



Counter-Terrorism from Within

Assessing Saudi Arabia's Religious Rehabilitation and Disengagement Programme

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Following a series of deadly domestic terrorist attacks in 2003, the government of Saudi Arabia began an ambitious and wide-ranging counter-terrorism effort. In addition to traditional security and law enforcement efforts to kill and capture terrorists, a parallel strategy was launched to combat the ideological justifications for violent extremism within the kingdom. This 'soft' counter-terrorism strategy is made up of three components: prevention programmes to deter people from getting involved with violent extremism, rehabilitation programmes designed to encourage supporters and sympathisers to renounce violence, and aftercare programmes to prevent recidivism and to reintegrate people back into Saudi society.

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This paper will provide an overview of the Saudi programme to rehabilitate and disengage Islamist extremists and militants, and explain its objectives and mechanics. It will also provide an initial background on programme participants, in an attempt to illuminate who goes through religious rehabilitation, and suggest why these efforts are working.

This strategy has perhaps become best known for its counseling programme which seeks to encourage Saudi security detainees to repent and repudiate extremist ideologies. Through

intensive religious debate and psychological counseling, religious scholars work to demonstrate to participants that they have been following corrupted interpretations of Islam. After proving that they had deviated from proper Islamic doctrine, the counselors then teach the state-endorsed interpretation of Islam.

The objective of the programme is to de-radicalise and demobilise individuals and to encourage extremists to renounce 'terrorist ideologies', especially the doctrine of *takfir*. Some important notes on the programme: detained security offenders – regardless of their individual offenses – are invited to participate in the rehabilitation process. Once the process is completed, those determined to have renounced their former beliefs are eligible to be released from custody. Ministry of Interior officials stress, however, that individuals who have 'blood on their hands' and who complete the rehabilitation programme still will not be released early. Furthermore, individuals that have gone before a judge and been sentenced are not eligible for release until they have finished their sentence. Finally, even after completion of the programme, if the authorities have reason to believe that an individual will reoffend, then they simply will not release them.

One of the keys to the programme's success is the extensive social support given to a detainee and his family, intended to offset hardship and short-circuit further radicalisation within a family. In a combination of coercion and co-optation, Saudi authorities use traditional cultural factors such as honour, family hierarchies and powerful social obligations to prevent recidivism.

Of the roughly 1,400 programme participants that have renounced their beliefs through this programme and been released, only thirty-five have been rearrested on security offenses. That is about a 2 per cent recidivism rate. As of last November, under a parallel programme to reintegrate Guantanamo returnees, approximately 117 individuals have been repatriated and none have reoffended.¹ Unlike in other countries, repatriated Saudis do not seem to return to the battlefield.

Background

The government of Saudi Arabia views the struggle against violent extremism as part of a 'war of ideas' centered upon issues of legitimacy, authority and what is permitted in Islam. To achieve victory, the government strives to cast extremists as illegitimate for having perverted true Islam. The government frames the issue as centring on notions of authority and understanding of religious doctrine, and it argues that extremists lack both. It was an evil ideology, the government asserts, that misled the extremists, many of whom it considers to be well intentioned men who wanted to do good works. Through this focus on authority and an understanding of religious doctrine, the state aspires to help misguided believers return to the correct understandings of Islam. This strategy melds nicely with the Saudi concept of *da'wah* (call to faith) as a governmental obligation. Central to the Saudi strategy is the message that the use of violence within the kingdom to affect change is not permissible. Only legitimate scholars and knowledgeable authorities, the government argues, can engage in such activities as authorising a permissible jihad. These objectives dovetail with many of the traits of Wahhabi Islam practised in the kingdom, which stresses such attributes as loyalty, recognition of authority and obedience to leadership.

The Saudi 'war of ideas' also stems from a recognition that violent radical Islamist extremism cannot be defeated by traditional security means alone. That recognition has resulted in the implementation of soft counter-terrorism policies.² Essential to victory is

the defeat of the ideological infrastructure that supports and nurtures political violence. As such, the Saudi campaign strives to prevent exposure to *takfiri* beliefs; to refute those ideas and encourage the rehabilitation of offenders; and to promote policies that prevent relapses. It takes on these challenges through time-tested Saudi policies such as co-optation, patronage, and coercion.

Counseling Program: Structure and Practice

Rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia is administered under a scheme called the Counseling Program, which is organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior. Within the Ministry, the Counseling Program is run by a group called the Advisory Committee.³ The committee travels to visit prisons across the country and meet with detainees throughout the kingdom. The Advisory Committee is made up of four subcommittees: the Religious Subcommittee; the Psychological and Social Subcommittee; the Security Subcommittee; and the Media Subcommittee.

The Religious Subcommittee is the largest of the four sub-groupings. It is made up of approximately 150 clerics, scholars and university professors, and it is the group that directly engages in the prisoner dialogues and the counseling process. The Advisory Committee is very careful who it asks to participate in its activities. One of the most important factors in selecting Religious Subcommittee members is communication style. It is essential that when talking with a detainee, a cleric not lecture; the process is not intended to be one sided. One of the criteria used to evaluate communication style is whether the scholar speaks with a detainee like 'his own brother' and whether or not the Subcommittee member is motivated out of love, compassion and a drive to help the detainee.

Because of the large number of religious experts and scholars in Saudi Arabia, the committee is able to draw on a very large pool of potential participants.⁴ Participating scholars have recognised the danger posed by

'corrupted understandings' and 'misinterpretations of correct doctrine', and thus are driven to help guide young men back to the correct path, according to officials.

The government strives to cast extremists as illegitimate for having perverted true Islam

The Psychological and Social Subcommittee is comprised of around fifty psychologists, psychiatrists, social scientists and researchers. They play a key role during the counseling process as they are responsible for evaluating a prisoner's social status, diagnosing any psychological problems and assessing the prisoner's status and compliance. During the counseling and dialogue process, members of this subcommittee will participate in some of the sessions, in particular the long study sessions. Social scientists and psychologists continually interact with detainees and are therefore able to assess their development and status during the programme. This provides vital insights into how an individual participant is progressing. Moreover, this subcommittee also evaluates detainees' participation in an attempt to determine whether or not the rehabilitation is genuine. Because many of the counselors live with or spend considerable periods of time with the detainees, they get to know them quite well. It is said that this, in combination with the regular psychological and sociological testing and other evaluation methods, helps reduce the number of opportunistic or insincere revisions.

This subcommittee is also responsible for determining what support the prisoner and his family may need after release. In doing so, the Advisory Committee seeks to offset physical hardships that often arise when a family member is arrested. More importantly, this is also done to prevent the radicalisation of other family members.

The Security Subcommittee performs several functions, although for research



purposes many details of their work remain as yet unknown. The most important function of the Security Subcommittee is to evaluate prisoners for security risks and then make release recommendations based upon the input provided by the Religious Subcommittee and the Psychological and Social Subcommittee. This subcommittee also advises prisoners on how to behave upon release, and makes suggestions on what detainees can do to best avoid future run-ins with the authorities. Central to the work of this subcommittee is monitoring detainees once they leave prison. Upon release programme graduates are told that they will be monitored, and that their continued freedom is dependent upon their staying away from their old associates and habits. Detainees are told that they will be monitored in very obvious ways and in a much more covert manner. They are advised of who they can associate with once they leave prison, and it is understood that they are required to regularly check-in with the subcommittee.

Essential to victory is the defeat of the ideological infrastructure that supports and nurtures political violence

The Media Subcommittee produces materials used in the programme and also makes other educational materials for use in prevention programmes in schools and mosques. This subcommittee is focused on outreach and education, and primarily on targeting young Saudi men. Towards this end, the subcommittee has done extensive research in order to determine what the best means of delivering this message is. Accordingly, they studied the internet, radio, television and print media, and through their research they determined that the most efficient way to reach their target audience was through *Jumu'ah* prayers. As such, much of the committee's work is conveyed to

the public through mosques and events like lectures and study circles held at mosques.

The Counseling Process

When members of the Advisory Committee initially sit with a prisoner, one of the first things that they stress is that they are not employees of the Ministry of Interior or associated with the security forces.⁵ Rather they explain that they are independent and righteous scholars. Before the government adopted this technique, it was not uncommon for families to ask clerics and scholars to visit their family members in jail and talk with them about their behaviour.

According to several committee members, initial meetings between counselors and detainees did not go well. At first detainees would refuse to meet with clerics.⁶ According to Sheikh Ali Al-Nafisah, the detainees 'would not salute or shake hands with members of the committee, because they believed that these members were aides of infidels'.⁷ This situation has slowly changed, and meetings are now described as being held in a 'warm and respectful' environment.⁸ As word of the programme began to spread, there was initially a sizable backlash from extremists who would denounce the committee. The rehabilitation programme was called a sham, and the militant community accused anyone that had gone through the programme of being a government spy.⁹ Detainees themselves at first thought that the programme was merely another form of interrogation.¹⁰ However, the head of the Interior Ministry's Guidance and Awareness Department has affirmed that 'the counseling process has nothing to do with the interrogation of those detained for security reasons'.¹¹

In their first meeting, committee members will simply listen to the prisoner. They ask them about what they did, why they did it, and the circumstances that brought them to be in prison. Throughout the process, the scholars engage prisoners in discussions about their beliefs, and then attempt to persuade them that their religious justification for their actions is wrong

and based upon a corrupted understanding of Islam. First the committee demonstrates how what the prisoners were tricked into believing was false, and then they set to teach them the proper state-approved interpretation of Islam. Sheikh Abdel Mohsin Al-Obaykan has described the process as follows: 'The advice is given through discussion sessions in a suitable place. The prisoner is asked to express all the suspicions he has and the evidence on which he relies, and then these are discussed with him, and he is introduced to the truth and to the meaning of this evidence'.¹²

Initial sessions, especially those held in prison, are conducted one-on-one.¹³ These can be both formal and informal discussions, as much of the counseling process depends on the two individuals involved. Later on, especially once a detainee has moved to the Care Rehabilitation Center (a residential 'halfway' house-like facility), sessions do not just take the form of religious lectures. Discussions and dialogues are encouraged.¹⁴ While some counseling sessions take place in classrooms, others occur in very informal settings, oftentimes involving very subtle negotiations and dialogue about everyday affairs.¹⁵ However, all the while the committee staff is evaluating programme participants.

The Advisory Committee runs two programmes. The first are short sessions, which typically run about two hours. While some prisoners recant their beliefs after a single session, typically a prisoner would go through several of these.¹⁶ These sessions are most commonly used with individuals who are looking for a way out, and their success should be considered atypical. The others are called 'Long Study Sessions'. These are six-week courses for up to twenty students led by two clerics and social scientist. Ten subjects are covered over the six weeks, including instruction in such topics as *takfir*, *walaah* (loyalty) and *bayat* (allegiance), terrorism, the legal rules for jihad and psychological courses on self-esteem. Instruction is also given on the concepts of 'faith, leadership, and community', as well as guidance on how to 'avoid misleading, delusional books'.¹⁷

The important role of scholars in Islamic jurisprudence is stressed, and detainees are also taught about sedition and the sanctity of blood in Islam.¹⁸ The study of so-called ideological topics, such as 'loyalty (to Muslims), and enmity (against non-believers), (the illicitness of) supporting non-believers and (the need to) throw them out of the Arabian Peninsula, and others, in an effort to rectify' incorrect religious understandings is essential.¹⁹ At the end of the course, an exam is given; those that pass the exam move to the next stage of the process (including possible release), those that do not pass, repeat the course.

Programme Demographics

Extensive research has been done to examine the demographic backgrounds of rehabilitation programme participants.²⁰ Two major research studies have been completed by the Advisory Committee, one focusing on domestically active yet non-violent offenders and another examining violent terrorism suspects. The first study focused on individuals that had been active within the kingdom up to 2004; this study included 639 subjects, none of whom were engaged in political violence domestically but may have participated in violence abroad. The second study included sixty subjects who had participated in terrorism within Saudi Arabia up to 2006. According to the committee's findings, the vast majority of detainees who have successfully participated in the rehabilitation programme did not have a proper religious education during their childhood.

Members of the Advisory Committee argue that because these individuals did not correctly learn the tenets of their faith originally, they were susceptible to extremist propaganda. Therefore, the Counseling Programme seeks to remove detainees' misunderstandings of Islam and to reintroduce and reinforce the official state version of the faith. This is done through a complex process of religious dialogue and instruction, psychological counseling, and extensive social support.

Participants in the first study were

typically young (usually in their twenties), from large, lower- or middle-class families (with seven to fifteen siblings) and their parents typically had limited educations. They came from large urban areas throughout the kingdom. This generally tracks with what is known of the backgrounds of those individuals who participated in the AL-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (QAP) campaign.²¹ Only a small number were determined to have come from more affluent families (3 per cent). As with their families, programme participants tend to be come from the same social strata, the lower and middle classes. Most were students, although some were employed in lower or middle income jobs; only 6 per cent were employed in so-called high-level, white collar positions. Interestingly, and contrary to assumption, it was found that only a very small minority (5 per cent) were employed in so-called religious professions, such as prayer leaders or as members of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

It was found that roughly one-third of the study participants had gone abroad to participate in jihad, primarily to Afghanistan, Somalia, or Chechnya. It is currently unclear to what extent these individuals actually engaged in combat abroad, as opposed to undergoing paramilitary training or simply traveling to or participating in support of activities in foreign theatres of jihad.

Two very interesting trends emerge from the data. First, it found that one-quarter of the 639 programme participants had prior criminal histories. Of those, approximately half had been arrested for drug offences. This tracks with an increasing recognition within Saudi Arabia and throughout the Muslim world of the dangers posed by prison radicalisation.²² The second fact to emerge had to do with their knowledge of religious matters. According to programme officials, many of the detainees in the programme knew relatively little about Islam, and it was their desire to become more religious that led them into contact with the extremists who propagated a corrupted understanding of Islam. Most of the

programme participants had an incomplete understanding of Islam. This is a critical point to note, and one that Saudi officials cite for the relative successes of the rehabilitation programme to date. The Advisory Committee's research showed that most detainees did not complete much formal education or proper religious instruction. Moreover, the majority of security offenders in the kingdom have been radicalised through a now well known path: extremist books, tapes, videos and, more recently, the Internet.²³ According to one report, one of the more popular texts among programme participants (before rehabilitation) is Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, author of *Clear Evidence of the Infidel Nature of the Saudi State*, a publication obviously banned in the kingdom.

While some counseling sessions take place in classrooms, others occur in very informal settings, oftentimes involving very subtle negotiations and dialogue about everyday affairs

The second study – which focused on individuals who had allegedly participated in violence within Saudi Arabia – revealed an equally interesting set of factors. Most significantly, the data shows greater domestic problems and troubled home lives for this group. Approximately half came from homes with a father over the age of fifty, and one-quarter (26 per cent) came from polygamous households. Saudi authorities stress that they believe there is a correlation between individuals who receive lesser attention in the home due to a father's need to share his attention on other domestic matters and trouble later in life. Similarly, over a third (35 per cent) of the second study subjects came from homes with 'family problems' and one-fifth were identified as orphans with



Prime Minister Brown speaks with Saudi students at King Saud university in Riyadh after meeting with inmates at a deradicalisation centre during his November 2008 visit. Photo courtesy of Reuters.

no traditional parental oversight. It is important to stress that social backgrounds alone do not determine participation in political violence.²⁴ Ideology is a central factor, whether it is followed for inspiration or used as justification.

There was also evidence of previous difficult relationships with authority, including employment termination,²⁵ arrests for reckless driving offences and violent criminal records (fighting, petty crime, etc). Significantly, at least 10 per cent were non-practicing Muslims, drawing attention to the fact that it is not always the religiously inspired or interested who are driven to political violence in the kingdom.

Inspiration and Motivation

There are also very notable differences in the sources of inspiration and motivation between the two groups. This is perhaps best illustrated by the readings popular among study subjects. Among those active in violence abroad but not domestically, the writings of theorists predominate, while those active in terrorist violence within the kingdom were driven by the writings and materials of organisation leaders and military commanders. The differences in intellectual motivation can be understood as both a manifestation of

differing radicalisation processes and as potential indicator of future intent. Perhaps not surprising, in both groups Osama bin Laden is the most popular author.

Among the theorists, influential sources include Hamad Al-Uqla Al-Shuyabi, who gives his name to an informal collection of influential Wahhabi scholars and the author of *Meaning and Reality of Terrorism*;²⁶ Ali Al-Khodeir, author of a fatwa defending the killing of civilians; Sulayman bin Nasir Al-Alwan, author of the article 'Let Us Die as Martyrs'.²⁷ in which he argues that jihad is central to Islam and that a ruler's authorisation is not needed for jihad; Abdullah Azzam, godfather of the 1980s Arab-Afghans; Safar Al-Hawali, one of the original 'awakening shaykhs',²⁸ and Nasir Al-Fahd, perhaps best known for a fatwa legitimising the use of WMD against civilian non-combatants.

In the second group, very different figures emerge as sources of inspiration and motivation. These include Abdel Aziz Al-Muqrin; Ayman Al-Zawahiri; Saleh Al-Aufi; Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, and Yusuf Al-Ayeri. Ayeri, Muqrin, and Aufi were all operational leaders of the QAP. Ayeri led the initial organisation for the violence that started in May 2003 and was later killed. He was succeeded by Muqrin, who was also killed in a June 2004 exchange

with authorities. In August 2005 Aufi was killed by security forces.²⁹ These figures are emblematic of military operations against the state, many of whose writings have appeared as independent tracts and in online publications such as *Sawt Al-Jihad*.

There are also noticeable differences in the motivation of both groups. Muslim grievances and sympathies with symbols of Muslim oppression frequently figure in the motivation of all groups. For the first group, the motivational factors included consuming audio and video recordings, the militant awakening that took place in the kingdom and the influences of shaykhs and friends. The second group, however, was found to have been driven much more by immediate paramilitary concerns, including a drive to expel American and allied forces; a desire to seek revenge against the security services and the perceived hegemony of Western forces (US and UK); aspiration to advance the cause in Iraq – through both fundraising and deeds; and a wish to develop military and operational skills.

Conclusion

There is increasing recognition that counter-radicalisation and disengagement programmes for Islamist extremists and militants hold great potential. Similar programmes to counter-radicalise Islamist extremists have been adopted in numerous countries including Egypt, Yemen, Algeria, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia,³⁰ and many others have plans to start programmes. The US military has employed comparable tactics in Iraq with insurgent detainees, a move that has been credited in part with curbing recidivism.³¹ To be sure, such programmes will not work universally, and there will always be hardcore extremists that are beyond rehabilitation. However, reaching the others – the uncommitted, the curious and those on the fence – is vital. Another critical aspect comes from preventing logistical and support personnel from becoming active in terrorist violence.

Understanding the Saudi rehabilitation programme is important for several reasons. As the Saudi effort is the best funded and longest continually

run programme, it has become a de facto model for other countries seeking to implement a counter-radicalisation programme. This includes Western partners such as the UK who are reportedly looking at the Saudi programme for transferable applications. Moreover, the growth of these programmes is recognition that modern violent Islamist extremism cannot be defeated solely through traditional hard security measures. ■

NOTES

- 1 According to Saudi sources, two Guantanamo returnees have been arrested on 'parole violations', see 'Powers of Persuasion', *The Economist*, 17 July 2008. According to Ken Ballen and Peter Bergen, a total of six returnees have been rearrested, see 'The Worst of the Worst?', *Foreign Policy* (web exclusive), October 2008. None of these rearrested returnees, however, has been charged with actions akin to returning to the battlefield, according to a Saudi government officials (Boucek interview, 2008).
- 2 For more detail, see Christopher Boucek, *Saudi Arabia's 'Soft' Counterterrorism Strategy: Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare* (Carnegie Endowment paper 97, 2008).
- 3 Data in the section is based on author interviews and research in Saudi Arabia, March 2007, including interviews with Dr Abdulrahman Al-Hadlaq, Advisor to HRH Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs and Major General Mansour Al-Turki, Official Security Spokesman, Ministry of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 2007.
- 4 This factor has been noted as contributing to the programme's success. When asked if the Counseling Program could work in other countries, Al-Hadlaq noted that some countries do not benefit from having so many experts, and therefore will have a much harder time finding qualified personnel to run the programme, interview with Al-Hadlaq, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.
- 5 Interviews with Al-Hadlaq and Al-Turki, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 2007.
- 6 Sultan Al-Obathani, 'Saudi Arabia: Over 400 Extremist Released in the last six months', *Asharq Alawsat*, 22 November 2005, citing Saud al Musaybih, Director General for Public Relations and Guidance, Ministry of Interior.
- 7 Turki Al-Suhayl, 'Saudi Arabia: Decisive Turnaround for Takfiris Through Counseling and Release of Detainees for Security Reasons; al-Washm Blast has Caused imbalance Within al-Qa'ida Organization's Ranks', *Ashraq Alawsat*, 30 November 2005. FBIS translated text.
- 8 Sultan Al-Obathani, 'Saudi Arabia: Over 400 Extremist Released in the last six months', *Asharq Alawsat*, 22 November 2005, citing Saud al Musaybih, Director General for Public Relations and Guidance, Ministry of Interior.
- 9 Interview with HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 2007.
- 10 Interview with Al-Hadlaq, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.
- 11 Turki Al-Suhayl, 'Saudi Arabia: Decisive Turnaround for Takfiris Through Counseling and Release of Detainees for Security Reasons; al-Washm Blast has Caused imbalance Within al-Qa'ida Organization's Ranks', *Ashraq Alawsat*, 30 November 2005, citing Shaikh Ali Al-Nafisah. FBIS translated text. According to interviews, the investigation and interrogation phase ends before a detainee can enter rehabilitation.
- 12 Turki Al-Suhayl, 'Al-Ubaykan: Al-Qa'ida and Books of Abu Qatadah Al-Maqdisi Have the Most Prominent Influence on the Minds of the Deceived Youths', *Asharq Alawsat*, 9 September 2005. FBIS translated text. A member of the Advisory Committee, Shaikh Obaykan is also the judicial advisory to the Justice Ministry and a member of the Majlis ash-Shoura. For more on Obaykan, see David Ottaway, 'Saudi Effort Draws on Radical Clerics to Combat Lure of Al-Qaeda', *Washington Post*, 7 May 2006.
- 13 "'Extremists have no firm religious beliefs'", *Khaleej Times*, 27 November 2005. According to committee members, some meetings did initially occur with several shaikhs present.
- 14 Interviews with Shaikh Ahmed Hamid Jelani and Care Rehabilitation Center staff, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.
- 15 Even during regular meetings and discussion about non-religious or contentious topics, committee workers are evaluating programme participants' development and progress. Observations made during site visit to Care Rehabilitation Center, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.
- 16 Turki Al-Suhayl, 'Al-Ubaykan: Al-Qa'ida and Books of Abu Qatadah Al-Maqdisi Have the Most Prominent Influence on the Minds of the Deceived Youths', *Asharq Alawsat*, 9 September 2005. FBIS translated text.
- 17 Turki Al-Suhayl, 'Rehabilitating Reformed Jihadists', *Asharq Alawsat*, 6 September 2007.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Turki Al-Suhayl, 'Saudi Arabia: Decisive Turnaround for Takfiris Through Counseling and Release of Detainees for Security Reasons; al-Washm Blast has Caused imbalance Within al-Qa'ida Organization's Ranks', *Ashraq Alawsat*, 30 November 2005, citing Sheikh Ali Al-Nafisah. FBIS translated text, reproduced as printed.
- 20 Section is based on in-depth author field research and interviews in Saudi Arabia, in March 2007; October-November 2007; and May-June 2008.
- 21 See Thomas Hegghammer, 'Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia', *Middle East Policy* (Vol. 13, No. 4, Winter 2006), and Abdullah Al-Khalifah, *Suspects' Families and the Relationship with Terrorism and Extremism in Saudi Society* (Riyadh: Imam Mohammed University, 2008).
- 22 Saudi officials have recognised the danger of exposure to extremist ideologies for those held in criminal custody, interview with Saudi Ministry of Interior official, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007. See also Christopher Boucek, 'Jailing Jihadis: Saudi Arabia's Special Terrorist Prisons', *Terrorism Monitor* (Vol. 6, No. 2, 24 January 2008).
- 23 For more information on the role of the internet, see Christopher Boucek, 'The Sakinah Campaign and Internet Counter-Radicalization in Saudi Arabia', *CTC Sentinel* (Vol. 1, No. 9, August 2008).
- 24 Interestingly, there is no data regarding incidents of mental illness or autism. It is known that some Saudi Guantanamo returnees suffer from a range of psychiatric disorders, although accurate numbers are unavailable (author's interviews, Saudi Arabia, November 2007). According to the US officials, approximately 6-7 per cent of current Guantanamo detainees (c. 250) are being treated for mental illnesses (author interview with JTF Guantanamo chief psychiatrist, Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, November 2008). In his sample, Sageman has found only 1 per cent incidents of mental disorders, compared to 3 per cent in the general population, see Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 64. On autism, see Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, *Engineers of Jihad*, University of Oxford, sociology working paper (2007).
- 25 Among this group, most worked in the private sector, significant as it demonstrates their desire to avoid associating with a government they view as illegitimate.
- 26 Published in the online minbar at-tawhid wa Al-jihad (2002). This article is in the top twenty most read texts, according to the West Point Militant Ideology Atlas (2006).
- 27 Ibid. According to the Militant Ideology Atlas, this is the eighteenth most read text.
- 28 See Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) and Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).
- 29 Roger Harrison and Javid Hassan, 'Al-Qaeda Chief in Kingdom Killed', *Arab News*, 19 August 2005.
- 30 For more information on these and other programmes, see John Horgan and Tore Bjørgo (eds), *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Disengagement from Political Violence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).
- 31 Andrew Woods, 'The Business End', *Financial Times*, 27 June 2008.