.7%; N. Region, 6%. The national average was 4.8%. See Hamzah Al-Hassan, *The Role of Religion in Building National Identity (Case Study: Saudi Arabia)*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Westminster, April 2006, pp. 98–9.
- 7 'Prince Sultan: "We will Select Members for the Shura from All Parts of the Kingdom"' [in Arabic], <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2005/01/25/9795.html>; 'Prince Sultan Speaks at a Press Conference' [in Arabic], http://www.alriyadh.com/2005/04/11/article55807_s.html.
- 8 'Fatwa on How to Deal with Rafidi Butchers and their Restaurants' [in Arabic], <http://www.ibn-jebreen.com/>

- ftawa.php?view=vmasal&subid=11092&parent=3959; 'Fatwa on How to Deal with Rafidi', <http://www.ibn-jebreen.com/ftawa.php?view=vmasal&subid=12461&parent=3959>.
- 9 See for example Amnesty International, *Report 2007: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International, 2007), pp. 222-4; <http://thereport.amnesty.org/document/15>.
- 10 'Ministry of Economy and Statistics – Census Data' [in Arabic], <http://www.cdsi.gov.sa/showproductstandard.aspx?lid=25&pid=420>.
- 11 'Clampdown on a Large Terrorist Network Targeting Oil Installations in the Kingdom and Abroad' [in Arabic], http://www.daralhayat.com/arab_news/gulf_news/04-2007/Item-20070427-3460e340-coa8-10ed-01b2-ed861919fbc/story.html.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *al Watan* in April 2007 reported 21 incidents in the past year of confrontations between the *mutaw'a* and Saudi nationals involving firearms and knives. Also see *al Quds al Arabi*, 7 July 2007; 'Vice Squad: The Power of Saudi Arabia's Morality Police is being Challenged, amid Allegations of Abuse and Violence', *Time*, 6 August 2007.
- 14 'Prince Naif Confirms that the "Committee" will Remain Strong' [in Arabic], http://www.islamtoday.net/albasheer/show_news_content.cfm?id=13181. For Naif's confirmation of the *mutaw'a*'s role, see 'Prince Naif Confirms his Standing by the "Committee"' [in Arabic], <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?article=383995&issue=10160§ion=1>.
- 15 Robin Wright and Peter Baker, 'Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election from Iran', *Washington Post*, 8 December 2004.
- 16 Although Saudi official statistics of 2004 do not show any religious - sectarian affiliations, they indicate the proportion of the population living in each region of the kingdom. Najd (mostly Wahhabi) constitutes 30%, the Hijaz (Sunni non-Wahhabi) constitutes 32.2%, al-Hasa, Eastern region (mostly Shia) 15.5%, the Southern region (Sunni and partly Ismaili) 18.8% and the Northern region (Sunni non-Wahhabi) 3.3%. For more detailed information see Al-Hassan, *The Role of Religion in Building National Identity*.
- 17 Sefr al-Hawali, *Kissinger's Promise and the American Aims in the Gulf* (Riyadh: al-Saudi'a, 1991).
- 18 See 'Fatwa: The Shi'a are more Dangerous to Islam than the Jews and the Christians' [in Arabic], <http://www.ibn-jebreen.com/ftawa.php?view=vmasal&subid=9546&parent=3959>; 'The Net for the Defence of the Sunna. Fatwa: No Apologies for the Shi'a, Religious Evidence is Against Them' [in Arabic], <http://www.d-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=21144>; 'Fatwa: Commending the Conversion from Shi'ism, where there is Sin and Apostasy, to the True Islam' [in Arabic], <http://www.d-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=21101>.
- 19 See Saudi News Agency, 13 July 2006; Mai Yamani, 'The Muslim Civil War', Project Synicate, 2006, <http://www.project-synicate.org/commentary/yamani12>.