This author was able to conduct extensive fieldwork in Saudi Arabia on five trips between 2004 and 2008. Although I was never able to access active QAP members, I interviewed their friends and families, veterans of foreign jihad fronts, former radicals, moderate Islamists, journalists and expert commentators across the country. Some of the informants have been anonymised in this book for obvious reasons.

The third development was the change of attitude among Saudi authorities towards information-sharing after the outbreak of the QAP violence. From May 2003 onward, the Interior Ministry was considerably more forthcoming with information about security incidents than it had been in the past. The change likely reflected a realisation that the Internet and satellite TV had broken the state's monopoly on information, and that the government needed to present its own version of events as an alternative to that of the militants. Local Saudi media, while state controlled, were also allowed to undertake a certain amount of investigative reporting.

For the micro-level analysis the book relies on a collection of 539 biographies of Saudi militants whose activities span a range of arenas from the 1980s Afghan jihad to the QAP campaign (but excluding Iraq). The biographies were collated from open sources by this author alone over a period of over four years. More detailed information about the sources and the socio-economic data is included in Appendix 1. The ambition of the micro-level analysis is not primarily comparative, so it does not engage systematically with the vast and growing corpus of profile-based studies of individual radicalisation. It does, however, provide a relatively detailed look at how some Saudis became militants.[16]

This book will inevitably contain factual errors and omissions, as do all empirically rich studies of clandestine phenomena. Nevertheless, I believe the data is sufficiently extensive and varied to provide relatively well-founded answers to some of the above-mentioned questions.

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[16] For studies of individual radicalisation in other contexts, see e.g. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Notes and Preliminary Findings', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 4 (1981); Ayla Hammond Schbley, 'Torn Between God, Family and Money: The Changing Profile of Lebanon's Religious Terrorists', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 23 (2000); Ami Pedahzur, Leonard Weinberg and Arie Perliger, 'Altruism and Fatalism: The Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists', *Deviant Behaviour* 24 (2003); Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malečková, 'Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is there a Causal Connection?', *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (2003); Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Edwin Bakker, 'Jihadi Terrorists in Europe', in *Clingendael Security Paper no. 2* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2006).

The central argument, put very simply, is that Saudi jihadism has been more pan-Islamist than revolutionary, in contrast to the Arab republics where the reverse has been true. I further argue that the QAP campaign represented the homecoming of a Saudi jihadist movement which had developed in three stages. The first stage lasted from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s and saw the formation of a classical jihadist movement which engaged in local struggles of national liberation in places such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya in the name of pan-Islamism. The classical jihadist movement emerged at this time for three reasons. First, the increase in the number and visibility of conflicts pitting Muslims versus non-Muslims made pan-Islamist rhetoric more empirically credible. Second, domestic political factors produced a beneficial political opportunity structure for extreme pan-Islamist activism. Third, Abdallah Azzam and his associates exercised excellent social movement entrepreneurship.

The second phase, from the mid-1990s to 2001, witnessed the emergence of the more radical 'global jihadist' branch of the Saudi jihadist movement. The global jihadists were also extreme pan-Islamists, but differed from the classical jihadists by their anti-Americanism and their willingness to use international terrorist tactics. The global jihadists, represented by the al-Qaida organisation, attracted many Saudis in the late 1990s because Bin Ladin succeeded in establishing a local recruitment infrastructure, winning the support of radical clerics and exploiting popular sympathy for the Chechen and Palestinian causes.

In the third phase, from 2002 to 2006, the global jihadist branch produced an organisation, the QAP, which waged war on the Western presence in Saudi Arabia. The immediate cause of the QAP campaign was a strategic decision by Usama bin Ladin, taken after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, to open a battlefront in the kingdom. In the spring of 2002, several hundred Saudi fighters returned from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia and began making military preparations under the supervision of Yusuf al-Uyayri. The mobilisation was facilitated by inconsistent policing, a polarisation of the Islamist field and new symbols of Muslim suffering.

The book is structured over a basic 3x3 grid with three chronological periods and three levels of analysis. The first part explains the rise of classical jihadism in Saudi Arabia between 1979 and 1995. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 analyse the emergence of a classical jihadist movement at the macro, meso and micro level respectively. The second part moves forward in time, narrows the focus to the global jihadists and examines the mobilisation of Saudis to al-Qaida between 1996 and 2001. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are thus devoted to the context, the agents and

the subjects of recruitment to al-Qaida in Afghanistan. The third and final part examines the formation of the QAP in 2002 and 2003, with chapters 7, 8 and 9 devoted to the macro-, meso- and micro-level aspects of the group's formation. Chapter 10 serves as an epilogue that explains how the campaign evolved and why it failed.

1 The politics of pan-Islamism

> In the past few years, a number of sister Islamic nations … have experienced unusual crises and natural disasters … The government has consistently come to the rescue of these ravaged countries in order to strengthen the ties of fraternity among Islamic countries, inspired by the precepts of Islam that call for cooperation and solidarity among mankind.
>
> Saudi Ministry of Finance, 1991[1]

From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, thousands of Saudis left quiet lives of material comfort to fight in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. They put their lives at risk for people they had never met and for territories they could barely place on a map. In a time of low oil prices, the Saudi state spent billions of dollars to liberate countries thousands of miles away. Its army was too weak to defend Saudi oilfields against Iraq in 1990, yet it encouraged its young men to take part in other Muslims' wars in Europe and Central Asia.

The driving force behind this curious behaviour was *pan-Islamism*, an ideology based on the view that all Muslims were one people who had a responsibility to help each other in times of crisis. In the 1980s the Muslim world witnessed the rise of an increasingly militarised interpretation of pan-Islamism, which saw the umma as threatened from the outside and placed a special emphasis on helping Muslims involved in conflicts against non-Muslims. The most extreme proponents of this ideology sought to convince average citizens to get militarily involved in other Muslims' struggles of national liberation.

To understand why this endeavour succeeded when it did, and why it was more successful in Saudi Arabia than in most other Muslim countries, we need to examine the evolution of the political opportunities for extreme pan-Islamist activism in the kingdom from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s. As we shall see, these opportunities were shaped by the

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[1] *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Economic and Social Development Aid to the Islamic World* (Riyadh: Ministry of Finance and National Economy, 1991), 24.

Saudi state's evolving concern for pan-Islamist legitimacy as well as the dynamics of Saudi domestic politics.

The rise of pan-Islamism

While the ideal of Muslim unity is encapsulated in the Qur'anic notion of the *umma* (the community of believers), the intellectual history of pan-Islamism goes back to the late nineteenth century and the rise of modern Islamism. In the course of the twentieth century, the idea of the umma gave rise to a variety of political phenomena. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between three political manifestations of pan-Islamism: caliphism, foreign policy coordination and popular mobilisation.

For early Islamist thinkers such as Rashid Rida, who wrote around the time of the end of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924, pan-Islam connoted a concrete project of creating formal political unity in the Muslim world. The 1920s and the 1950s would see several attempts at uniting Muslim countries in a caliphate-like organisation. However, local nationalisms and realpolitik prevented the realisation of this project which was all but dead by the late 1950s.[2]

In the 1960s and early 1970s, pan-Islamism was revived in a less utopian form, namely Saudi King Faisal's call for coordination and mutual aid between Muslim countries. A foreign policy doctrine rather than political unification project, King Faisal's notion of 'Muslim solidarity' (*al-tadamun al-islami*), was articulated largely as a counterweight to Nasser's secular Arab nationalism. King Faisal's pan-Islamism was above all an alliance-building tool in the Arab cold war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. However, it also served a domestic political purpose, namely to boost the Saudi regime's religious credentials. Containing the birthplace of Wahhabism and the cradle of Islam, Saudi Arabia had made religious integrity a key pillar of its legitimacy. Leading and helping the Muslim nation was King Faisal's way of laying claim to religious integrity.[3]

Of course, the promotion of pan-Islamism under King Faisal was somewhat ironic given the Wahhabi ulama's historical hostility towards non-Wahhabi Muslims. Up until the early twentieth century, Wahhabi scholars often did not consider non-Wahhabis Muslims at all. This changed with globalisation, which brought Saudis into contact

[2] J. M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford University Press, 1990); James Piscatori, 'Imagining Pan-Islam', in *Islam and Political Violence*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Fethi Mansouri (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).

[3] Abdullah M. Sindi, 'King Faisal and Pan-Islamism', in *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia*, ed. Willard Beling (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

with 'original infidels' from the non-Muslim world. By the 1950s, the Saudi religious establishment had come to see other Muslims as believers who should be supported. The official recognition of non-Wahhabis as Muslims came in 1954 when the Saudi Great Mufti Muhammad Bin Ibrahim met for the first time formally with senior non-Wahhabi ulama such as the Egyptian Mufti Hasanayn Muhammad Makhluf and the Tunisian Maliki scholar Muhammad Tahir Ashur.[4]

To promote pan-Islamism, King Faisal established a number of institutions at the national and supranational level which worked to promote cooperation, mutual solidarity and religious awareness in the Muslim world. The two most important of these were the Muslim World League (MWL), founded in May 1962, and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), established between 1969 and 1972. The MWL became involved in a vast range of cultural, educational and charitable activities and served as the umbrella organisation for a plethora of smaller organisations. Although formally a non-governmental organisation, it has remained influenced and generously funded by Saudi Arabia until today. The Mecca-based MWL was also influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members, having fled persecution in Egypt and Syria, were strongly represented in the organisation. Whereas the MWL operated on the societal level, the OIC was an inter-governmental organisation with greater influence in the diplomatic sphere. In addition to being a forum for foreign policy coordination between Muslim countries, the OIC had the power to set up financial institutions and charities. This became particularly significant after the 1973 oil crisis filled the treasuries of its member states.[5]

The international Islamic organisations set up by King Faisal helped foster a third manifestation of pan-Islamism, namely a movement promoting popular assistance to Muslims in need. This populist pan-Islamist movement, which emerged in the international atmosphere of 1970s Hijaz, developed a particularly alarmist discourse about external threats to the umma and the need for grassroots inter-Muslim assistance. Populist pan-Islamists benefited from Saudi funding through the MWL and worked with state actors when convenient, but they were essentially non-state actors unfettered by realpolitik. Instead they would pressure states into extending more support for Muslim causes around the world.

[4] Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert* (London: E. J. Brill, 1990), 123.
[5] For more on the OIC, see Naveed S. Sheikh, *The New Politics of Islam* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003); for the WML, see Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus*.

For the populist pan-Islamists, the notion of Muslim solidarity was intrinsically linked with Muslim suffering. Since their foundation, the international Islamic organisations therefore sought to spread awareness of the plight of Muslims around the world through publishing and the media. This concerted effort, combined with technological advances in printing and distribution, led to a proliferation in the late 1970s of Islamic publications reporting on the plight of Muslims around the world. In magazines such as *Akhbar al-Alam al-Islami* (News of the Muslim World) and *Majallat Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami* (Journal of the MWL), Muslims in Morocco could now read about the Muslim diaspora in the Balkans or the situation in Indonesia. The umma was becoming smaller.[6]

Pan-Islamism also took on a more political dimension in the course of the 1970s. With the exception of the support for Palestine, the early activities of the MWL and the OIC were apolitical and focused on humanitarian aid and disaster relief. This period therefore saw the establishment of numerous charities and development funds which worked to alleviate poverty and promote economic development in the Muslim world. From the late 1970s, however, apolitical issues gave way to politically grounded suffering such as war, oppression and discrimination. This is clear both from the agendas of OIC and MWL annual meetings and from the contents of MWL-sponsored magazines. Of course, in the pan-Islamist world-view, these predicaments were two sides of the same coin. Muslim solidarity therefore came to be used as justification for a range of different types of assistance, from development aid on the one hand to clandestine weapons shipments on the other.[7]

This process was helped by the precedent set by King Faisal's support for the Palestinian cause, which had been framed in pan-Islamist terms. In 1948, then Prince Faisal had supervised the setting up of a 'Committee for Aid to Palestine'. As King, he would generously fund the armed Palestinian struggle against Israel and direct most of Saudi Arabia's development aid to Israel's immediate neighbours and enemies. After the 1967 war, the Saudi government launched a number of domestic

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[6] William Ochsenwald, 'Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Revival', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13, no. 3 (1981): 281.

[7] For the emergence of the Islamic charitable sector, see J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins, *Alms for Jihad* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jonathan Benthall, 'L'humanitarisme islamique', *Cultures et Conflits*, no. 60 (2005); Abdel-Rahman Ghandour, *Jihad humanitaire: Enquête sur les ONG islamiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002). For the politicisation of the MWL, see *qararat wa tawsiyat ahamm al-mu'tamarat allati 'aqadatha rabitat al-'alam al-islami* [Resolutions and Recommendations of the Most Important Conferences Organised by the Muslim World League] (Mecca: MWL, 1991).

initiatives to raise funds for the Palestinian cause. In December 1967, King Faisal notably established the 'Popular Committee for Aiding Martyrs' Families, Prisoners and Mujahidin of Palestine,' an organisation which exists to this day. The Committee, chaired then as it is today by Faisal's half-brother, Prince Salman, worked 'to offer all kinds of political, moral and material support to the Palestinian people'. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Committee would organise special fundraising campaigns and telethons, notably during regional crises such as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the outbreak of the intifada in 1987. As we shall see below, many of the organisational structures and awareness-raising strategies pioneered in the late 1960s were reproduced in the 1980s and 1990s to muster support for other causes such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya.[8]

The Saudi support for the Palestinian resistance was consistently justified and rationalised with reference to religion, and the government sought the approval of senior religious scholars for its policies. In late 1968, the Popular Committee asked Great Mufti Muhammad bin Ibrahim for a ruling on the issue of whether alms money collected in Saudi Arabia could be used to fund the Palestinian struggle. On 3 December 1968, the Mufti issued a fatwa authorising 'the use of part of the *zakah*, on the condition that it is the Government which supervises its expenditure, … to purchase weapons for the *fida'in* who are fighting the Jewish enemies of God'. This ruling set an important precedent and contributed to a widening of the notion of charity to include private support for violent struggle.[9]

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw a securitisation of pan-Islamism. In February 1979 the newly established OIC-sponsored 'Islamic Institute of Defence Technology' (IIDT) in London organised the first 'Muslim security conference', which focused on 'ways and means to

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[8] In 1968, the Committee launched a project called 'Riyal of Palestine' under the slogan 'Pay a Riyal, Save an Arab'. Another project was 'Record the Honour', a call for regular (subscribed) donations. The same year saw the launch of 'The Five Percent Palestinian Commitment Project', whereby Palestinians in Saudi Arabia committed to giving 5 per cent of their salary to the Popular Committee. This was followed in 1969 by 'The One Percent Project' which called on Saudis to donate 1 per cent of their salary to the Palestinian resistance. According to political economist Steffen Hertog, this 'jihad tax' represents the first and last government-proposed income taxation scheme in Saudi history. See Abd al-Rahim Mahmud Jamus, *al-lijan al-sha'biyya li-musa'adat mujahidiy filastin fi'l-mamlaka al-'arabiyya al-sa'udiyya* [The Popular Committees for the Support of Palestine's Mujahidin in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] (Riyadh: Darat al-Malik Abd al-Aziz, 2001), 26 and 34. For a bibliography of Saudi writings on the Palestinian issue, see *al-qadiyya al-filastiniyya bi-aqlam sa'udiyya* [The Palestinian Cause in Saudi Authors' Words] (Mecca: Umm al-Qura University, 2002).

[9] Jamus, *al-lijan al-sha'biyya*, 46 and 94.

strengthen the defence of the Islamic world'. The same year the IIDT began publishing a monthly magazine called *Islamic Defence Review*. In 1980, the OIC adopted a resolution entitled 'The Security of Muslim States and their Solidarity', which for the first time emphasised that 'the security of any Muslim state is a concern for all Muslim states', and the following year an 'Islamic security committee' was established within the OIC. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the OIC expressed solidarity with a number of member states in conflict with non-Muslim states, most of which happened to be Christian: with Iran against the USA in 1980, with Lebanon against Israel in 1982, with the Comoros Islands against France throughout the 1980s, with Somalia against Ethiopia in 1984, with Azerbaijan against Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988 and with Sudan against 'foreign designs' in 1991. In the cases of Afghanistan and Bosnia, of course, the OIC members would adopt measures that went far beyond verbal condemnation. Pan-Islamism was acquiring a military dimension.[10]

The securitisation of Islamic solidarity also manifested itself in Saudi Arabia. The late 1970s and 1980s were characterised by greater Saudi involvement in international political struggles pitting Muslims versus non-Muslims. For a start, the level of Saudi financial support for Muslims in conflict increased markedly from the late 1970s onward. In the late 1980s, spending on both Afghanistan and Palestine would increase considerably, despite a marked decrease in oil revenues in the same period (see Figures 1 and 2). Moreover, in the case of Afghanistan, Saudi support began to include military assistance (though support for Palestine remained purely financial). The Afghanistan war became the first foreign conflict since the 1948 and 1967 Arab–Israeli wars to see the personal military involvement of Saudi nationals (the Saudi military had dispatched small Army units to Jordan in 1948 and 1967). Finally, the geographical sphere of involvement expanded, from the Arab world in the early 1970s, via Central Asia in the 1980s, to Europe in the 1990s.[11]

The rise of populist pan-Islamism in the 1980s was above all a result of the accumulated propaganda effort of the international Islamic organisations, which had been working relentlessly since the 1970s to

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[10] *Journal of the Muslim World League* 6, no. 4 (1979), 64 and 8, no. 4 (1981), 63; Mohammad El Sayed Selim, ed., *The Organisation of the Islamic Conference in a Changing World* (Cairo: Center for Political Research and Studies, 1994), 117 and 119.

[11] A military unit of 513 Saudis allegedly took part in the 1948 war for Palestine, 134 of whom 'fell as martyrs'; Jamus, *al-lijan al-sha'biyya*, 18. During the 1967 war, a Saudi brigade of 3,000 soldiers was sent to southern Jordan but did not fight; Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, 384.
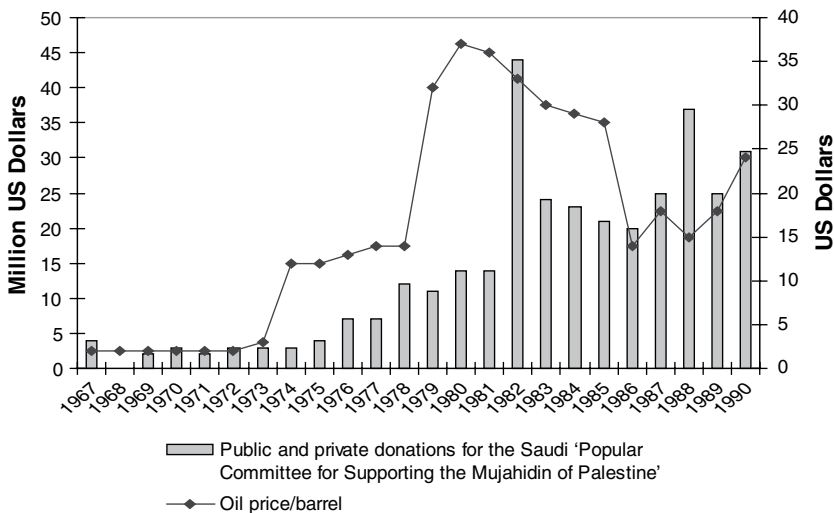
Figure 1: Saudi funding for Palestinian resistance compared with oil prices, 1967–90. Sources: Jamus, *al-lajan al-sha'biyya*, 56; BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2006
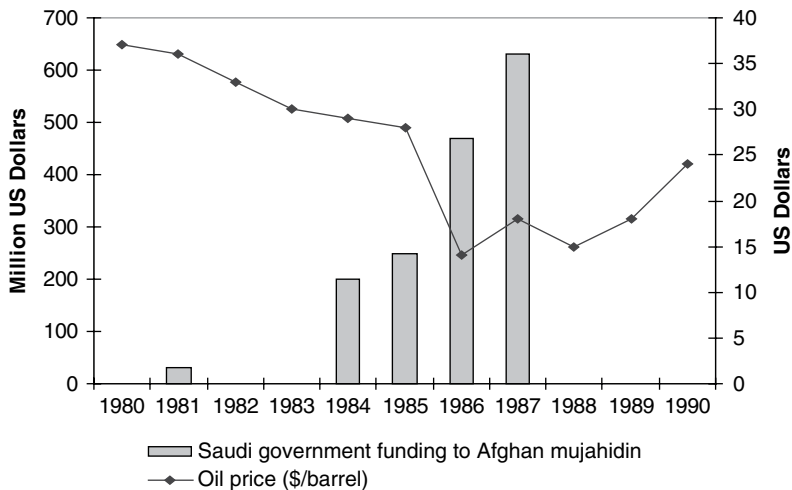

Figure 2: Saudi government funding of Afghan mujahidin compared with oil prices, 1980–90 (data lacking for 1982 and 1983). Sources: Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 65, 102 and 151; BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2006

promote awareness of Muslim suffering around the world. A second factor was the de facto increase in the number of violent conflicts in the region, such as Afghanistan, the war in Lebanon and the Palestinian intifada. This gave the pan-Islamist frame more empirical credibility and thus more mobilising power. The spread of news media ensured that the same conflicts were visible to a larger number of people in Saudi Arabia. Yet another factor was the decline of the pan-Islamists' major ideological competitor, namely Arab nationalism. Pan-Arabism, having been discredited by the 1967 war, the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty and the Lebanese civil war, left an ideological vacuum which could be filled by the pan-Islamists. This tendency was strengthened by the fact that many of the conflicts which preoccupied the Muslim world in the 1980s and early 1990s occurred in non-Arab countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya.

Apart from factors specific to the Afghan jihad, which we shall examine below, two developments inspired a more active pan-Islamist policy on the part of the Saudi state in the 1980s. One was the rise of revolutionary Iran, which challenged Saudi Arabia for the leadership of the Muslim world and adopted a populist discourse deeply hostile to the United States, a key Saudi ally. The other factor was the decline in oil prices in the mid-1980s which triggered a serious economic crisis. The kingdom was notably forced to abandon the promise of guaranteed employment to university graduates, among other things.[12]

These developments challenged two key pillars of Saudi regime legitimacy, namely its religious integrity and the ability to provide economic welfare. Sensing these pressures, and noting the rise of the Sahwa movement in the late 1980s, the government came to see promotion of pan-Islamist causes as a useful way to deflect some of the internal domestic dissent. Diversionary politics is well known from other Muslim countries. In 1980s Algeria, for example, government spending on the religious sector increased markedly as GDP per capita went down. Populist pan-Islamism was thus to some extent Saudi Arabia's 'opium for the people'.[13]

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[12] For the Saudi–Iranian cold war, see Jacob Goldberg, 'Saudi Arabia and the Iranian Revolution: The Religious Dimension', in *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, ed. David Menashri (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990). For the economic decline, see e.g. Elaine Sciolino, 'In Saudi Oasis of Calm, Some See Seeds of Unrest', *New York Times*, 15 May 1985; and Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom* (New York: Viking, 2009), chapter 10.

[13] For the rise of the Sahwa in the late 1980s, see Matrook Alfaleh, 'The Impact of the Processes of Modernization and Social Mobilization on the Social and Political Structures of the Arab Countries with Special Emphasis on Saudi Arabia' (Ph.D.

The rise of pan-Islamism in the 1980s coincided with the distinct process of social conservatisation of Saudi society. In the beginning of the decade, partly in response to the 1979 Juhayman incident, the regime decided to slow down the process of social liberalisation which had accompanied the 1970s oil boom. The state awarded the religious establishment significantly increased powers and budgets. The ulama, who had been pressuring for such a change for years, jumped at the opportunity to promote and reinforce the strict Wahhabi rules on ritual observance and moral behaviour more intensively than before. In the 1980s, therefore, Saudi Arabia was swept by a wave of social conservatism. Cinemas were closed, female news presenters were taken off the air and the religious police became more visible in cities across the country.[14]

However, the 'Wahhabisation' and the 'pan-Islamisation' of 1980 Saudi Arabia represented two distinct processes with different causes and results. While the first was a purely domestic process promoted by the Najdi Wahhabi ulama and resulting in social conservatism, the latter had international ramifications, was promoted by the Hijaz-based organisations such as the MWL and produced political radicalism. Nevertheless, both processes left more political space for Islamist activism of all kinds. The political opportunity structure for Islamist activists – especially those seeking to mobilise people for the jihad in Afghanistan – thus became highly beneficial.

The Afghan jihad and the Saudi state

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 led the transnational Islamic organisations to issue calls for jihad against the Soviet occupation. This gave the conflict a religious dimension which would mobilise colossal levels of state and non-state resources from the Muslim world in general and from Saudi Arabia in particular. With its involvement in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia moved from a passive and financial to an active and military approach to pan-Islamism.[15]

The range and depth of Saudi support for the Afghan resistance was entirely unprecedented, and it exceeded even the assistance for

dissertation, University of Kansas, 1987), 176; and Lacroix, 'Les champs de la discorde', 327ff. For Algeria's diversionary policies, see Abdelaziz Testas, 'The Roots of Algeria's Ethnic and Religious Violence', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25 (2002).

[14] Gwenn Okruhlik, 'Networks of Dissent: Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia', *Current History* (2002); Michaela Prokop, 'Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Education', *International Affairs* 79, no. 1 (2003): 78; Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (London: Routledge, 2006), 83–5.

[15] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2002), 136ff.

the Palestinians. The Saudi financial support to the Afghan mujahi-
din between 1984 and 1989 was larger than that provided to the PLO
in any five-year period since the 1970s. The PLO received a total of
SAR 3.72 billion (US$992 million) from the Saudi government in the
fourteen-year period from 1978 to 1991, while the Afghan mujahidin
received a total of at least SAR 6.75 billion (US$1.8 billion) in the three
years from 1987 to 1989. The Saudi military support in Afghanistan
was also more direct than it had been in Palestine. Saudi Arabia had
funded many of PLO's weapons purchases, but the Palestinians never
needed Saudi help for weapons procurement and they certainly did not
need unfit Saudi volunteers. Saudi Arabia's alliance with the United
States also made it politically difficult to send fighters to Palestine.
Israel's borders were also notoriously difficult to penetrate for volunteer
fighters, and after 1970, none of its neighbours provided a suitable base
for infiltration. In Afghanistan, on the other hand, volunteerism was
sanctioned by the USA, welcomed by the Afghans and facilitated by the
presence of a transit territory, namely Pakistan. As a result, the Saudi
state provided direct military and logistical support, and Saudi citizens
took part in the fighting.[16]

In the early 1980s, the Saudi support was primarily diplomatic, polit-
ical and humanitarian. Diplomatically, the Saudis worked through the
OIC to ensure the isolation of the Kabul regime and to rally support
behind the Afghan resistance. Politically, Riyadh exerted considerable
pressure on the Afghan mujahidin factions to close ranks and insisted
on unity as a condition for expanding aid. The Saudi government also
provided a certain amount of financial aid, mainly to charities and to
Abd (Rabb) al-Rasul Sayyaf's Ittihad party. The official Saudi aid in the
first few years was channelled through two principal organisations: the
Saudi Red Crescent and the 'Popular Committee for Fundraising'. The
latter was set up in early 1980 under the chairmanship of Prince Salman
on the model of the Popular Committee for Palestine. Later the same
year the Popular Committee became the 'Saudi Relief Committee'. As
early as May 1980, Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal delivered a cheque
of SAR 81.3 million (US$21.7 million) to the OIC to help Afghan refu-
gees, and in July 1981 Prince Salman delivered an additional SAR 50
million (US$13.3 million) to Pakistan 'from the Saudi people'.[17]

However, the Saudi state support for the Afghan resistance did not
reach significant proportions until the mid-1980s. Abdallah Azzam, the

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[16] 'The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Economic and Social Development Aid.' These fig-
ures do not include private donations.
[17] William B. Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security and Oil* (Wash-
ington, DC: Brookings, 1981), 42; Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the*

main entrepreneur of the Arab mobilisation, later said that the Saudi government and its people were with the Afghan jihad only from 1983 onward. Why did support increase in the mid-1980s? An important part of the answer is to be found in American politics. In 1980 or 1981, the kingdom had pledged, at the request of the Americans, to match US congressional funding for the Afghan resistance. The two parties agreed to contribute equally to a CIA-administered fund destined for the Afghan mujahidin from 1982 onward. However, in 1984 and 1985 the amount of money allocated by the US Congress – and by extension also by Saudi Arabia – skyrocketed as the result of political developments in the domestic American arena. Without the American pressure and initiative, the Saudi involvement in Afghanistan would probably not have taken the proportions it did. The mid-1980s funding increase was not just a budget issue. It was also a clear political signal from Washington to use all means available to help the Afghan mujahidin.[18]

When discussing the Saudi support for the Afghan jihad, it is important not to view the sender and the recipient of this support as unitary actors. For a start, the Saudi government did not supervise and control the entire flow of money and volunteers emanating from Saudi Arabia. Much of the assistance came from semi-official organisations such as charities and religious organisations, as well as from private donors. In the mid- and late 1980s, a large number of Saudi charities were operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many of them extended logistical and other services to combatants in addition to their humanitarian or missionary activities. For example, the MWL's representative in Peshawar from 1986 onward was none other than Wa'il Julaydan, a close friend of bin Ladin and early member of Abdallah Azzam's Services Bureau. The Saudi Red Crescent was part of the weapons pipeline – it maintained offices in the border regions partly to alleviate the cost of

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CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001 (New York: Penguin, 2004), 82–3; David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1981), 537; Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 2nd edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 193; Basil Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab fi afghanistan* [The Arab Supporters in Afghanistan], 2nd edn (Riyadh: Lajnat al-Birr al-Islamiyya, 1991), 37–8; 'Support for the Afghan Jihad Effort', *Journal of the Muslim World League* 7, no. 8 (1980), 60; 'Aid for Afghan Refugees', *Journal of the Muslim World League* 8, no. 10 (1981), 43.

18 Bashir Abu Rumman and Abdallah Sa'id, *al-'alim wa'l-mujahid wa'l-shahid al-shaykh 'abdallah 'azzam* [The Scholar, Mujahid, Martyr and Sheikh Abdallah Azzam] (Amman: Dar al-Bashir, 1990), 84; Jonathan Randal, *Osama: The Making of a Terrorist* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 72; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 81–2, 90–1, 102; George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (New York: Grove, 2003), 238; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 180, 196.

transporting weapons. On at least one occasion, ambulances were used to transport healthy fighters to and from the battlefront. This blurring of the lines between humanitarian and military assistance was an important corollary of the rise of militarised pan-Islamism in the 1980s and 1990s, and contributed to the view of participation in violent jihad as an act of charity. However, the degree of government control over the charitable sector was far from complete.[19]

A good example of the fluid nature of the early Saudi support is the role of Nasir al-Rashid, a senior official of the Saudi Red Crescent and one of the first Saudi aid workers in Afghanistan. In the autumn of 1981 or 1982, al-Rashid visited Afghan mujahidin camps and was appalled to find that thousands of fighters in the Warsak and Abu Bakr camps lacked blankets and tents for the winter. So he proceeded to buy the necessary equipment with his own private money. It is hard to categorise this kind of assistance as strictly official or non-official.[20]

The government of course had its own programmes and instruments for supporting the Afghan jihad. Saudi intelligence services cooperated closely with the CIA and allowed the latter to use Saudi territory as a transit point for weapons shipments to Pakistan. Saudi intelligence also operated independently from the Americans in Pakistan and Afghanistan. At the height of the Saudi involvement in Afghanistan, the Saudi intelligence director, Prince Turki al-Faisal, travelled to Pakistan up to five times a month. However, the vast majority of the official Saudi support for the Afghan jihad went to the Afghans, not the Arabs. There was of course a degree of contact and limited collaboration between Saudi officialdom and the Arab fighters. Prince Turki al-Faisal is known to have been in contact with Usama bin Ladin at the time, although the precise nature of their relationship remains unclear. Saudi diplomats and intelligence officials cooperated on an ad hoc basis with Abdallah Azzam's 'Services Bureau' (SB). Bin Ladin himself has described how the Saudi ambassador in Islamabad, Tawfiq al-Madar, helped him transport a bulldozer from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan in 1985. The bulldozer was later used for the construction of training camps in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, this support is negligible compared to the hundreds of millions of dollars provided by the Saudi government to the Afghan militias.[21]

[19] Muhammad Amir Rana and Mubasher Bukhari, *Arabs in Afghan Jihad* (Lahore: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2007); Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 197 and 231; Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 186; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 86.

[20] Abdallah Azzam, *ayat al-rahman fi jihad al-afghan* [Signs of the Merciful in the Afghan Jihad] (Amman: Maktabat al-Risala al-Haditha, 1986), 184; Jasir al-Jasir, *'qissat al-afghan al-sa'udiyyin'* [The Story of the Saudi Afghans]', *al-Majalla*, 11 May 1996: 20.

[21] Mark Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet: The Struggle for Islam* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999), 10; Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap*, 2nd edn

The precise division of labour between state, semi-state and non-state actors may not be crucial for our analysis. The key point is that the political opportunities for mobilisation were excellent. The state did not place any obstacles whatsoever in the way of those, like Abdallah Azzam and Usama bin Ladin, who sought to recruit Saudis for Afghanistan and raise funds for their activities. If anything, the state, or semi-governmental entities like the Muslim World League, actively encouraged the departure of Saudis to Afghanistan. Saudi Airlines famously gave a 75 per cent discount on flights to Peshawar in the late 1980s. The government-controlled media reported extensively from Afghanistan from the mid-1980s onward. State television would broadcast the Afghan mujahidin leader Sayyaf's lectures in Mina before the King during Hajj. Saudi newspapers reproduced statements and fatwas from religious scholars about Afghanistan, and some articles even reported the so-called *karamat* (miracles) of Arab martyrs fallen in battle in Afghanistan. The authorities also organised telethons to raise funds for Prince Salman's Committee for the Assistance of Afghan Mujahidin.[22]

Perhaps the only part of the Saudi state which was somewhat hesitant about encouraging young men to fight in Afghanistan was the religious establishment. A common misperception in the historiography of this period is to present the Wahhabi religious scholars as prime movers behind the mobilisation to Afghanistan. In fact, very few, if any, of the scholars in the religious establishment actively promoted the Afghan jihad as an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*) for Saudis. The majority of ulama viewed the jihad as a collective duty (*fard kifaya*) and were anxious to ensure that the resources and personnel devoted to the Afghan cause went to people and organisations with a sound doctrinal orientation. The Saudi government's insistence on funding the Saudi-trained but politically marginal Sayyaf, as opposed to other more politically legitimate parts of the Afghan resistance, was an implicit concession to the religious establishment. In the late 1980s, concerns over doctrine led to a divergence in the respective funding preferences of the scholars and

(Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2001), 100; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 82, 86–7; Jamal Khashoggi, 'Kingdom Has Big Role to Play in Afghanistan's Reconstruction: Prince Turki', *Arab News*, 9 November 2001; Jamal Khashoggi, 'Osama Offered to Form Army to Challenge Saddam's Forces: Turki', *Arab News*, 7 November 2001; Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 87.

22 Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet*, 3; *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20 March 2005; Fathi al-Zubaydi, *al-jihad al-afghani fi'l-kitabat al-'arabiyya al-mu'asira* [The Afghan Jihad in Contemporary Arab Writings] (Damascus: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1996); Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 46; Salih al-Wardani, *fuqaha' al-naft: rayat al-islam am rayat al sa'ud?* [Oil Scholars: The Banner of Islam or the Banner of the Al Saud?] (Cairo: al-Madbuli al-Saghir), 87–94; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 84.

the government. While Saudi intelligence favoured Sayyaf, the Wahhabi establishment endorsed the more socially conservative Jamil al-Rahman and his community in Kunar (see below).[23]

The broader Islamist community, notably the Sahwa, was also sceptical about Saudis going to Afghanistan to fight. The Sahwa's opposition was based on two arguments: first, that the Afghan resistance was not doctrinally pure, and second, that the struggle benefited American interests. Among the most prominent sceptics was Safar al-Hawali, who criticised Abdallah Azzam in a famous lecture entitled 'The Concept of Jihad'. Al-Hawali's position subsequently earned him the scorn of prominent jihadist ideologues such as the Egyptian Abd al-Qadir bin Abd al-Aziz (in the early 1990s) and Yusuf al-Uyayri (in 2003). The other Sahwist icon, Salman al-Awda, was less outspoken, but in 2004 he would point to his opposition to Saudi involvement in 1980s Afghanistan to dismiss accusations that he was inciting Saudis to fight in Iraq. Yet another public critic of the Arab Afghan involvement was Muhammad al-Munajjid, a prominent religious figure in the Eastern Province.[24]

Nevertheless, in the second half of the 1980s, as the Afghan cause gained popularity, very few mainstream scholars would publicly rule against going to Afghanistan. Most ulama in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere adopted a rather vague position. For example, the leading Saudi scholar Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz ruled that 'helping and aiding our fighting and exiled Afghan brothers is an individual duty on Muslims today, financially and physically or one of the two according to one's capability'. At first sight the fatwa looks clear – but on closer inspection it does not say that all Muslims should fight in Afghanistan. Most Saudi sources interviewed by this author agree that Bin Baz never declared the jihad in Afghanistan to be an individual duty for all Muslims.[25]

Looking back on the 1980s, Saudi officials have insisted that they only responded to popular demand for action in Afghanistan. In a 2001 interview, Prince Turki al-Faisal said the government had no

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[23] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 195 and 199; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 83; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 242 and 261.

[24] Author's interview with Nasir al-Barrak; author's interview with Yusuf al-Dayni, Jidda, April 2004; Safar al-Hawali, '*mafhum al-jihad* [The Concept of Jihad]' (www.alhawali.com, 1989); Abd al-Qadir bin Abd al-Aziz, '*radd kalam al-hawali fi kitab al-difa*' [Response to Hawali's Talk on the Book 'The Defence' (of Muslim Lands)]' (www.tawhed.ws, dated 1990); Yusuf al-Uyayri, '*al-hamla al-'alamiyya li-muqawamat al-'udwan* [The Global Campaign of Resistance to Aggression]' (www.tawhed.ws, 2003); Salman al-Awda, '*ya ibn (al-watan) la taftari 'ala ahlak* [Oh Son of the Nation, Do Not Bring Calumny on your People]' (www.islamtoday.net, 2004).

[25] *al-Jihad*, no. 22 (September 1986): 25; and Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 74.

choice but to support the Saudi volunteers. He said it would have been a 'grave mistake' for any Arab state to have prevented volunteers from doing their 'sacred duty' in Afghanistan, because 'for the first time in many years, many Muslims were doing something against an invader and appearing to be succeeding'. Prince Turki's advisor Jamal Khashoggi has said that 'it was the right thing for Saudi Arabia to send Jihadis to Afghanistan. All Saudi Jihadis came back in 1992. They were nice people.'[26]

These statements gloss over the fact that the government instrumentalised pan-Islamism for domestic and foreign political gain. The Afghan jihad constituted a golden opportunity for Saudi Arabia to consolidate its image as the champion of Islamic causes and liberator of Muslim territory. The kingdom's pan-Islamic offensive thus gave the regime a momentary legitimacy boost. However, it also set in motion the powerful forces of extreme pan-Islamism, which would soon prove to be a potent tool in the hands of the domestic Saudi opposition.

Pan-Islamist bidding games

The fortunes of the Saudi government were reversed on 2 August 1990 by Saddam Hussain's invasion of Kuwait. The perceived Iraqi threat to Saudi oil fields led King Fahd to authorise the deployment of American troops on Saudi soil, a decision which seriously undermined the kingdom's pan-Islamist credentials, because the Arabian Peninsula enjoys a special and sacred status in Islam as the 'Land of the Two Sanctuaries', a reference to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.[27]

In the autumn of 1990, as the crisis escalated and American soldiers poured into the kingdom, the government did its best to frame the conflict with Iraq in pan-Islamist terms, and to mobilise both domestic and foreign Muslim support 'in defence of Islam's Holy Places'. Saudi Arabia invited military forces from as many Muslim allies as possible to come and fight under Saudi command – a request met by twenty-four countries from West Africa to South Asia. The government also launched an entirely unprecedented civil defence mobilisation effort. Recruitment centres were set up across the country and volunteers were given uniforms and training – boot camps for men and nursing courses for women. To boost patriotism, the Saudi press wrote about the overwhelming popular response to the call for

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[26] Khashoggi, 'Osama Offered to Form Army'; al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State*, 102.

[27] Bernard Lewis, 'License to Kill: Usama Bin Ladin's Declaration of Jihad', *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 6 (1998).

homeland defence, while describing in detail the atrocities of the evil Iraqi forces to the north.[28]

But the authorities were fighting an uphill ideological battle. Most Saudis were sceptical about the arrival of the US troops and many believed Saddam's invasion had been staged by the Americans to provide an excuse to invade the region. In Islamist communities inside and outside the kingdom, the Saudi decision to call for US support was met with wild condemnation. This was not surprising, because there was already considerable resentment towards the Western presence in Saudi Arabia prior to the deployment. Most Islamists saw the arrival of American troops as a defilement of holy land and an affront to the Prophet's alleged deathbed wish that 'there should not be two religions on the Arabian Peninsula'. For many, the intrusion of 'Crusaders' was far more serious than the threat represented by Saddam Hussain. In Saudi Arabia, none reacted more strongly to the deployment of US forces than the Sahwa, the moderate Islamist opposition movement that had been gaining strength through the 1970s and 1980s and that was now ready to confront the regime politically.[29]

One of the most hard-hitting criticisms of the US military presence was articulated by Safar al-Hawali in his book *Revealing the Sorrow to the Scholars of the Nation* (also known as *Kissinger's Promise*). Al-Hawali's book, which was based on a compilation of lectures held in the autumn of 1990, and which was styled as an open letter to the country's most senior scholar Abd al-Aziz Bin Baz, became extremely popular inside and outside Saudi Arabia. *Revealing the Sorrow* was essentially a geopolitical analysis of the causes and implications of the Gulf war. Al-Hawali argued that America had orchestrated the Gulf war in order to secure a military presence on the Arabian Peninsula, humiliate Islam and crush the Islamic movement. In al-Hawali's view, the US policy was clearly intended to control Saudi territory:

It is clear to you that the calumny which has befallen the umma will not be forgotten by history until the day of judgement. It began with the Iraqi Baathist army's invasion of Kuwait, then the invitation of the Christian Western nations and their followers to the whole region, and the deployment of tens of thousands of American troops in Riyadh, Jidda, Ta'if, Yanbu and Asir, rather

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[28] Alan Munro, *An Embassy at War: Politics and Diplomacy behind the Gulf War* (London: Brassey's, 1996), 131–2.

[29] For Islamist reactions to the arrival of US forces, see James P. Piscatori, 'Religion and Realpolitik: Islamic Responses to the Gulf War', in *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. J. P. Piscatori (University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Maha Azzam, 'The Gulf Crisis: Perceptions in the Muslim World', *International Affairs* 67, no. 3 (1991). For 1980s anti-Americanism, see Sciolino, 'In Saudi Oasis of Calm, Some See Seeds of Unrest'.

than the Eastern and Northern provinces, and the encirclement of all the sea-shores of the Arabian Peninsula under the pretext of the economic blockade on Iraq.[30]

Al-Hawali's analysis was articulated in explicit pan-Islamist discourse. It emphasised the territorial infringement committed by non-Muslim forces and stressed that the issue concerned the entire Muslim nation. He spoke of an 'occupation' of the Arabian Peninsula by 'Crusaders' who wanted to 'steal the resources' of the Muslim nation. The book was also very anti-American and reminded the reader that 'the West is our enemy from now till the day of judgement'.[31]

However, the Sahwists' use of pan-Islamist discourse was instrumentalist. The core of the Sahwa's agenda was internal political reform, as was made clear in the movement's two main petitions, namely the *Letter of Demands* and the *Memorandum of Advice*. By criticising the government's failure to protect the Arabian Peninsula and deploring the situation in Bosnia, the reformists tapped into the reservoir of popular pan-Islamism and used it in their confrontation with the government. For the Sahwa, the issue of the US troops was thus primarily a symbolic cause. The Sahwist critique nevertheless represented a severe challenge to the regime's credibility as a champion of Islamic causes. The political capital acquired through the support for the Afghan jihad had been swept away in a matter of months.[32]

What the Sahwa did was essentially to contest the very same source of legitimacy which had benefited the state in the late 1980s, namely pan-Islamism. The regime now found itself accused of betraying the umma: how could the King aspire to the role of the liberator of Muslim territory when his own country was flooded with American soldiers? The challenge from the Sahwa forced the government to look for ways to compensate for the credibility lost by emphasising other Islamic causes. In 1992, a new opportunity for displays of pan-Islamic solidarity would arise in the least likely of places: Eastern Europe.

The Bosnian war, which pitted Bosnian Muslims against Bosnian Serbs (and temporarily against Bosnian Croats) between March 1992 and November 1995, was a complex conflict in which religion was

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[30] Safar al-Hawali, *kashf al-ghumma 'an 'ulama al-umma* [Revealing the Sorrow to the Scholars of the Nation] (Riyadh: Dar al-Hikma, 1991), 7. For more on the Sahwist criticism, see Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent,* 67ff.

[31] al-Hawali, *kashf al-ghumma*, 21 and passim; al-Hawali, quoted in Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Western Dominance and Political Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 86.

[32] For details of the Sahwa's programme of domestic reform, see Lacroix, 'Les champs de la discorde', 410ff.

arguably more important as an identity marker than a driving force. However, pan-Islamists in the Arab world saw the conflict in simplistic terms as a war of aggression by Christian Serbs against oppressed Muslims. Thus the 'Bosnian jihad' became the first major pan-Islamic battleground after the Afghan jihad and the new destination of choice for large numbers of Arab volunteer fighters. As such, it was also the first opportunity for the Saudi state to regain some of the pan-Islamist credibility lost in the Gulf crisis.

However, Bosnia was not an easy place to mount an international jihad effort. For a start, the international community no longer welcomed the participation of Arab Islamists, who had acquired a bad reputation in early 1990s Egypt and Algeria. Moreover, Bosnian Muslims were more secular and less connected with the Arab world than the Afghans and Pakistanis. In addition, there was no neighbouring country to provide strategic depth for the jihad effort, as Pakistan had done for Afghanistan. Finally, while Afghanistan had been a 'free zone' ungoverned by the minutiae of international law, the Bosnian conflict was handled from an early stage within a UN framework and eventually with NATO involvement. All these factors restricted the ability of foreign jihadists to establish a sizeable infrastructure in Bosnia, and limited the range of support that the Saudi government could extend to the Bosnians.

Inside Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, there was ample opportunity for private recruitment and fundraising for Bosnia. The regime was blowing the pan-Islamist trumpet more than perhaps ever before, because it was facing both international and domestic competition over the championship of pan-Islamic causes.

At home, the Sahwa was questioning the regime's pan-Islamic credentials and presenting itself as a more legitimate and sincere defender of the Land of the Two Sanctuaries. The Sahwa was a very vocal supporter of the Bosnian jihad. In the summer of 1993, Sahwist scholars signed a collective statement which implicitly denounced the government for not providing enough support for the Bosnian cause.[33]

Internationally, countries like Sudan and Iran were also trying to exploit the Bosnian crisis for regional political gain. In April 1991, following the Gulf war, the Sudanese Islamist Hasan al-Turabi created the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC) as a countermovement to the OIC, which he accused of representing the 'Islam of the Wealthy'. The PAIC was quick to declare support for the Bosnian Muslims, and Sudan's open-door policy for Arabs allowed militant Islamist networks

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[33] *al-Jazira al-Arabiya*, no. 31 (August 1993): 9, cited in Stéphane Lacroix, 'Les islamistes saoudiens', unpublished book manuscript.

to run operations in Bosnia from Sudan. Iran had long-standing links with Bosnian political leaders and was the first Muslim state to provide substantial material support for Bosnia. In the mid-1990s, a war of words erupted between Saudi Arabia and Iran over who provided the most aid to Bosnia. According to one Saudi official, Tehran had 'the loudest mouth' but did not contribute nearly as much money to the Muslim cause as Riyadh.[34]

The official Saudi support for the Bosnian cause followed a tried and tested pattern. Saudi Arabia used the OIC to rally support for the Bosnian cause, and to push for UN sanctions against Serbia and a lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia. The kingdom also urged its American ally to get more directly involved in the defence of the Muslims in Bosnia. The next step was the establishment of a fundraising committee chaired by Prince Salman. On 5 June 1992, the government set up the 'High Committee for Fundraising to the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina' which incorporated a number of local branches known as 'People's Committees'.[35]

The Saudi government also ran a sustained media campaign to raise funds and public awareness about Bosnia. The Saudi Ministry of Information organised trips for Saudi journalists to Sarajevo, as well as a series of extensively advertised telethons featuring senior religious figures and members of the royal family. Many of the symbolic displays of Islamic solidarity used during the Afghan jihad were repeated. The kingdom sponsored pilgrimage travel and organised Id celebrations for Bosnian Muslims, just as it had done for Afghan refugees during the 1980s. In 1993, the President of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ali Izetbegovich, was awarded the King Faisal International Prize for service to Islam, just as Abd (Rabb) al-Rasul Sayyaf had been in 1985. Several Saudis and veteran expatriates interviewed by this author have insisted that

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[34] For more on the PAIC, see Abdullahi A. Gallab, *The First Islamist Republic: Development and Disintegration of Islamism in the Sudan* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 125–6. For Iranian and Saudi funding, see Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan–Bosnian Network* (London: Berg, 2004), 45; John Pomfret, 'How Bosnia's Muslims Dodged the Arms Embargo', *Washington Post*, 22 September 1996; Ann Devroy, 'Internal US Probe Faults Policy on Bosnian Arms', *Washington Post*, 16 April 1996; Michael Dobbs, 'Saudis Funded Weapons for Bosnia, Official Says', *Washington Post*, 2 February 1996.

[35] Selim, ed., *The Organisation of the Islamic Conference*, 121–3; Dobbs, 'Saudis Funded Weapons'; Ziyad Salih al-Hadhlul and Muhammad Abdallah al-Humaydhi, *al-qissa al-kamila li'l-dawr al-sa'udi fi'l-busna wa'l-harsak* [The Full Story of the Saudi Role in Bosnia-Herzegovina] (Riyadh: Al-Homaidhi Printing Press, 1998), 165–95; *ukhuwwat al-islam: al-mamlaka al-'arabiyya al-sa'udiyya wa muslimu al-busna wa'l-harsak* [Brotherhood of Islam: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina], (London: Al-Hani International Books, 1993), 29.

the Bosnian jihad was even more visible in the public sphere than the Afghan jihad had been in the 1980s.[36]

A good measure of the scope and impact of the media campaign is the amount of money raised for the Bosnian cause. By its own figures, the High Commission had collected an astonishing SAR 1.4 billion (US$373 million) from public and private donors between 1992 and 1997. No other international cause has ever solicited a similar level of popular Saudi donations in such a short space of time. By comparison, Saudi donations to the Popular Committee for Palestine during the entire fourteen-year period from 1978 to 1991 amounted to a 'mere' SAR 850 million (US$227 million). The bidding game between the state and the Sahwa had brought popular pan-Islamist fervour to unprecedented heights. As a former Arab fighter in Bosnia later said, 'all of Saudi Arabia, starting with the government, the religious scholars, and the ordinary people, was on the side of driving the youths towards jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina.'[37]

The level and nature of the material government support for Bosnia are difficult to assess because, as in Afghanistan, there was not always a clear division between state and private actors. There is evidence that the Saudi state provided direct military assistance to the Bosnian authorities. In February 1996, the *Washington Post* cited high-level Saudi sources as saying that the Saudi government had funded a US$300 million covert operation to channel weapons to Bosnia with the knowledge and tacit cooperation of the United States.[38]

However, most of the Saudi military assistance went to the Bosnian army, not to the foreign fighters. Moreover, the Saudi government took a number of measures in 1993 to keep the financial support for the Bosnian jihad under state supervision. It imposed restrictions on overseas wire transfers and closed the Jidda office of the Islamic Benevolence Committee (IBC), a self-declared charity which operated as the 'Services Bureau' of the Arab fighters in Bosnia. As a result, the Saudi state found itself under frequent criticism from the jihadist community for

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[36] al-Hadhlul and al-Humaydhi, *al-qissa al-kamila*, 391; author's interviews with various Saudis and Western expatriates, Riyadh, January 2007.

[37] al-Hadhlul and al-Humaydhi, *al-qissa al-kamila*, 185; 'The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Economic and Social Development Aid'; *al-Quds al-Arabi,* 2 April 2005. The Saudi figures are credible because a 2003 German Police Investigation documented that Prince Salman transferred a total of over US$120 million to the Austrian bank account of the Third World Relief Agency between July 1992 and November 1995; see Federal Office of Criminal Investigation, *Expert Report Concerning the Area Financial Investigation*, 28 August 2003 (available at www.nytimes.com).

[38] Dobbs, 'Saudis Funded Weapons'; Irwin Molotsky, 'US Linked to Saudi Aid for Bosnians', *New York Times*, 2 February 1996; Stephen Engelberg, 'US Denies Aiding Saudis in Arming the Bosnians', *New York Times*, 3 February 1996.

not doing enough for Bosnia. The Arabs in Bosnia themselves lambasted the kingdom for not supporting the Arab mujahidin and for channelling funds to international agencies or shared reconstruction projects instead. Usama bin Ladin issued a special statement in August 1995 complaining about government restrictions on private support for the Bosnian jihad.[39]

In order to fend off criticism from the Islamist community, the government did its best to publicise its contributions to the Bosnian cause. In 1998, for example, it sponsored the publication of a 740-page book entitled *The Full Story of the Saudi Role in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. This expensively bound work listed the contributions of the Saudi government, particularly the royal family, to the Bosnian jihad. However, the Saudi government's public displays of pan-Islamic solidarity did not impress the jihadists. In his 1995 statement, Usama bin Ladin quite accurately observed that 'the King is attempting to escape from the internal facts by drawing attention away from his problems to those going on outside the country. He is creating a diversion, tickling the nation's emotions by raising the slogan of the support for Bosnia Herzegovina.'[40]

The increasing restrictions on private support for the Arab mujahidin in Bosnia were part of a gradual re-evaluation of government policy towards the jihadist community which would culminate in a clean break in late 1995. In the early 1990s, the regime had begun to realise that jihadists were uncontrollable and represented a threat to international and domestic stability. Atrocities in Algeria, Egypt and Bosnia as well as the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center in New York had illustrated the threat posed by the so-called Arab Afghans. Moreover, the Saudi government strongly resented the fact that many of the biggest recipients of Saudi financial support over the years, such as Palestinian and Afghan Islamists, publicly criticised the kingdom for its handling of the Gulf crisis in 1990.

The Saudi government's strategy was to promote pan-Islamism for political purposes while trying to keep the Saudi assistance to Bosnia under state control. The problem was that the state's hands were tied by the arms embargo and the reluctance of the international community to intervene. With no official military option on the table, the state

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[39] Steve Coll and Steve LeVine, 'Global Network Provides Money, Haven', *Washington Post*, 3 August 1993; Sam Roe, Laurie Cohen and Stephen Franklin, 'How Saudi Wealth Fuelled Holy War', *Chicago Tribune*, 22 February 2004; 'Interview with Sheikh al-Mujahideen Abu Abdel Aziz', *al-Sirat al-Mustaqeem*, no. 33 (1994); Usama bin Ladin, '*ma'sat al-busna wa khida' khadim al-haramayn* [The Bosnia Tragedy and the Treason of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques]' (Statement no. 18 from the Advice and Reform Committee, 1995).

[40] al-Hadhlul and al-Humaydhi, *al-qissa al-kamila*; Bin Ladin, '*ma'sat al-busna*'.

found itself caught between its own lofty promises and the demands of the Islamist community.

The rise of pan-Islamism in the 1980s and early 1990s created a very beneficial political opportunity structure for actors seeking to mobilise Saudis to jihadist activism abroad. Classical jihadism became socially accepted in the kingdom, not as a result of Wahhabism or an inherent Saudi radicalism, but rather of historically specific political processes. State populism and bidding games led to growing popular support for militarised pan-Islamism, which in turn produced a political climate where participation in resistance struggles abroad came to be considered as altruism. Herein lies the key to understanding Saudi Arabia's historically ambiguous relationship with Islamist violence, a relationship which at times produced what Daniel Byman and others would call 'passive sponsorship of terrorism'.[41]

Despite the end of direct official support for jihadist causes in the mid-1990s, private support for such causes continued. Pan-Islamism could not be ruled out by decree – it would remain a very strong force in Saudi politics for years to come. As a result, the state's ability to crack down on jihadist support networks in the kingdom would remain restricted. For example, authorities could not easily arrest people involved in fundraising for Chechnya in the late 1990s, because most Saudis viewed this sort of activity as charity, not terrorism. After 9/11 this reluctance would become a major source of friction between the United States and Saudi Arabia. It was not until after the outbreak of the QAP campaign in 2003 that the Saudi regime dared take measures that ran counter to pan-Islamist sentiment. However, by that time, the Saudi jihadist movement had exploited the beneficial opportunity structure to grow remarkably strong.[42]

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[41] Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 223–8.

[42] Gawdat Bahgat, 'Saudi Arabia and the War on Terrorism', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2004): 51–63; F. Gregory Gause, 'Saudi Arabia and the War on Terrorism', in *A Practical Guide to Winning the War on Terrorism*, ed. Adam Garfinkel (Stanford: Hoover Press, 2004), 94–100; Roger Hardy, 'Ambivalent Ally: Saudi Arabia and the "War on Terror"', in *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Arabia's Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 99–112.

2   The classical jihadists

> When I wrote this text, it did not cross my mind that it might bring about such a great revolution, so that our numbers would increase close to tenfold.
>
> <div align="right">Abdallah Azzam, preface to the
2nd edition of Join the Caravan, 1988</div>

One of the most remarkable aspects about the Saudi jihadist movement was the speed at which it formed. In the early 1980s, there was no sizeable community of militant Sunni Islamists in the kingdom. Juhayman and his rebels had represented a small and exceptional phenomenon in the Saudi political landscape. By the mid-1990s, there were thousands of Saudi veterans of the Afghan, Bosnian and Chechen battlefronts. How did this mobilisation come about?

Afghanistan, cradle of the jihadist movement

The Saudi jihadist movement was born in Afghanistan in the 1980s. It was here that the personal connections, organisational structures and internal culture that would later shape its evolution were created. But why and how exactly did Arabs get involved? Clearly it was not an automatic response to the Soviet invasion, because Arabs had not volunteered for other conflict zones in the past and did not go to Afghanistan in significant numbers until the mid- to late 1980s.

Interestingly, many Islamists and officials today contend that the Arab mobilisation for Afghanistan was massive and immediate; that thousands of volunteer fighters travelled for Afghanistan within months of the invasion. This is in stark contrast to the historical evidence from the early 1980s, which strongly suggests only a few tens of fighters made it to Afghanistan before 1984. It would seem that the collective Muslim memory of the Afghan jihad has been retroactively constructed to fit the idealised notion of a spontaneous rise of the Muslim nation. For state officials, this myth has the additional benefit of exonerating governments from responsibility for the Arab Afghan phenomenon. In

reality, Arabs did not rise at once to liberate Afghanistan; their involvement came about in a much less romantic fashion.[1]

The story of the Arab mobilisation for Afghanistan began in November 1980, when the Supreme Guide of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) dispatched an envoy named Kamal al-Sananiri, a brother-in-law of Sayyid Qutb, on a forty-day trip to Pakistan to assess the state of the Afghan jihad and consider the scope for involvement. In this period, part of the Muslim Brotherhood was promoting a pan-Islamist agenda, and the Egyptian branch had long-standing connections with Afghan Islamists who had studied in Cairo's famous al-Azhar University. Around September 1981, on the way home to Egypt to bring his family to Pakistan, al-Sananiri stopped over in Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage. In Mecca, he stumbled upon a Jordanian-Palestinian friend and fellow Muslim Brother named Abdallah Azzam. Al-Sananiri told Azzam about the situation in Afghanistan and convinced the latter to travel with him to Islamabad once he had picked up his family in Egypt. However, September 1981 was not a good time to be an Islamist in Egypt. Al-Sananiri was caught in the massive police crackdown which struck the Islamist community that month and allegedly died from torture in prison. However, Azzam kept his part of the deal and travelled to Islamabad on his own in late 1981. Abdallah Azzam would become the single most important individual behind the mobilisation of Arab volunteers for Afghanistan.[2]

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[1] In an October 1983 interview, the Afghan commander Abd Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf said of the Arab presence: 'If we consider the participation of two or three [Arabs] a year, then maybe they are participating; and if we do not take this number into consideration, then they are not participating', see *Majallat al-Da'wa*, 19 October 1983. In 1984, Abdallah Azzam wrote: 'no more than a tiny negligible number of non-Afghans have entered the battlefield. As for those who have continued into battle, they are fewer than the fingers of two hands.' See Azzam, *ayat al-rahman*, 185. Saudi officials have claimed, based on an alleged count of exit visas, that around 1,000 Saudis travelled to Pakistan in 1980 (see Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom*, chapter 13). However, this figure means little until we know how many Saudis used to go to Pakistan before the invasion, and how many of the 1,000 were fighters, as opposed to humanitarian workers and preachers. In researching this book I collected all the names of Saudi volunteer fighters from the 1980s I could find – 113 in total – and only a tiny fraction of these went before 1984. There is no reason why the earliest fighters should simply disappear from the historical record – if anything they should be more visible because they were pioneers.

[2] Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 39; Ayman al-Zawahiri, '*fursan taht rayat al-nabi* [Knights under the Prophet's Banner]', *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2–12 December 2001; author's interview with Hudhayfa Azzam, Amman, September 2006. Kamal al-Sananiri was married to Sayyid Qutb's sister Amina. He had been arrested in Nasser's crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in 1954 and spent the following twenty years in prison; see John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (London: Hurst, forthcoming), conclusion.

The chance encounter between Azzam and al-Sananiri may consti-
tute one of history's great accidents, but it also illustrates the crucial role
of Muslim Brotherhood networks in the Arab mobilisation for Afghani-
stan. Muslim Brothers served as the main interface between the Arab
world and the Afghan mujahidin in the early 1980s. For example, in
1983, when Afghan mujahidin leaders, having failed to agree on the
leadership of a political union, delegated the appointment of a leader to
a committee of seventeen Arab scholars, the majority of the committee
members were MB figures. The Brotherhood also exercised influence
through the international Islamic organisations such as the Muslim
World League, where they were well represented owing to the influx
to the Hijaz of Egyptian and Syrian Muslim Brothers fleeing persecu-
tion in the 1950s and 1960s. The MWL was present in Pakistan from
1981 onward and would come to play an important role in the mobilisa-
tion. Perhaps most telling of all is the fact that the MWL paid Abdal-
lah Azzam's salary at the International Islamic University in Islamabad
from his arrival in 1981 until he left the position in 1986.[3]

The first Saudi involvement in Afghanistan came through the MWL
and the MB. Because the Muslim Brotherhood influence in Saudi Ara-
bia was greatest in the Hijaz, and especially in Medina, the mobilisation
for Afghanistan started here. The first 'Saudi Afghans' were aid work-
ers from the Saudi Red Crescent and the Saudi Relief Committee who
went in 1980. Then, in 1981, began the arrival of envoys of the Muslim
World League in Jidda and students and staff from the University of
Medina. Afghan mujahidin leaders – especially Abd (Rabb) al-Rasul
Sayyaf – would stay in the region and socialise there during their vis-
its to the kingdom. However, the Saudis who went between 1981 and
1984 were mostly aid workers and administrators. The military involve-
ment came later and was above all the result of the entrepreneurship of
Abdallah Azzam.[4]

The Palestinian-born and al-Azhar-trained sheikh Abdallah Azzam
had risen to prominence in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood in the
1970s, acquiring the nickname of 'the Sayyid Qutb of Jordan'. After los-
ing his university post for political reasons in early 1981, he emigrated
to Saudi Arabia, where he took up a position at King Abd al-Aziz Uni-
versity in Jidda the same spring. However, only half a year later he met

[3] Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*; Muhammad al-Majdhub, *ma' al-mujahidin wa'l-
muhajirin fi bakistan* [With the Mujahidin and the Emigrants in Pakistan], 1st edn
(Medina: Nadi al-Madina al-Munawwara al-Adabi, 1984); author's interview with
Jamal Isma'il, Islamabad, March 2008; Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam
and the West* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2004), 174–6.
[4] Author's interview with Yusuf al-Dayni; al-Jasir, *'qissat al-afghan al-sa'udiyyin'*, 20.

al-Sananiri and towards the end of the year he was on a plane to Islama-
bad, where he would take up a job at the newly founded International
Islamic University with a salary from the Muslim World League. Over
the following three years, Azzam divided his time between his teaching
duties, inter-Afghan diplomacy in Peshawar and international aware-
ness-raising for the Afghan jihad. Azzam paid particular attention to
Saudi Arabia and held numerous talks in the Hijaz in the early 1980s.[5]

   In May 1982, Azzam published his first article about the Afghan jihad
in the MB journal *al-Mujtama'*. He later collected his journal articles in
a book, *Signs of the Merciful in the Afghan Jihad*, which presented stories
on the so-called *karamat* – the miracles which occur when the *mujahid*
falls a martyr. *Signs of the Merciful* became so popular and influential
in the Arab world that it would be printed in more than ten editions
over the next decade. In 1984, Azzam wrote *The Defence of Muslim
Lands*, in which he famously argued that the jihad in Afghanistan is
an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*) for all Muslims. These two books had
an enormous influence on the mobilisation of Arabs for Afghanistan.
As Basil Muhammad, the main historiographer of the Arab Afghans,
later noted: 'Two things mobilised Muslim public opinion for Afghani-
stan: the *karamat* and the fatwas on jihad in Afghanistan.'[6]

   Azzam's fatwa on jihad in Afghanistan was far from uncontrover-
sial. The mainstream position of religious scholars at the time was that
jihad was only an individual duty for the Afghans, not for all Muslims.
In addition to the Saudi scholars mentioned in the previous chapter,
prominent international figures remained sceptical. Sheikh Yusuf al-
Qaradawi argued that it was enough to support the Afghans materially.
Hasan al-Turabi practically ridiculed Azzam, saying the latter's fatwa
implied that all Islamic movements should assemble in Afghanistan,
which would make them vulnerable and weaken struggles against infi-
dels elsewhere in the world. As Azzam himself later said, 'I distributed
it, and some were angry, some were pleased, some reproved. Our broth-
ers scolded us and sent a storm in our face, saying "you are urging

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[5] Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 45; Abu Mujahid, *al-shahid 'abdallah 'azzam bayna al-
milad wa'l-istishhad* [The Martyr Abdallah Azzam from Birth to Martyrdom] (Pesha-
war: Markaz al-Shahid Azzam al-Ilami, 1991); author's interview with Hudhayfa
Azzam and Jamal Isma'il.

[6] Abdallah Azzam, *'ayat wa basha'ir wa karamat fi'l-jihad al-afghani* [Signs and Tidings
and Miracles in the Afghan Jihad]', *Al-Mujtama'*, no. 569 (1982); Azzam, *ayat al-rah-
man*; Abdallah Azzam, *al-difa' 'an aradi al-muslimin* [The Defence of Muslim Lands]
(Amman: Maktabat al-Risala al-Haditha, 1987); Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 73.
The earliest physical copies of *Signs of the Merciful* and *Defence of Muslim Lands* located
by this author are dated 1985 and 1987 respectively. It is Basil Muhammad who cred-
ibly argues (in *al-ansar al-'arab*) that the works were first written in 1983 and 1984
respectively.

the youth to rebel against us".' However, as the mobilisation gained momentum and the tide of the war turned in favour of the mujahidin, more scholars adopted Azzam's position.[7]

Abdallah Azzam's doctrine was controversial because it broke with the predominant conceptions of jihad of both mainstream clerics and most extremist groups at the time. Azzam essentially advocated universal private military participation in any territorial struggle pitting Muslims versus non-Muslims. All Muslims, Azzam argued, had a duty to fight for all occupied Muslim territories. This unsettled mainstream clerics, who argued that only the populations most concerned had a duty to fight in territorial struggles such as the Afghan jihad. More importantly, Azzam's agenda differed from that of most militant Islamists at the time, who were either involved in revolutionary struggles against local regimes, such as in Egypt and Syria, or in territorial struggles against a local occupier, such as in Palestine. The territorial focus of Azzam's doctrine set it apart from the socio-revolutionaries, while his pan-Islamist vision differed from that of the irredentists. As such, Azzam's classical jihadist doctrine represented no less than a paradigmatic shift in the history of radical Islamist thought.

The combined effect of the increased involvement of the Islamic organisations, Sayyaf's frequent visits to Saudi Arabia and Azzam's advocacy was increased Arab interest in Afghanistan. From late 1983 onwards, the flow of Arab volunteer fighters increased, albeit still only at a rate of a handful of people a month. In early 1984, a group of about ten to twenty young Arabs resided in Peshawar, and the first steps towards coordinating a specific Arab effort were taken. In February 1984, a group of Arabs were allowed to train in the Sayyaf-controlled Badr camp near the village of Babi on the Afghan–Pakistani border. The Badr camp had allegedly been paid for by a Saudi businessman who had wanted 'a Badr brigade of 313 men educated about Islam'. This was the beginning of the development of a training infrastructure specifically for Arab volunteers.[8]

Among the people who arrived in 1984 was Usama bin Ladin, the 27-year old son of the Saudi–Yemeni construction mogul Muhammad bin Ladin. Usama had politicised in late 1970s Jidda under the influence of a high-school teacher who was also a Syrian Muslim Brother. Despite the considerable literature on Bin Ladin, we do not yet know

[7] *al-Jihad*, no. 5 (21 April 1985): 21; *al-Jihad*, no. 37 (December 1987): 12; Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 74, 76, 89. For post-1986 scholarly endorsements of Azzam's view, see for e.g. *al-Jihad*, no. 22 (September 1986): 32 and al-Jihad, no. 40 (March 1988): 18.

[8] Abdallah Anas said there were twelve Arabs in Peshawar when he arrived in late 1983; Abdallah Anas, *wiladat al-afghan al-'arab* [The Birth of the Afghan Arabs] (London: Saqi, 2002), 19.

exactly what made him invest himself so much in the Afghan cause. Abdallah Azzam is likely to have exercised considerable influence, either in 1981 when their paths crossed at the university in Jidda or at some of Azzam's Afghanistan rallies in Jidda in 1982 and 1983. Whatever the precise reasons, Bin Ladin would come to play a crucial role in the early mobilisation for Afghanistan as the main sponsor of Azzam's Services Bureau (*maktab al-khidmat*), established in October 1984.[9]

Azzam had a triple motivation for setting up the Services Bureau at this particular point in time. First, he had grown tired of mediating between bickering Afghan mujahidin leaders; second, he had grown frustrated and eventually broke with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, which focused on relief work and refused to recruit fighters for Afghanistan; and finally, he felt a responsibility to accommodate the growing numbers of Arabs who were showing up in Peshawar.[10]

The foundation of the Services Bureau was a turning point in the Arab involvement in the Afghan jihad because it provided a basis for a much more systematic approach to mobilisation. It streamlined the entire chain from international fundraising and recruitment, via the accommodation of volunteers arriving in Pakistan, to the personnel deployment and weapons distribution inside Afghanistan. The SB placed great emphasis on media activities, such as the publication of the magazine *al-Jihad* and the production of propaganda videos, all of which greatly improved the awareness of the Afghan jihad in the Muslim world from 1985 onward. The Services Bureau was not simply a paramilitary logistics office, it also had a humanitarian mission. In fact, much if not most of its activities in Peshawar consisted of providing healthcare, food and education to Afghan refugees, especially orphans. The Bureau's fundamentally ambiguous portfolio was less an attempt at concealing military work than a reflection of the fact that classical jihadists saw no distinction between humanitarian and military assistance to oppressed Muslims.[11]

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[9] For more on Usama's pre-Afghanistan politicisation and his presumed 1981 contacts with Azzam, see Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 198–212 and 245–60 and Randal, *Osama*, 57–67; Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 88. New evidence suggests Bin Ladin may have met Azzam in the United States in 1979; Najwa bin Laden *et al.*, *Growing Up bin Laden* (New York: St Martin's, 2009), 25.

[10] Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 83–4.

[11] Author's interview with Abu Abdallah al-Balkhi, Amman, May 2008, and with Hudhayfa Azzam and Jamal Isma'il. The first issue of *al-Jihad* came out in December 1984. The magazine was published in over sixty issues. The SB's film producer Abu Umran produced three videos called *Tushawni* 1, *Tushawni* 2 and *Reflection of Jihad* (*mira'at al-jihad*); Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 194. For more on the *al-Jihad* magazine and the other Arab media in Peshawar, see Ahmad Muaffaq Zaidan, *The 'Afghan Arabs' Media at Jihad* (Islamabad: ABC Printers, 1999).

The Services Bureau also helped draw real Islamic charities into the military effort. One strategy consisted of having key SB-affiliated individuals appointed as representatives of the Islamic organisations in Peshawar. Thus in 1985, Jamal Khalifa and Wa'il Julaydan, both close friends of Bin Ladin and active SB members, were appointed Peshawar representatives of the MWL and the Saudi Red Crescent respectively. Another strategy consisted of cajoling Arab charities and organisations in Peshawar to extend logistical support to the SB, thus drawing the former into the war effort. Usama bin Ladin also used his family connections to muster resources for the Services Bureau. In addition to spending his own yearly allowance, which amounted to around US$300,000 a year, he convinced his less religious brothers to help him procure weapons and transport-construction equipment from Saudi Arabia for Afghanistan.[12]

Early Saudi recruitment was slow. In late 1984, there were only a handful of Saudis in the Jordanian-dominated Arab community in Peshawar, and none of them were based there permanently. Basil Muhammad's history of the Afghan jihad only mentions some sixteen Saudi fighters who had been to Afghanistan prior to 1985. It was only in 1985 that the recruitment of Saudi volunteer fighters slowly began to pick up, but the permanent Saudi contingent would not exceed fifty people until early 1987. In 1985 and 1986, the Saudi recruitment effort was led by Usama bin Ladin personally. He would give talks in Jidda and Medina, distribute the writings of Abdallah Azzam and advertise the latter's visits to the kingdom. He urged his friends and acquaintances to go to Afghanistan, and offered to pay their expenses. Partly as a result of Bin Ladin's efforts, the majority of the Saudis who went to Afghanistan in this period were from Medina and Jidda. Many of them, such as Wa'il Julaydan and Musa al-Qarni, came from Muslim Brotherhood-leaning circles.[13]

After Bin Ladin finally settled in Pakistan in March 1986, he began seeking a degree of independence from Abdallah Azzam and the Services Bureau. In October 1986, after a battle at Jaji had convinced him of the Arabs' desperate need for training, he founded a separate camp in Afghanistan which would later become known as the Lion's Den (*al-ma'sada*). This inspired him to step up his recruitment efforts in Saudi Arabia considerably. From November 1986 to May 1987, Bin Ladin went on at least five trips to the kingdom, each time bringing back

[12] Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 140, 165–6, 193, 198; Coll, *The Bin Ladens*, 284–96.
[13] Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 85–6, 119; al-Jasir, '*qissat al-afghan al-sa'udiyyin*', 20; Lacroix, 'Les champs de la discorde', 312–14.

between ten and thirty new volunteers, primarily from Medina. He also dispatched his friends on recruitment missions to different parts of the kingdom: for example, Abd al-Rahman al-Surayhi was sent to Jidda, Tamim al-Adnani to the Eastern Province and a certain Abu Hanifa to Ta'if.[14]

In mid-1987, the flow of volunteers from Saudi Arabia began to pick up significantly, and more volunteers came from other parts of the kingdom than the Hijaz. This increase was above all the result of more publicity. The Arab media industry in Peshawar was growing, and an increasing number of jihadist magazines were sold in Saudi Arabia. Abdallah Azzam also continued to write influential treatises such as the very popular *Join the Caravan* (1987). Moreover, the mainstream Saudi press began to write more about the Afghan Arabs from 1986 onward. Bin Ladin and Azzam actively encouraged and facilitated the visit of Saudi journalists such as Jamal Khashoggi to Afghanistan. From 1986 onward the MWL-sponsored magazines such as *al-Rabita* and *Akhbar al-Alam al-Islami* began highlighting the Saudi participation, implicitly encouraging others to follow suit. In April 1987, for example, *al-Rabita* proudly declared on its front page that 'Most of the Martyrs are Saudis', and in May 1988 it republished biographies of Arab martyrs from *al-Jihad* magazine.[15]

Another factor was the natural network effect of the arrival of Saudi volunteer fighters from 1984 onward. Each new person could potentially inspire many more people in his family, social circle, school or neighbourhood to go. Mid-1987 seems to have represented the tipping point of the mobilisation, after which recruitment transcended personal social networks and reached most parts of the country. At this point, Bin Ladin scaled down his recruitment efforts in Saudi Arabia, as they were no longer needed. Saudi jihadism had effectively become a social movement.

The best indication that the jihadist movement had acquired a momentum of its own in the late 1980s was that it continued to drive

[14] Muhammad, *al-ansar al-'arab*, 184, 214, 216, 243, 305; *al-Jihad*, no. 50 (December 1988): 33; *al-Jihad*, no. 53 (April 1989): 36.

[15] Hasin al-Binayyan, '*aqdam al-afghan al-'arab al-sa'udiyyin: shahadtu milad al-qa'ida, fikrat al-tanzim misriyya* [The Oldest of the Saudi Afghan Arabs: I Witnessed the Birth of al-Qaida; it was an Egyptian Idea]', *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 21 November 2001; Zaidan, *The 'Afghan Arabs' Media at Jihad*; *al-Jihad*, no. 53; Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 50ff; Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet*, 3; Jamal Khashoggi, 'Arab Youths Fight Shoulder to Shoulder with Mujahideen', *Arab News*, 4 May 1988; Jamal Khashoggi, 'Arab Mujahideen in Afghanistan-II: Masada Exemplifies the Unity of Islamic Ummah', *Arab News*, 14 May 1988; *al-Rabita,* no. 265 (April 1987) and *al-Rabita,* no. 278 (May 1988), 49–53.

people to Afghanistan long after the Soviet withdrawal in February 1989. There was a significant Arab presence in Peshawar and Afghanistan throughout the so-called Afghan civil war between the mujahidin and the communist regime of Najibullah. Only in April 1992, when the capture of Kabul by the mujahidin made the Arab presence in the area unnecessary and unwanted – particularly by the Pakistani authorities – did the era of the first Afghan jihad really come to a close.

Although many Arab volunteers, including Usama bin Ladin himself, returned to their home countries in 1989, guest houses and training camps remained open and continued to receive thousands of new volunteers in the period from 1989 to 1992. Most, though not all, of the Saudis who went in the 1989–92 period joined Jamil al-Rahman's 'Society for Da'wa to the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Hadith' in the remote north-eastern Afghan region of Kunar.[16]

Jamil al-Rahman was the pseudonym of an Afghan mujahidin leader named Maulavi Hussain who had broken with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami on ideological grounds in 1985. Around 1986 he set up an independent organisation in Kunar with the encouragement and financial support of conservative Saudi and Kuwaiti businessmen. This organisation drew many Saudis because it was rigidly salafi and thus enjoyed the backing of the official Saudi ulama. Saudi sheikhs considered Jamil al-Rahman's group more doctrinally pure than the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Services Bureau or the revolutionary Egyptian and Jordanian factions in Peshawar. Jamil al-Rahman had studied with Ahl-e-Hadith in Pakistan, and his 'Society for Da'wa' had a stronger focus on social and ritual issues than other factions. They engaged in violent enforcement of the Wahhabi ban on grave worship and other local practices considered religious innovations (*bid'a*). Al-Rahman's group had extensive contacts in Saudi Arabia and published a magazine in Peshawar called *al-Mujahid*, which was even more widely available in the kingdom than Azzam's *al-Jihad* magazine. The flow of Saudis slowed down after the assassination of Jamil al-Rahman in 1991 and all but ceased after the fall of Kabul in 1992.[17]

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[16] The Society for Da'wa had very close links with the Pakistani Islamist organisation Markaz al-Da'wa wa'l-Irshad and its armed wing Lashkar-e Tayyiba. Some Arab fighters were involved in the training of Lashkar-e Tayyiba militias in Kunar in the early 1990s. See Mawlana Amir Hamza, *qafilat dawat jihad* (in Urdu) (Dar al-Andalus, 2004).

[17] Barnett R. Rubin, 'Arab Islamists in Afghanistan', in *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?*, ed. John Esposito (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 196–7; Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 118; Lacroix, 'Les champs de la discorde', 318–22. When this author consulted the King Sa'ud University Library in Riyadh in November 2005, the 1980s

There are no good figures for the total number of Saudis who went to Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s. Some writers have suggested numbers as high as 20,000. Estimates by former Afghan Arabs vary from a few thousand to 15,000. The Saudi Interior Ministry allegedly compiled a report in 1995 which estimated that 12,000 Saudis had gone to Afghanistan.[18] Whatever the total number, only a fraction had significant exposure to military training and combat. The majority of Saudis only went for a month or two during their summer holidays, and anecdotal evidence suggests that most of them were never involved in fighting. The jihadi literature indicates that only between 50 and 300 Saudis were killed during the Afghan war. However, even if the number of 'real' Saudi jihadists was in the low thousands – probably between 1,000 and 5,000 – it was still a remarkable figure, given the near-absence of a militant Islamist community in Saudi Arabia in the early 1980s. An entire movement had been created in the space of five years.[19]

The Afghan experience politicised the Saudi volunteers and exposed them to the heated debates in the ideological melting pot of Peshawar. The Pakistani border city was home to some of the most important socio-revolutionary groups and ideologues in the Muslim world at the time. By contrast, the Saudis who came to Peshawar in the 1980s had virtually no concept of violent anti-regime activism. Some Saudis were no doubt influenced by the revolutionary atmosphere and by the publication in 1989 of the book entitled *The Obvious Proofs of the Saudi State's Impiety* by the Peshawar-based and Saudi-trained Jordanian ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. *The Obvious Proofs* represented the first socio-revolutionary treatise articulated in Wahhabi religious discourse and was thus particularly flammable in the kingdom. For this reason, the Saudi government has long considered al-Maqdisi as one of its arch-enemies. However, the 'takfiri influence' of Peshawar on Saudi Islamism should not be exaggerated. The vast majority of Saudis returned from Afghanistan as classical jihadists with no intentions of fighting the Saudi regime.[20]

jihadist magazines were still on the shelf. Issues of *al-Jihad* were available in one copy, while issues of *al-Mujahid* were available in ten copies each.

[18] al-Jasir, '*qissat al-afghan al-saʿudiyyin*'; Akram Hijazi, '*rihla fi samim ʿaql al-salafiyya al-jihadiyya* [A Journey Through the Mind of Salafi Jihadism]', *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 29 August 2006; Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, 41–2; Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet*, 2–3; James Bruce, 'Arab Veterans of the Afghan War', *Jane's Intelligence Review* 7, no. 4 (1995); Anthony Cordesman, *Islamic Extremism in Saudi Arabia and the Attack on al-Khobar* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2001), 4.

[19] al-Jasir, '*qissat al-afghan al-saʿudiyyin*', 23; Randal, *Osama*, 76. This author has collected the names and basic biographies of forty-three Saudis who died in Afghanistan before 1992.

[20] Mishari al-Dhaidi, '*matbakh bishawar wa tabkhat gharnata* [The Peshawar Kitchen and the Grenada Cooking]', *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 15 May 2003; Abu Muhammad

On the other hand, the overall importance of the Afghan experience on the evolution of the jihadist movement cannot be overestimated. The Afghan jihad produced a discourse, mythology and symbolic universe which shaped militant Islamist activism in the 1990s and continue to do so today. Moreover, key elements of the mobilisation structures and recruitment mechanisms from the Afghan jihad were reproduced in subsequent contexts, as we shall see below. Most importantly, Afghanistan created reputations and forged social bonds which generated a cadre of professional jihadists. These individuals would become key entrepreneurs in the jihad zones of the 1990s, starting with Bosnia.[21]

Jihad in Bosnia, the anticlimax

Few would have guessed, much less the Arab Afghans themselves, that the next major jihad after Afghanistan would take place in a province of Yugoslavia. When the first Arab fighters arrived, they knew virtually nothing about the area. As one Saudi jihadist in Bosnia explained: 'we were unable to understand where Bosnia was, was it in America or in the southern hemisphere or in Asia? We had no idea where it was. When we found out that it is a part of Yugoslavia in Eastern Europe, we still had no idea of how many Muslims there were and we had no idea as to how and when Islam reached there.' Within six months of the first arrivals, hundreds of volunteer fighters from all over the Arab world were roaming the Bosnian hills in combat gear, and many were to follow.[22]

The Bosnian conflict erupted at a time when the rug was being pulled from under the Arab Afghans in Pakistan, and many militants needed a new place to go. The jihadist involvement in Bosnia began in late April or early May 1992, when a delegation of four prominent Afghan Arabs from Peshawar led by the Saudi Abd al-Rahman al-Dawsary (aka Abu Abd al-Aziz, aka 'Barbaros' after the sixteenth-century Ottoman admiral) linked up with the Italy-based Egyptian Sheikh Anwar Sha'ban and went on a joint expedition to Bosnia to check out the conditions for Arab involvement. The parties knew each other from Afghanistan and saw the excursion as mutually beneficial: Barbaros was seeking an alternative base to Peshawar, and Sha'ban aspired to the

al-Maqdisi, *al-kawashif al-jaliyya fi kufr al-dawla al-sa'udiyya* [The Obvious Proofs of the Saudi State's Impiety] (1989).
21 See e.g. Anthony Davis, 'Foreign Combatants in Afghanistan', *Jane's Intelligence Review* 5, no. 7 (1993); Gilles Kepel, 'Les stratégies islamistes de légitimation de la violence', *Raisons Politiques*, no. 9 (2003): 88; and Gilles Kepel, 'Terrorisme islamiste: De l'anticommunisme au jihad anti-américain', *Ramses* (2003): 45–6.
22 Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe*, 19.

role of the Abdallah Azzam of the Bosnian jihad. They liked what they saw, set up camp near Zenica and began mobilising their multinational Arab Afghan network. They spread the word of the need for mujahidin, and within weeks more Arab Afghans were on their way, and recruiters and fundraisers were at work across the Middle East.[23]

Sha'ban and Barbaros, probably with the Services Bureau model in mind, also moved quickly to get two crucial organisational components in place, namely a logistics unit and a cadre of elite instructors. At some point in the early summer of 1992, the charity known as the 'Islamic Benevolence Committee' (IBC) set up an office headed by a certain Enaam Arnaout in Zagreb in neighbouring Croatia. The IBC, also known as 'Benevolence International Foundation', effectively became the Services Bureau of the Bosnian jihad. According to Arnaout himself, the IBC sponsored volunteer fighters, met them at the airport, brought them into Bosnia and provided accommodation in IBC facilities. It also shipped weapons and military equipment into Bosnia, all under the cover of humanitarian work. The IBC also produced publications and videos aimed at raising funds from wealthy donors in the Gulf. Several other Islamic charities, such as the International Islamic Relief Organisation and Third World Relief Agency, would also extend services such as visas and fake ID cards to Arab combatants, but the IBC was the most significant actor. In 2005, a Bahraini former fighter detained in Bosnia named Ali Ahmad Ali Hamad revealed numerous details about the Saudi charities in Bosnia during the war. He notably said that the Haramayn Foundation and the Saudi High Commission for Refugee Affairs were largely staffed by Saudi veterans from Afghanistan. He also said the Saudi High Commission had supplied money, vehicles and healthcare to Arab fighters, and had used vehicles with diplomatic licence plates to transport wounded fighters. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees later noted that 'although the majority of these agencies were experienced and highly professional, others were not. Some had dubious links with the warring parties, fundamentalist groups, mercenaries, secret intelligence agencies, arms smugglers and black-marketeers.'[24]

The second key component, namely a military cadre, fell into place in the autumn of 1992 after a visit to Zagreb by Usama bin Ladin's envoy from Sudan, Jamal al-Fadl. Al-Fadl met with Barbaros, Enaam

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[23] See 'Interview with Sheikh al-Mujahideen Abu Abdel Aziz' and Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe*, 23.

[24] Evan F. Kohlmann, 'The Role of Islamic Charities in International Terrorist Recruitment and Financing', in *DIIS Working Paper* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2006), 6–10; *USA* v. *Enaam Arnaout – Government's Evidentiary*

Arnaout and Abu Zubayr al-Madani (a cousin of Bin Ladin) in Zagreb and agreed to send a joint recommendation that nine elite instructors from the Sada camp in Afghanistan be sent to Bosnia. This step was important, because it signalled to the Arab Afghan community that leading figures such as Usama bin Ladin were backing the Bosnian jihad effort.[25]

The first reports of Arab deaths in combat came in June 1992, and by September 1992 units of up to fifty Arabs were operational. By the end of 1992, some 500 foreign (mostly Arab) volunteers had gone to Bosnia. The flow of recruits continued, at least until mid-1993, when it seems to have slowed down somewhat. When the conflict ended in December 1995, at least 1,000 Arabs had fought in Bosnia.[26]

The mujahidin seem to have been divided, at least in the first half of the war, into two separate structures. On the one hand there was a well-organised and conventional unit known as the 'mujahidin battalion' which was incorporated into the Bosnian army, and on the other hand a smaller, looser constellation of groups involved in more improvised and controversial operations. The first group, which was considered the main unit for foreign volunteers, consisted of Egyptians, Algerians and a mixture of other nationalities. It seems to have counted around 500 men at the most. Its first amir was Barbaros, who was succeeded in 1993 by a certain Abu Mu'ali. The political and spiritual leader of the mujahidin brigade was Anwar Sha'ban. The second structure, which was commanded by the Saudi Abu al-Zubayr al-Ha'ili, was smaller and consisted of more experienced fighters. This structure was made up of small groups distributed in many areas, which would join forces when hot battles erupted. Some of the Arab units, particularly in al-Ha'ili's camp, evolved into incontrollable thuggish gangs who alienated most people in their path and tarnished the Arabs' reputation.[27]

Proffer (Northern District of Illinois, 2003); *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 25 February 2005 and 8 August 2006; Eric Lichtblau, 'Documents Back Saudi Link to Extremists', *New York Times*, 24 June 2009 (see also related source documents on www.nytimes.com); Mark Cutts, 'The Humanitarian Operation in Bosnia, 1992–95: Dilemmas of Negotiating Humanitarian Access', in *New Issues in Refugee Research* (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999), 24.

[25] *USA* v. *Usama bin Ladin et al* (District Court of Southern New York, 2001), 315–16.

[26] Milan Vego, 'The Army of Bosnia and Hercegovina', *Jane's Intelligence Review* 5, no. 2 (1993). Estimates of the total number of Arab fighters vary from 'between 500 and 1,000' (Bruce, 'Arab Veterans of the Afghan War') to as many as 6,000 (Stephen Schwartz, 'Wahhabism and al Qaeda in Bosnia Herzegovina', *Terrorism Monitor* 2, no. 20 (2004)).

[27] *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 24 March and 2 April 2005; 'Interview with Sheikh al-Mujahideen Abu Abdel Aziz'; 'Bin Laden and the Balkans' (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001), 11–12; Bruce, 'Arab Veterans of the Afghan War'.

Saudis were present in Bosnia from a very early stage. Some, like the pioneer Barbaros, came straight from Peshawar, while most came directly from the kingdom. In the battles involving Arabs in the autumn of 1992, the Saudis were clearly the majority group. Later in the war, the flow of Saudis seems to have abated somewhat. Saudis seem to have predominated in al-Ha'ili's ranks.

Barbaros played a key role in promoting the Bosnian cause in Saudi Arabia. In December 1992 he went on a major fundraising trip to the Middle East, touring Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. He was particularly active in his native country, giving lengthy interviews with the Saudi press and lecturing extensively. Recordings of his speeches circulated in the kingdom and elsewhere. A particularly popular audio cassette featured a discussion between Barbaros and the leading salafi sheikh Sheikh Nasir al-Din al-Albani recorded during a meeting in Amman.[28]

One of Barbaros' most important missions was to convince religious clerics that the situation in Bosnia was a legitimate jihad worthy of financial and military support. Barbaros and his fellow activists found many scholars willing to listen, given the pan-Islamist atmosphere in the kingdom at the time. As former jihadist Nasir al-Bahri later noted, 'there was no religious sheikh or preacher who did not talk about jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina and about the suffering of Muslims everywhere'. The scholars played a crucial role, not only because they established the religious legitimacy of the cause, but also because they constituted the main intermediary between the donors and the volunteers. When volunteers inquired about how to get to Bosnia, the same scholars could put them in touch with a donor or give them money from available funds. As the former militant Nasir al-Bahri explained:

I was equipped for my first jihad by a woman. She worked as a schoolteacher. She had heard about the tragedies that had befallen the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and wanted to contribute to their defence. She asked: What is the best thing I can contribute? The answer was: Equip a mujahid. She said: I will donate a full month's salary to equip a mujahid. It was equivalent to approximately $2,000. That sum was to equip me for my first jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina.[29]

Another important Saudi recruiter was a friend of Barbaros called Khalid al-Harbi (aka Abu Sulayman al-Makki), who had worked as a religious teacher in Mecca before becoming a renowned mujahid in Afghanistan. After visiting Bosnia in the early summer of 1992, al-Harbi

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[28] Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe*, 75; *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20 March 2005.
[29] *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20 March 2005.

returned to Saudi Arabia to bring more volunteers. As a former teacher and Arab Afghan, he had a vast network of contacts from which to draw recruits, particularly in his native Mecca and the rest of the Hijaz. Many of the first Saudis who went to Bosnia were therefore from Mecca and Jidda.[30]

The mobilisation of Saudis started well, but gradually slowed down. By 1995 it was clear that the Bosnian jihad had flopped. The international community was working against the Arabs, the Saudi government would not help them as much as they wanted, and the Bosnians seemed ungrateful and unobservant. By the time the Dayton accord was signed in December 1995, most of the Saudis had left Bosnia and returned to the kingdom. Some considered their mission completed and wanted to go back to their normal lives. Others simply stopped to 'refuel' on the way to new adventures. When asked where the Arab mujahidin went after the Bosnian jihad, Nasir al-Bahri said 'a group of them decided to head for the Philippines, while another group headed for Chechnya. I was with a third group that headed for Somalia. That is why they turned from one "meteor" into several "shooting stars".'[31]

Tajikistan, Chechnya and the minor jihad fronts

The Bosnian war was not the only conflict to attract Saudi jihadists in the first half of the 1990s. A number of armed conflicts evolved more or less in parallel, notably in Algeria, Somalia, the Philippines, Kashmir, Eritrea, Tajikistan and Chechnya. Saudi militants would get involved in all of these conflicts at one point or another, although to very varying degrees.

When the Afghan jihad came to an end in the spring of 1992, jihadists were looking for new arenas where they could fight in defence of the umma. Many of the activists were young and not very knowledgeable about international politics or foreign cultures, so the search for new battlefields often had an improvised element to it. In Peshawar rumours of many different jihad opportunities circulated, each of which enticed small delegations of adventurous individuals. After the fall of Kabul, some Saudis tried to make it to Kashmir. However, the Pakistani government did not want them there for fear of damaging relations with India. Others travelled to places like the Philippines or Eritrea in the mid-1990s, although the details of this involvement are not very well known.[32]

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[30] *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 2 April 2005.   [31] *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 2 April 2005.

[32] 'Interview with Sheikh al-Mujahideen Abu Abdel Aziz', and al-Jasir, '*qissat al-afghan al-sa'udiyyin*', 22. Bin Ladin's Saudi brother-in-law Jamal Khalifa allegedly served as a liaison between Bin Ladin and Philippine militant groups in the 1990s; Anonymous,

Algeria featured prominently in Saudi public debates, not least because Sahwist preachers such as Safar al-Hawali took a great interest in the Algerian war and criticised the Saudi regime for not supporting the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS). The entire Saudi Islamist field was sympathetic to the Algerian Islamists, but for most Saudi jihadists, getting militarily involved in Algeria was out of the question because it was an internal conflict, not a classical jihad pitting Muslims versus non-Muslims. Usama bin Ladin had sporadic contacts with Algerian militants from his base in Sudan, but it seems that he did not send people to Algeria. One of the very few Saudi jihadists to have gone to Algeria was Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin, who went there for about a month in 1994 or 1995 after coming into contact with Algerians in Bosnia. He was allegedly involved in weapons smuggling between Spain and Algeria, but had to flee when his cell was dismantled by Algerian authorities.[33]

Somalia would also witness an influx of small numbers of Saudi jihadists. This involvement came in two different stages. First was Bin Ladin's 1993 attempt to support the Somali resistance against the UN forces deployed in 'Operation Restore Hope'. To Bin Ladin, this intervention represented yet another infringement on Muslim territory and an attempt by the US to gain a foothold in Africa in order to invade countries in the Middle East. Bin Ladin thus dispatched a small team of military instructors from Sudan to Somalia. The mission was led by experienced Egyptian militants such as Abu Hafs al-Masri, but it included a few Saudis, such as Yusuf al-Uyayri (the future founder of the QAP), and Muhammad Awda, one of the co-conspirators in the 1998 East Africa bombings. The precise role of the Arabs in the 1993 events remains unclear, but recent evidence suggests Bin Ladin's involvement was greater than has thus far been assumed.[34]

Through our Enemies' Eyes (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2002), 180–2. In late December 1995, two Saudis – Salih al-Quway'i and Zayid al-Amir – were arrested in Manila on terrorism charges; Robert McFadden, 'Nine Suspected of Terrorism are Arrested in Manila', *New York Times*, 31 December 1995. Jamal al-Fadl described meetings in Khartoum in the early 1990s between al-Qaida and an Eritrean group called 'Jamaat e Jihad Eritrea'; *USA* v. *Usama bin Ladin et al*, 328–9. We know of at least two named Saudis who fought in Eritrea: Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin and a certain Abu Hisan al-Makki; see Hamad al-Qatari and Majid al-Madani, *min qisas al-shuhada' al-'arab fi'l-busna wa'l-harsak* [From the Stories of the Arab Martyrs in Bosnia and Herzegovina], 2nd edn (www.saaid.net, 2002), 168–9.

[33] Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*, 83–4; '*liqa' ma' ahad al-matlubin al-tisa' 'ashar* (1)' [Interview with One of the Nineteen Wanted Men]', *Sawt al-Jihad,* no. 1 (2003).

[34] Muhammad al-Salim, '*yusuf al-'uyayri: shumukh fi zaman al-hawan* [Yusuf al-Uyayri: Standing Tall in an Age of Lowliness]', *Sawt al-Jihad*, no. 1 (2003); *Al-Qaida's*

The second round of Arab involvement in Somalia came in the context of the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia in Ogaden. In 1994 or 1995, small groups of Arabs who had fought in Bosnia travelled via Saudi Arabia or Yemen to Ogaden to fight with the 'Islamic Union' against the Christian Ethiopians. Among the people who went was subsequent QAP lieutenant Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin, who ended up being captured and imprisoned in Ethiopia for two and a half years before being extradited to Saudi Arabia.[35]

A more significant arena for Arab Afghan involvement in the early 1990s was Tajikistan, where a five-year civil war broke out in 1992, a year after independence. A series of massacres in January and February 1993 forced the Tajik Islamist opposition and thousands of civilians into exile in Afghanistan. The Tajik Islamist al-Nahda party sent a request for help to the Arabs in Peshawar. This happened at a time when Arabs had begun to leave Pakistan and Afghanistan, and when many of them had become disillusioned with the infighting between the Afghan warlords. As in Algeria, the Islamist struggle in Tajikistan was not a clear-cut classical jihad, because the incumbent regime was nominally Muslim. However, the strong Russian support for the Tajik government made some foreign fighters see the conflict as a case of de facto Russian occupation and an extension of the jihad in Afghanistan. Thus in the spring and summer of 1993, three successive groups of Arab fighters, numbering about 100, ventured to Tajikistan to take part in the jihad against the Russian-backed regime in Dushanbe. A majority of the fighters were Saudis and included subsequently famous figures such as Samir al-Suwaylim (Khattab). These fighters would stay in south Tajikistan until they were forced out in 1995.[36]

In 1996 the conflict escalated again and prompted the intervention of Russian troops, which gave the jihad a more 'classical' character. This inspired a new attempt by Arabs to join the Tajik jihad in mid-

(Mis)adventures in the Horn of Africa, *Harmony Project* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007).

[35] 'liqa' ma' ahad al-matlubin al-tisa' 'ashar (1)'.

[36] The three groups were led by Ya'qub al-Bahr, (Ibn) Khattab (Samir al-Suwaylim) and Usama Azmaray (Wali Khan) respectively. One of the groups allegedly received funding through Sheikh Salman al-Awda. While the latter group disbanded early, the former groups fought for about two years. Ya'qub al-Bahr's group went deep into Tajikistan while Khattab operated in the border areas. In Khattab's company were a number of people who later become prominent QAP members, such as Khalid al-Subayt and Salih al-Awfi. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 27 December 2004; *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20 March 2005; *USA* v. *Usama bin Ladin et al*, 355; al-Qatari and al-Madani, *min qisas al-shuhada' al-'arab*, 119–20; Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet*, 14; Isa bin Sa'd Al Awshan, '*khalid bin abdallah al-subayt: fida' wa tadhiyya*', *Sawt al-Jihad*, no. 15 (2004); Raid Qusti, 'Background of the Most Wanted Terrorists – Part 2', *Arab News*, 12 December 2003.

1996. This contingent, which became known as the 'Northern group', included some of those expelled in 1995 as well as a number of new volunteers. The group was led by a certain Hamza al-Ghamidi and numbered thirty-six people, most of whom were Saudis. They made it to north Afghanistan, but were unable to enter Tajikistan and headed south to Jalalabad, where they met another Saudi who had recently settled in Afghanistan, namely Usama bin Ladin. Several members of the Northern group, including subsequently well-known figures such as Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, Umar al-Faruq and Nasir al-Bahri, would eventually join al-Qaida.[37]

As the Tajik jihad came to an end, new opportunities arose in the Caucasian republic of Chechnya, where a war between secessionist rebels and Russia erupted in late 1995 and a second war would break out in 1999. The Chechen conflict could easily be framed as a classical jihad because it pitted a local Muslim population against a non-Muslim occupier, and a very brutal one at that. For the Saudi jihadist movement in particular, Chechnya would become an extremely important cause which attracted volunteers well into the 2000s. In fact, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Chechnya was a more attractive destination than Afghanistan for Saudi volunteer fighters, because as a classical jihad it was considered a less controversial struggle than Bin Ladin's global jihad against America.

The initial Arab involvement in Chechnya was facilitated by a Jordanian-born Chechen Islamist called Fathi Muhammad Habib (aka Abu Sayyaf). Raised in Amman, Habib studied engineering in Germany and America before going to Afghanistan in the 1980s, where he worked closely with Sayyaf. In early 1992 he settled in Chechnya where he set up an Islamic school and began using his Arab connections to solicit funds for *da'wa* (missionary) work in Chechnya. When the first war broke out in late 1994, he used his contacts to draw Arab Afghans to Chechnya. In early 1995, news of the Russian invasion reached Khattab just as the opportunities in Tajikistan were narrowing. Khattab received a letter from Sheikh Fathi urging him to come to Chechnya, which he did some time in the spring of 1995. Khattab's closest comrades in arms from Afghanistan then followed suit. Several of Khattab's early companions would become legendary jihadist figures, such as Muhammad al-Tamimi (aka Abu Umar al-Sayf), the chief ideologue of the Chechen Arabs; Abd al-Aziz al-Ghamidi (aka Abu Walid al-Ghamidi), one of Khattab's successors as commander of the foreign mujahidin in Chechnya, and Suhayl al-Sahli (aka Yasin

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[37] *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20 March 2005.

al-Bahr), who would lead the first battalions of foreign fighters in northern Iraq in early 2003.[38]

Shortly after his arrival in Chechnya, Khattab began building a training infrastructure which he would run in partnership with the legendary Chechen commander Shamil Basayev. By mid-1995 a logistics chain had been set up to facilitate the arrival of foreign volunteers. The main stations on this chain were Istanbul (Turkey) and Baku (Azerbaijan). The Baku safe house was run by Arabs operating under the cover of the Islamic Benevolence Committee. Khattab enjoyed a certain amount of logistical and financial support from Saudi Arabia. Saudi sheikhs declared the Chechen resistance a legitimate jihad, and private Saudi donors sent money to Khattab and his Chechen colleagues. As late as 1996, mujahidin wounded in Chechnya were sent to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, a practice paid for by charities and tolerated by the state. After the end of the first Chechen war, Khattab expanded his activities in Chechnya, built more camps and set up an institute in which old Saudi friends of Khattab taught religion and military science to Chechen rebel leaders. The second Chechen war which broke out in late 1999 led the Russians to practically seal off the country, so, after 2000, very few foreign volunteers made it to Chechnya. Funds continued to flow, but they decreased significantly after the crackdown on Islamic charities after 2001.[39]

It is not clear exactly how many Arabs joined Khattab between 1995 and 1999, but the number seems to have stayed in the low hundreds, perhaps not even exceeding 100. The Jordanian journalist and researcher Murad al-Shishani compiled 51 biographies of Arabs in Chechnya, 30

[38] Murad al-Shishani, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Fighters in Chechnya* (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2006), 7; Mowaffaq al-Nowaiser, 'Khattab, the Man who Died for the Cause of Chechnya', *Arab News*, 4 May 2002; al-Qatari and al-Madani, *min qisas al-shuhada' al-'arab*, 127; author's interview with Faris bin Huzzam, Dubai, November 2005; 'World Exclusive Interview with Field Commander Shamil Basayev' (Azzam Publications (posted on www.islamicawakening.com), 2000); Julie Wilhelmsen, *When Separatists Become Islamists: The Case of Chechnya* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI/Rapport), 2004), 33; Khattab was not the first Arab in Chechnya. A Saudi named Fayhan al-Utaybi (aka Abu Turab al-Najdi) had allegedly gone before him, but he had left because he was the only Arab and could not communicate with the locals; see al-Qatari and al-Madani, *min qisas al-shuhada' al-'arab*, 121.

[39] Aukai Collins, *My Jihad: The True Story of an American Mujahid's Amazing Journey* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2002), 123; *USA* v. *Usama bin Ladin et al*, 300–2; Isa bin Sa'd Al Awshan, '*khalid bin 'abdallah al-subayt: fida' wa tadhiyya* [Khalid bin Abdallah al-Subayt: Courage and Sacrifice]', *Sawt al-Jihad*, no. 15 (2004); al-Shishani, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Fighters in Chechnya*, 13–14; Miriam Lanskoy, 'Daghestan and Chechnya: The Wahhabi Challenge to the State', *SAIS Review* 22, no. 2 (2002): 177ff. For more on the Arabs in Chechnya, see Yossef Bodansky, *Chechen Jihad: al Qaeda's Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* (New York: Harper, 2007).

of whom were from Saudi Arabia. Most of the Saudis in Chechnya arrived in the inter-war period, that is, between 1996 and 1999. The outbreak of the second war in the autumn of 1999 made a new generation of Saudis want to join the jihad, but at this point Chechnya was extremely difficult to reach. As a result, many of the recruits who headed out for Chechnya between 1999 and 2001 ended up in Afghanistan, were they were drawn into Bin Ladin's al-Qaida organisation.[40]

The relationship between Khattab and Bin Ladin is said to have been lukewarm. In Afghanistan in the late 1980s, Khattab had sought a degree of independence from both Bin Ladin and Azzam. Around 1997–8, Bin Ladin allegedly invited Khattab to cooperate more closely with him, an offer which was rejected by Khattab after a polite written correspondence. The Khattab–Bin Ladin enmity was not just about personal chemistry or rivalry; it also reflected a significant ideological division, namely between the 'classical' and the 'global' branches of the Saudi jihadist movement. Khattab did not subscribe to Bin Ladin's doctrine of attacking the United States and did not approve of the targeting of civilians. Saudi sources have described the jihadist community in the kingdom as being divided between the 'Khattabists' and the 'Bin Ladinists', the former being more numerous.[41]

There was a continuous Saudi presence in Chechnya up until at least the mid-2000s. Khattab was active as a guerrilla leader until his assassination by a poisoned letter from Russian intelligence on 20 March 2002. His old companion Abu Umar al-Sayf would rise to become one of the most prominent ideologues in the international jihadist community until he too was killed in early December 2005.

In the Islamist historical narrative, the emergence of the Saudi jihadist movement represents a spontaneous 'rise of the people' in the face of outside aggression in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. The reality was far more complex. 'The people' never rose to any of these causes, and the mobilisation was far from spontaneous. A few thousand men were mobilised, and only as the result of the systematic and sustained effort of entrepreneurial groups of devoted individuals.

The most crucial factor behind the success of the mobilisation was the articulation, in the early 1980s, of Abdallah Azzam's doctrine of classical jihad, which offered a new and very powerful ideological justification for private involvement in other Muslims' struggles of national liberation. Azzam's doctrine had great mobilising power because it

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[40] Wilhelmsen, *When Separatists Become Islamists*, 29; al-Shishani, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Fighters in Chechnya*.

[41] '*Almrei* v. *Canada* (2005 FC 1645)' (Federal Court of Canada, Ottawa, 2005), paragraph 366; author's interviews with Nasir al-Barrak and Faris bin Huzzam.

appealed to pan-Islamist sentiment and stayed close to orthodox jihad theology. At the same time, his insistence that jihad participation is an individual duty for all sidelined the ulama and left the jihadists free to fight where they wanted.

At the organisational level, the mobilisation relied on a formula which was developed in 1980s Afghanistan by the Services Bureau. It consisted of creating a separate infrastructure for Arab fighters, working systematically with the media and exploiting charities for military purposes. The same principles were applied in the mobilisation of Saudis for Bosnia and Chechnya, and to some extent also in the recruitment to al-Qaida's Afghan camps in the late 1990s. However, some of these same factors would contribute to the weakening of the jihadist movement in the mid-1990s. Insularity became a liability: in Bosnia the Arabs appeared as foreign intruders, while their presence in Chechnya was used by the Russians to delegitimise the Chechen resistance. Formal organisation was a weakness if state actors worked against them. Exploitation of charities was eventually uncovered and undermined the credibility of the movement.

With weakness came radicalisation. The Saudi classical jihadist movement arguably reached its peak, in terms of numbers and popular support, around 1989. From then on, the number of people able and willing to travel abroad for jihad seems to have decreased, for a number of different reasons. The people left in the movement were the most committed individuals, who were willing to sacrifice more than just their holidays for the Muslim nation. As the movement grew smaller, it became more radical and more controversial, eventually giving birth to global jihadism. It is easy to understand how the experience of training camps and war contributed to the radicalisation of Saudi jihadists over time. The more intriguing question is why people sought out these experiences in the first place.