Saudi Arabia, homeland of Usama bin Ladin 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 Ladin not launch a campaign there until 2003? This 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.

THOMAS HEGGHAMMER is a Senior Fellow at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI).
Cambridge Middle East Studies has been established to publish books on the nineteenth- to twenty-first-century Middle East and North Africa. The aim of the series is to provide new and original interpretations of aspects of Middle Eastern societies and their histories. To achieve disciplinary diversity, books will be solicited from authors writing in a wide range of fields including history, sociology, anthropology, political science and political economy. The emphasis will be on producing books offering an original approach along theoretical and empirical lines. The series is intended for students and academics, but the more accessible and wide-ranging studies will also appeal to the interested general reader.

A list of books in the series can be found after the index.
Jihad in Saudi Arabia

Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979

Thomas Hegghammer

Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)
Contents

List of figures and tables  page vii
Acknowledgements  viii
A note on conventions  x

Introduction  1

1 The politics of pan-Islamism  16
   The rise of pan-Islamism  17
   The Afghan jihad and the Saudi state  24
   Pan-Islamist bidding games  30

2 The classical jihadists  38
   Afghanistan, cradle of the jihadist movement  38
   Jihad in Bosnia, the anticlimax  48
   Tajikistan, Chechnya and the minor jihad fronts  52

3 Recruitment to the early jihad fronts  59
   Hijazi domination  59
   For the umma and the afterlife  60
   Recruitment in the open  65

4 Opportunities for global jihad  70
   From the Burayda intifada to the 1995  70
      Riyadh bombing  70
   Between police oppression and complacency  74
   New pan-Islamist causes  78
   The rise of the al-Shu'aybi school  83

5 Al-Qaida and Saudi Arabia  99
   The global jihadists  99
   The global jihadist doctrine and Saudi Arabia  102
   Al-Qaida central  108
   Al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia  112

6 Recruitment to al-Qaida  130
   Unemployment and ‘Najdification’  130
   Classical jihad exploited  133
   Gatekeepers  138
## Contents

7 Post-9/11 Saudi Arabia  
   New symbols of Muslim suffering  
   Al-Qaeda’s scholars  
   From soft to hard policing  

8 The mujahidin on the Arabian Peninsula  
   Returning from Afghanistan  
   Al-Nashiri and al-Qaeda’s failed 2002 offensives  
   The al-Uyayri network  
   Launching the jihad  

9 Recruitment to the QAP  
   Boys of Riyadh  
   The Afghanistan factor  
   Anti-Americanism and companionship  
   Persuasion, incrimination and protection  

10 The failure of the jihad in Arabia  
   The aims of the QAP  
   Evolution of the campaign  
   Explaining the downfall of the QAP  

Conclusion  

Appendix 1 – Socio-economic data on Saudi militants  
Appendix 2 – Chronology of Islamist violence in Saudi Arabia, 1979–2009  
Bibliography  
Index
Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Saudi funding for Palestinian resistance compared with oil prices, 1967–90

Figure 2: Saudi government funding of Afghan Mujahidin compared with oil prices, 1980–90

Figure 3: Departure dates of Saudis in Afghanistan, 1996–2001

Figure 4: Geographic origin of Saudi jihadists, 1980–2006

Figure 5: Evolution of education level of Saudi jihadists

Table 1: A rationale-based typology of Islamist activism with examples from Saudi Arabia
Acknowledgements

This book would never have seen the light of day without the remarkable generosity of many people around the world. First of all I thank Gilles Kepel, who expertly supervised the doctoral thesis on which this book is based. I am also grateful to my other academic mentor and long-time colleague Brynjar Lia, whose advice and support have been invaluable and whose talent and integrity remain a great inspiration.

My doctoral project was made possible by a three-year scholarship from the Norwegian Ministry of Defence. My employer, the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), kindly offered me the supplementary resources and the time to carry it out. I am also indebted to Bernard Haykel at Princeton University and to Monica Toft and Steven Miller at Harvard University for awarding me postdoctoral fellowships in 2007–8 and 2008–9 that enabled me to turn my Ph.D. thesis into a book.

I cannot overstate my gratitude to the King Faisal Foundation and the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh for hosting me as a visiting student on my five trips to Saudi Arabia. I thank Prince Turki al-Faisal, Yahya Ibn Junayd and their colleagues for their unconditional support and practical assistance during my fieldwork. I will repay in the currency I know they value the most: academic objectivity and sincerity.

I am also grateful to the many people I met during my fieldwork in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan and elsewhere. I am forever indebted to Saud al-Sarhan, Mansur al-Nuqaydan and Yusuf al-Dayni who unselfishly shared their vast knowledge of Saudi Islamism and helped me in innumerable ways since I first arrived in the kingdom in April 2004. I am very thankful to Fahd al-Shafi, Nasir al-Huzaymi, Nasir al-Barakk, Hudhayfa Azzam, Abdallah Anas and certain anonymous friends, whose willingness to share knowledge seemed limitless. I thank Nawaf Obaid for his invaluable insights into the QAP’s history, and Abd al-Rahman al-Hadlaq, Lt.-General Mansur al-Turki and Major Umar al-Zalal at the Saudi Ministry of Interior for their openness. I interviewed
many other generous people who are unfortunately too numerous to be listed here.

In preparing this book, I have benefited from the fruitful interaction with colleagues in the field who have generously shared documents, contacts, information and ideas with me. My closest companion in this process has been Stéphane Lacroix, with whom I have enjoyed an exceptionally fruitful and trustful working relationship since we first enrolled in Sciences-Po together in 2003. I also thank Steffen Hertog, William McCants, Marc Lynch, Robert Lacey, Lawrence Wright and Peter Bergen, all of whom, along with Brynjar Lia, kindly commented on parts of the manuscript. I also thank my other colleagues at FFI's terrorism research project for their help and inspiration over the years. I have also benefited from discussions with, and the travel companionship of, fellow doctoral students at Sciences-Po in Paris, notably Carine Abou Lahoud, Abd al-Asiem al-Difraoui, Amelie Le Renard, Nabil Mouline, Thomas Pierret, Omar Saghi and Abdallah Tourabi. Many other brilliant scholars and reporters have helped me in various ways on this project, including Mariam Abou Zahab, Awadh al-Badi, Faiza Ambah, Faris Bin Huzzam, Christopher Boucek, James Buchan, Frank Gardner, Roger Hardy, Andrew Higgins, Gregory Johnsen, Sean Keeling, Michael Knights, Roel Meijer, Rolf Mowatt-Larsen, Tim Niblock, Reuven Paz, Bernard Rougier, Kjetil Selvik, Guido Steinberg, Camille Tawil and Christoph Wilcke.

I am also grateful to all the people who offered practical assistance during my field research. I especially thank Bishoy Salah, Ashraf Ibrahim and Nicholas Stivang for helping me around Cairo in 2003; I thank Ambassador Jan Bugge-Mahrt and Trond Rudi at the Norwegian Embassy in Riyadh; I thank the librarians at the Arab World Documentation Unit in Exeter University; and I thank Wyn Bowen, Michael Clarke and Peter Neumann for facilitating my research visit at King’s College London in 2005–6.

Finally I am thankful for the support and patience of my editor Marigold Acland, the extremely useful and detailed comments by manuscript reviewer David Commins and the invaluable helping hand of copy-editor Monica Kendall. They have greatly improved the original text. All remaining errors and inaccuracies are mine alone.

Last but not least I thank my family and close friends for their unrelenting support and patience throughout this laborious process. Above all, I thank my wife Målfrid, who put up with my long absences, commented on several chapters and, in the midst of it all, gave me two wonderful children.
A note on conventions

Transliteration

Words and titles in Arabic are transcribed using a simplified version of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* system. Ayn is not included at the beginning of names (e.g. Abdallah not ‘Abdallah). Transcribed Arabic words are never capitalised. Arabic words in unabridged English dictionaries (Qur’an, hadith etc.) are not italicised.

Names

Arabic names are transcribed according to the above-mentioned system (though capitalised) unless a different transcription is dominant in English-language texts (e.g. Khobar not Khubar). Where different usages occur, I use the one closest to the above-mentioned system (e.g. Usama bin Ladin not Osama bin Laden). The article is dropped before common place-names (e.g. Riyadh not al-Riyadh).

Footnotes and references

Footnotes pertain to the entire preceding paragraph, not only the preceding sentence. Full URL and consultation date of Internet sources have been omitted, but all cited documents have been stored electronically by the author. Some interviewees have been anonymised.