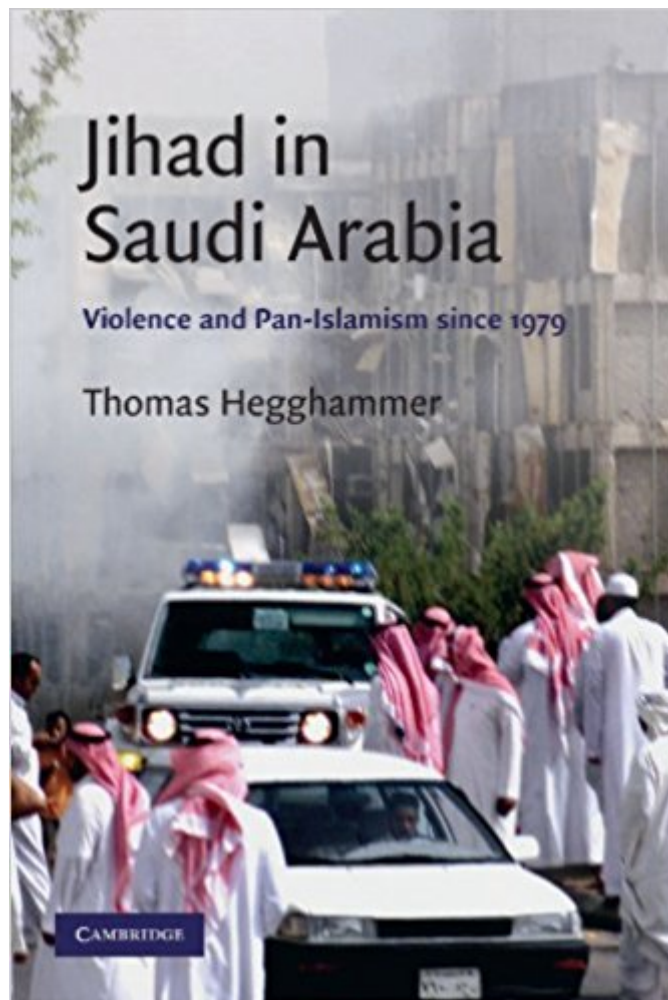


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Jihad In Saudi Arabia: Violence And Pan-Islamism Since 1979 (Cambridge Middle East Studies)



Synopsis

Saudi Arabia, homeland of Osama bin Laden and many 9/11 hijackers, is widely considered to be the heartland of radical Islamism. For decades, the conservative and oil-rich kingdom contributed recruits, ideologues and money to jihadi groups worldwide. Yet Islamism within Saudi Arabia itself remains poorly understood. Why has Saudi Arabia produced so many militants? Has the Saudi government supported violent groups? How strong is al-Qaida's foothold in the kingdom and does it threaten the regime? Why did Bin Laden not launch a campaign there until 2003? This 2010 book presents the first ever history of Saudi jihadism based on extensive fieldwork in the kingdom and primary sources in Arabic. It offers a powerful explanation for the rise of Islamist militancy in Saudi Arabia and sheds crucial new light on the history of the global jihadist movement.

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Customer Reviews

"A rare combination of sympathetic nuance and critical rigour...[A] useful corrective to common misreadings of the kingdom and deserve a wide audience...Mr. Hegghammer's analysis of the rise and fall of Saudi jihadism reveals some fascinating details...Yet what stands out most are his persuasive insights. The spread of jihadist ideas in Saudi Arabia, it seems, owed as much to temporary local factors as to outside influences or, for that matter, to Islamic scripture. The state erred, for instance, with policing methods that switched abruptly from being so hard as to provoke

anger to so soft as to dispel fear. Hair-splitting ideological rivalries between Islamists, meanwhile, led to a polarisation of the different camps and to a radicalisation of no more than a few men." The Economist

"The definitive work on Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, this book makes an exceptional contribution to studies of Saudi Arabia, political Islam, and comparative political violence." David Commins, Dickinson College

"Thomas Hegghammer presents the first substantiated study of the jihadist movement in Saudi Arabia. He brilliantly analyses a wealth of hitherto unexamined material and adds both depth and subtlety to our understanding of Islamic politics in the Kingdom. In doing so, he perceptively highlights the importance of pan-Islamism as a mobilizing and radicalizing factor. This informed and conceptually suggestive study deserves a very wide reading." James Piscatori, The Australian National University

Saudi Arabia is widely considered to be the heartland of radical Islamism. This 2010 book presents the first ever history of Saudi jihadism based on extensive fieldwork in the kingdom and primary sources in Arabic. It offers a powerful explanation for the rise of Islamist militancy in Saudi Arabia.

I am a Saudi myself and a physician so I know the culture Mr Hegghamer is talking about and I also know what a scholarly scientific work is. This is a great book by all means although I have to object to Mr Hegghammer reference about some massacres executed by the Israeli government as "claimed", but I understand what is it like to be an academic in the US or Europe where condemning Israel could be of serious consequences on your professional future. Withstanding these glitches this book was the best I read on the subject and worth reading not only by westerners but also Saudis or Muslims who wants to read a critical piece by an honest outsider not biased to the subject. Thank you Dr Hegghammer.

First, let me start by saying that this is a real scholarly work. Almost every page has lots of comprehensive footnotes. What impresses me the most, is all the primary (and secondary) sources Hegghammer has used in this book: Interviews with and biographies on ex-jihadists, prisoners from Guantanamo, families of active jihadists etc. (about 500 in all if I remember correctly). This makes Hegghammers arguments very convincing. The book divides the time from 1979 into three periods. The first period ends in the mid-1990s and covers the rise of what Hegghammer calls "classical jihadism", that is the type of jihad conducted in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, in defense of muslim territories. Other examples are Chechnya and Bosnia. The second period lasts from the mid-1990s until 9/11 2001, and covers the rise of al-Qaida and global jihadism, a much more

controversial doctrine than classical jihadism. The third period covers al-Qaidas operations in Saudi Arabia, after they were ousted from Afghanistan. For each period Hegghammer has a chapter on the political environment, a chapter on the leaders and the organisations (e.g. al-Qaida), and a chapter on the jihadist recruits themselves. To me, the most interesting parts of the book were the ones that covered the rise of jihadism. This gives rise to some general lessons, and also to some thoughts on how to win the war on terror. Hegghammer argues convincingly that doing something about symbols of muslim suffering is more important than political reform at home, at least in dealing with al-Qaida. Of course, this may not be the case with all islamists, and he makes some interesting comparisons between Egyptian and Saudi Arabian islamists. For someone more interested in Saudi Arabia itself (than me), the parts covering al-Qaidas operations in Saudi Arabia may be just as interesting, and rest assured that Hegghammer has covered this in detail.

It is hard to remember this book as I have read 40 books in the past 2 years trying to educate myself about Muslims. I do remember that the Dictator Family has financed Taliban and al Quida. Their special business family, Osama Ben Laden is Saudi and has spent a large part of his vast fortune in the fight against infidels. Today I learned the Pope Sainted 400 Priests that were beheaded for not converting to Islam in the 15th Century. I was taken aback. I thought from what I had read this World Wide Battle by the Muslims to make the entire world one big Muslim world was from this Century. This book tells of the Jihad in Saudi Arabia and the rush of young Saudi men into the battle to get martyred. Many returned after a week, disgusted with how hard it was. Young men in Saudi Arabia do not do physical labor, but loll about all day. They do not go to the store or seek a job. Some are educated in fine schools and then retire on family money. None do labor work, (it is too hot and it is hired by men from outside the country). It is a very strange society of very wealthy people from their giant pool of oil under the desert. This money is shared by the ruler to keep the people happy and to keep his family in power. He has a group of brothers that have taken turns as rulers. It is soon to be passed to a younger generation as the current generation is growing old and there are thousands of young men heirs to the throne and there will have to be a family election to see who will rule. The Saudi oil money has been the largest contributor to the cost of the battle to convert the world and behead those who do not yield.

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