Counter-Terrorism in Saudi Arabia:
Narratives, Practices and Challenges

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Abstract

Since 9/11, both in the Middle East and worldwide, the academic, political and religious focus on extreme radicalisation has intensified. The attacks carried out in Riyadh, the capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by Al-Qaeda in 2003, motivated a succession of bombings within and outside of the Kingdom. These events have led to a plethora of general and specific studies to understand the phenomenon of extremism.

This thesis investigates radicalisation in Saudi Arabia since 2001, focusing on the impact of Al-Qaeda and its impact on individuals and the state. It specifically focuses on the role of the Mohammed bin Naif Centre for Counselling, Rehabilitation and Care, in this context referred to as 'the Centre', analysing its function as a tool for the 'soft power' strategy that has been initiated by the Saudi Arabian Government, intended to de-radicalise individuals who are perceived by the state to have been misled.

The study uses a detailed literature review to unpack the historical trends regarding the origins of Saudi Arabia, the political differences therein, as well as the different religious interpretations which are attributed as being a root cause of discontent which thereby leads to radicalisation and violent extremism in the region. In this thesis, I trace the various schools of thought regarding the treatment of religion and governance in relation to local and international politics, and how this impacts upon the radicalisation of individuals.

A Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) approach is used to highlight the need to view studies on security from a reflexive perspective, both in the researcher and the researched subject matter, namely the terrorist organisations and the governments against which they are fighting. The concept of governance is analysed and how this either precipitates or prevents dissent that results in violence.

In addition, the political and religious solutions to radicalisation are assessed, with a specific focus on the de-radicalisation process, as reflected through a qualitative research on the views and thinking of the practitioners working in the Centre. In this context, I investigate the motives, roles, responsibilities and strategies used in executing their roles, with the aim of seeking possible explanations for the causes of radicalisation and the challenges faced in de-radicalising individuals. Their views are used to form the main basis for the data for this research.

This study should be of interest to politicians, security experts, academics, religious leaders, Islamic scholars and interested individuals. It will be a valuable contribution towards an understanding of the causes, consequences and possible solutions to addressing Islamic extremism and radicalisation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background context

After 9/11, counter-terrorism strategy was changed both within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as globally. The audacity with which terrorist organisations approached extremist activities, before and after 9/11, not only caused local and international counter-terrorism strategies to appear ineffective and outmoded, it motivated countries throughout the world to adopt new approaches to counter extremism. Differing approaches to researching security have been influenced by traditional security studies in contrast to the recent CTS.

Saudi Arabia has adopted what is known as the 'soft power' approach, which has been designed to surpass the previous 'hard power' strategies of counter-terrorism. The extremist threat had become a reality emboldened by the attack on the prestigious Twin Towers of the US, which were a symbol of its economic might. There was a worldwide perception of the need to deal with this threat using a range of innovative counter-terrorism strategies, including both hard and soft measures. There remains an on-going threat by extremist organisations, as evidenced by the attacks in January 2015 directed towards the Charlie Ebdo Magazine in Paris. It is arguable that this event has highlighted a need for western countries to implement the counter-terrorism measures similar to those currently being used in Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Naif Centre for Counselling and Care in order to combat the threat of extremist terrorism. This approach to counter-terrorism bases its strategy on a re-education process where the extremists' views are addressed through debate with the individuals. From a Foucaultian perspective, this is inadequate as institutions such as the Mohammad bin Naif Centre could be perceived as patronising and providing an unequal platform for negotiation with the perceived dissenters (Savoia, 2012).

This introduction provides background contextualisation of the different narratives regarding the question of radicalisation and de-radicalisation in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi political landscape has been challenged by new interpretations that have affected and influenced cultural and ideological debates. These have influenced the radicalisation processes that have led to extremist terrorism. The consequence of this has led to various approaches towards de-radicalisation, one of which is the justification of the Mohammed bin Naif Centre and its validity in the Saudi context. The emergence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, herein after referred to as AQAP, in 2003 is strongly related to the American intervention in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 and Iraq in 2003, as well as its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 (Asseri, 2009; Lacey, 2009; Hegghammer, 2010). These events had a massive bearing on the political dynamics relating to radicalisation, both on a domestic and international scale, as well as the related terrorist activities, which became the order of the day in Saudi Arabia and internationally. In this context, CTS would apply due to the need for governments to actively engage the perceived 'terrorist' organisations in peace agreements that reduce or prevent hard power measures (Herring, 2008).

The Iraq wars have resulted in the attraction of anti-West sentiments and debates about Saudi Arabia's domestic and foreign policy. There exists contention regarded the invasion of Iraq by the US, and Saudi Arabia's obligations to America as an ally. This alliance was a reassurance to the West that Saudi Arabia was still politically allied to it, despite some assumed ideological differences that had muddied relations, such as the fifteen Saudi suicide bombers who took part in the 9/11 attacks on the US (Lacey, 2009). It is arguable that since the rejection in 1991 by the Saudi Government of Osama bin Laden's offer to fight in Iraq that this could have led to bin Laden recruiting the Saudi bombers for the attack on the US. This was Al-Qaeda's fulfilment of its declaration of war on the US, and any other states that were perceived as enemies of Islam. Al-Qaeda's stance could be viewed as a

'terrorist act' by states, yet according to CTS, 'non-state' actors in conflict should be viewed as having a say in political events (Herring, 2008).

The bombings in Riyadh in 2003, executed by AQAP, was one of the first major signs of terrorism in Saudi Arabia. Various questions and debates have been raised regarding the motives of these bombings. Initially, activists who were opposed to the state's domestic and international policies were imprisoned, and with this came allegations of the torture and death of those prisoners, in turn leading to further uprisings and bombings. Realisation occurred of the need to adopt a softer counter-terrorism strategy towards extremism, given the sporadic attacks in other countries, such as Bali in 2002, Madrid in 2004 and the '7/7' attacks in London in 2005. From a CTS perspective, as well as other governments internationally, the Saudi Government sought to investigate the ideological thinking and motivation behind the perpetrations of violent extremism in order to prevent further violence (Asseri, 2009). Emerging from these conflicts has been the realisation that total governmental political decision-making and control is causing the 'subjectification' of its citizens where unquestioned discipline towards the state must be observed (Savoia, 2012).

The violence that emerged with the political, religious and ideological divisions in Saudi Arabia, in 2003 and later, led to the Government finding ways to adopt softer counter-terrorism approaches that were locally specific. The connections and motives behind the development of violent extremist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, have a historic connection to the fight against the occupation of Islamic lands, for example, that of the Russians, whom they fought and removed from Afghanistan (Hegghammer, 2010). This spurred these fighters to think they could use the same approach and ideology to protect Islam against the perceived interference of the West in Islamic lands. This is partly because the groups were, and are, inspired by a commitment to the strict and

humble practices of predecessors, such as Juhayman, one of the first to form organised resistance against the Saudi administration along religious lines. He later became the leader of al-Ikhwan in Saudi Arabia, which attacked the Holy site in Makkah in 1979. This organisation was among the first to practice 'rejectionism', which then became the inspiration and panacea for Islamic extremism then and now. Such behaviour, and an interpretation to religious doctrine and politics, was perceived as acts of madmen who needed 'normalisation' through processes of political control and demands for their individual discipline and submission to the state. This has proved impossible because the so-called extremists have established an ideological basis for their resistance and offensive acts against the state through acts that have been labelled as terrorism.

A new extremist version of the Sahwa social movement emerged later to influence the religious and political debates that were the key to extremist thinking (Lacey, 2009). These events determined the level of extremist fundamentalism that influenced the political and religious rhetoric. This later spurred individuals to engage in political thinking, to the extent of becoming political jihadists outside the country. Interestingly, both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders have had a link with the US, training as revolutionary jihadist fighters. During the 1979 Afghan resistance against Russia, they became specialists in revolutionary thinking and bomb making. It is arguable that this would prove to be a difficult political and ideological challenge to their respective governments. Such training, combined with the extremist religious and political ideology of these former fighters, has led to the new form of resistance and violent backlash towards current political and religious administrations in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia, as well as internationally in the West. This knowledge assists in recognising the difficulty in resolving the Afghan war's creation of this form of extremism, and how it has developed into a force to be reckoned with – militarily, ideologically and religiously – and recognising that there have

been ideological sympathisers both locally and internationally. Knowing that such origins of political problems may provide the solution to resolving them has been the focus of various studies that have been conducted on counter-terrorism from a Foucaultian perspective. It is of paramount importance for governments to study, reflect and analyse the way in which to reverse the tide of extremism, bearing in mind the history of the religious controversies that have taken hold on the political and ideological debates on extremist radicalisation in the Middle East and around the world. This would aid the powerful states' processes of reflexivity where they may start to reflexively view themselves as contributors to the violence on innocent people as well (Herring, 2008; Savoia, 2012).

There are substantial challenges and complications to the process of de-radicalisation and reversing extremist thinking. These debates involve the Saudi state's politically pragmatic alliance with the US in general. Saudi Arabia and the US have had various historical and longstanding strategic agreements, which were fully sealed when the Saudi state found itself in a complex diplomatic situation regarding the fifteen Saudi suicide attackers involved in the attack on the Twin Towers on 9/11, as well as its policy on violent extremism. These contentious issues seemed to oblige Saudi Arabia to further guarantee its political alliance with the US in order to protect its political dominance and protection within the region, as shown by the Joint Commission for Strategic Dialogue in 2005 (Asseri, 2009). The extremists were inflamed, seeing this as a betrayal and denial of sharia law. As a consequence, it is possible to conclude that the reputation of the US, then and now, regarding the use of hard power measures, has not assisted the counter-terrorism cause in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

1.2 Historic and cultural variables

The above discussion illustrates the links between the historic origins of dissent in Saudi Arabia, linking them to current events, and the strategies for countering violent extremism. It highlights that this is not a new phenomenon but one that is rooted in its historic political, cultural and religious factors. The focus of this study lies, in part, in the investigation of the developmental pattern of religious and political dissent leading to violent extremism. This focus can be said to be in line with the Foucautian analogy of the state as a pastorate, invented by theocratic principles of leadership and population control (Savoia, 2012).

There are many reasons to explain this pattern, the major one being the controversial interpretation of Islam by charismatic individuals who then, after exploiting their ideological influence, gain popularity and appear, in the eyes of different establishments, to use such interpretations for their personal or political gains. It is necessary to address the rise of historic and current extremism.. The key contentious issues and solutions may lie in the various arbitrary approaches to tolerating and addressing religious interpretations and political decisions in relation to sharia law and international political alliances. Also, some events have appeared to stir continuing discontent, locally and internationally, since they impact upon Islamic nations and principles. It is important to understand the complexity of radicalisation in relation to politics and religion.

Events like the Arab Spring, and new social media technological advances, have shifted political and religious reasoning and positioning in the region. The development of this research as well as the development of events as a result, has seen a shift in focus on the concentration of hard power measures towards soft measures. The advent of the Arab Spring, and its consequences for the political, diplomatic and religious balances today, have had an effect on the different forms of counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation strategies locally in

Saudi Arabia and internationally. The reason behind this could be in the perception of the application of religious interpretation in politics, where religion is becoming a means for political ends (Asseri, 2009: 60).

This particular research project has been fluid due to current events regarding extremism having been dynamic. It seeks to address the constant political and social fluidity, innovations in policy and politics, as well as the resultant ideological stances taken to address the challenges pre and post 9/11, during and after the Arab Spring, and to the present day. These major events have and are influencing extremist ideology and activity. They have created a new phenomenon whose motivation and grip need to be investigated. Saudi Arabia has always addressed political challenges from an Islamic cultural perspective, which has always attracted varied religious, political and academic debates, interpretations and applications of what are perceived as acceptable religious, social and political solutions to domestic and international issues. It would seem that this approach has produced numerous challenges regarding what is considered acceptable legally, politically and culturally, as well as morally, in the Saudi domestic context. These interpretations have consequences, both internationally and locally, which have led to conflict, arising out of opposition to what the administration may deem to be the appropriate solutions for addressing local religious, political and even diplomatic decisions. This has its challenges when faced with an opposition that will not accept total government dictates, while an uncontrolled violent political dissent cannot be tolerated. In this context, reflexive thinking has to be practised by both state and non-state actors (Herring, 2008).

Political disputes in Saudi Arabia have a historical link. During the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there were disagreements between the state and fighters, such as the Ikhawn in 1929, causing splits on a religious and political level, which in turn led to wars

and division. In order to understand current extremist radicalisation, this demands an understanding of the history behind political and religious differences (Lacey, 2009; Lacroix, 2011). Several factors can be considered in this context. The significant influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been exiled in early 1960s from Arab countries, such as Egypt and Syria to Saudi Arabia, had an impact on Saudi society. They were an influential political and academic force in the country, and prior to this they had clashed with leaders in their respective home countries. Their hold on universities and education sectors allowed them to have influence in Saudi politics (Al-Zaydi, 2015).

The Saudi state does not exist in a vacuum; it is beset with ideological threats from neighbouring Iran (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005). It is important to bear in mind the nation's priorities of preserving and upholding Sunni religious values. However, such a stance has its political and diplomatic dilemmas, especially as viewed from an Islamic extremist point of view. It would appear that in an Islamic cultural context, particularly the Saudi one, liberalism has its limits and cannot be tolerated given that it has never existed since the formation of the nation. These views do not disregard the need for and the actual practice of reflexivity by the state, regarding political matters.

There is a conflict of values in the context of Islamic interpretation by radical Islamists, whereby the latter assert that the Saudi Government's alliance with countries from other cultures illustrates the state's illegitimacy on religious grounds. There are historical reasons to explain this policy, dating back to the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, when religious clerics allied with Al Saud to form the political and religious forces that would later determine the Saudi power base. Saudi Arabia's resultant foreign policy and consequent dilemmas can be witnessed in its policies on jihad and the protection of Sunni Islam, as seen in its sentiments regarding the preservation of Sunni Islam and how this

impacts on its relations with neighbouring countries such as Iraq, Syria and Iran, as well as internationally with the West. There are instances where the Government of Saudi Arabia has been challenged and undermined by analysts who may not acknowledge the complexities of the religious and political situation in the region.

The political and ideological pressures and conflicts, covert and overt, from neighbouring countries, such as Iran with its Shia religion, inspired international policy and the sectarian wars in Iraq and Syria, as well as the continuing Palestine-Israel conflict, all of which have a bearing on Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation programmes. Compounding this, according to hard-line extremist Islamists, is the detestable alliance between Saudi Arabia and the US. This appears to be a political and religious dilemma which most extremist organisations and, interestingly, the Shia, regard as the Saudi state's worst decision, and which underpin the heightened criticisms and ideological justifications against the Saudi state. From a sharia law perspective, it would appear as if the Government has double standards when dealing with international political cases. Some Muslims have allowed jihadi fighters to engage in foreign lands, such as Afghanistan. This has set the precedent for war veterans returning from countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq and Syria to hold an ideological and political mind-set with the potential of becoming a threat to security.

1.3 International exposure and social media

Recently, there has been a rise of new radical and revolutionary Islamic thinking that has challenged the power of administrations internationally in the Middle East. The 'Arab Spring' has been accompanied by a new wave of social media, which has developed a new and uncensored form of social protest, paving the way for extremist thinking and persuasion. Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups have used the social media effectively to their

advantage (Fighal, 2009). This has been their platform for radicalising individuals, by publicising their extremist ideology and glorifying their violent approach. The use of the social media for extremist purposes has evolved in such a way that it is now very complicated, while being compounded by faster and more complex forms of agitation. The spokesman for the Saudi Ministry of Interior stated that more than half a million unknown users have been identified as being a substantial factor to the negative effect and development of negative social media. It is important to note that the difficulty to control and monitor such media outlets is a serious security threat (al Arabiya, 2014), and undermines any attempts at peaceful bilateral resolutions.

The internationalisation of study opportunities for young Saudis, for instance the King Abdullah Scholarship Programmes, has exposed them to a new epistemological phenomenon, in terms of politics and religion. This trend has rendered the concept of the closed and 'conservative states' into those that are open and vibrant with political and religious debate. It is reasonable to conclude that this has unavoidably left them prone to extremism, and highlights the need to approach radicalisation from a calculated empirical and scientific, rather than repressive and unquestioning approach.

It is important, therefore, to embark on a concerted analysis of the impact of this new social and technological phenomenon in relation to the radicalisation and militarisation of individuals currently. It is possible to conclude that part of this radicalisation has led to the popularity and willingness of individuals to engage in violent extremism. There has been a new development behind the need to study the impact of this new intellectual and ideological assertiveness in Muslim individuals, by governments, locally and internationally. The intention of all governments is to make sure that the impact of this phenomenon is not taken

over by violent extremism that attracts sympathy, and later causes individuals to engage and fight for its causes.

This thesis locates the various factors that led to the successes or challenges of attempts at using Saudi-specific de-radicalisation, while focusing on the Saudi-centric approach in relation to international, especially Western, strategies as a central example. To a significant extent, most of Saudi Arabia's challenges have been precipitated by social media radicalisation. The appeal of Al-Qaeda, its policies, and powers to debate and even discredit governments, has developed its audacity to declare war on the US and other countries, as well as proceed to attack them and show these attacks in the media.

1.4 Overt confrontation and challenges to state policy

Individual challenges and confrontations to state-sanctioned laws and political decisions, despite their spectacle, are not new, having a link to historical individuals and events. As stated above, there is a pattern to the development of the philosophy, inspiration, and ideology, as well as the appeal, of such extremists. The core of this attractiveness, it would appear, may be inspired by the audacious confrontations to the state administration of extremist leaders such as Juhayman in 1979, Osama bin Laden pre and post 9/11, Zarqawi in Iraq and currently al-Baghdadi of ISIS (IS). All of them were, or are, adventurous extremists who have challenged the West's diplomatic and military foreign policy, the Middle Eastern governments, particularly Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia, the latter being described by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of ISIS as the "head of the snake and stronghold of disease" (Al Omran, 2014). They have challenged the religious as well as the political status quo in the name of preserving Islam, and protecting it from Western threats and alleged corruption. It could be said that the motivation of these individuals varies; they may be driven by individual and grandiose religious interpretation, by political inspiration or by religious and intellectual

solutions that inspire them to think they are revolutionaries (Jarvis, 2009). There were and are many extremist agitators who have fallen into trouble with the law, for example, Al Zarqawi, Al Bagdadi, bin Laden, Al Zwahri, Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada to name a few. As a result, they attract popularity among the ordinary and young people who hold anti-administration, as well as anti-Western, sentiments. The states also compound this by deploying the concept of 'terrorism' in a way that disregards the views of those opposed to the political status quo (Herring, 2008). In this sense, dissenters view the state as a power that has become understood as having 'historical correlates of practices of government', where the history of governmental totality has become a methodological tool to be resisted (Savoia, 2012).

Regardless of the reason behind, and the scale of, the extremist motives, there is a need to dig very deeply into the effect of these motives, and to study the impact and hold which extremist narratives have. This would provide a measurement of the power that extremist radicals have, which is capable of inspiring some Muslims worldwide to adopt a uniform and uncompromising violent attitude. Individuals, from all backgrounds, have been persuaded into engaging in extremist sympathies: rising with a uniform response and resoluteness against governments, locally and internationally. In recent times, there has been an unprecedented determination of young Muslims to sympathise with, and even join, Al-Qaeda and other related organisation, demonstrated by the growth of recruitment and consequent responses to join in extremist activities and organisation in order to fight. The questions to address this phenomenon are numerous, and there are no straightforward answers. A balance between traditional governance and reflexive political practice is necessary (Heath-Kelly, 2010).

This thesis therefore seeks to address the experiences of the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, and its dealings with former detainees who are perceived to

have been involved in extremist and terrorist activities. It seeks to look at the claims made about its success, locally and externally, by the press and local and international academics, as well as by opposition movements. As mentioned above, there have been criticisms levelled at the Centre by various sectors. The key focus therefore is to study the specific cultural, scientific and empirical approaches used therein, in relation to other Muslim countries and the Western models' approaches, while addressing the concept of CTS. From a CTS point of view, the Centre could be seen as a place of individual re-direction, a place for re-moulding individuals to perceive reality in the state's epistemology (Savoia, 2012).

1.5 The Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre

The Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, operating under the umbrella body of the Ministry of Interior (MOI), is a typical example of the philosophy behind the stance of the Saudi Arabian Government regarding soft power-based counter-terrorism measures. It could be criticised from a reflective and critical stance as state power and ideology that is meant to influence the political path of individuals (Herring, 2008).

The Centre is essentially a prison for those who have committed non-lethal terrorist offences, or who have participated in high risk Islamic activism without yet carrying out acts of terrorism. Its ethos is reformative, and it is committed to 'de-radicalising' those who are admitted in to the Centre. Its approach embodies everything that relates to the state's soft power strategies against violent extremism and the ideologies that support it. In a document presented at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) (2010), the Saudi system of rehabilitation was succinctly summarised as being one of the most systematically structured approaches: a collaborative process between the universities and the Centre's counselling and care departments.

The Centre was conceived as a result of the Saudi state's 'war of ideas' against extremism. The programme has adopted a unique solution to the Saudi terrorism problem. It began in secret, and not in response to outside pressure. Its origins arose out of the recognition, within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, that something had to be done to address extremist sympathies. It is a clear acknowledgement of the Government's reflexivity and awareness of the threat that the 'war of ideas' has posed. According to data gathered from the interviews, the implementation of the rehabilitation process at the Centre involves advice, rehabilitation and care. The advice phase involves preventive courses outside of the prison, and curative courses inside, while the rehabilitation phase involves educational, training, and culture and sports programmes. Lastly, the care phase involves pre-care, which involves care within the Centre where even the family is co-opted into the strategies, as well as training the beneficiaries to reintegrate back into society. In this process, financial support for personal circumstances ranging from psychological support to disabilities is made available, and its graduates may even receive financial support towards marriage, funding further studies and to start a business.

1.5.1 Aims of the Centre

The aim of the programme is "to assist those individuals that have espoused *takfiri* beliefs" to "repent and abandon terrorist ideologies". According to Ashour (2009), *takfir* is the act of accusing a Muslim of abandoning Islam (or the perceived correct Islamic teachings) and becoming an infidel or an apostate (*murrtadd*). In some instances it can either be passive or violent. The programme seeks to 'de-radicalise' extremists and extremist sympathisers by engaging them in intensive religious debates and psychological counselling. According to the Centre's mission statement, the de-radicalisation strategy seeks to develop knowledge and behavioural skills through a set of programmes delivered by specialist advisers. In an

interview with al-Abdallah (2010), Professor al-Attayan, one of the Centre's psychologists, states that the Centre caters for the rehabilitation of individuals involved in violent terrorist activities fuelled by psychological, religious, academic and social reasons. He states that the purpose of the Centre is to cater for rehabilitation rather than to serve as a prison. As a result, the approach at this institution is different from that of a prison. The main aim is to promote behavioural change that could lead to disengagement and possibly de-radicalisation, and which occurs through a change of thinking or beliefs (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). Yet according to Savoia (2012), such an approach from a Foucaultian perspective can be seen as developing highly individualised obedience directed towards supporting government, something akin to obedience to the government.

The purpose of the prison is to act as a deterrent, while the Centre acts as a place for guidance and care. The beneficiaries are constantly reminded that their presence at the Centre is for their own social, psychological and religious benefit and the new inmates have their religious, legal, psychological, social and political inclinations diagnosed, in order to measure their needs during their stay at the Centre. This understanding helps to provide the necessary education and de-radicalisation process suitable to put into effect the best solutions for disengaging the individuals from extremist thinking and violent activity, and reintegrating them back into their society. From a radical perspective the strategy sounds patronising and dictatorial, yet state governance has to establish a boundary not to be crossed in case there develops anarchy and chaotic governance. The criticism of Foucault and CTS relates to the fact that that these theories seem to be idealistic rather than practical.

1.5.2 Researcher impressions of the Centre

According to government and academic literature on the Centre, the beneficiaries are provided with a free system of movement inside. From observation, there is a 50000 metre

holding area around the beneficiaries' rooms, which provide freedom for them to move around and meet in a communal living room. They can pray and relax together, as this promotes the intended homely living atmosphere. The Centre itself has two parts: one is a comfortable area which is a former holiday resort with swimming pools, palm trees and low walls for a secure rehabilitation centre, whilst the other side resembles a prison. There are guards, mainly in plain clothes, and whilst the security system differs to that of a prison, the beneficiaries are constantly watched. It can be described as a Centre aimed towards freedom.

The average age of the beneficiaries ranges between twenty to thirty years old. Approximately 3000 beneficiaries have graduated from the Centre (El-Said, 2013; Arab News, 2014). The staffing at the Centre is mainly made up of permanent security workers, in alliance with experts, who come from different university departments of religion, security, criminology and psychology. These experts are part of the team that designs and implements the rehabilitation programme. The atmosphere at the Centre is not tense but is relaxed, open and friendly; the dress code is traditional, but not strict, and there is no uniform. The sole aim is to gently guide the beneficiaries towards the correct mode of religious practice as defined by the Centre, and to guide their behaviour to allow them to reintegrate back into society.

1.5.3 Counselling at the Centre

From a Foucaultian perspective (Savoia, 2012), counselling at a political rehabilitation centre is analogous to Foucault's 'psychiatric power' where the government and its workers structure the field of other people's thinking and actions, as would be done in psychiatric institutions. The counselling programme is based on the authorities' perceived benevolence, and the idea that vengeance or retribution is not sought. The Centre's approach is based on the assumption that the suspects were manipulated, lied to and misled by extremists into moving away from 'true Islam', and that the state wants to help these individuals to return to

what it sees as the correct path. This approach is based on a strategy that focuses on maintaining the intellectual security of individuals and the community against extremist thinking, as defined by the Centre.

The Centre conducts the Munasaha Committees, which involve dialogue at legal, psychological, religious and social levels and is consciously aware that, along with the state, it is confronting the negative effects of Al-Qaeda and other related organisations' propaganda, which is mainly influenced by *takfiri* ideology. This ideology creates anti-Western and fanatical religious interpretations regarding jihad, which have been described by professor Turki Al-Attayan as serving misguided terrorist goals in the name of Islam (al-Abdallah, 2010). With this observation in mind, the Centre has been designed along deeply religious, academic, psychological and social lines, which are intended to produce an effective system of counselling, as well as education. However, the views and perceptions of the so-called radicalised terrorists need to be considered in order to prevent the political and religious rhetoric of labelling any opposition as terrorism.

The main focus of the Saudi soft power strategy is to engage and combat extremist ideologies that are based on what the state perceives to be false interpretations of Islam. A careful and sustained study of the terrorist phenomenon calls for a deeper and well-researched approach that can ultimately serve scholars, affected communities and politicians in implementing effective soft power strategies. According to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) (2010), such an approach has been exhibited through the structures of the Centre, which has departments that work in alliance with prominent universities like the Naif Arab University of Security Sciences, the King Saud University and the Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud University. These centres are headed and run by academics specialising in the areas of religion, media, psychology, politics and security.

This combination of specialties assists in addressing and executing the state's moderate Islamic principles. This strategy recognizes that violent extremism should not be combated and fought solely through violent coercion. Rather, it should be accompanied by a soft method that prevents and challenges extremist thinking, ultimately rehabilitating detainees. In this respect, to ensure that inmates are not drawn back into terrorist activities, it is important for the state to provide inmates with post-release care.

The Centre is guided by the principles of the 'PRAC strategy', which means to prevent, rehabilitate and care for the programme's beneficiaries. These strands are then implemented through the various departments at the Centre. According to Ansary (2008), combating extremism using both hard and soft approaches could be viewed as implementing both a "security strategy" and "advocacy and advisory strategies". Both of these methods are essential in fighting extremism and eliminating it. The main focus of this thesis is on the Centre as the prototype for the Saudi model of countering radicalisation and terrorism. The study of the de-radicalisation process at the Centre aims to reveal the challenges of extremism and how the state has planned to confront it using soft power methods. In this respect, Gunaratna and Rubin (2011: 1) observe, "A successful counter-terrorism policy must ensure [the beneficiaries'] smooth reintegration into society". This, according to Hoffeman, (cited by Gunaratna and Rubin, 2011), can be futile if attempts at rehabilitation are done through strict ideological and political lines. As a result, the focus of this thesis is to study the process of de-radicalisation at the Centre and its accompanying challenges. One of the aims is based mainly on the experiences of the practitioners' implementation of the process in general. From a Foucaultian perspective, the very concept of 'soft-power' is patronising, assuming the benevolence and control of the state in its reduced force of controlling non-state political actors (Herring, 2008; Stump and Dixit, 2012).

1.5.4 A brief demographic description of the Centre

According to Boucek (2011: 87), the exact statistics relating to the Centre's inmates are difficult to obtain. He states that, since the 2003 domestic attacks, approximately 3000 inmates have gone through the Centre's counselling programme. Some of these have arrived in batches from Guantanamo. Approximately 123 Saudis were released from Guantanamo in 2009. Two of them died, two refused to participate in the Saudi programme, and ten remain in rehabilitation at the Centre.

Boucek observes that as a result of the counselling and re-education programmes at the Centre, approximately 1400 of those inmates have renounced their former beliefs. In 2009, approximately 1000 inmates were detained at the Centre. This number accounted for those still in the process of rehabilitation, those who have gone through the programme and still serving their sentences, as well as those who had attempted and failed to go through the process, or refused to participate altogether (El-Said and Barrett, 2013: 218). Asseri (2009: 104) and Strack (2007: 3) have confirmed this and observed that, between 2004 and 2007, 3 to 5 per cent of the hard-line inmates relapsed into their old habits after release. Asseri (2009: 107) confirms that more than 3000 persons have participated in the programme, with 90 per cent of them renouncing their former beliefs and being released. It is not clear what the source of these statistics is, whether they are empirical or political is not definite since access to such data is extremely difficult.

Boucek (2008), cited in Asseri (2009: 107), asserts that there is an evident trend in former inmates to leave the Centre as moderate Muslims. He states that this is to be expected, since initially the inmates would have been involved in terrorist activities as a consequence of their quest for understanding and defending their culture and religion. According to Boucek (2011: 88), even women have been involved in the de-radicalisation programme, in the

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context of using them as relatives who could be relied upon to assist in further de-radicalising the inmates. He goes on to state that the Saudi Government has acknowledged that there has been an 80 per cent success rate, with a 20 per cent failure rate. El-Said and Barrett (2013: 218) analyse Boucek's findings, and his explanation for the high rates of recidivism. He explains this is a consequence of the former inmates' having missed the opportunity to engage in rigorous debate, as well as being involved in the many advanced and sophisticated social, psychological, historical, religious, art, and other extra-curricular programmes created after 2006.

There are various reasons that may motivate extremist behaviour and lead to terrorist activity. Some of these involve sympathy from fellow Muslims, towards other Muslims who have been persecuted by perceived foreign invaders in other countries (Al-Hadlaq, 2011), with examples of this ranging from the persecution of Palestinians to the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan (Al-Hadlaq, 2010: 68). According to the US magazine The Economist (2008), US officials recognize the success of the Saudi counter-terrorism strategy. The magazine states that, "Saudi authorities … have a firm grip on the militants. Their policy of mixed hard-nosed security operations and an extensive de-radicalisation program [*sic*] in the prisons, with social measures for the families of the militants". Moreover, the Saudi Government hosted an International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation between the 24 and 26 February 2005, acknowledging the strides that they have made regarding co-operation with other international institutions involved in terrorist studies and rehabilitation. Examples of such countries and organisations are Singapore, the US, the UK, the European Union and the United Nations (El-Said and Barrett, 2013: 220).

1.5.5 Media and academic reviews of the Centre

According to Boucek (2008), Saudi officials have tried to prove the efficiency and effectiveness of the Centre by giving statistics that show that only a minority of former inmates, about 1 to 2 per cent, have reverted to terrorism. Statistics vary in this regard as, according to Stracke (2007), other Saudi officials have confirmed that 3 to 5 per cent of the hard line prisoners have relapsed into their old ways. Al-Hadlaq (2011: 64) reiterates the same observation, citing the success and effectiveness of the programme as being mainly focused upon the easily impressionable inmates, ideologically vulnerable to extremist persuasion. He states that such beneficiaries were unlike the high profile hardliners, such as Said al Shihiri, one of the leaders of AQAP who have proved to be difficult to de-radicalise. Some academic writers, such as Horgan and Braddock (2010), have branded some of the claims, in relation to the success of the Centre's de-radicalisation programme, as politically partisan. They state that it is difficult to measure de-radicalisation and disengagement in individuals and claim that it can take up to five years to see noticeable behavioural changes in radical extremists, which is no guarantee for de-radicalisation or disengagement.

Furthermore, such measurement involves a host of behaviour modifications that call for continuous monitoring and other variables (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Lankford and Gillespie, 2011). They assert that conclusively declaring the successes of programmes at the Centre could be driven by political motives, rather than scientific research and measurement (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; House, 2012: 203-5). After all, the terms are heavily politicised labels that serve the interests of the definers, namely the states. Most credible claims about the Centre's successes have only been observed in the strides made with the ideologically and religiously ignorant and impressionable individuals who only participated in violent extremist

crimes out of emotion rather than deep political and ideological persuasion (Al-Hadlaq, 2010: 59; Ezzarqui, 2010).

Various other criticisms have been made of the Saudi de-radicalisation programmes that are run at the Centre. Most of these have focused on the issue of recidivism. Lankford and Gillispie (2011) and Horgan and Braddock (2010) have sought to review the reasons and processes behind the behavioural actions that lead to recidivism. They have sought to explore this phenomenon by linking it with the social-psychological make-up of the terrorists during their indoctrination period. They observe that the Saudi counter-terrorism strategy needs to be more comprehensive and well versed in the process of reversing extremist indoctrination. The causes of radicalisation and recidivism are the key issues in the thematic concerns that arise in this ethnographic research. Statistics of recidivism vary. The Saudi claims of the declining rates of recidivism, 12 per cent, are based on official and political perspectives (Arab News, 2014; Braude, 2014), not empirical ones (Bouceck, 2011). However, the West's rates and views on recidivism are also mainly based on the analysis of variables, like the bifurcation of individual behaviour publicly and privately (Braude, 2014). The political and religious triggers that promote or hinder recidivism are varied (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). Good examples of the complexity of de-radicalisation and recidivism can be seen in the Saudi 'living suicide bomb,' Ahmed al-Shayea (Beaumont, 2014).

The Western writers stated above have claimed that the Saudi strategy has been found to be wanting in the area of reviewing its approaches to reversing indoctrination and its general counter-terrorism strategies. Furthermore, various writers, such as House (2012: 203), Al-Hadlaq (2011: 60) and Horgan and Braddock (2010) have made observations on the fact that there are many factors behind terrorist activity. Fink and El-Said (2011) and Lankford and Gillespie (2011), observe that there is a need for an in-depth individualised care

programme that should not just centre upon political and religious correction. They observe that there is a need for a constant review of the design of the Centre's de-radicalisation programmes. The term 'correction' in this context, assumes the state's claims for higher moral standards than its opponents, rendering it patronising.

Prince Mohammed bin Naif believes that it is crucial to win the support of the Saudi society (El-Said, 2013). Lacey (2009: 258) states that there is little chance that the recidivists could survive in Saudi Arabia, since people do not support extremism, and because Saudi Arabia has an efficient and powerful military and intelligence service. He claims that this is the reason why most extremists move to unstable countries such as Yemen, Iraq and Syria. According to Fink and El-Said (2011), the Saudi Government quickly identified the need to remove any public sympathy for extremist behaviour, thought and actions. Fatany (2004) confirms the above assertion, stating that the state's strategy has been to ensure that the terrorists have no sympathisers amongst the public. He states that the terrorists capitalise on the ignorance of some Muslim youth about the correct rules of sharia law, turning these youth into "willing tools for killing people". Hence, the Saudi Government has embarked on a campaign to use specific websites and public speeches, especially at mosques as well as in the press. They have targeted the use of advertising media, including billboards in the streets and public places, and have used official mass media such as radio, newspapers and the television. All of these have been designed, and are run, by the state ministries for Security, Education, Sports and Islamic Affairs with the purpose of removing any terrorist influences. Other sectors have contributed to raise awareness against, as well as to actively fight, this misguided influence.

1.5.6 Challenges

The Centre is faced with the challenge of proving its effectiveness, especially with the die-hard extremist ring-leaders who have been observed to return to violent extremism after being detained and counselled (Al-Hadlaq, 2010: 60; Lankford and Gillespie, 2011). This could be an opportunity for government reflectivity and a way of changing some of its uncompromising strategies with the dissenting extremists. The key to this has been the Saudi Government's strategy of isolating the extremists, to prevent a relapse into extremist activity. There have been successful measures undertaken by the Saudi Government, through its control institutions, to increase awareness and consciousness among the general public, in relation to the danger of extremist behaviour and thinking. This has isolated the extremists regarding those vulnerable to government hard measures, especially if they revert back to violent extremism (Fatany, 2004).

Prince Mohammed has acknowledges that about 20 per cent of the detainees refuse to change, and that psychologists and religious clerics are brought in to address such cases (Lacey, 2009: 205). The Prince admits that the Centre has released some inmates who have immediately gone back to recidivism in Yemen, joining with the Al-Qaeda cell there (Lacey, 2009: 258). He states that the names of such recidivists are on the wanted list which is sometimes addressed using hard power measures, since the Saudi state is equipped to deal with extremists in both hard and soft power contexts. On the other hand, other international academics, such as Stracke (2007), acknowledge that there has been evidence that shows the effectiveness of the programme in re-educating and de-radicalising detainees. Moreover, House (2012) and Stracke (2007) detail the process as one that involves the inmates seeking solutions and being part of correcting their extremist ideology. CTS advocates for the change

in state governing strategies, like the use of hard power, which may be fuelling violent extremism. This awareness calls for a reflexive review by both the state and non-state actors.

Furthermore, Fatany (2004) states that some inmates came out of the Centre grateful that they had gone through the process. He quotes one of the inmates who declared that he thanked God for being detained and jailed as he came out of the Centre an enlightened man. However, according to Seifert (2010), it is difficult to measure and conclusively state how de-radicalisation is ever achieved with extremists. The reasons are numerous and range from social pressure from extremist sympathisers, individual attitudes and weaknesses to resist the influence of extremist persuasion, and a sense of betrayal for the extremist cause.

Moreover, there is the concept of the relationship of violent extremism to a religious commitment to martyrdom, and the urge to seek recognition through perceived heroism and a commitment to bonds made with extremist friends or recruiters. Generally, these factors and many others have a substantial impact on recidivism. There are obvious challenges to this programme as some people, and even scholars, doubt its effectiveness. Some of them highlight these challenges as a measurement of the system's failures, as well as denouncing the programme as a propaganda ploy. El-Said and Barrett (2013: 219) argue that the inmates that fell back to recidivism did so as a consequence of missing these programmes, and thus the opportunity of dealing with their trauma, as well as a chance to purge their hard-line extremist views. Despite this, the programme could be given credit for its relative success bearing in mind that it is not even a decade old. Certainly, with more scholarship in the areas of CTS, a concerted reflective approach to the study of de-radicalisation processes is bound to occur.

The arguments behind the criticism of the Centre have, ranged from debates about diagnosing and rehabilitating the psychologically affected; the individuals' related social

situations; their socio-economic conditions; their family and religion, as well as their political persuasions. There are internal and external reasons for the Centre's success and challenges. Some of these are linked to religious and legal issues relating to alleged indefinite stays in the Centre. Such complaints are used for political purposes by those opposed to the programme, especially in the media.

This thesis focuses on the fact that there are different conceptions, perceptions and narratives regarding extremist radicalisation and how to remedy it. Such narratives are local to Saudi, as well as international. This is where the debate about the contradictions and conflicts in implementing the de-radicalisation process can be located. These cannot, and must not, all be generalised under the popular perceptions, and resultant labelling and narratives regarding the equating of all Islamic extremism under the umbrella of Islamist jihadist terrorism. Such perceptions lead to consequent violent solutions, which could be motivated by the way the perpetrators are described, perceived and hence treated. A stark contrast of such approaches could be in the comparison of the approaches by the Saudi counter-terrorism centre as compared to Guantanamo and Abu Graib Prisons.

The Mohammad bin Naif Centre, on the other hand, perceives the same 'jihadi terrorists' as 'beneficiaries.' This appears to be a moderate Islamic stance that, according to the Centre's aims, considers radicalised individuals who come to the Centre as 'beneficiaries' who need guidance, not from a strictly religious, legal and academic point of view but from a communal, caring and guiding approach. The Centre's approach is deemed typically, by the state, to be aimed at correcting a wrong and distorted militant jihadist ideology: hence, with the process of de-radicalisation there is a 'war of ideas'. Despite this, critics have highlighted the scarcity of the scientific or even empirical research materials regarding de-radicalising extremists in this way. This has motivated this study, making it challenging while creating an

exciting avenue for exploration and the chance of developing new knowledge regarding specific empirical studies that could accurately address the phenomenon of violent extremism and how to reverse it. This would ultimately highlight the major threats to Saudi national security and social stability.

1.6 Background to research questions

With the above background in mind, this thesis sets out to locate the experiences of the practitioners in the de-radicalisation programmes used in Saudi Arabia, specifically at the Mohammed bin Naif Centre. Part of this study considers an understanding of the motivations for extremism. These could be due to contradictions in implementing de-radicalisation programmes by states purporting to be partners in counter-terrorism. This provides the opportunity for the states and their agents to reflect on their contributions to the rising radicalisation they seek to stop (Herring, 2008; Heath-Kelly, 2010).

Various rhetorical questions emerge as triggers for this study. Firstly, why is there a rising tide in extremist recruitment locally, in Saudi Arabia, as well as internationally? Secondly, why is there an incompatible relationship in the activists' backgrounds, for example being professionals such as doctors and engineers, as well as being from middle class families, in relation to the violent extremist activities they engage in? Thirdly, what is the relationship between the impact of differing cultural and religious thinking, race, persecution and the perceived oppression of Muslims worldwide (Asseri, 2009)? Fourthly, how have seriously genuine and concerned Muslim believers been convinced into sympathising and engaging in extremist ideology and activity? Finally, is it is possible to hypothesise that there is a clash of differing civilisations attempting to co-exist but failing and repelling each other violently?

It is important to consider such questions in order to form specialised, reflexive and context specific de-radicalisation approaches. This could explain the reasons why there have been high profile failures, as shown in the recidivism of former detainees and the return to Al-Qaeda by former beneficiaries, as compared to the much politically publicised success rates of the Centre. Closely related to this could be the massive investment in hard power initiatives that have proved expensive, both materially and in human lives. These initiatives have proved ineffective in key areas of conflict such as in Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, and recently Syria. It is important for research to consider the reasons behind such low levels of success in these contexts. Such observations could explain the motivating factors for inspiring engagement in extremist activities, while prompting governmental authorities to review their counter-terrorism strategies.

1.6.1 Religious solutions and clerics in the de-radicalisation process

This thesis' research context is grounded on the fact that there is a massive cultural bearing on de-radicalisation, especially of Saudi individuals, by Saudi authorities and institutions. Religion has a key bearing on the process, as both jihadi extremism and radicalisation are determined by religious concerns. Literature based upon the criticisms and accusations of the use of Islamic clerics, as part of the solution in the de-radicalisation process, abounds.

These criticisms are varied, ranging from a lack of respect for government allied clerics especially before, during and after 2003, to a criticism of those that seek to find political and social solutions to prevent radicalisation. This is because of the different factions in the Muslim clerical context regarding the support or denouncing of the 9/11 attacks. The differences influenced the impact that government-allied clerics had in de-radicalising extremists, along with doubts about their effectiveness from a scientific and empirically based assessment of religious approaches, to de-radicalisation. The impact of clerics has been

regarded as unscientific, arbitrary and false by Western media outlets. Locally, in Saudi Arabia, there have been debates questioning the implementation process within the Centre itself. There are editorials, which consider clerics as having a positive impact as well as a negative one in the handling of extremism (Stracke, 2007; Al-Harthi, 2014; Saudi Gazette Report, 2014;). Despite this, the Saudi Government has been recognized as providing a comprehensive solution towards de-radicalising violent extremists, internationally, because of the publicised in-depth knowledge that clerics have regarding religion and jihad (BBC, 2008; The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, DC, 2010; Braude, 2014; Delman, 2015). Some Western countries have been known to consult and invite clerics from the Kingdom to advise them on de-radicalisation approaches. Despite this, issues of religion are complex in that they rouse matters of morality and political uprightness. Resistance, on the basis of theological interpretation, can be a challenge especially if that type of resistance is based on a belief in moral religious and political uprightness and is gaining support.

Various background explanations can account for the incidence of this negativity towards government-allied clerics. Generally they were, and are, perceived to be mercenary in their alliances and functions in state affairs. This dates back to the 1960s and 1970s and the rise of the Sahwa social movement, which instigated political and extremist religious debate (Lacey, 2009; Lacroix, 2011). This extremist religious thinking later flared into extremist fundamentalism during the Iraq wars, as US troops and military equipment were brought into Saudi lands. This was a result of an open Declaration of Alliance between Saudi Arabia and the US, as sealed in the Joint Commission for Strategic Dialogue in 2005 (Asseri, 2009). This move resulted in the emergence of passionate and divisive debates, regarding government decisions and sharia law (Cordsman and Obaid, 2005: 391).

These incidents propelled the split between Saudi clerics, and generated both sympathisers and enemies of Al-Qaeda. It is crucial to note the importance and respectability of the clerics and their impact on the radicalisation and de-radicalisation of individuals, since this seemed to have a bearing on which clerics were considered acceptable or unacceptable in the eyes of the extremist radicals. Al-Qaeda later selected those clerics it deemed acceptable and rejected those it didn't, especially regarding the treatment of the US bases in Saudi Arabia during the Iraq wars (Rudolph, 2009). This had a bearing on the Saudi state's use of clerics in the de-radicalisation process. The question in this instance could be asked as to which side is correct, the non-government organisation or the state. Hence, reflexivity is paramount in matters of religious radicalisation and de-radicalisation since political matters tend to easily lead to violent confrontation.

Religious radicalism led to the arrests of some extremist clerics, as well as cautions being given to some, while others were under surveillance by the Government (Rudolph, 2009). Religion in Saudi Arabia became a contentious issue, which split the communities as well as determined the political alliances that would later bolster Al-Qaeda's influence and impact locally and internationally (Lacey, 2009). This effect is one that has determined the effectiveness, or lack thereof, in the context of the Centre's de-radicalisation attempts. The details of the conflict between the Sahwa movement, the Government and religious establishment are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

This thesis therefore seeks to investigate the effectiveness and feasibility of the de-radicalisation strategies applied at the Centre. It considers the internal and external challenges meant to limit radicalisation in relation to the successful implementation of the de-radicalisation. This has been done through qualitative research that is focused on the

experiences of those practitioners who execute the duties of countering extremism at the Mohammed bin Naif Centre.

1.6.2 Literature on extremism in Saudi Arabia

The literature on Saudi radicalisation is limited and mainly written by government-affiliated individuals, as well as accredited researchers. There is a dearth of varied and objective literature on critical terrorism studies, which needs to be reviewed critically, bearing in mind the varied backgrounds and intentions of the writers on the subject of extremist radicalisation in Saudi Arabia. Traditional Security Studies have been criticised for being blind to state or government abuses of power, what Herring (2008) refers to as taboos about state terrorism. On the other hand, CTS are viewed as impartial and balanced, yet they tend to be idealistic in their projection of political solutions.

There have been texts written solely by writers seeking to open this closed society to the outside world (Lacroix, 2011). Others have been written by researchers seeking to understand the politics of the nation, in relation to extremism and its impact on the rest of the region and the world (see Lacey, 2009; Hegghammer, 2010; Boucek, 2011) The Saudi state has commissioned some of these writers to research and write about political Islamic issues from an objective stance, which could leave the subject and content of their studies prone to suspicion and critical analysis by other opposing academic reviewers, such as House (2012) and Lacey (2009). This is because there is a need to avoid letting these seemingly moderate and objective studies appear to serve the interests of the Saudi political establishment, if taken at face value as objective and empirical studies with a Western flavour. Despite this, Stump and Dixit (2012) are very critical of the selective nature of access to information and research on terrorism. They state that the methods of data collection and analysis are not

based on explicit discussions of logical understanding and commitments that inform their application in the writing.

On the other hand, there is a rich resource of literature by writers such as El-Said (2013), Al-Hadlaq (2011), Al Saud (2009), Asseri (2009), Al-Otibi (2005) and Cordesman and Obaid (2005), who write from Arab-centric perspectives, and whose approaches and discussions are sometimes not in tandem with some of the Western countries' perspectives and observations. There are even some Arab writers who write from a critical and reflective stance, and other perspectives that may be linked to the political, social and economic issues. A case in point is the conception of the terms 'jihad' and 'terrorist'. According to Asseri (2009), jihad can be perceived in different ways. For the purposes of this study, jihad will be defined as the "intense effort of the sword, which corresponds to conflict with enemies of the Islamic community in circumstances where believers are persecuted and their freedom curtailed". This could be the basis for extremist violence, perpetrated under the perception of a perennial persecution of Muslims by perceived enemies.

With this perspective in mind, the description of a terrorist becomes specific to the perpetrator's aims and ends as seen by those he is fighting. Carr (2007: 48) observes that, "terrorism is simply the contemporary name given to, and the modern permutation of warfare deliberately waged against civilians with the purpose of destroying their will to support either leaders or policies that the agents of such violence find objectionable". This definition is extremely broad and can be applied to different terrorist movements. He suggests that terrorism can involve very unacceptable and aggressive practices including piracy, slavery and genocide. The plethora of motivators and justifiers only serves to increase the complications in developing a legally and diplomatically precise definition of the term. From a CTS perspective, the term 'terrorism' dose 'not exist independently of human interpretive

practice ... it is rather a social construction sustained by ... people and their leaders' (Stump and Dixit, 2012).

In the context of 'extremist terrorism', one can conclude that it is an act of violence against the state and humanity. However, the problem emerges when these acts are done in the name of defending a culture, religion, or a political cause. It is a very broad and non-specific term generally used for political purposes (Herring, 2008). There are various differences in the perspectives regarding the causes and future of extremism, with speculations that are varied and determined by the writers' epistemologies, whether by Western or Muslim governments and academics.

On the subject of the perennial threat of Islamic radicalism, Asseri (2009) locates this phenomenon within a political perspective, asserting that most of the motives behind Islamic radicalisation are motivated by politics, rather than religion, and therefore requires political solutions. It is yet to be established what the most effective political solutions are beside violent warfare. On the other hand, writers such as Huntingdon (1993) observe that the key contentions behind the rise of Islamic extremism could result from sociological factors, one of which is the appearance of racial and cultural conflicts, and the consequent clash of civilisations, leading to the radical and violent extremist reactions to perceived Western-led oppression and persecution. There is a possibility that this could have led to the rise of new version of political Islam that could have given birth to intolerance, moving from its original moderate version into a threatening popular and widespread version of extremist Islam, acting against any other religion that is not aligned to it. This observation could serve to explain the need to view extremist radicalisation as only resolvable through reflexive localised approaches to understanding the motives and reasoning behind extremist sympathies and engagement in order to identify the possible strategies meant to resolve the

problem of violent extremism. These can be explained through a reflective understanding of the local and cultural dynamics and other drivers.

Such approaches cannot be generalised solely through psychological, political and social models that Western approaches to de-radicalisation tend to focus upon. On the other hand, the Saudi stance towards de-radicalisation involves the engagement of religious clerics as well as local psychologists and sociologists. There have been many critics of this strategy ranging from the Western media to the local media, political as well as academic analysts. It is difficult to locate a definite approach to de-radicalisation, as individual circumstances vary and there is a danger of imbalances and generalising the approaches from political, psychological, social and economic perspectives. Consequently, Seifert (2010) claims that it is difficult to measure and conclusively state how de-radicalisation has been achieved

1.7 Historical background to radicalisation and violence

The attacks on the US and other Westerners in Saudi Arabia in 2003 led the Saudi Government to adopt a soft power method which was implemented to complement its hard power strategy, which was seen to have inflamed extremist attacks rather than reduce them (Boucek, 2007; Ansari, 2008).

As previously discussed, radicalisation in Saudi Arabia, and globally, is motivated by either religious priorities or political motives. For the purposes of this introduction, an example of the Sahwa clerics' rebellious debates and criticisms of the state, is the Juhayman inspired radical groups, whose main focus and priorities were based on Islamic religious preservation and the protection of 'true Islam', and influenced violent events.

Lacroix (2011) and Hegghammer (2010) considered that the inspiration for the violent extremism and terrorist attacks which started in 2003 was the work of radical groups and

could be seen as early as the Riyadh violence of 1995 and the 1996 Al Khober attacks. Religion and violence at this point were the norm, until the radical groups' alliance with the former Afghan jihadi fighters who had returned to Saudi Arabia. Their main priority was politically motivated, while the local radical groups were religiously focused. This alliance led to a combination of religious and political motives meant to challenge the Saudi state.

These events and alliances are significant in locating the motives behind contemporary extremist jihadism today. This is because the convergence of these two forces in the 1980s inspired the combination of religious and political motivations within Al-Qaeda and other related extremist organisations to date, and best explains Asseri's (2009) argument that there is a new form of violent political Islam that is using religion for political gain.

Afghanistan was the centre of the roots of classical jihadism. This was initiated in Pakistan by Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden, and was later funded and grown in Pakistan under the name of Makhtab al Khadimat and which raised funds and recruited individuals for jihadist engagement (Cordsman and Obaid, 2005; Calvert, 2007). Azzam, in the late seventies, was the first jihadist to declare war on foreign nations perceived to be a threat to Islamic interests or Islamic lands. He later declared war on the Soviet Union when it attacked Afghanistan. Later, Al-Qaeda declared war on the US, and launched an attack therein on 9/11. This trend set a precedent that is being replicated today by all jihadists with the aid of the social media. The pattern of extremist jihadi, political and related religious sentiments are evident in all extremist actions and narratives. It is therefore pertinent to trace this pattern as a contributory trajectory to use when working towards de-radicalising individuals.

1.8 Religious and political perspectives of de-radicalisation

Studying the radicalisation of individuals from an Islamic perspective is different from studying, for example, the motives behind extreme racism or general political radical thinking, and requires an Islamic philosophical analysis of the roots of governance and the tradition that justifies violent political opposition. It also makes it difficult to fit in the Foucaultian analogy of the pastorate state as affecting the process of governance (Sovoai, 2012).

Islamic radicalisation is grounded on various factors, on which the extremists focus. In Islamic culture, pride and its preservation is key, while race and socio-economic disparities are subsidiary elements in the radicalisation process. Unlike racism claims, which could be made on the basis of economic exploitation and subjugation, an anthropological analysis of Islamic extremism focuses more on cultural and religious identity, pride and the preservation of that pride which is perceived as being under threat from foreigners, locally and internationally.

It is important, therefore, to scrutinise the Saudi prioritisation of an Islamic cultural approach to soft power. Linked with this approach are conceptions and descriptions that subsequently lead to the traditional remedial strategies for de-radicalisation. The family is a crucial component in the de-radicalisation process (Lacey, 2009: 257). A cultural approach highlights culture as the main strand for remediation, and with it come a host of criticisms from so-called empirical and scientific analyses. From an empirical standpoint, cultural approaches are arbitrary and epistemologically determined, and demand concerted and clear explanations of the process. They are arbitrary, especially as perceived from an outside perspective, which would label it as ineffective with preference for that which is measurable.

Emotions and sentiments are not easily quantifiable entities, yet they are crucial in their effect on motivating extremist thinking and behaviour. It takes someone from a similar cultural experience, ethnographically speaking, to understand and render the appropriate and relevant remedy for individuals. An example in the Saudi context could be the simple cultural remedy of finding a wife for a young, adventurous and youthful man. From a Western and 'developed' perspective, this could be dismissed as simplistic, yet it could be a very pertinent solution to garner the energies and focus of a youthful man towards raising a family, rather than engaging in unconstructive violent activity (Lacey, 2009; Boucek, 2011; El-Said and Harrigan, 2013)). This example serves to illustrate the importance of how disparate culture-centric approaches to de-radicalisation lie in relation to so-called empirical and generic standard approaches.

The gap here is in amplifying the need to use alternative solutions to the generic security studies, based upon those that seem to be divorced from the family, community and general social context of the individual, and locating them in a standard generic or social model to explain their reasons for engaging in extremism. There is a very important need to appreciate and interrogate the effectiveness of the different strategies applied at the Centre, while comparing or even relating it to other models and considering other external factors such as Western hard power foreign policy, and its negative impact on the de-radicalisation process.

There is a difference in the perceptions or conceptions of individuals who engage in extremist radicalised activities. The popular US, British and other Western institutionalised narratives paint a generic portrait of an extremist as a jihadist and a jihadist as a terrorist. Eyebrows are raised if the same individuals are termed victims who need counselling, as the former description evokes hard power solutions not soft power ones. Also from a CTS

perspective, the glossing over of states and foreign governments' violent acts on civilians needs to be highlighted if ever a fair de-radicalisation strategy were to succeed.

According to Asseri (2009), the terms evoke different attitudes and it is the cultural perception of the state that determines the design of the de-radicalisation process. The term 'radicalisation' is a social construct that evokes different emotional and intellectual responses in different contexts, be they academic, religious or social. In the context of Islamic radicalisation, as touted by the media locally in Saudi Arabia and internationally, the generic concept raises images of terrorism and death. From a psychological perspective, it evokes a different image of social, behavioural and mental mechanisms at work and needing correction, while from a Saudi academic/psychological and historic/cultural perspective it evokes an image of a victim who has been misled and needs redirection. As patronising as this last claim may seem, the overall goal is to establish peace for the population and general humanity.

1.9 The problem of defining 'terrorism'

From a CTS perspective, it is important to locate the conception of the term 'terrorism', and how it has impacted the radicalisation and de-radicalisation context. Terrorism has been described in relation to politically and religiously motivated violence (Asseri, 2009). There is no single agreed and authoritative definition of 'terrorism', yet it has gained currency in political discourse and media narratives. It is often intensely affiliated to specific religions, races and countries in which its use has seemed to be synonymous with freedom fighters, for example, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Africa and even India. In the context of the Middle East, and even the West, the label is emotive and judgemental, and usually instigates emotional reactions that, in most cases, do not help the cause of counter-terrorism (Hoffman, 2006). According to Herring (2008), as well as Stump and Dixit (2012), it is a socially

constructed, state coined term used in the media to portray opposing and non-state groups as violent groups bent on harming the general populace no matter how justified their cause. It is a political label therefore.

It would seem that this term is the trigger behind international hard-power, which could be argued to be terrorism in its own right (Herring, 2008; Jarvis, 2009). Because the term evokes emotional reactions, it needs to be analysed and its effect highlighted in order to inform foreign policy, especially where countries claim to be operating in partnership, yet could be contradicting each other in the actual counter-terrorism approaches applied in different contexts. This has led to many political, academic and religious debates, which in some cases have led to conspiracy theories regarding the religious and political situation in Muslim countries.

According to Jenkins (2001) there is no universal or clear definition of terrorism, yet there is an emerging consensus with regards to defining the term. Enders and Sandler (2002: 145) have coined the following comprehensive definition of terrorism:

> "The premeditated use or threat of use of …violence or brutality by sub-national groups to obtain a political, religious or ideological objective through the intimidation of an audience, usually not directly involved with the policy making that terrorists seek to influence".

From a CTS stance, this definition can be associated with 'who' or 'what organisation' has the power to label or define another and to what effect or gain. Therefore, a terrorist to one nation can be a freedom fighter to others. According to Asseri (2009), it is easy to ascribe the description to individuals and small organisations, while it could be difficult to do so to powerful nations, yet Hoffman (2006: 20-21 cited in Asseri, 2009: 4)

asserts that even the powerful nations can be conceptualised as such in their quest for "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence, or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change". This has been seen in the context of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, to name a few, with dire consequences, as there have been multiple proliferations of violent extremist groups soon after the intervention of powerful nations. Therefore, this confusion in counter-terrorism measures seems to provide a gap in the study of radicalisation and de-radicalisation. It is paramount to advocate a more transparent international counter-terrorism strategy that would not be as disparate and multipronged as the threat of the extremist groups are with their varied religious and political aims.

The above discussion serves to locate the need to devise effective counter measures that are co-ordinated through an international and non-haphazard way. It advocates a need to combine various approaches in a unified and systematic way that would then remedy the threat without flaws related to disjointed policies and approaches. One of the recurrent issues in the research has been the implementation of the alliance of US and Saudi foreign policy, in the context of counter-terrorism. Extremists consider the alliance between Saudi Arabia and its Western allies as a provocation to them. They view the Government's political and diplomatic alliance in the context of counter-terrorism as a betrayal that must be fought.

1.10 Psychological issues of radicalisation, de-radicalisation and recidivism

Psychology as a science is a useful tool in the de-radicalisation process (Horgan, 2009; Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Bouceck, 2011). It is a process that, in my view, cannot be applied in isolation from the cultural and epistemological perspectives of the subjects under study.

Government statistics on rates of successful de-radicalisation have been questioned by academics, such as Rubin (2011) and Horgan and Braddock (2010), who query the extent to which individuals can be fully de-radicalised. There is a need to distinguish between de-radicalisation and disengagement, and this has been one of the criticisms levelled against populist government pronouncements regarding success rates. This happens in politics everywhere. An objective appraisal of such claims demands further analysis of them, and it aids to enrich an effective de-radicalisation process. Any unscientific claims can only successfully work as morale boosters for counter-terrorism practitioners and uninformed individuals in a political context.

The difficulty with disengagement and a cessation of violent terrorist activity does not equate to de-radicalisation. De-radicalisation should mean permanent attitudinal change, although this is difficult to measure or guarantee, since there are many triggers of attitudinal behaviour. Such triggers can be varied, as there are individuals in this world that have varied social, emotional, religious and psychological experiences. This could be one of the research gaps that ought to be addressed, especially in investigating the effect of the social, psychological and emotional variables on extremist behaviour as it relates to the combination of culture, race, religion and politics in the context of extremist fomentation. A good case in point is where a mother highlights her concerns about her autistic son who returns from the war after fighting for ISIS (Adesina and Chaudhary, 2015). This case highlights the complications of the appeal of radicalisation to impressionable young men, demonstrating the permanent and detrimental impact on their mental health, making them potential security threats.

Disengagement, according to Rubin (2011), is the behavioural change away from involvement in terrorist activity. This does not necessarily accompany an ideological change,

which could explain some of the incidences of recidivism in former detainees who would have been described as fully de-radicalised. This is one factor, because of its arbitrariness, that politicians and academics, as well as popular media outlets, capitalise on in the discussions and debates regarding politics, religion and de-radicalisation.

The emotiveness and elusiveness of the process, especially along cultural lines, makes it a complex phenomenon to address and seems to pit academics and religious experts against each other. Khashoggi (2013) observes that what drives terrorism and extremism are the seemingly double standards led by US coalition, which he claims have created the 'angry Muslim mindset'. He claims that Muslims are not fully integrated into Western society and appear to be treated unequally internationally, as seen in the Palestine/Israel context. Moreover, one of the bedrocks of the reasons behind Islamic radicalisation are the attacks on Muslim civilians in countries perceived to harbour terrorists. Also film producers, left wing magazines in France, the Netherlands, Denmark and Hollywood have produced films and cartoons about the Prophet Mohammed, something that has provoked anger in Muslims (Burke, 2015). Thus, approaching de-radicalisation using standard and generic psychological and sociological models is bound to fail, bearing in mind the cultural and ideological variables involved in the precipitation of hatred towards anything that is associated with perceived enemies of, or threats to, Islam.

Similarly to the term 'terrorism', the term 'de-radicalisation' is under-defined and hence inadequately conceptualised in its application. Whatever may have been considered to be de-radicalisation may actually have been politically prescriptive descriptions of complicated behavioural processes. The terms radicalisation and de-radicalisation seem to have a developed a politically semantic function. Radical now seems to denote aspects relating to security, extremism and foreign policy related conceptions. There appears to be a

danger of having these terms used loosely by different individuals to mean different things. On an analytic and official level they mean one thing, while on a political and public level they may be used anecdotally, especially in descriptions of success by politicians. It is difficult and unrealistic, psychologically speaking, to place different individuals on the same continuum of de-radicalisation or disengagement. Disengagement should be both physical and psychological. The processes of achieving these are, or can be, determined by cultural or religious factors, as in the Saudi case. Hence, the Saudi approach chooses to emphasize the specific political, cultural and religious aspects of de-radicalisation as part of its counter-terrorism strategy. This approach has helped to a large extent in de-radicalising people, changing their extremist ideology and convincing them not to engage in violence. In addition to this, generic methods such as the sociological and psychological approaches are used. From a CTS perspective, it would take a reflexive state or states to review their own contributions to these conditions in individuals, which would help to stem the flow of extremist rhetoric and thinking in many contexts.

1.11 Research focus and research questions

1.11.1 The rationale for this study

Historically, Saudi Arabia has suffered from violent acts of terrorism and extremism. Most notably are the terrorist attacks against foreigners residing in the Kingdom on 12 May 2003. Since then, a number of attacks have been witnessed, and have led the Saudi Government to adopt a soft power method, which was implemented to complement hard power, in order to fight and reduce violence, terrorism and extremism (Boucek, 2007; Ansari, 2008). This method has received substantial attention from all government officials and it has been commonly agreed that such a method can only bear fruit in the long term. It will be very

difficult to conclusively prove its success in the short term (Stracke, 2007; Al-Hadlaq, 2010: 59; Boucek, 2010; Khan, 2010).

Saudi Arabia is perceived as having a high political and economic status, mainly due to its possession of more than 40 per cent of the world's known oil reserves. It is also one of the world's last closed societies, centred on the influence of Islamic tradition and conservatism. The country as a whole is still coming to terms with the contentious forces of modernization and globalization. The Saudi response to terrorism is part of a wider response to the global and modern forces of extremism.

In an attempt to acknowledge the importance of combating terrorist actions, globally as well as locally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has adopted an open policy of reporting and confirming terrorist attacks as and when attacks have taken place. The response has been evident in the Government's counter-measures. Between 2003 up to the present day, Saudi Arabia has experienced a wave of attacks comprising many separate terrorist incidents, including hostage taking, violent attacks, murder, kidnapping and explosions. Such attacks have been pivotal in the development of new methods of combating terrorist violence. These attacks started on the 12 May 2003, when four coordinated attacks from a 'deviant group', the phrase commonly used by Saudi officials to refer to Al-Qaeda or extremist groups linked to Al-Qaeda, took place in an expatriate-inhabited residential compound in Riyadh. In total, thirty-five people were killed and more than 160 people were injured as a result. Crown Prince Abdullah immediately condemned this attack, promising to take serious measures against the terrorist group behind this incident (Asseri, 2009; Hegghammer, 2010: 202).

In the aftermath of these attacks the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched a wide-ranging counter-terrorism campaign, combining hard-line measures commonly referred to within the counter-terrorism community as kinetic or hard power techniques. The Saudi

response also included less hard-line and more innovative methods, commonly referred to as soft power, a set of approaches centred on the rehabilitative treatment of terrorists and the de-legitimisation of the ideological narratives on which their violence is based. Currently, the Saudi Government views the struggle against violent extremism as part of a 'war of ideas' centred on issues of legitimacy, authority, and to what extent Saudi Arabia's approach to counter-terrorism is permitted in Islam. The primary objective of this soft approach is to engage and combat an ideology that the Saudi Government perceives as based on a corrupted and deviant interpretation of Islam. The impetus of this approach came in a large part from the recognition that violent extremism cannot be combated through traditional hard power security measures alone.

This Saudi approach is composed of three interconnected programmes: prevention, rehabilitation, and post-release care. The Saudi counter-terrorism strategy for tackling extremism and radicalisation is outlined in its Prevention, Rehabilitation and Care document (PRAC) (Boucek, 2011: 71). In general, the topic of rehabilitating terrorists seems to have been insufficiently researched by local scholars in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As a result, it is complicated to generate an effective, indigenous and theoretical understanding of the causes of terrorism and the ways to prevent it. However, researchers such as Boucek (2010), Horgan and Braddock (2010) and Stracke (2007) have aimed to study the role of the soft strategy in preventing terrorism and the rehabilitation of offenders. As stated earlier it would be interesting to analyse the depth, tone, and direction that their research has taken, bearing in mind the new approach to studying terrorism referred to as CTS.

It would appear that the issue of studying Saudi or Islamic specific radicalisation is not adequately addressed by social scientists working within Saudi Arabia. Many political and cultural considerations would make this appear necessary, such as the need to have a

Saudi-centric study, by Saudi researchers, of the psychological, social and religious impact on individuals in relation to extremism. This would give weight to local claims on de-radicalisation that are shared and discussed locally among Saudi intellectuals, as well as presented in the public domain. The Saudi response to terrorism, in the form of specific counter-terrorism policies, has received even less sustained attention. Despite this seemingly general neglect, a small group of scholars are currently working on this issue, most notably, Saudi scholars, psychologists, sociologists and politicians, including Al Saud (2009), Asseri (2009) and Cordesman and Obaid (2005). Foreign researchers such as Stéphane Lacroix (2011), Thomas Hegghammer (2010) and Christopher Boucek (2008) have appeared to contribute substantially to the study of this phenomenon.

The soft power strategy aims to engage and combat extreme ideologies that are based on perceived corrupted and false interpretations of Islam. The Saudi state has always addressed such phenomena through guidance, debate and discussion. A careful and sustained study of the terrorist phenomenon calls for a deeper and well-researched approach that can ultimately serve scholars and affected politicians in implementing effective strategies such as soft power. This approach has recognized that violent extremism should not be combated and fought solely through force, but rather that a soft method, which should target prevention and the rehabilitation of offenders, including post-release care to ensure that offenders are not drawn back into terrorism, can be followed. The work of El-Said (2013), House (2012), Boucek (2011) and Hegghammer (2010) though illuminating, is largely descriptive and lacks the requisite evidence demonstrating the usefulness of this strategy. Asseri (2009: 46) claims that Islam is "a religion of peace" and that terrorism in the name of Islam distorts this. The Qur'an emphasizes:

"Whosoever kills an innocent human being, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind" (Qur'an 5:32).

According to Asseri (2009), the Saudi Government is faced with a fight with 'obscurantism', which is a breakaway from orthodox Islamic teaching. The Saudi Government has therefore adopted a soft power approach in dealing with this obscurantism (Asseri, 2009). Islam is described as inherently peaceful, and the jihadists are violating it with their 'misinterpretations' (Ansari, 2008; Boucek, 2008; Asseri, 2009). According to Khan (2010), the establishment of the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Centre for Counselling and Care "would go a long way to help terrorists who want to reform". Al-Hadlaq (2011: 59), Khan (2010) and Stracke (2007) agree that the establishment of the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Centre for Counselling and Care is likely to have long term benefits in involving and helping former terrorists who are willing to reform. It has adopted and improved upon the previous Prevention, Rehabilitation and After Care programme (PRAC), a strategy of the Al Munasaha Wa al Aslah Programme. The soft power strategy, and its success, has been documented from the eyes of very few researchers, most of whom are not native Saudi nationals. Researchers such as El-Said and Harrigan (2013), House (2012), Boucek (2011), Lacroix (2011), Hegghammer (2010), and Stracke (2007) have contributed by portraying a fuller and empirical understanding of the strategies. These few studies would need, therefore, to be juxtaposed against the new reasoning behind CTS that would obviously be unpopular with most governments using hard power measures.

Using the Saudi perspective, this thesis aims to provide a sociological account of the recent innovations in Saudi Arabia's response to terrorism. The main method will be the use of semi-structured interviews, constructed around the main ideas and findings of previous

research and the current practice of soft power. I have placed emphasis on available sources of data, such as related literature in the form of journals, official government documents and related books. There are various specific sources in relation to terrorism and counter-terrorism in Saudi Arabia. Such research will be the basis of this thesis - for instance, Stracke, 2007; Ansary, 2008; Asseri, 2009; Boucek, 2010; Hegghammer, 2010; Al-Hadlaq, 2011; Lankford and Gillespie, 2011; Rubin, 2011.

A number of researchers have investigated terrorism and explored how soft power can reduce extremism. However, from these studies, it has been difficult to see how useful such a method is in fighting terrorism. It has been noted that the research concerning soft power in Saudi Arabia is largely based on conclusions from media sources as well as official government documents (Stracke, 2007; Ansary, 2008; Boucek, 2008; Al Saud, 2009; Asseri, 2009; Khan, 2010). It is important to bear in mind that these conclusions may not be reliable, as little of the research in this area is of any academic or scientific use, especially in the areas of examining methods; some lack empirical evidence and analysis due to the highly sensitive and secretive nature of gathering the data. Hence, this could be deemed a considerable concern and could be considered a major gap in the extant research.

In an attempt to study and provide a logical exploration of such issues, the current research aims to use a qualitative method, where an examination of the application of soft power as a strategy to counter extremism is applied. In this process, details of the experiences of the practitioners are collated and analysed. The following research aims have been proposed to investigate the general questions of the current research:

Aims of Research:

1- To historically contextualise and explain how the Saudi counter-terrorism innovations came about.

2- To provide a sociological account of the recent innovations in Saudi Arabia's response to terrorism.

3- To describe and expose the ideological assumptions behind the new policies and practices.

4- To explore the implementation of these policies and practices from the perspective of the practitioners responsible for Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism strategy.

Key Research Questions:

• What are the aims, new measures and guiding ideas that Saudi Arabia has introduced in its effort to combat terrorism?

• What is the role of the soft power approach in Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism strategy?

• How do those involved in delivering the goals of that strategy view their occupational role and the challenge of combating terrorism in Saudi Arabia?

• How credible are the claims that have been made regarding the progress of the new soft power strategy?

Objectives:

- To explore the soft power strategy in Saudi Arabia and how far it has been used to counter terrorism.

- To study the occupational roles of those involved in the delivery of strategies to counter terrorism in Saudi Arabia.

- To examine the role of the practices and challenges faced in countering terrorist activities in the Saudi state.

The above introduction highlights the necessity to look at the origins of extremism and the need for a soft approach to redressing it. It is important to discuss the background reasons for the radicalisation and extremist behaviour in Saudi Arabia. This is revealed in the next chapters.

1.12 Summary of following chapters

Chapter two discusses the historical context of Saudi Arabia, Islam and the question of Islamic identity. It also looks at the development of extremist and fundamentalist thinking, as initiated by the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood and Saudi Wahabism's influences on Islam in the country and the region. It highlights contemporary Islamist radicalism, as typified by the Al-Jama al-Salafiya al-Muhtasiba (JSM), the roots of organised contemporary extremist resistance. It further discusses the emergence of different interpretations of Islam and how these later led to the development of religious differences resulting in conflict. The development of violent extremism is analysed with a focus on the birth of Al-Qaeda in relation to the Afghan war of the late 1970s. The consequences of this are discussed with examples of violent extremism, shown through the terrorist activities of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. In addition it reviews hard power counter-terrorism in Saudi Arabia, which was and is the Saudi Government's generic strategic response towards violent extremist activities. It starts with a brief history of the traditional counter-terrorism strategies adopted by the early Saudi rulers up to later times where this approach is contrasted with soft power measures. These measures later gain prominence in the Government's soft power policy on extremism, where a regard for the definition of radicalisation determines the counter-terrorism approaches to be adopted.

Chapter three looks at the Saudi soft power strategy as compared to other Arab states' strategies. It shows how the Government links this approach to local traditional approaches to resolving conflict through discussion and debate. It also traces the Saudi Government's efforts in using innovative counter-terrorism strategies locally and internationally and traces the origins of soft power in practice, as well as the theoretical origins of the strategy. Examples of the application of soft power in different countries are discussed and compared to Saudi Arabia's model. Various approaches are analysed to reveal their impact, ranging from political alliances to international conferences for religious dialogue. The extent to which the Government adopts reforms and prevention measures is also revealed.

Chapter four discusses the different methodological philosophies and approaches used in this research. Being a case study of the de-radicalisation process of the Mohammed bin Naif Centre, the practitioners who work therein are the focus for this case study. The chapter deals with the different research approaches involved from the research paradigms to the main research method used, namely interviews. It explains the justifications for the choice of methodology and the fieldwork processes involved.

The focus of chapter five is on the analysis of interview data, which is based on the thematic approach used in the interviews. Overall eleven interviewees participated in this study, all of who are considered specialists and experts in the field of counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation. They were interviewed at the Centre in Riyadh, while others were met at different universities from 23 December 2013 to 13 March 2014. The data from this fieldwork is mainly qualitative.

Chapter six concludes the study with some observations and recommendations being made, as a contribution to the knowledge that has been generated from the research study.

Chapter 2: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Saudi Arabia

2.1 Terrorism in Saudi Arabia

2.1.1 Historical context: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Islam and the question of existential identity

In order to understand the nature and workings of the Saudi state, as well as the conflicts within and the challenges it faces, it is necessary to understand the social, political and cultural context from which it emerged. It is essential to focus on the philosophical and religious background of the state. This will reveal the momentous and defining impact of Islam on the Kingdom's formation, political conduct and its very existential identity. It is impossible to understand Saudi Arabia without bringing into focus the absolute centrality of Islam to its existence, political affairs and, as Durkheim might put it, its 'collective conscience' or collective psyche.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formally established on 23 September 1932. Its foundations were laid almost two centuries earlier, in 1745, when Mohammed bin Saud's family joined forces with the Islamic clerics, the traditional religious Wahhabi leaders, with their reformer, Mohammed bin Abd Al-Wahhab (Lipsky, 1959: 10). These two entities formed the crucial elements of traditional Islamic leadership and played a decisive role in the political formation and history of Saudi Arabia (Lipsky, 1959: 10; Al-Farsy, 1986: 73; Vassiliev, 2000: 82).

Islam is central to the political, cultural and religious identity of the Saudi state. Its very emergence was intimately and inextricably bound up with a particular vision of Islam and how it ought to be practised. Thus, the unification of politics and religion determined the

history of Saudi Arabia, characterising its tone as early as the third Islamic century. From a Foucaultian perspective, the theocratic nature of the formation of the state would render its governance as based on and influenced by a paternalistic and pastorate approach which views democratic and liberal approaches to governance as unacceptable (Savoia, 2012).

In the seventh century AD, when the Prophet Mohammed was alive, Islam was a revolutionary doctrine and encountered strong resistance from the various tribes then in power on the Arabian Peninsula. These tribes were polytheists, worshipping several gods and practising various rituals and habits, which would subsequently be condemned by orthodox Muslims as *haram* (forbidden). The rise of early Islam is defined by the conflict between the Prophet and his followers on the one side, and the polytheistic tribes on the other. Although the former were eventually triumphant, the question of the rectitude of religious belief and practice among the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula did not go away, and has been a source of fierce conflict both within and outside the Arabia Peninsula ever since. Aspects of such conflict are evident in fundamentalist religious practices as well as those that are liberal and moderate. Over time, these conflicts would affect the politics of the theologically influenced administration of Saudi Arabia, especially in areas of foreign policy. Indeed, this conflict still defines key aspects of social and political life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today.

Orthodox Islam, which is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, is characterized by reference to 'the body of Hadiths, and accounts of the Prophet Mohammed's deeds and sayings' (Vassiliev, 2000: 563). In line with this, it includes a multitude of Islamic practices, defined as correct in the Qur'an and the Hadiths. As mentioned above, since the time of the Prophet there has been persistent and intense conflict over the acceptable nature of these practices. For orthodox Muslims, there is only one God. Worship of numerous gods was thus

not only wrong, but was an outrage and an act of defiance against the word of God, as relayed by the Prophet.

During the period in which the foundations of the Saudi state were laid, bitter conflict over the meaning and scope of Islam across the entire region emerged. In certain key aspects, the Saudi state came in to existence to manage this conflict, not by mediating between the different warring parties, but by siding with and strengthening the claims of the forces of orthodoxy. The tribes, which were seen to have misinterpreted and distorted Islam during its spread over the centuries, were condemned for their *bid'ah*, - their innovations, such as worshipping natural phenomena, such as the sun, statues and other objects while claiming to be Muslim (Vassiliev, 2000: 67-8), and forced to accept the orthodox line (Long, 1997: 23). The formation of a single Saudi state offered an answer to the deep conflicts over religious identity, which had bedevilled the region ever since the time of the Prophet, and under the politico-religious umbrella led by Ibn Saud a more unified, cohesive and peaceful order could emerge.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located directly where Islam originally emerged. It is home to Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet, and is the site of the famous Kaaba Mosque, and Medina, where the Prophet lived. It is difficult to exaggerate the symbolic importance of these two places, commonly known as the 'cradle of Islam' (Peterson, 2002: 32). Thus, Saudi Arabia is far more than a state or political entity; it is an essential component of the very meaning and iconography of Islam itself.

There are four legal Sunni schools of Islam: the Hanbali, Maliki, Shafai and Hanafi – all named after their respective founders (Long, 1997: 23). One of these, the Hanbali School, is considered to characterize the strictest and most conservative form of Islam and its legal schooling (Al-Farsy, 1986: 75). It entails a strict fundamentalist monotheism that asserts

divine unity. In the formation of Saudi Arabia and its legal system, it was this school which Mohammed bin Saud and Mohammed bin Abd Al Wahhab would agree to follow (Al-Farsy, 1986:75). It was also to become the basis of Mohammed bin Abd Al Wahhab's revival movement that took root and then spread in the Arabian domain.

The eventual result was the creation of a powerful threefold political order. Three traditional leadership roles were formed: the tribal leaders (sheikhs); the religious leader (imam); and the king (malik) (Lipsky, 1959: 5). In 1902, the King re-captured Riyadh, the Al Saud dynasty's ancestral capital, from the rival Al Rashid family. This was followed by a great string of conquests to the east, south, north and west of the Arabian Peninsula. Regions such as Al-Hasa, Nejd and Al-Hijaz were unified between 1913 and 1932, and by 23 September 1932 these regions were known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The new state was under the control of King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Abd ar-Rahman Al Saud, often known in the West as Ibn Saud (Long, 1997: 28).

The state was formally recognized regionally and internationally. According to Long (1997: 22-33) and Lipsky (1959: 42-4), the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula offered allegiance to the ruling family and its conservative religious patrons. Prior to this, the Arabian tribesmen had paid their loyalty to the tribe to which they had the strongest bond. Through military conquest, Al Saud united the tribes, and used their alliance with Mohammed Ibn Abd al Wahhad to cement this unity through deeply conservative Islamic principles.

Today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest and most powerful country on the Arabian Peninsula, and is central to the security affairs of the Middle East. Its northwest borders are with Jordan, with Iraq to the north and northeast, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to the east, the Arabic Gulf to the northeast, Oman to the southeast, Yemen to the south and the Red Sea to the west.

Source: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/middle-east/saudi-arabia/

Saudi Arabia is the largest oil exporter in the world and possesses around 40 per cent of the world's known oil reserves (Peterson, 2002: 32). This has been advantageous because it has significantly increased Saudi Arabia's wealth and political influence making it the fulcrum, both politically and economically, of the Gulf region. In addition, on a political level, Saudi is considered both by other Arab states and the West to be a force in the Middle East (Peterson, 2002: 5). As the leading state in the region, and as host of the two holiest sites in Islam, it also has a responsibility for the welfare of the worldwide Islamic community (Peterson, 2002: 32).

According to Peterson (2002: 32), this obligation stems from "the eighteenth-century alliance between the Al Saud and the religious reformer Muhammad Abd al Wahhab, and the historic position of the Al Saud monarchy as having a special role to play as the agents of Islamic purification". This importance, Peterson states, has led Saudi Arabia to consider itself the quintessential Islamic state and notes that it is for this reason that: "the country exhibits

an extraordinary religious and social conservatism". Any form of dissent or extremist views from the orthodox Islamic line is considered impure and unacceptable in the Saudi political context. As we will go on to see later, it is exactly in these terms that the Saudi state views contemporary jihadist terrorism, as fundamentally extremist and un-Islamic.

The Saudi state is responsible for the administration of the Hajj pilgrimage, and acts "as spokesman and advocate for Islamic causes throughout the world" (Peterson, 2002: 32). Because of this pivotal role, it has experienced conflict from other Islamic states such as Iran.

All of these aspects make Saudi Arabia very important, both economically and politically, especially to western countries because Saudi oil wealth is dependent on western markets. As a result of this, it is only natural for European and US interests to be vested in Saudi political and economic stability. Consequently, Saudi Arabia is pivotal, as a state in the region, and has been at the core of any strategic planning regarding any part of the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia's relatively short history has been marked by conflict and contestation, often of a violent and dramatic kind. At the centre of this conflict has been a dispute over the very existential identity of the nation. In recent years, Saudi Arabia's ruling family has been targeted and attacked for being falsely Islamic, indeed accused of being an apostate regime. Because of its immense oil wealth, neighbouring countries and the world view Saudi Arabia's on-going internal conflicts with concern and anxiety. International concern over the direction of the Saudi state reached fever-pitch in the aftermath of the attacks on 11 September 2001. Of the nineteen hijackers who carried out these devastating attacks, no less than fifteen were Saudi nationals. Moreover, and infamously, Osama bin Laden, the chief architect of 9/11, was a Saudi. Within days of the attacks, global attention turned to Saudi Arabia and the

existence of Islamic extremism within its borders, and the role that the Saudi state played in supporting the attack.

It is important to examine the Government's approach towards Islamic extremists. This has often been contradictory. On the one hand, it is resolutely opposed to jihadist terrorism, yet the existence of jihadist fighters in Saudi Arabia is precisely the result of Saudi foreign policy. Because it is a theologically influenced administration, the Saudi Government has been viewed as ignoring the influx of Saudi fighters to lands such as Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia. During the Cold War, the West believed Saudi Arabia was supporting Islamic foreign fighters who had gone to serve in these areas. As a consequence, the relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America has been, and continues to be, a deeply ambiguous and uneasy one. Former foreign fighters have frequently been disturbed by the presence of US military bases in Saudi Arabia. These individuals and their supporters, which the Kingdom now labels 'extremists', have long felt that their country is being infiltrated by the West and, according to their religious worldview, any Western occupation of holy Muslim soil is a threat worth eradicating, even if this requires violent means. Aspects of this worldview are also shared by non-violent Islamists, who have always opposed the Saudi Government's modernization policies through verbal protests, such as preaching in public venues like mosques, schools and universities. They have felt that any changes to Saudi religion and social culture threaten the long cherished conservative religious lifestyle, which they feel is being destroyed by the infiltration of their culture by the 'evil' West. Aspects of such infiltration range from lifestyle trends to certain forms of entertainment, technology and issues of cultural diversity.

This resistance remains in place, as shown in the different debates on cultural issues and religious rhetoric, which occur in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Rudolph, 2009: 84). The

extreme result of such discontent has been the emergence of various terrorist cells such as Al-Qaeda, which has felt that their views and concerns are falling on deaf ears.

Similarly to other Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia is facing an extremist Islamic insurgency. Within its borders, it has experienced bloody and deadly terrorist attacks, as well as exporting them. Saudi Arabia is most definitely in the front line of what the George W. Bush administration called the 'war on terror'. It is therefore important to study the Saudi experience of jihadist terrorism, and to describe and assess official response to it. Because jihadism is now a global phenomenon, the Saudi experience should offer useful lessons for counter-terrorism policy worldwide. One of the aims of this research will be to provide an overview of the key incidents of terrorism and political insurgency in Saudi Arabia's recent political history.

2.1.2 The Sibila Battle of 1929

The image of Saudi Arabia as an exemplar of 'true Islam' has not gone uncontested even at its inception. Its political policies have provoked intense disagreement, sometimes resulting in outright violence against the state, for example, as with the case of the Ikhwan as early as 1927.

The Ikhwan, Arabic for 'brothers', was the main military force behind Ibn Saud and played a central role in establishing his rule over most of the Arabian Peninsula. Though instrumental in bringing him to power, there were elements in the Ikhwan that viewed Ibn Saud with distrust and unease. This ill feeling toward him reached its climax in the Ikhwan Revolt of 1927. Elements of the group, including the radical irregular tribesmen of Arabia, deliberately sought to undermine the authority of the monarch by launching raids into neighbouring Iraq and Kuwait. The Ikhwan's grievances centred on concerns over Ibn Saud's

desire to create a modern state, with close links to non-Islamic countries such as Britain (Vassiliev, 2000: 273). The name 'Ikhwan' was common in the Arabian Peninsula at that time, and, had a positive connotation: to confer the status 'Ikhwan' on a fighter was to testify to and venerate his martial bravery and enthusiasm. The Ikhwan's defining ethos can be expressed in the statement, which they repeated in battle, "I am a brother who obeys God and pays all attention to one God". This ethos was fundamentally apolitical, in that the Ikhwan's primary loyalty was to God, and not to any man-made political entity or set of arrangements (Ismail, 2010: 39).

It is important to further clarify the nature of the disagreement between Ibn Saud and the Ikhwan rebels. According to Ismail (2010: 41), one major source of disagreement was that the rebels were vehemently opposed to the system of monarchical rule. They considered the power of the monarchy to be too much for a human being and thought it was prohibited in Islam and was characteristic of un-Islamic behaviour. Neither did they want any interference or influence from the English, who had colonised and dominated other Gulf States and Iraq. The King's later political implementations and alliances, which were based on the preservation of the state, felt like a betrayal to the Ikhwan as their priorities seemed to have been overlooked by the state.

The Ikhwan were formed initially as a reflection of traditional life in the Saudi community, as well as a form of severe austerity and asceticism. This situation led to the start of some of the cultural clashes that spilled over into political ones. Such problems were increased as a result of the Ikhwan's objections, since they were cultural hard-liners. They were a threat to other tribes and the inhabitants of cities and villages who were moving toward change, modernization and urbanization (Ismail, 2010: 42).

Not only did the Ikhwan rebels object to modernization, they also violently rejected external political and cultural forces, to the extent that they accepted the idea of jihad as legitimate in Islam. According to al-Mutlaq (2010: 148-58) and Asseri (2009: 51), the term jihad has several different meanings. This study will use the fourth category of jihad, as classified by Muslim jurists, since this is the category adopted by the jihadist groups with which the Saudi state is currently in conflict. It refers to the 'intense effort of the sword, which corresponds to conflict with the enemies of the Islamic community in circumstances where believers are persecuted and their freedom curtailed' (Asseri, 2009: 51).

This category of 'jihad' justifies the practice of fighting any forces that are bent on destroying or hindering the progress or stability of Islam. Consequently, it is acceptable universally in the Muslim world for any Muslim to take up arms and fight anyone, anywhere, in the name of the preservation and protection of Islam. Because of this, nations can allow their citizens to go and fight in defence of Islam in other Muslim nations that are perceived to be under threat. The concept of 'jihad' has become an ideologically and religiously controversial concept in Saudi and remains problematic throughout the Muslim world. Disputes over the concept have permitted the armed struggle to continue, even after the emergence of the political form of the state. The Ikhwan's cultural, political and military conflict is significant because it represents a prologue to the events that have affected Saudi Arabia until the present day.

2.1.3 A fateful alliance: the Egyptian Salafis and the Saudi Wahabis: Political and religion conflicts

Saudi society is religious and in the early 1950s, and the Cold War period of the 1960s, this created tension between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Egypt. Jamal Abdul Nasser, who was then a Soviet ally and the Egyptian president, supported the formation of a

Pan-Arabic force to confront Israel (Vassiliev, 2000: 351). Israel's conflict with Palestine led to its enmity with neighbouring Arab countries such as Egypt. This further escalated into an all-out confrontation between Israel and the Arab allies in the early 1970s. The Saudi state, being allied to the West, was not in agreement with the idea since the US supported Israel. This prompted Abdul Nasser to attempt to destabilize the Saudi administration. According to Cordesman and Obaid (2005: 391):

> "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been one of the targets of sporadic terrorist activity since the 1960s, when Gamal Abdul Nasser, the former Egyptian president made repeated attempts to create groups that could overthrow the Saudi Government, and to subvert the Saudi military".

During the same period, Abdul Nasser was faced with the thorny issue of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Egypt, which attempted to repress. Originally, they were a philanthropic and religious movement, although later turned out to have religious and political interests. They questioned Abdul Nasser's leadership policies, and threatened the Egyptian political administration, both peacefully and violently, between 1964 and 1966 (Ashour, 2009: 43).

The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood became widespread in other Arab countries. The founder of this group, Hassan Albanna, was assassinated in Egypt along with Sayyid Qutb, one of the original theorists of modern Islamism. Qutb was the Brotherhood's spiritual and ideological leader, and he was jailed and hanged for his involvement (Kepel, 2004; Ismail, 2010: 43). Many of the group fled from the Egyptian authorities, and having experienced torture and persecution in Egyptian prisons and in other Arab nations, they went to live in Saudi Arabia. They were accepted into the state since they were Muslims, and the Saudi state was almost obliged to protect them because of its centrality to the faith. The

alliance that emerged between the radicalised Egyptians and the Wahhabi militants was to prove very fateful, creating the context from which Al-Qaeda was later to emerge.

Since the Egyptian Government perceived the Brotherhood as a military as well as an ideological threat, it considered it acceptable to execute, persecute, arrest, imprison and exile the members of the organisation, especially in 1965 (Ashour, 2009: 44). It is during this period that jihadist ideology and the concept of *takfiri*, a worldview emphasising that other Muslims are infidels, were born along with the extremist declaration that Muslims of other kinds were apostates fit for slaughter. The long lasting cult of Sayyid Qutb, which propagated this confrontational ideology, took root. The original seeds of jihadism, and extremist influence in the Saudi society, germinated because of a similar affinity between the Brotherhood's conservative and extremist Sunni Islamist ideology with the Wahabist conservative Islam promoted in Saudi Arabia (Kepel, 2004: 51).

The Muslim Brotherhood blended with Saudi Wahabism, forming the contemporary concept of 'classical jihadism'. According to Kepel (2004: 51), conservative Wahabism had similarities and similar sentiments as the Brotherhood, which had members that were more educated and better organised than their Saudi counterparts. This provided a positive strengthening of the Sunni in Saudi Arabia, and further strengthened the Brotherhood's hold on the country's highest institution of education, the University of Medina, newly completed in 1961. The doctrine of the Brotherhood spread among the Muslim scholars and youth all over the Muslim world. Kepel (2004: 51) states that the Brotherhood amassed a great fortune from their exile in Saudi Arabia, reinvesting their fortunes back into Egypt after Abdul Nasser's death. Such funds, born out of 'petro Islam', a result of funds raised from the oil wealth of the Saudi state, were then used to finance the militant Islamist movement.

According to Kepel (2009: 51), the impetus behind the growth of the Brotherhood and the Wahhabite-Islamist alliance was the protection it received from the Saudi monarchy. In the late 1960s, the Saudi Royal Family was faced with enemies in the form of Abdul Nasser and the forces of the Cold War, which had developed a political threat to the monarchy in the form of the socialist alliance. As a result, the monarchy allied itself with the US to protect the Saudi state from 'communist' threats. This was a paradoxical situation because, at the same time that the Saudi state gave refuge to Egyptian jihadist elements, it was also supporting and being supported by the US, whom the Egyptian jihadists regarded with outright contempt.

Some of the Muslim Brotherhood exiles worked in different Saudi education sectors, also operating as agents for the organisation, and therefore their ideology would have a deep and gradual influence on the Saudi society. Some of those in exile adopted the ideology of violence and extremism towards Saudi society and governance, as well as towards other Arab state regimes. After becoming entrenched into Saudi society, the Muslim Brotherhood Movement began to oppose some government policies and started to radicalise their followers within the Saudi state (Kepel, 2004: 51; Ismail, 2010: 43; Al-Zaydi 2015) that 'petro Islam' involved Wahhabi Ulama religious leaders and Islamist intellectuals, who promoted the strict implementation of sharia in the political, moral, and cultural spheres of Saudi life. It could be argued that this ideology represented a seemingly pious movement of Saudi Islamism that led to the pan-Islamist movement that produced AQAP (Ismail, 2010: 43-4; Al-Zaydi 2015). The Muslim Brotherhood was as reactionary and extremist as the Ikhwan earlier, spreading into schools and mosques. The unification of the Egyptian brotherhood with Saudi Wahabbism is central to the formation of contemporary jihadism. There is a direct connection between the Brotherhood's introduction of conflict with government authorities and the extremism of recent times.

According to Calvert (2007), the justification for violent conflict against foreign governments that threatened Islamic states was personified in Azzam, the jihad leader in Afghanistan. He formulated the theoretical justifications for contemporary jihadist movements. Earlier, with Osama bin Laden, he had masterminded the resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It was this conflict that produced the radicalisation of the Mujahidin. Training camps and extremist Islamic ideological teachings developed the extremist streak that later pervaded the minds of the Islamist radicals and proved to be catastrophic internationally. Azzam and bin Laden recruited and used Arab fighters with the blessing of the classical jihadist philosophy, which the Muslim world supported. This was to the advantage of the US, as it was an indirect way for them to fight Russia and weaken communism during the Cold War (Calvert, 2007; Hegghammer, 2010: 7). Calvert (2007) asserts that it was Azzam who started the jihadist network that would later develop into the notorious Al-Qaeda. This organisation later became an international threat and would blossom into a deadly terrorist network under the leadership of bin Laden.

2.1.4 The Grand Mosque (al-Haram) attack of 1979

The Ikhwan philosophy planted the seeds of discontent along with the expansion and rise of extremism in Saudi Arabia. It was not until the al-Haram attack of 1979 that the full scope and intensity of this discontent was fully realised (Vassiliev, 2000: 396).

On 20 November 1979, a group of armed radical Islamists seized control of the Grand Mosque in Makkah (Vassiliev, 2000: 396). In a symbolically resonant gesture, they named themselves after the Ikhwan. This modern Ikhwan was presented as an extremely pious organisation while, in reality, it was a radicalised terrorist clique. They were also known as al-Jama'a al-Salafiyya al Muhtasiba (JSM). They had been established in Medina in the late 1960s, and led by Juhayman al-Utaybi. Muhammad al-Qahtani sympathised with Juhayman

and was self-named the *Mahdi* (spiritual leader), with his followers being Saudis, Egyptians, Yemenis, Kuwaitis and other Arabs (Vassiliev, 2000: 296; Rudolph, 2009: 36; Hegghammer, 2010: 3).

The attack was a spectacular and shocking event with more than 200 troops and militants being killed, 170 arrested, and around 65 subsequently executed (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 109; Hegghammer, 2010: 3;). The sacredness of the holy place had been compromised. According to Hegghammer (2010: 4), the Makkah event prompted the Saudi regime to give the Ulama (clerics) more power and Islamic activists more political space. The Saudi state gave such power to the Ulama in order to control discontent and to correct extremist Ikhwan ideas. Thus, the Saudi Government sought to apply sharia law, which would give them more power within, and outside of the country. This event marked a symbolic reaction to the political and religious status quo that would reverberate in the years to follow, culminating into global jihadism, which is characterised by grandiose extremist terrorist attacks locally and internationally (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2007).

The November 1979 attack marked the end for the Ikhwan. Not only were their core members killed or captured, their worldview was systematically undermined. The Saudi Arabian monarchy had, and retains, a close political connection with the Ulama, a strong religious leadership closely involved with government decision-making. Their function in Saudi social, religious and political life is crucial. Hence it was decisively important for the Saudi state to enlist their full support against the militants; the Ulama duly complied and refuted the Ikhwan's central ideas and actions. This lack of acknowledgement by higher religious forces meant that the group failed to gain additional support and was unable to spread its ideology within Saudi society. However, it also meant that the Government conceded considerable power to the religious authorities in Saudi Arabia.

The above discussion has revealed a brief account of the origins and nature of violent extremism in the Saudi state. It has also reviewed how the Saudi state dealt with challenges at its inception. The Saudi state adopted both hard and soft power measures to counter these violent extremist trends. It is important to trace the developments of these counter-terrorism strategies and how the state has later changed its approach to dealing with extremist violence.

The following section discusses contemporary resistance and rejection of the Government and its policies. It cites different aspects of the political and religious resistance. Opposition to the Saudi Government and its administration has prevailed over a long period. Such opposition has been both violent and rhetorical, hence the Government's adoption of both hard and soft power strategies.

2.2 Contemporary Islamist radicalism in Saudi Arabia: Al-Jama a al-Salafiya al-Mutasiba (JSM) and Juhayman

2.2.1 The roots of organised contemporary extremist resistance

An analysis will follow of the critical figure in the Saudi extremist resistance, Juhayman al-Utaybi, in order to reveal his contribution to extremist thinking and the subsequent prevalence of organised violent religious and political extremism in Saudi Arabia.

Juhayman al-Utaybi belonged to the JSM group, formed in Medina in the 1960s (Lacroix, 2011: 91). It later developed extremist tendencies that the moderate wing of the organisation found unacceptable. Known as Bayt al Ikhwan (al Ikwan House), it comprised mainly young students of religion (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 7). These members were mainly from the poorer sections of Medina, and were influenced by Albani's philosophy, which criticised Wahhabism and the mainstream Saudi religious establishment. They claimed

that it needed purification from its 'innovations' and misinterpretations of Islam (Lacey, 2009: 11-12; Lacroix, 2011: 90-92).

The attack of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, on 20 November 1979, was part of some of the sporadic pockets of resistance and opposition to the Saudi Government. It was a significant event, still considered a milestone in Saudi history. It is considered shameful for its perceived desecration of the holy sight, Islam itself, as well as the politics of the nation. According to Lacey (2009: 3), religious and political propaganda viewed this event to be a consequence of religious fanaticism mixed with violence and religion, and something such as bin Laden's activities was labelled as un-Saudi. Despite this, the legacy of Juhayman lives on. It is important to analyse the motivations and causes that lay behind the JSM and this event.

2.2.2 Ideology of the JSM

According to Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 21), Juhayman al-Utaybi was the leader of the extremist movement, al-Ikhwan, that broke away from the original JSM. He terrorised and murdered innocent people at the holy site in Makkah, and subscribed to what religious leaders considered a rather obscure form of Islamic ideology. On the basis of his staunch adherence to the Salafi practices, Lacey (2009: 12) states that Juhayman considered Saudi society as plagued with *bidaa*. His organisation's original intentions focused on moral principles and improvements. This ideology was influenced by the practice of rejectionism, an Islamist concept which denied political involvement, originated and propounded by the Syrian cleric Nasir al-Din al-Albani (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 6). This stance has influenced young extremists today.

Albani challenged the institutionalised Ulama, as he held the opinion that they had embedded themselves too deeply in politics and were thus instruments of the Government. He felt that true religious Muslims were tarnishing their faith and themselves by associating with politics and political administration. Hence, he advocated abstaining from politics and rejecting anything institutional. The result of such a philosophy was the birth of an apolitical Islam that rejected and disregarded the monarchy, the Government and even fellow Muslims who were part of the Saudi administration. Albani claimed that political participation by any Muslim was damaging to the teachings of the Islamic *da'wa*.

This resentment of the Government and a complete disregard for the monarchy's rule later led to potent extremist thinking, as shown by Juhayman's al Ikhwan, that pervades Islamic theory and politics, and influences extremism today. There was complete distrust of the politicians and clerics involved in Saudi politics. According to Lacey (2009: 13), there was also a complete mistrust of the Muslim Brotherhood, who presented themselves as academic, political and business-minded proponents of Islam. The JSM stood in stark contrast to this, leading to increasing conflict within itself, and externally with other clerics, the state and its policies.

2.2.3 The influence of JSM on Saudi extremism

The JSM's religious practices and focus were mainly centred on ritual practice, religious piety and a complete disdain for politics (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 8). According to Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 8-9), the JSM was intellectually and organisationally different from other forms of Islamist opposition in Saudi Arabia. Bayt al Ikhwan and Juhayman's extremism further complicated religious interpretation and increased extremist thought (Lacey, 2009: 13). This form of extremism did not encourage its members to attend

mainstream education and to participate in government. As a result it attracted poor, tribal and rural followers. Such individuals would prove a challenge to de-radicalisation.

As Saudi Arabia was modernising at a rapid pace, especially during the 1970s, the rejectionists found many reasons to resent the administration's development of the urban areas and the introduction of Western innovations. They were considered a sign of the erosion of Saudi culture and religion (Lacey, 2009: 4-5; Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 5). As a result of this development, the JSM, especially Juhayman's Bayt al Ikhwan, later called al Ikhwan, emerged as a key force in the refusal and rejection of modernised life and its perceived damaging effect on Saudi religion and culture in general.

2.2.4 The emergence of different types of Islamic interpretation

According to Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 5) and Lacey (2009: 9-13), the growth of the extremist offshoots of the JSM led to the development of two types of Islamic thought in the Kingdom in the 1950s and 1960s. The al-Sahwa were academic and moderate, pragmatic, political and elitist, while the neo-Salafi were rejectionist, isolationist, lower class, pious, and deeply resentful of the state. The two Islamic schools of thought co-existed, representing two distinct ideological approaches and sociological phenomena (Lacroix, 2011: 92).

The Sahwa were dominant and greater in number. They had a bearing on Saudi academic life, culture and political influence due to the presence of the socially and academically influential Muslim Brotherhood, who had already been exiled from their countries of origin due to their political dissent. They controlled the universities, influenced the Saudi education system, media, culture and, consequently, politics (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 7-12). Ultimately, the appearance of the Muslim Brotherhood in Saudi life and

culture led to the influence of Sahwists on Saudi university life and Islamic thought, later resulting in the reformist culture that later changed Saudi culture and thinking in the 1990s.

On the other hand, the Bayt al Ikhwan rejected education, politics and any affiliation to institutionalised forms of life, and even employment. Lacroix (2011: 92) states that they encouraged their followers to engage in *da'wa* and *hisba,* which proclaimed the dominance of the Hadith in their lives, and opposed any form of reason in religious ruling (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 10-13). This later had implications on extremist thinking, especially regarding the government policy in relation to these organisations.

According to Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 6), Albani's rejectionist theories tended to conflict with those of the Wahabbi school of thought. His teachings had a significant impact on Saudi society, and a profound impact on Juhayman's al Ikhwan conservative views about Saudi culture and Islamism. He would later take these teachings to extremes, accusing some of his moderate colleagues of being too ignorant of the Qur'an's teachings, as well as being state informers (Lacey, 2009: 13). His interpretations and writings provoked him to kill for the sake of his religious beliefs, which later influenced extremists with profound consequences on Saudi and international politics today. Originally, the JSM focused on the religious and moral reform of its members and, ideally, society. It detested any form of religious innovation, links with the Government and its policies of modernization. The Makkah raid and killings led to the al Ikhwan's utter destruction, with the arrest and execution of most of its proponents after the raid. Scholars have given various interpretations of the motives behind the incident; some have explained it as a purely religious fanatical miscalculation (Lacey, 2009: 12-13).

2.2.4.1 Juhayman and modern extremism

Despite his siege of the holy Mosque and the attack on pilgrims at the holy shrine, Juhayman is considered the epitome of government resentment and Islamic religious re-interpretation. He has had a bearing on extremist political and religious views today (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 25).

His writings and his Albani inspired rejectionist ideology have influenced attempts to revive his movement (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 24-5). Individuals such as Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi, better known as Isam Zarqawi, have taken up Juhayman's ideology. They have adopted it to the extent that it has influenced extremists such as Al- Zarqawi of the Iraqi Al-Qeada terrorist wing, who proved a problem for the Western allies until he was killed in 2006 (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 25). Juhayman's influence has led to the birth of Al-Qaeda and later, ISIS. Al- Maqdisi is known to have started a movement named the Salafi Jihad Movement of which Zarqawi was a student.

2.2.4.2 Bayt Shubra

In the 1990s, a revival of Juhayman's ideology took root in a newly developed organisation named Bayt Shubra (Lacey, 2009: 12). Unlike its extremist rejectionist predecessor, al Ikhwan, Bayt Shubra proved to have political interests and tendencies. The organisation was formed underground in the al-Suwaydi district of Riyadh. It attracted members from as far afield as Yemen, Kuwait and Egypt (Lacroix, 2011: 100-101). Bayt Shubra comprised of members from marginalised poor communities who avoided state education and employment altogether (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 26-27). This proved to be a potent recipe for extremist recruitment and supporting radicalisation in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Bayt Shubra was credited with the 1995 bombings in Riyadh, after which many members were

arrested, executed and exiled. Their flight to Afghanistan produced a new version of rejectionist extremism that combined with violent jihadist tendencies.

The formation of Bayt Shubra, and its actions, proved that there was a significant element of extremist thinking in Saudi. The Saudi Government was forced to act and its consequent counter-terrorism strategies were influenced by it. According to Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 28), these developments were proof that al-Sahwa did not have a monopoly on the Saudi Islamist field. A new and violently threatening form of extremism had taken root and later perfected the formation of Azzam and Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda (Calvert, 2007).

Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 27-28) claim that the Riyadh violence of 1995 and that of al Khobar in 1996, with the launching of a succession of attacks against foreigners from 2003 onwards, were the work of Bayt Shubra. Juhayman's philosophy had taken deep root in extremist Islam; such a phenomenon later proved problematic to the Saudi administration, prompting it to review its counter-terrorism strategies, since extremist religious indoctrination was key to the spread of terrorism in Saudi Arabia and internationally. The Saudi jihadists and Bayt Shubra were the most visible and politicised products of rejectionist Islam. They were pitted against reformist Islam represented in *Sahwism*. Despite being openly critical of the Government, they acted through debate and non-violence.

The 1980s saw the rise of a form of jihadism born out of the Afghanistan-Soviet conflict (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: 29). Saudi jihadism is rooted in the thousands of fighters who returned home radicalised and highly militarised. This culture set them apart from other Islamic movements and political currents in the Saudi state, and the broader international context. The jihadists were particularly keen on politics, unlike the Bayt Shubra

rejectionists (Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 27). The convergence of these two groups led to an exchange of ideologies and a reshaping of religious and political attitudes. While the jihadists were more involved in international political concerns, their alliance with the Bayt Shubra instilled in them an interest in local Saudi political concerns and a violent disdain for the Government.

Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011: 30) observe that by early 2001 there was growing polarisation in the Saudi Islamist field. This polarisation prompted a growing need for political awareness and an activism in which rejectionism was regarded as an ineffective political strategy. Ultimately, Juhayman's ideology and legacy had turned into a new and popular form of violent Islamic extremism. This challenge proved, to the Saudi Government, the need for deeper research and an informed understanding of this phenomenon in order to find an effective counter-terrorism strategy to contain it.

The following section deals with the inception and development of the new wings of extremist organisations and phenomena which bear roots in the further extremist radicalisation in organisations such as Al-Qaeda. It is a further exposition of the development of radical thinking that has its roots in the earlier discussed events and individuals and movements such as Juhayman and the Sahwa. The complicated nature of these organisations bears testimony to how advanced and challenging the effect of extremism has become in modern times.

2.2.5 The Afghan jihad, the birth of Al-Qaeda and the Foreign Fighters Phenomenon

In 1979, the Saudi state was faced with numerous challenges including the forces of Cold War rhetoric. These challenges were characterised by atheistic communist sentiments, held by some people in Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world. This was the year that the Soviets

invaded Afghanistan. They brought with them communist thinking and a complete disregard for the Islamic religion and its importance to the lives of the locals. This was considered anathema to Islamic philosophy (Moussalli, 2009). This was a Cold War phenomenon that provoked transnational Islamic organisations and governments to issue calls for 'jihad' against the Soviet occupation. The Saudi state recruited, financed and deployed jihadists to protect Afghanistan. The deployment of these jihadists later created radicals, indoctrinated and trained to fight Soviet Afghanistan occupation. This later was a political and religious challenge to the Middle East governments that had fighters involved in this jihad, especially after 9/11. It is arguable that this later led to the rise and development of international jihadism (Moussalli, 2009; Hegghammer, 2010: 38). The ex-fighters were not only from Afghanistan; there had been other conflict areas, such as Bosnia and Chechnya, which later produced fighters with similar sentiments.

2.2.6 The development of the threat of Al-Qaeda

Starting from the early developments of classical jihadism in Afghanistan, initiated by Abdullah Yusuf Azzam and Osama bin Laden, the threat of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism grew into an immensely huge international problem. It started in Pakistan, with an entity called the Makhtab al Khadimat (MAK). It later developed towards sourcing funds and recruiting jihadists (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 110). According to Calvert (2007), Azzam was among the first proponents of jihadism to initiate the need to declare war on foreign nations perceived to be threats to Islamic lands and interests. This was later manifested in the jihadist fight against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.

This war had attracted young Saudis in the 1980s to fight in the resistance, ironically aided by the United States, also then a close ally of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Hegghammer, 2010: 26). According to Hegghammer (2010), many of these young Saudis developed an

extremist streak, later proving to be a massive threat to the state as well as internationally. Initially, according to Cordsman and Obaid (2005), the Saudi administration had overlooked the influx as well as the radicalisation of the young jihadists, along with the arming and funding of the terrorist cells in Afghanistan. The Saudi state was faced with a massive struggle with illegal terrorist events internally, instigated by the former classical jihadist fighters as shown by the bombings in Riyadh in 1995 and al Khober in 1996.

After the Saudi Government's exiling of state critics and extremists to countries such as the UK (Moussalli, 2009), characters like Osama bin Laden started to develop plans to create a terrorist network, later known as Al-Qaeda. This proved to be a well-organised terrorist threat. It was motivated by the extremists' disgruntlement with the Saudi Government's 'detestable' and long-standing alliance with the US.. This proved to be the biggest test of Saudi and US relations since the Cold War (Blanchard, 2009). Al-Qaeda also detested the Saudi-US alliance because of partial treatment by the US of Israel in the Israeli - Palestinian conflict, and its behaviour in regard to other conflict areas involving Islamic nations.

Al-Qaeda developed in Afghanistan under the leadership and funding of bin Laden in 1988 (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005). In alliance with the Taliban, the organisation developed an effective terrorist network with training camps located in Sudan and Afghanistan (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 111). This gave the Al-Qaeda network the impetus to attack the US embassy in Kenya in 1998 and the oil ship 'The Cole' in Yemen in 2000. In retaliation, the US attacked bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan and Sudan. According to Hegghammer (2010), Al Saud (2009), and Cordesman and Obaid (2005), the Saudi Government had overlooked the influx of young Saudis to Afghanistan, the funding of the terrorist organisation's activities in Afghanistan and Sudan, as well as the politicisation of

jihadism, until it was too late. This prompted the US and its Western allies to assume that the Saudi state was colluding with the extremists, since jihad is an Islamic practice that the state encouraged, for the protection of Islamic lands. But this type of jihad would later prove to be a threat to Saudi peace itself (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005).

Bin Laden and his followers declared war on the United States in 1996, as Azzam had towards the Soviet Union a decade earlier (Blanchard, 2009). This was motivated by Al-Qaeda's demands for the withdrawal of US troops from the Arab Peninsula and the broader Islamic lands. According to Cordesman and Obaid (2005: 110), bin Laden established Al-Qaeda in 1988. His recruitment of mainly Saudi jihadists was purely a political action. Such demographics would later prove to be a problem for Saudi Arabia, as proven by the 2003 attacks carried out by AQAP on Saudi soil, prompting the state to be more vociferous in its denouncement of the 9/11 atrocities as well as stepping up its anti-terrorist stance against Al-Qaeda, both in the domestic and international arena (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005; Al Saud, 2009).

The Al-Qaeda leadership was motivated by bin Laden's sectarian ideological point of view, as influenced by his exposure to religiously motivated armed resistance (Martin, 2009: 196) and the classical jihadist principle of protecting Islamic lands (Moussalli, 2009). The seeds of 9/11 were sown in 1980s Afghanistan, and can be traced as far back as the alliance between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Wahabi extremists when the Saudi state sheltered the exiled Islamic Brotherhood.

With the above stated points, it seemed possible that a catastrophe as big as 9/11 was inevitable. This later developed in all out war that would inflame extremist Islamist sentiments. The aftermath of 9/11 led to the US foreign and domestic policy of declaring 'war on terror', a policy that could arguably be seen to have fomented further Islamist

radicalisation that was not helped by the difficulty in capturing the masterminds of the attacks. The invasion of Iraq, Afghanistan, and the attacks on any sympathisers would prove to be a further problem in US international relations, especially in the Middle East. This was later worsened by terrorist attacks in both Europe and in the United Kingdom on 7/7, as well as in Saudi Arabia. Further extremist challenges are currently being observed with the growth of further anti-Western jihadists in Iraq who have emerged and fought against the Syrian regime under Bashar al Assad. The Syrian catastrophe and the foreign support of jihadists have further complicated the Islamist divisions of Shia and Sunni factions in the region, making the conflict spread into Iraq and other countries.

It can be observed that part of the escalating rise of Islamic extremism and terrorism was a possible result of the foreign military actions and policies of the US, and its allies' with regard to the Islamic lands. The rise of anti-West sentiments appeared to grow between 2001 to the present. This could be due to the invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, which have proven to be problematic in terms of peace keeping initiatives, which have only led to many deaths of innocent victims, due to the hard power approach used. This is an emotional and controversial observation that has led to heated debates locally and internationally. Several bombings that followed were acts of violent protest. Examples of such bombings were of the National Guard office in 1995 and the Al Khober bombs in 1996. The Riyadh attacks of 2003 followed.

The Gulf War in 1991 ignited much dissatisfaction in the region, as well as in some Islamic circles, characterized by extremist inclinations. The biggest bone of contention was Saudi Arabia's alliance with the West, especially the US. Despite this having been supported by Saudi's religious clerics and broadly accepted after lengthy consultation locally and regionally, the decision was still unpopular with extremists such as bin Laden. At that point,

he was Al-Qaeda's most vociferous proponent of complete Western withdrawal from the Arab Peninsula. As mentioned above, he had been a jihadist commander in Afghanistan's war with the Soviet Union. In 1991, he offered military assistance to the Saud monarchy in the form of the former mujahidin fighters of Afghanistan, to fight the invading Iraq army. This offer was rejected, because King Fahd of Saudi Arabia saw it as illegal from the perspective of the United Nations (Lacey, 2009: 148-151). According to Lacey (2009: 141), the resistance to the Iraqi army's advance into Saudi lands helped to establish the Saudi nation's sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Kuwait.

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was perceived as a threat to Saudi Arabia's hegemony. This led to fighting and hasty consultations that resulted in the stationing of US troops in Saudi Arabia. There had been consultations about this US alliance with most Islamic nations through the League of Arab States, as well as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Through the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Islamic states internationally supported this in order to protect the holy shrines. As with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia was vulnerable to an attack from Iraq. It could be argued that the al-Khafji Battle in al-Khafji city, on the Saudi side of the Saudi-Kuwaiti border, was evidence of Saddam's desire for expansion. Consequently, in 1990, the King made a formal request to George H. W. Bush, the US president, for military assistance (Hegghammer, 2010: 30).

2.2.7 The Riyadh 2003 attacks

The Al-Qaeda attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre on the 11 September 2001 led to the US invasion of Afghanistan in October of that year, and in turn sparked bloodshed in the Saudi capital Riyadh. Afghanistan was invaded because the Taliban regime was accused of hiding and protecting bin Laden. Saudi Arabia's alliance with the US forced the Saudi Government to respond to the 9/11 attacks, which had involved fifteen Saudi

hijackers, and to quickly act against the terrorist cells (Lacey, 2009: 225). This action was intended to prove to the US that the state had no allegiance to the perpetrators. Bin Laden consequently declared war on Saudi Arabia in May 2003, stating that the Saudi state would be the target of further terrorist attacks from his newly instituted AQAP.

On 12 May 2003, four coordinated attacks by extremist groups linked to the Al-Qaeda network took place in an expatriate inhabited residential compound in Riyadh. In total, thirty-five people were killed and more than 160 people were injured. Crown Prince Abdullah immediately condemned this attack, promising to take serious measures against the terrorist group behind it (Hegghammer, 2010: 202). Less than a month later, twelve men were identified as the perpetrators of the attack. The Government arrested a number of suspects across the country. Between May and November 2003, twenty-six militants were killed, including top leaders such as Yusuf al-Uyayri, Turki al-Dandani and Ahmad al-Dukhayyil (Hegghammer, 2010: 202). Moreover, more than 100 were detained, including key operatives such as Ali al-Gamdi (Hegghammer, 2010: 202).

The above events led to the increased mobilization of jihadists against the US, which at this stage was viewed as an aggressor against a poor Islamic nation (Hegghammer, 2010: 143). Pan-Islamist sentiment and solidarity rose, leading to the recruitment of more young Saudi jihadists, and others from around the Islamic world, into the military campaign against the Western allies in Afghanistan. Such a reaction was meant to counter the perceived Western oppression and humiliation of fellow Muslims.

In 2003, the Western allies invaded Iraq, another country they considered a threat to peace. This further inflamed local anti-Western sentiments. The Saudi state was seen to be colluding with an aggressor since the US and its allies had started their 'war on terror'. Saudi Arabia's domestic and foreign policy were put to the test.

2.2.8 The al-Sahwa (Awakening) movement

The al-Sahwa movement developed in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s (Lacroix, 2011: 37). It was a social movement practising a modern form of Islamic activism that was alien to the Saudi Arabian political and religious establishment. It managed to influence a substantial amount of the youth and had effective and established networks that influenced Saudi Society politically. The Sahwists' demands were espoused in their documented political demands of 1991 and 1992 respectively. These were presented in two formats; the first being the 'Letter of Demands' and the other one entitled the 'Memorandum of Advice'.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, this al-Sahwah movement saw the rise of political and extremist religious debate (Lacey, 2009: 119). Extremist fundamentalism was on the rise in political and religious rhetoric. One of the contentious issues was the Gulf War, which brought in US troops and equipment to Saudi lands. Such resistance was led, later, by passionate preachers such as Dr. Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awda. However, most religious leaders in Saudi Arabia rejected violence and extremism, and were mainly concerned with implementing policies in accordance with Islamic sharia law (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 391). Details of the debates and confrontation are discussed in the following paragraphs.

After the attack, by Al-Qaeda in 1998, on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, several Saudi imams and sheikhs, such as Hammoud bin Aqla al-Shu'aybi- one of the high-ranking members of the Ulama emerged, criticising the Saudi Government's stance in relation to the US (Moussalli, 2009). They later advocated for overt government support and funding of the Islamic resistance to the post-9/11 occupation of Afghanistan by the US.

This led to the rise in prominence of movements such as the Sahwists (Hegghammer, 2010: 4). They were a non-violent group, which resorted to Wahhabist conservatism and Muslim Brotherhood pragmatism. They all advocated for resistance to US influence and alliances with the Saudi Government (Hegghammer, 2010: 4). Such factions started prolonged debates about jihad and violent opposition to US influence within Saudi lands. According to Hegghammer (2010: 147):

"The political opportunities for mobilisation for jihad in Saudi Arabia in the 2001-3 period were … shaped by internal developments in the Saudi Islamist field, most notably the war of words between … Sawhist scholars and the Al- al-Shu'aybi school over how to deal with the United States and the West".

However, in early May 2003 the opportunity arose to change the established Western hatred and the habit of blaming the Government. Terrorists appeared to be attacking innocent Saudi people, and government media campaigns emphasized this. Thus, attitudes towards extremist activity began to change. Moussalli (2009) states that Sawhist leaders like Salman Al-Alwda, Safar Al-Hawali and Nasir Al-Umar, later changed their extremist stance to work with the Saudi Government against internal terrorism. Consequently, al-Shu'aybi was removed from the Council of Higher Ulama and asked to stop issuing fatwas that instigated violence (Hegghammer, 2010: 145).

Hegghammer (2010: 150-5) also states that individuals, including Nasir Al-Fahad, Ahmad Al-Khaldi and Ali Al-Khudayr, had taken the anti-West line to extremes, which escalated the anti-West rhetoric by 2003, such that it caused state security concerns. The sheiks of the al-Shu'aybi school had a social and religious status that accorded them power to issue fatwas, as well as attract young students to their philosophy. This was done through

religious rhetoric in mosques, as well as through the use of the Internet. They were active in the agitation of anti-West sentiments between 2003 and 2004. Their perspective almost gained political capital, until the traditional mainstream Saudi Islamists, for example Salman Al-Awda and Safar Al-Hawali, having observed the destructiveness and retrogressive consequences of anti-West sentiments and the extremes this had gone to, condemned the 9/11 attacks (Hegghammer, 2010: 148).

Details of terrorist activities and their targets proliferated in the newspapers, such as the bombing of the US consulate in Jeddah (Fatany, 2004; Ansary, 2008; Al Saud, 2009). Moreover, news channels, including CNN and Al Jazeera, as well as the Internet, through sites such as the 'Sawt al Jihad' (Voice of Jihad) - one of the popular websites used by extremists in the Arab Peninsula - prevailed. An extremist response to this has been accompanied by many other similar websites throughout the world today. The instigators, especially on the Internet and pirate videos and other forms of written media, are thought to be motivated by extremist ideals.

According to IPI (2010), the Internet has gained a significant hold on extremist activities, with some testifying that it is a better channel for disseminating ideology and sentiment than the Mosque. The Internet is viewed as an organised and centralised way of exporting extremist views worldwide. It is viewed as an effective currency as it can be accessed in both conflict and non-conflict zones (IPI, 2010). Alienated individuals can be incited into becoming dangerous terrorists, and encouraged to single-handedly commit atrocities (IPI, 2010).

2.2.9 Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) 2003

Al-Qaeda is a networked terrorist movement (Sageman, 2008). Al-Qaeda Central is currently based on the Pakistan/Afghan border. It has affiliates, including Al-Qaeda in Morocco (AQM), Al-Qaeda in Indonesia (AQI), Al-Qaeda in Algeria (AQA), Al-Qaeda in Pakistan (AQP), and Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The key affiliate for this study is the Al-Qaeda of the Arab Peninsula (AQAP), formed in 2003.

Originally based in Saudi Arabia, AQAP later moved to Yemen. It was formed as a result of Osama bin Laden's declaration that he was forming a new battlefront on the Saudi lands (Hegghammer, 2010: 10). Its operations were focused mainly in the Arab Peninsula. Previously, Saudi Arabia, though the target of various attacks, had not experienced extremist Islamic militancy of the kind that had been seen in Egypt and Algeria (Hegghammer, 2010: 1). According to Hegghammer (2010: 1), the main reason for this phenomenon was that the AQAP was driven by extreme pan-Islamism and not a socio-revolutionary ideology. This military struggle, therefore, was for political and religious reasons, rather than being a socially determined conflict based on class inequalities, as is the case today in the Arab Spring revolutions.

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, many of the mujahidin returned to Saudi Arabia to find that it was a good place to start the fight against the Western 'crusaders'. Many non-Muslim foreigners resided in the nation, whom the mujahidin considered a bad influence on local culture and religion. This shifted their attention to fighting foreign forces on their soil, and thus formed the AQAP. Its initial agenda was to evict 'crusaders' from their land, with Jews and Christians considered the main enemies. They clearly stated that they would not attack security forces in Saudi Arabia, unless these troops offered to protect the foreign forces. The AQAP was considered *takfiri* by many, but worked hard to shed this

label. They stressed that they would not attack other Muslims, even if they considered them apostate or false. They claimed that their aim was, rather, to protect fellow Muslims in Islamic states from being unjustly treated at the hands of non-Muslims.

This, and not political revolution, seems to have been their main intention. However, it should be noted that from 2004 there were a number of verbal attacks directed towards the security establishment, the Royal Family, Saudi citizens and the Ulama. These actions suggested to the Saudi state that revolution was a covert aim, though this was never explicitly stated by AQAP (Hegghammer, 2010: 200-201). According to Hegghammer (2010: 201), further evidence of the revolutionary aim of AQAP came from Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, who allegedly told interrogators that the main aim of bin Laden was to overthrow the Saudi Government. Other captives who were affiliated to AQAP also confirmed this to be the position (Hegghammer, 2010: 201). AQAP saw that by keeping their aims focused on Muslim concerns and values in general, they would gain more popularity and mobilize more followers than if they were seen as a revolutionary extremist group (Hegghammer, 2010: 201). According to Hegghammer (2010: 201), AQAP was considered the main extremist threat to Saudi Arabian stability. It was active at the beginning of the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions. However, it eventually failed for a number of reasons.

Following the arrests that followed after the 2003 bombings in Riyadh, the militants within the Al-Qaeda organisation showed their intent to improve their strategies and launched a media unit under the name of Sawt al-Jihad, which was publicised in the general media channels and on the Internet. They produced propaganda in the form of magazines and videos to improve their image in the region. Their media effort worked well between late 2003 and late 2004. According to a Western diplomatic source, three clusters of militant groups were

established, two in Riyadh and one in Hijaz, although their mode of operation was unknown (Hegghammer, 2010: 203).

On 8 November 2003, a terrorist attack that significantly affected the popularity of AQAP occurred. This particular attack shifted public perception and proved to be a disaster for the organisation. Two suicide bombers drove a replica police van into the al-Muhayya residential area, killing more than twenty people and injuring over two hundred (Rudolph, 2009: 69). This attack coincided with the seventh century battle of Badr, and was allegedly orchestrated by AQAP. Later, AQAP released a video with the details of the attack (Hegghammer, 2010: 204). The general public condemned the incident, as it occurred in the holy month of Ramadan, and was carried out in a mainly Arab residential compound leading to the deaths of many Arab and Muslim residents.

The Saudi Government used the media to launch a propaganda campaign presenting the militants as confused rebels aiming to create public disorder by targeting and killing Muslims (Hegghammer, 2010: 220). The Saudi Government used preachers at public places, including mosques, schools, and universities, and utilised the media in the form of television and the Internet to show injured Muslims who were victims of previous attacks. It also used 'Black Propaganda' which used lies to rouse public opinion against the militants. Most of this propaganda claimed that the militants were willing to damage Saudi society and create instability (Qusti, 2003).

The al-Muhayya attack in 2003 negatively impacted upon the popularity of the organisation with any extremist or radicalised sympathisers. The Washm bombing of 21 April 2004 was the largest of its kind on a government office in Saudi Arabia, and publicly clarified the objectives of AQAP. The AQAP blamed the Government for provoking these attacks, stating that the aggression of the security forces against them had led to the formation

of another organisation, the Haramain Brigades, whose role was to intervene and defend the mujahidin (Hegghammer, 2010: 207-8).

2.2.9.1 AQAP - the end of the old generation

Between August 2004 and May 2005 the Saudi Government eliminated the remaining leaders of AQAP, including the successor of al-Muqrin, Sa'ud al-Utaybi. Although there were assassinations involving Irish, British and French citizens between August and September 2004, and two major attacks in Jidda and Riyadh in December, AQAP was unable to sustain itself. It was severely affected by mid-2005, although some smaller cells committed themselves to carrying out violent operations beyond this date (Hegghammer, 2010: 210).

According to al-Otibi (2008: 124) and Cordesman and Obaid (2005: 122), the extent of the Saudi Government's effect on AQAP is not fully known. However, the assassinations of 2004 were the last to be officially reported, until 2007. Clearly, the Saudi authority's intelligence, previous arrests, and the capture of evidence against AQAP worked in their favour to combat terrorism in the Kingdom. The early months of 2005 were a quiet period for AQAP, confirming its deterioration as an organisation. Even their media wing, the Sawt al-Jihad Internet publication, was rendered ineffective. However, some senior militants and leaders were still to be captured (Hegghammer, 2010: 212-3).

A very significant incident occurred on 3 April 2005, when a resident in al-Rass town informed police that there was suspicious activity taking place in a house nearby. The security forces engaged in a gun shoot-out lasting three days, centred on a house in which all the significant leaders of AQAP were resident. It appeared to be the nerve centre of the organisation, the confrontation leading to heavy gunfire and the use of powerful weaponry. After three days, fourteen militants were killed, including significant leaders such as Karim

Majati, who is a Moroccan, and Sau'd al-Utaybi, and five other militants were injured (Hegghammer, 2010: 213).

This operation resulted in more than 100 casualties in the security forces (Hegghammer, 2010: 213). However, it practically ended the original AQAP, first formed by Yusuf al-Uyaryri. According to Hegghammer (2010: 213), the media arm of AQAP still issued the Internet magazine 'Sawt al-Jihad' in late April 2005 showing vivid accounts of the al-Rass incident, puzzling many observers who thought that the AQAP organisation was finished at this point. In May 2005, 'Sawt al-Jihad' was brought to its final closure as the security forces captured a figure unknown at the time: Abd al-Aziz al-Anzi. He was discovered to have produced the last issue of the magazine on his own (bin Huzzam, 2006). It wasn't until 2007 that 'Sawt al-Jihad' was produced again by Abd al Aziz al-Anzi, using the pseudonym, Abu Abdallah al-Najdi. Again, he worked on his own, clearly signifying that a single person was capable of organising media and propaganda (Waterman, 2007).

2.2.9.2 AQAP- the new generation

By 2005, AQAP had lost many of its leaders. Most of its original members had been killed, including those who had returned from fighting the US invasion of Afghanistan. The new generation of AQAP was composed of junior members who clearly did not have the same jihad experience (bin Huzzam, 2006). The new members of the organisation were revealed in lists of the wanted terrorists, issued by the Interior Ministry on the 28 June 2005. The new leadership was not as powerful as the old, as it had no central figure to hold it together. Salih al-Awfi was declared the new leader following the death of Sa'ud al-Utaybi. He was killed on the 18 August 2005, and although no declaration was made about the successor, the Saudi authorities identified the new leader as Fahd al-Juwayr, who was then killed on the 27

February 2006. Since then, no one has emerged as the leader of AQAP (Hegghammer, 2010: 214).

On the ground, many cracks appeared in the organisation. This was reflected in a number of Internet statements belonging to different entities of an obscure nature. All the individuals involved in these statements were new and previously unknown to the security forces. According to Ulph (2005), the "Echo of Tuwayq Brigades in Zulfi" released a series of statements between October 2005 and March 2006. This was followed by a series of statements produced by the "Good Tidings Foundation for Media Production" group, which was later revealed to be part of Al-Qaeda. It is highly likely that the groups who released the statements had no connection with the organisation that was originally created by al-Uyayri (Ulph, 2005b; Heffelfinger, 2006).

The latter half of 2005 indicated that the new generation of AQAP was on the defensive. During 2005, only two incidents took place against the security forces (Hegghammer, 2010: 214). The first incident targeted and killed a police interrogator, Mubarak al-Sawat, who was well known for his brutality towards prisoners (Hegghammer, 2010: 214-5). The second incident took place in the Buraydah area on 27 December 2005, when two wanted militants fired randomly at police patrols.

One of the main reasons for AQAP's weaknesses in 2005 is that the security forces were on high alert. The last half of the year saw many arrests and little resistance from the militants (Hegghammer, 2010: 215). By early 2006, it was apparent that the shoot-outs between security forces and militants had become minimal, signifying that AQAP was almost dead. Yet there was a secret plot by the militants, who prepared for a new organised attack (Hegghammer, 2010: 215). On the 24 February 2006, the militants targeted the oil industry

for the first time, when a group called the 'Usama bin Ladin Squadron' tried to drive two vehicles filled with explosives into the Abqaiq Oil Refinery.

This was the only AQAP attack to reach execution stage throughout the whole of 2006 (al-Rodhan, 2006; Ulph, 2006). Whilst the aim of the organisation was to perform further attacks, the security forces thwarted these intentions by stopping many attacks before they reached fruition. On 21 April 2006, Saudi police discovered a car that contained weapons, maps of vital installations and forged papers, which were destined for the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Two months later the police raided a flat in Riyadh, resulting in a gun battle that killed six militants and a police officer. The materials found in the flat indicated that the militants were on the verge of committing a suicide bombing, allegedly aimed at a security target (Hegghammer, 2010: 216). The months of July and August 2006 showed the arrest of almost eighty militants across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia suspected of being part of AQAP. According to Fattah (2007), in February 2007 a lethal attack targeted French tourists near Mada'in Salih - a historical place located north of Medina. The militants managed to escape, but were later captured.

According to Al Saud (2009) and The Guardian (2009), one of the significant attacks carried out by AQAP in recent years was conducted in 2009 against Prince Muhammad bin Naif, the leader of counter-terrorism in the Kingdom, because the extremists had identified him as a threat to their existence. So as to be able to enter the palace, a suicide attempt was conducted that injured Prince Muhammad. This attack had significance for the Saudi Royals, but also showed the continued inability of AQAP to successfully execute its operations. The decline of AQAP is the result of a number of factors. First and foremost, AQAP had killed too many people and appeared to be still carrying out further terrorist atrocities on civilians.

As an organisation, AQAP proved immensely unpopular in the region, and this significantly sealed their fate.

Although the Saudi Government used hard measures for combating terrorism it also used less forceful tactics, allowing many militants to surrender using religious mediators. Although, this was criticised by many across the world, the strategy appeared to work. Complementing this strategy was the use of the media to change public perceptions and present AQAP as a revolutionary movement rather than a jihadist one. AQAP was further criticised for its choice to remain in Saudi Arabia when it was expected to take part in jihad against occupiers in the war in Iraq. To many, this war was the ultimate jihad and hence AQAP's decision not to take part further split public and mujahidin opinions about its legitimacy as a jihadist movement.

This section has used the background events and the religious and political divides existing in the Saudi state to explore the different causes and the discourse around the developments leading to the gradual rise of extremism, to the point of terrorism and a threat to the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The next part will focus specifically on the multiple and changing counter-terrorism strategies that have been used to deal with extremist groups in Saudi Arabia. The effect of power and governance, from a religious and political perspective seems to have impacted the response to counter terrorism in Saudi Arabia. The next section deals with the theories of governance and power and how these influence political and religious issues in the state.

2.3 Counter-terrorism in Saudi Arabia and its approach to power and governance

Hard power is a popular military form of response that many countries traditionally use in their foreign intervention policies, as well as their domestic activities. Nye (2004a: 5) describes it as "the ability to coerce [and] grows out of a country's military or economic might". As the term implies, 'hard power' involves the use of force and forceful coercion. According to Nye (2004), the use of military force is an example of overt hard power, whereas soft power involves more subtle ways of influencing behaviour and consequently changing it. From a Critical and Theoretical analysis of terrorism, it is essential to use soft power with an awareness of the political rights of the dissenters. Overlooking these rights can lead to the state terrorism of individuals and society in general, which can be seen as a dictatorship by those that feel oppressed (Herring, 2008; Jarvis, 2009).

There are disadvantages to the use of hard power. One of its flaws is that it can lead to the inflammation of the attitudes of the affected communities and individuals. This usually leads, as in cases such as Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Egypt, to a hatred of the authorities in power, and could potentially lead some to support the causes of violent extremists. It could also, as shown by the 1920s Ikhwan rebellions and the later Juhayman case, lead to a generation of grudges and a hatred for the law and the authorities. According to Herring, (2008); Jarvis, (2009); Heath-Kelly, (2010) and Stump and Dixit, (2012), governments need to be reflexive of their own hard power strategies which are perceived to be akin to state terrorism.

The nature of power changes over time and several international strategies and infrastructures, such as counter-terrorism and information technology, can be affected by

such alterations. Power, as a general concept, means having the capacity to perform an act effectively. Poulantza (1973: 104 cited by Lukes, 2004: 55) notes, "power is the capacity of a social [or political] class to realise its specific objective interests". It is defined by Nye (2004a: 1-2) as "the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants".

It is important to understand the motives and strategies behind extremists' claimed defence of religious and cultural practices and their claims for the preservation of territorial sovereignty. This plays a major part in the success or failure of the hard power strategy. As shown in the early years of its formation, the Saudi administration used negotiation and military might in its quest to coerce and change the behaviour of its subjects and opposition. As years have passed the strategies have changed, as the Government has reflected on and realised the shortcomings of their hard power stance.

According to Nye (2004 cited by Dondelinger, 2008) there are three different forms of power, namely military, economic and soft power. Because of a cunning and bloody resistance from extremist terrorist groups to hard power measures from governments, Nye devised soft power strategies which, according to Dondelinger (2008: 40), refer to "the ability of a political entity to exercise a form of power which alters the behaviour and shapes the preferences of others not through compulsion/coercion or even inducement/payment, but through attraction/co-optation, leading to acquiescence". Still from CTS perspective, the term still smacks of patronising and controlling tendencies that assume state power as advantageous over non-state actors in political conflicts.

2.4 The Saudi hard power counter strategy to dissent and extremism

There are various reasons that prompted governments such as Egypt, Algeria and Indonesia to adopt counter-revolt or resistance strategies in an attempt to ensure the survival of their regimes. Some of the approaches are influenced by tradition and philosophy, as well as contemporary political culture. This culture needs to be reflective and recognize the value of opposing political views rather than disregarding them (Herring, 2008). This chapter analyses the evolution of the Saudi monarchy and the Government's adoption of counter strategies against any resistance to its administration.

It is imperative to look at the strategies used. It is also important to trace the reasons why the Saudi Government adopted particular strategies and how they were executed. From this discussion, an in-depth analysis of the historical development of the Saudi hard power and soft power strategies can be developed and the situation more clearly understood.

The philosophy, justification and application of counter-rebellion strategies will be analysed in order to study and effectively describe the gradual change in governmental approaches from as early as 1932, when the Saudi state was established, to the present. This discussion considers the consequences that were prevented or provoked by the philosophies and strategies chosen. It should be noted that the use of hard power, in resolving political resistance, was prevalent during the early years of the Saudi state. It should also be born in mind that this was not only a localised feature of political resolution but was an international one practised even by many states in the Western countries for example Britain, Europe and even the US.

2.5 The Sibila battle of 1929 and the consequences of the Ikhwan rebellion

As stated earlier, the Saudi state met resistance and rebellion from some sections of the Ikhwan in its quest to expand, unify, establish and maintain the Saudi state and its influence on the newly acquired regions. According to Vassiliev (2000: 272), the establishment of the Ikhwan brought with it advantages and challenges to the peaceful establishment of Saudi's reign in the conquered and assimilated tribal regions. It is arguable that problems with assimilation of the tribes and their territories to the Kingdom emerged due to differences in Islamic doctrinal interpretation. However, there was also some rejection of the Saudi monarchy's policies regarding the treatment of neighbouring regions such as Kuwait and Iraq. Furthermore, there was localised territorial conflict between the nomadic tribes. Two sources of conflict were the levels and processes of modernization in the urbanised lands, and the treatment of religious shrines and the two holy cities.

Such differing views were to be expected during the introduction of Islam in the new regions, as religious interpretations differed, and as a consequence the Saudi family's supreme rule and command were challenged. There were breakaways from the original alliance, and to resolve this, King Ibn Saud had to use hard power in order to instil his influence on the rebellious tribes and establish political and territorial stability in the region (Vassiliev, 2000: 278).

There are many possible reasons why the Saudi state initially used soft measures. King Abdul Aziz had tried to avoid conflict with those who were against the state's modernization projects. Their argument was that they were preserving their culture and hence their religion from a wave of Western values and influence. However, the King could foresee the advantages of the different forms of technology that would benefit, economically and materially, different areas in the region. Such benefits could have been lost if he had allowed

the cessation of the modernization process occurring within the country. The Saudi state, newly established, was keen to maintain political stability, in order to promote its own establishment, and furthering the ideas of the King.

The dispute over the concept of jihad in Islamic law was one of the crucial reasons behind the 1929 battle of Subila. The concept of jihad was understood in many different ways across the Islamic world. According to Lacroix (2011: 25), some viewed jihad as the active conquest of territories in the quest to expand Islam, while the King's perception was that it was to do with strengthening the hold on already unified territories. This was a dispute heavily influenced by ideologically based religious interpretations.

One of the Ikhwan's demands was the continuation of expansionist-armed jihad, even after the emergence of the political state. The Saudi state signed peace treaties with Britain as well as agreements for peaceful co-existence with British colonised regions such as Iraq and some of the other Gulf States (Ismail, 2010: 42). This tendency to befriend non-believers caused political and religious disagreements within the state historically, and continues to do so.

In reaction to the King's apparent disregard for what they saw as religious protocol, some of the Ikhwan invaded Iraq, reaching Karbala and Najafi in the north of the country (Ismail, 2010: 42). This prompted the King to suppress this rebellion because it was viewed as a threat to and a disregard of his power, something that could bring corruption and damage to the emerging state. Moreover, it could have created enmity with Iraq, and have antagonized the British and the international community in general.

According to Vassiliev (2000: 270), a worrying later development was the negative attitude of some of the Ikhwan towards some pilgrims that were going to Makkah. There

were differing views regarding the treatment of the shrines, and the traditional views of the nomadic Bedouins were not the same as those of the urbanised dwellers of Makkah. The political, religious and cultural climate in the newly co-opted regions was as varied as the tribes that dwelt on these lands, and as a consequence the King would later have to take decisive unifying action (Al Zaidi, 2004: 185).

In order to ensure the stability of the Saudi state, there had to be uniformity in the adoption of Islamic law and the accompanying political administration of regions, such as the Hijaz. To quell uprisings and revolts, the military prowess, religious wisdom and leadership of Ibn Saud and the council of clerics was put to the test. These qualities, ultimately, meant that the Saudi establishment triumphed against the individual princes that propagated dissent and outright military resistance.

Characters, such as Faisal al Dawlish and others to the east, north and southwest of Riyadh, were becoming hostile to the central Saudi authorities. The King and his administration were essentially saved by his alliance with those of the Ikhwan who were non-rebellious, tribes and powerful militarily (Al Zaidi, 2004: 200). This is still a Saudi strategy today.

Earlier, leaders, including Faisal al Dawlish and bin Bjad, had sent a list of complaints to the King. These included the perceived political misdemeanours of the King's leadership. The complaints ranged from his sending of his son to London, the unfair taxation of certain regions, his unacceptable tolerance of Shia pilgrims and citizens in the region, to the banning of trade with the Kuwaiti. Such affronts pitted these leaders against the King on moral, religious and political grounds (Vassiliev, 2000: 274).

According to Vassiliev (2000: 276), the King's response to these grievances revealed his awareness of the need to amass military power as well as to seek compromise with the petitioners. He amended some of the issues, for example decreasing the taxes that had triggered the grievances. On the other hand, he refused to ban the use of cars and radios in the region. The presence of Shia Muslims in the region was one of the burning contradictions. At this stage, the Ikhwan rebellion waged expansionist raids into Iraq wiping away any they considered to be non-believers. The British criticised this action, and so did the Saudi King. This earned him enemies for siding with the British on the issue of Iraq. Because the Ikhwan considered itself to be the King's military backbone, they felt that he could be challenged on the issue of a holy war against the seemingly religiously misdirected Iraqis (Vassiliev, 2000: 276).

A definitive split between Ibn Saud and the tribal leaders occurred when some tribal groups denounced him. In a public gesture of submission, the King stepped down on the understanding that the throne was to be handed to someone from the house of Al Saud (Vassiliev, 2000: 277). What complicated issues for the King was that the resistance to his authority was veiled under the claims that it was based on religious grounds and that he, the King, was forming un-Islamic alliances for his own personal interests, especially with the 'infidel' British (Vassiliev, 2000: 277). This is a common accusation against the monarchy even today.

The first evident instances of hard power were shown in early March 1929, when the King clashed militarily with Faisal al Dawlish and Ibn Bijad at the Sibillah Battle (Lacroix, 2011: 13). Al Dawlish suffered a severe wound, and some of his allies were arrested whilst others died in prison. The rebellious leaders were effectively defeated, yet there were religious and cultural sentiments that would lead to the re-emergence of similar sentiments

decades later. Religious extremists, who would later emerge as violent terrorists, exhibited such sentiments.

It is arguable that these were signs of the effectiveness of traditional military hard power, after the seeming failure of the earlier soft power negotiation strategies. This trend would develop with further resistance after the physical, military and political recovery of Faisal al Dawish and Sultan bin Bijad.

2.6 The end of the Ikhwan uprising

The events leading to the final conflict between Ibn Saud and the Bedouin Ikhwan stemmed from a series of attacks on the allies of some of the rebellious Ikhwan by sympathisers of the King (Vassiliev, 2000: 279), for instance, Fahd Ibn Jiluwi killed Zaidan bin Hithlain in a retrospective attack on opposition sympathisers. Vassiliev (2000: 279) states that the murder of Zaidan created a conflict between the King and the Bedouin of northeast Arabia. According to Vassiliev (2000: 278), the British helped Ibn Saud crush the Ikhwan revolt summarily and effectively. Because the rebels were getting aid and sympathy from Kuwait and Iraq, the King had suspected the British to be involved; these suspicions were resolved when the British aided the King in his campaign to quell the revolts.

The Saudi regime had, through hard power and diplomacy, finally established itself in the region and was a credible force to reckon with in the Arabian Peninsula. Yet despite its successes in its political and military campaigns, the prominence of the Saudi state would still be challenged by religious conflict and differing interpretations of Islam to the point of armed conflict and resistance.

2.7 Juhayman

In November 1979, Juhayman horrified the whole Muslim world when he led hundreds of young men to their deaths at the holy shrine of Makkah (Lacey, 2009: 3). Many viewed this as a gesture of demented religious fanaticism. The House of Saud went to extreme lengths to disown him. The Government apologists explained the situation from a culturally and religiously intolerant perspective. They disowned Juhayman's actions as not typical in the slightest; this mingling of violence with religion was an un-Saudi aberration. This was what conventional leaders and critics of religious dissent would say twenty years later about Osama bin Laden (Lacey, 2009: 3).

One of the reasons for Juhayman's behaviour can be traced back to 1973, when King Faisal of Saudi Arabia announced a boycott on oil sales from the Kingdom to the West, especially to the US. According to Lacey (2009: 3), the King had been angered by President Richard Nixon's military support for Israel in the October War against Egypt and Syria, and hoped to compel some dramatic change in US and Western foreign policy.

As a consequence of this Arab boycott of oil exports to the West, the price of oil on the world market multiplied by almost five times. Inside the Kingdom, dramatic changes to the economy and lifestyle of Saudi society caused a massive religious and cultural extremist backlash. Conservative extremists, such as Juhayman, influenced by a rejectionist ideology led this backlash, prompting him to occupy the holy site in protest at the Government's modernization policy, and other political and religious issues.

Similarly to his Ikhwan predecessors, Juhayman was motivated by a complete disregard for the monarchy and its administration. He was a descendent of one of the early opposition fighters against the King and the Government, and is described as a fiery and

rather reckless religious extremist (Lacroix, 2011: 93). As a result, he developed a new form of resistance to the regime, mainly influenced by a set of religious doctrines that would later create a new form of extremism until present.

The Government used soft measures against Juhayman's JMS group, arresting and later releasing them. They also used discussions between clerics and the groups, trying to persuade and discourage them from following their extremist path (Lacey, 2009). The Government's respect for the nation's clerics, such as bin Baze, facilitated the earlier release of the group's extremist activists. The clerics' argument was that the arrests had been unwarranted, caused by something that could have been discussed and resolved. The issue behind the arrests had been the pulling down of pictures and any forms of Western modernity, including portraits of the King (Lacey, 2009). Despite this, the influence of the group's religious extremism developed into a complicated form of dissent. This later led to the Saudi religious administration, intelligence, police and the military to reconsider their counter-terrorism strategies.

2.8 The siege of Makkah

Limited sources of information are available to fully elaborate and discuss the events of the siege of Makkah, partly because the details of the event were censored by the Saudi political establishment until as recently as 2003 (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011: viii-ix). According to Lacroix (2011: 93) and Trofimov (2007: 164), the event was considered in Islamic circles, as the most unacceptable act against the religion; Juhayman had dared to infiltrate the holy shrine, hold pilgrims prisoner, and even kill some.

This action was a daring and bold affront against the religious establishment, the Government, and the country's intelligence and security system. The situation was a complex

one. It demanded that the Ulema practice caution and find acceptable ways to justify the hardpower strategy in dealing with the violent situation that confronted them. According to Trofimov (2007: 165), the Ulema cited a Qur'anic verse that waived the traditional ban on using weapons in the holy premises: "Do not fight with them in the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it. But if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers".

Despite his religious fervour and extreme interpretation of the Qur'an, Juhayman tarnished his religious position and principles by defiling the holy site with his actions. He had very little sympathy from people and this action legitimised the clerics' and the state's use of military force to subdue him at the holy site (Trofimov, 2007: 265; Lacey, 2009: 26). This would be a lesson to all aspiring extremists, local or external, and an example of the effective use of Saudi hard power.

According to Peterson (2002: 61), the Western perception of the Saudi reaction to handling this extremist situation was uni-dimensional, and they viewed the Saudi Government to be knowingly conservative and reactionary in its dealings with opposition.

However, the Saudi Government was now, by its own measures, legally justified to attack the Juhayman militarily, using the latest weapons (Lacey, 2009: 32). This had become open warfare, not a policing action (Trofimov, 2007: 166). Juhayman's snipers had wreaked bloody havoc on the army and the civilians from the holy site's minaret tops. The army ordered that the tube launched, optically-tracked, wire-command-link-guided missiles be used on the terrorist snipers.

To extremist sympathisers, this event was a heroic one that seemed to immortalise the earlier resistance of the Ikhwan leaders, such as Faisal al Dawish and bin Bjad. Juhayman

was considered to have displayed similar heroic tendencies. Such philosophical and military resistance to the Saudi administration from a small group of people would grow more popular and problematic in the following years.

The powerful crushing of the insurgency seemed to fuel further fanatical and violent extremism in the years after the Siege of Makkah. A number of groups started to emerge, motivated by a similar fervour and philosophy that would be further inflamed by events that involved the occupation by foreign powers, especially those of the West, of the Arabian Peninsula and other Muslim lands, including Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq.

2.9 The Jihad in Afghanistan and the Ulaya, Khobar attacks 1995-96

Various events and dynamics in the late 1970s, for example the Iranian revolution, had the potential to influence politically and religiously motivated events in some Muslim countries. Individuals, such as Juhayman, could have been encouraged to violently occupy the holy site of Makkah as a result of such events.

According to Lacey (2009: 16), Juhayman was inspired by his studies of religion, and his familial links with the Ikwhan. He was a rejectionist who saw the monarchy as an opportunistic leadership bent on distorting the religious and cultural backbone of the Saudi society for their own personal gains (Lacey, 2009: 16; Lacroix, 2011: 127). Events outside Saudi Arabia influenced his behaviour and that of other members of the opposition, and suggested that they might achieve the same successes, for example the revolution in Iran, had led to the deposition of the Shah. Subsequently, the leadership of the country was taken by Ayatollah al-Khomeini, and this led people in the Arab regions to think that revolutions could occur in other Muslim countries (Ismail, 2010: 44).

In Saudi Arabia, the Sahwist leaders confronted the Ulama on a variety of political, religious and other issues, specifically pertaining to international relations between the Saudi regime, the West and other Arab countries (Fandy, 1999: 3). Such opposition to the Saudi Government and its religious clerics prompted an increase in debates about ideological and religious principles. Some of the debates were related to international relations, and others to domestic issues including social conservatism (Fandy, 1999: 25; Hegghammer, 2010: 24). Such dynamics and observations later led to grievances that were violently meted against the Government (Hegghammer, 2010: 24).

According to Hegghammer (2010: 23), the late 1970s and the early 1980s saw a wave of Arab Nationalism that threatened the political stability of the Arab region. Pan Islamism (Islamic Nationalism) was on the increase, prompting an increase in activism that was fuelled by religious extremism that would, in some circles, later turn violent. As a soft power strategy to deal with this popular sentiment, the Saudi Government attempted to deflect extremist sentiments from the local scene to the international situation. The Saudi administration, as we shall see below, proved its religious integrity on the international scene in those Muslim nations perceived to be persecuted, including Afghanistan.

In the 1980s, the Russians invaded Afghanistan, provoking Muslim countries - especially the Saudi Government- to recruit and fund jihadists in Afghanistan (Lacey, 2009: 65). This was Saudi Arabia's proof of its participation in Pan-Islamism (Hegghammer, 2010: 26). There was active funding, intelligence support and logistical assistance given to the mujahidin of Afghanistan. This proved Saudi dominance in the situation: even the US acknowledged their instrumental role in dispatching the Russians and their 'evil doctrine' (Lacey, 2009: 77).

In this context, the United States' Central Intelligence Agency was seen to be working hand in hand with the Afghan fighters and other sympathetic nations including the Saudi Government. According to Hegghammer (2010: 26), the lines between which individuals or governments were funding the humanitarian and military assistance, and at what expense, were blurred. Saudi Arabia is described as having spent in the region of 6.75 billion SAR (US$1.8 billion) to fund efforts in the Afghan conflict (Lacey, 2009: 65; Hegghammer, 2010: 25). However, because of these blurred lines, there was potential for the funds to be siphoned for other clandestine activities by the leaders of Al-Qaeda. This lack of accountability would later prove to be deadly.

Afghanistan was one of the initial seedbeds for the radicalisation processes that eventually produced extremist and violent Islamists. Jihad in Afghanistan was considered by pan-Islamists to be a sacred religious duty (Lacey, 2009: 115; Hegghammer, 2010: 25). The consequence of radicalisation in Afghanistan was evident in the character and nature of the ex-combatants when they returned, especially to Saudi Arabia. They had been so radicalised that they proved to be a security threat to the nation. As a result they had to be monitored under strict surveillance. Some were also arrested for violent political acts and activities (Ismail, 2010: 50), others were later to be executed or shot because of their extremist activities (Rudolph, 2009: 6). What spurred the activism and radicalisation was the rampant debates between the Sahwa, the Ulama and the Saudi state regarding its relations with the West and other perceived infidel states (Lacey, 2009: 150; Rudolph, 2009: 73).

One of the reasons for the discontent among local people and clerics was the aftermath of the Iraq threat to Kuwait and Saudi security in 1991. The Saudi Government had invited the US Government to send its troops to establish military bases in Saudi Arabia, as a security precaution against a perceived threat from Iraq (Lacey, 2009: 150). Hegghammer

(2010: 4) states that the presence of US troops on Saudi soil was viewed with abhorrence by the Saudi public, especially scholars, politicians, religious and community leaders, as well as by other Muslim countries. This abhorrence was mainly based on the sharia declaration that there should be no people from religions other than Islam in the Arab Peninsular (Lacey, 2010: 150). Such individuals agitated for action, which was readily executed by the impressionable youth and sympathetic former Afghan fighters.

2.10 The emergence of Sahwa

Because of the hard power treatment that was meted on any offenders, most of the fighters had to return to Afghanistan's training camps. These were now being run by newly converted former mujahidin fighters who had by now named themselves Al-Qaeda, and were operating under the command of Osama bin Laden (Lacey, 2009: 14). They were still privately funded by individuals and associations whose actions could not be stopped because there were various pan-Islamist causes for whom funds could still be raised without the intervention of the Government (Hegghammer, 2010: 37). This led to the birth and sustenance of a formidable force in Al-Qaeda, which would go on to torment Saudi society, Western society, and many other Muslim countries.

As a result of the traditional repressive, hard power methods that had been implemented by governments, the extremists perfected their hard power offensive by forming an organised terrorist machinery. This was well-funded, trained and radicalised to the point of being able to launch serious attacks against governments, individuals, other religious groups and nations (Cordesman and Obaid, 2009: 257). This action was typified in the most deadly attacks that were to be observed after the 9/11 attacks on America, the 7/7 attacks in London and the bombings in Spain and Bali. Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, bore the brunt of most of the attacks from 2003 (Lacey, 2009: 115; Hegghammer, 2010: 10).

In the 1990s, radical politics inspired by Sahwism and Al-Qaeda's extremist sentiments became the order of the day (Lacey, 2009: 115-118). This led to some clerics being arrested, cautioned or put under surveillance by the Government (Lacroix, 2011: 3). The Saudi authorities faced a variety of domestic threats from a range of sources including conservative Islamists, Sahwist radicalisation and violent religious extremism (Rudolph, 2009: 36). This prompted the Government to enact a series of laws to control the volatile behaviour locally and internationally. The law, school syllabuses and preaching agendas were revised in a bid to calm the flames of extremism taking hold of Saudi society. The police were trained to cope with this phenomenon using new forms of surveillance, international co-operation, modern policing techniques and technology (Lacey, 2009: 230; Hegghammer, 2010: 221).

Pan-Islamism had progressed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, creating a situation that pitted the Government against religious activists, extremists and terrorists. Sometimes the Government found itself meeting criticism from Western governments for fomenting terrorist activity. As a result the Saudi Government found it was faced with a new threat to its religious, regional, international and political stability. Because of this, it had to revise its policing and treatment of religious extremists in some minor instances. Hard power strategies were reviewed after 2004 and changes were made to complement these new methods, especially in the detention and treatment of extremists, surveillance and arrests, as well as the monitoring of extremist thinking and actions.

The following section highlights how policing became complicated when issues relating to regional and international relations stirred domestic backlashes that led to debates that inflamed anti-and anti-Western sentiments leading to attacks as seen in the 1995 and 2003 bombings.

2.11 The Al Ulaya attack 1995 in Riyadh

According to Hegghammer (2010: 31), various developments triggered the bombings of 1995. This section will discuss how the hard power strategy that the Saudi Government had seen as a generic approach to dealing with extremism caused a violent backlash from extremist Islamists. During the mid 1990s, the Saudi Government identified the Sahwa as a political threat, and the former Afghan jihadists as a security threat (Hegghammer, 2010: 8; Lacroix, 2011: 3).

According to Hegghammer (2010: 70), the late 1990s saw the Government take a firm and repressive stance in suppressing the extremists. It was a perilous exercise to be involved in clandestine extremist activity, as the consequences for this were dire. Some of those arrested for violent extremist activity were executed. The state's hard power approach did not earn it a good reputation among the dedicated and die hard extremists who viewed the Government's domestic and foreign policy as anathema to Islam. This stance coincided with the overt formation of Al-Qaeda between 1996 and 2001. Since Osama bin Laden's offer of the mujahidin to fight against Sadam Hussein's army was rejected by King Fahd, Al-Qaeda saw fit to develop a form of resistance that affected some Middle Eastern governments and foreign administrations. He was bitter, and diverted all his anti-Saudi state energies towards forming doctrinal alliances with the Sahwa (Lacey, 2009: 150). The following section discusses the Sahwa and gives a detailed presentation of the dissent that the Saudi state faced.

2.12 The Sahwa activism and arrests

According to Peterson (2002: 61), 'Muwahhidin' (Ikhwan), the belief in the preservation and purity of Islam, took on new shape and force in the 1990s. It was born of a similar fervour as the earlier Ikhwan excursions in the spread and sustenance of the family of Al Saud into

power along with the spread of Islam in the region. Because the Sahwa were Salafist, who follow the Prophet and his companies, they denounced the state as corrupt and un-Islamic (Fandy, 1999: 3; Peterson, 2002: 61-2; Lacroix, 2010: 3). The Sahwa leaders, al Awda, al Omer and al Hawali, opposed the presence of US troops on Arab soil. They declared that the US presence in the Arab Peninsular was in gross disregard of the Prophet's prohibition of the settling of a non-Islamic people on Arab Peninsular soil (Lacey, 2009: 64; Hegghammer, 2010: 31)

Lacey (2009: 150) observes that there were various announcements in Sahwist sermons expressing defiance at the state's decision to let the US settle on Saudi land. 'Let there not be two religions in Arabia' was a text quoted from the Prophet's Hadith. This was supported with selective various quotes from the Qur'an and the Hadith as well. Fandy (1999: 25) identifies the source of the problem through an observation that, historically, the interaction between the state and Islam brought about certain adjustments to Islam rather than the other way round. He says that the state adjusted Islam to support it, creating religious problems, from the perspective of fundamentalist extremists.

Peterson (2002: 61) goes on to reiterate the challenges that have faced the Saudi state in its quest to balance Islamic traditional culture with modernity. He describes it as akin to walking a tightrope between Islamic conservatism and the pursuit of development and security. Sahwist accusations of the state's policies reached unprecedented levels where they even declared the sanctioned religious establishment, the Ulama, to be an illegitimate tool of the state. When the respected clerics, bin Baz and bin Uthaymeen, intervened to explain the that the US were present in Saudi Arabia as a defensive measure to preserve the safety and stability of the nation, he was dismissed by the radical thinkers as a government apologist (Lacey, 2009: 150).

Based on the principles of the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), the Sahwa was poised for a showdown with the state, and it gained popularity throughout the 1990s. Advocates, including al Hawali and Salman al Awda, held fiery sermons denouncing the state's policies and the US attack on Afghanistan (Fandy, 1999: 3; Lacey, 2009: 65).

Arrests continued between 1992 and 1993, culminating in the 1994 showdown where rallies were held denouncing the state and its alliance with the US. Rallies held in Riyadh and Buraydah were silenced with the arrests of leaders, activists of Sahwa. A total of 110 people were arrested. The treatment of the Sahwist prisoners in the jails inflamed the extremist Islamist community (Hegghammer, 2010: 70). These arrests continued into 1995, effectively silencing the local opposition. According to Hegghammer (2010: 71), hundreds of the Sahwa lingered in prison and this had its negative consequences. It could be suggested that the Government imprisonment of the Sahwist clerics would inevitably lead to the violent chaos that followed. Opposition activists were becoming increasingly out of control, having no restraining advice from the imprisoned religious leaders. In this case, hard power repression resulted in the extremists resolving that there was no way they could influence or change the Government except through violent means. According to Hegghammer (2010: 71), one of the most significant consequences of the arrests was the noticeable absence of respected clerics such as bin Baz and bin Uthaymeen. They could have controlled the rampant and agitated former mujahidin who were already spoiling for a fight with the state of Saudi Arabia, something the Sahwist clerics had never recommended.

The aftermath of the arrests in Buraydah, al Awda's hometown, and the interrogations that followed, can be said to have led to the Riyadh bombings in 1995. A certain activist by the name Abdallah al-Hudayf had attacked a notoriously violent police officer with sulphuric

acid for allegedly persecuting his father, brother and other Sahwists who were in prison (Hegghammer, 2010: 71). Abdallah al-Udayf was arrested, and consequently executed for the crime on 12 August 1995. Because his body was never returned to his relatives there were strong allegations that he had been tortured; Islamist extremists declared him a martyr. Earlier, he had advocated the bombing of the foreign compounds. His arrest and death at the state's hands triggered outrage, leading to four of his comrades plotting and executing the first and deadliest bombing in Riyadh on 13 November 1995. It was a 100kg bomb that killed five American and two Indian officials (Lacey, 2009: 176; Hegghammer, 2010: 72).

According to Hegghammer (2010: 72), there is no evidence that Al-Qaeda was directly involved in the plot and execution of the bombing. The four perpetrators are described as having been influenced by their reading of extremist literature written by bin Laden, Abu Muhamad al Maqdisi, and others (Fandy, 1999: 3-4). Because the state had used hard measures to repress and control the Islamist extremists, the violent backlash was a shock and a hard blow to its intelligence and security system (Lacey, 2009: 176). As a result, the four bombers were made to confess in public by way of television and other media; they were later executed in May 1996.

2.13 Saudi hard power and Al-Qaeda: 9/11 and Riyadh bombing 2003

According to Assiri (2009: 82) and Hegghammer (2010: 202), the bombing in Riyadh on 12 May 2003 provoked another massive police crackdown on the Saudi jihadist community. Those who bore the brunt of this were once again the former Afghan, Bosnia and Chechnya fighters. They had been under intensive surveillance and suspicion since returning home. In some cases the crackdown was violent, leading to shoot-outs and deaths on both sides.

In the same manner as arrests of the Sahwa leaders in 1994, the summer of 2003 once again saw a resurgence of arrests of clerics from the region as well as scholars being discreetly picked-up and imprisoned. This led to an absence of credible clerical backing and guidance for the jihadists, which would prove challenging to the Government's security, as the Al-Qaeda fighters in Saudi Arabia would enact irrational and unrestrained violent action as revenge or protest. As stated in earlier parts of this study, AQAP suffered heavily during this period, being the target of police crackdowns, arrests, interrogations and investigations (Hegghammer, 2010: 204). Much of the network's resources and infrastructure was lost as safe houses were exposed and raided (Hegghammer, 2010: 204).

This section discusses the events that escalated to the 2003 Riyadh bombings and other violent attacks, leading to the hard measures taken by the Saudi authorities. According to Fandy (1999: 183), Hegghammer (2010: 10) and Peterson (2002: 62), Osama bin Laden's initial focus was the eviction of the US from Saudi soil. It was the hard measures that were exerted on his extremist Sahwa brothers that slowly led him to gravitate towards violent solutions to resolve the jihadist grievances. Bin Laden was united with the Taliban as a consequence of the 1998 US attack on his training camps and the Taliban Government of Afghanistan. It is during this period that bin Laden formed an alliance with the exiled Egyptian Al-Qaeda under al Zawahiri, who was himself a victim of the Egyptian Government's hard measures on jihadists (Hegghammer, 2010: 110).

In addition, because bin Laden appeared to support the bombing of the US compound in Riyadh in 1995, he was listed as a target by the Saudi state. Bin Laden proceeded to actively command the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya in 1998, the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000 as well as the 9/11 attacks. This made him not only a target of Saudi security agents; he was a wanted man internationally.

Consequentially, after these attacks there was increased pressure from the West on the Saudi state to act, and be seen to be taking action, against jihadist insurgents at home and abroad (Cordsman and Obaid, 2005: 161). This was because, towards the end of the 1990s, a majority of the Al-Qaeda suicide bombers and insurgents were discovered to be from Saudi Arabia (Hegghammer, 2010: 112).

It is arguable that because bin Laden had been refused the chance to participate in the Iraq war against Saddam Hussein, he became bitter towards the Saudi Government and the Saudi Royal Family. In addition, like other former Sahwa rejectionists he was determined to discredit the Government. Bin Laden criticised and opposed the stance of the Saudi state on fighting Saddam Hussein. In the same way as the Sahwa leaders, al Hawali and al Awda, he claimed that the use of non-Muslim troops to protect Saudi lands was unacceptable (al-Rasheed, 2002: 166; Hegghammer, 2010: 29). The aim was to frustrate and hurt the Saudi leadership as much as possible while the state harboured US troops.

After observing the mass arrests of the Sahwa leaders and activists in 1994, bin Laden resolved to change his rhetorical stance and moved towards using violent means as a strategy for addressing religious and political grievances in the Saudi state and internationally (Hegghammer, 2010: 113). He was suspected of smuggling arms and explosives from Sudan to eastern Saudi Arabia in 1994 (Hegghammer, 2010: 33). In 1995, he arranged to meet an Iraqi Government official in Khartoum to discuss carrying out joint ventures to attack foreign troops in the Saudi lands (Bergen, 2006). After the Saudi Government took out hard measures against the Sahwa scholars and the jihadists, bin Laden started to open branches of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, especially in the Hijaz region. After the Burayah rally of 1994, there was a concerted wave of arrests, interrogation, imprisonment and persecution of the Sahwa leaders and activists, as well as jihadists.

The bombing in Riyadh in 1995 and the al Khober bombings of 1996 enabled Al-Qaeda to secretly strengthen its stronghold in Buraydah, in the Hijaz region of Saudi Arabia. Most of Al-Qaeda's ideologues and potential helpers or supporters were in prison (Hegghammer, 2010: 114). The US tightened its security and surveillance network and strategy around all its areas of interest in Saudi Arabia as preparation for potential Al-Qaeda attacks.

The period between 1996 and 2001 saw very little or no Al-Qaeda attacks in Saudi Arabia. Instead, this period saw a massive police crackdown on the jihadist community and on any opposition to the Government. In 1998 the Saudi police made arrests and prevented a missile attack on the US embassy, where the deputy US president was scheduled to visit (Hegghammer, 2010: 114). The following crackdown led to about 900 arrests countrywide, especially in the Makkah area. This missile plot alerted the Saudi authorities to a potential terrorist threat to the Government and its allies.

The US and Saudi Arabia wanted to extradite bin Laden to Saudi Arabia, increasing pressure on the Taliban regime to arrest him. When this failed, bin Laden declared war on the US and was indifferent to how riled the Saudi Royal Family became in the process. Another hard power stance taken by the Saudi state was its joint collaboration with the US (Hegghammer, 2010: 114). It could be noted that earlier, Western governments, especially the US, had not fully perceived the gravity of the Al-Qaeda threat until it was evidenced through the Kenya/Nairobi embassy bombings and the attack on the US Cole.

Furthermore, according to Hegghammer (2010: 115-16), another arrest in October 1998 was carried out in Yemen, involving the Egyptian wing of Al-Qaeda. This involved the discovery of more missiles in the hands of insurgents, which prompted the closure of the US embassy and the arrest of more Islamist extremists in Saudi Arabia in early 1999

(Hegghammer, 2010: 116). The arrests frustrated Al-Qaeda's operations in the Arab Peninsular leading to the downgrading of the organisation's cells and network. As result of the Saudi hard power policing, the organisation is said to have gone underground. It went on a campaign to create new networks of sympathisers and sponsors in Buraydah, the Hijaz, throughout Saudi Arabia and internationally. Bin Laden banned all attacks in Saudi Arabia creating a lull in the insurgency; this put the state off guard until at least 9/11.

According to Hegghammer (2010: 25), Lacey (2009: 67) and Peterson (2002: 63), 1998 was a year when Saudi Arabia was used as a recruitment base for Al-Qaeda, as well as a source of funding from potential sympathisers. It could be suggested that this strategy was designed solely for the purposes of amassing resources for a potentially massive and deadly counter attack that would be spectacular and shock the world in the end; this was 9/11.

Bin Laden was focused on evicting the foreign troops as well as causing harm to the American nation. He was winning support and his army was growing as a result of the traditional hard policing measures used by the Saudi state, as well as the US in 1999 (Hegghammer, 2010). Bin Laden and the Sahwa leaders perceived the presence of US troops and the reliance of the Saudi state on the West as a potential threat to Saudi culture and morals (al-Rasheed, 2002: 167).

A parallel can be drawn with the relationship between King Abdul Aziz and the rebellious Ikhwan leaders, such as Faisal Al Dawish and bin Bijad, in 1929. The same can be said about the view of both Juhayman and bin Laden towards the Saudi establishment's inclinations towards cultural and political alliances with the West.

According to Hegghammer (2010: 14), one of bin Laden's lieutenants in al Qassim Province, Yosef Uyayri, had been arrested in June 1996, and had been tortured and

imprisoned indefinitely in one of the Saudi prisons. On his release, he was recruited by bin Laden to increase the Al-Qaeda terrorist empire in terms of Islamic clerical support from the Hijaz and Buraydah. He was a well respected, self taught scholar of Islam who was born there and even knew al Awda personally (Hegghammer, 2010: 29). Because of his role as a military trainer in bin Laden's training camps, Uyayri's negative experiences under the hands of the Saudi police was ripe material for spearheading the fund raising and recruitment campaigns for AQAP. He executed his duties effectively and was a respected ideologue and Islamist scholar who was viewed by many as having a certain charm (Hegghammer 2010: 29).

2.14 Post 9/11

After the attacks of 9/11, the Saudi state found itself under a massive backlash of diplomatic pressure, negative comments and perceptions from the West. Understandably, this was because of the demographics of the participants in the bombings, with most of the suicide bombers being from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was committed to forming strategic co-operation with the US (Cordsman and Obaid, 2005; Hegghammer, 2010: 111). Moreover, this would lead it to exercise further hard measures on the insurgents, coupling this with the Guantanamo experiences of some of the arrested suspects. Furthermore, the Saudi Government resolved to embark on a policy of co-operation with the Americans, as this was a diplomatic stance that could preserve the state's international image and security (Peterson, 2002: 60; Cordsmanan and Obaid, 2005: 263).

After 9/11 a new wave of US co-ordinated hard power measures was announced, namely, the 'war on terror'. According to Hegghammer (2010: 113), to the Muslim world this was the beginning of another period of misery for the Islamists and the jihadists, especially in Saudi Arabia. Until 2004 hard policing measures were used, and there were frequent attacks

in the form of explosions, especially after 2003. This led to mass arrests of extremist suspects especially of former foreign fighters who had been in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia. Cities, such as Riyadh, suffered the effects of such bombings (Hegghammer, 2010). The arrests later intensified the radicalisation and rebelliousness of many young Arab men (Hegghammer, 2010), which later led to further violent action from Al-Qaeda insurgents and other groups that claimed to be Al-Qaeda.

According to Hegghammer (2010: 148), the 'war on terror' was another phase of hard power and was another emotional and un-objective approach that was characterised as US discrimination, oppression and the victimisation of Muslims. This caused further unrest and violence from both the West and the insurgents themselves. The invasion of Afghanistan, in October 2001, was the first attempt by the US to start its 'war on terror', justified on the basis of claims that bin Laden was a fugitive there. The Afghan invasion started a new wave of anger, hatred and anti-American sentiments. To compound this, Guantanamo was debated by Saudi citizens, and was widely regarded as a tool for Muslim humiliation; this fuelled more jihadists to go and fight in Afghanistan. It triggered suicide bombings and general protests in Saudi, as well as internationally, against human rights abuses perpetrated by the US and its allies (Arab News, 2002).

It should be noted that Guantanamo represented the foulest treatment by the US of its enemy combatants ever known (Almotawa, 2002). Here, the Americans tortured, interrogated and even dehumanised their perceived enemies to levels that were repulsive even to their own citizens. Based in Cuba, Guantanamo was outside US human rights laws on the treatment of prisoners. To Saudi society, Guantanamo was synonymous with the humiliation and torture of prisoners, most whom were from Saudi Arabia (Almotawa, 2002).

The US approach and tone regarding the definition of Muslim insurgents as terrorists and its vengeful stance post 9/11 only served to fuel further violent conflict. In Saudi Arabia, random arrests and the indefinite imprisonment of numerous individuals and even families occurred. After several debates and exchanges in the media between extremist sympathisers and moderates who supported the Government stance, the general perception in Saudi Arabia and internationally was that the 'war on terror' seemed to be a war on Islam. This led to a new wave of rhetorical debate that fuelled insurgency against the Saudi state and the US (Rudolph, 2009: 84). To the Islamists and the Saudi public in general, this 'war on terror' made Al-Qaeda an organisation to be sympathised with, a credible representative of everything Islamic that was being threatened by Western power and culture. For a while the support for Al-Qaeda grew, along with more arrests of vocal clerics and activists (Rudolph, 2009: 84-5). Such debates affected and influenced the reasoning of activists and violent terrorists, making them difficult to dissuade from violent extremist involvement.

In this respect, the Sahwist scholars and the al Shu'aybi schools started a new debate concerning the alliance between the Saudi Government and the West. This dramatically escalated the anti-West rhetoric, leading to more arrests, surveillance and public confessions by perceived dissidents. Individuals, such as Abdallah al Rashud and Faris Zahrani, escalated the al Shuaibi rhetoric and fatwas that caused violence to erupt as a result (Rudolph, 2009: 83). According to Rudolph (2009: 83), Al-Qaeda itself was against any attacks on the Saudi state, but they agree on the need to remove certain Saudi state officials whom they viewed as impeding their extremist Islamist progress.

The Saudi state went on high alert following this declaration: from as early as the late 1990s until after 9/11 there was an escalation of direct bombings on government institutions, US army bases and ships. In 2003, there were sporadic suicide bombings on housing

compounds for foreign workers. Moreover, gun battles between the state's intelligence and security forces were the order of the day, with the execution of violent raids on Al-Qaeda safe houses. It is obvious that the state used hard measures against the extremists. This, as a reaction from the terrorists, led to the killings of ex-patriots in the country (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 114-116).

It is worth noting that according to al Otibi (2008: 165), the Saudi Crown Prince during that time, Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, warned in a televised speech, after the bombing of the residential compounds in 2003, that the attackers would be "struck with an iron fist" and that all those who tried to carry out terrorist activities in the country would be branded as criminals. Moreover, he declared that there was "no place for terrorism" but that the crucial deterrent would be to change each thought which would be fuelled by opinionated sympathizers. He warned in particular that anyone who tries to find a justification for these heinous crimes of religion would "become a real partner of the killers and must face the same fate they would face". Arguably, these hard power sentiments may be the reason why extremism and the establishment will always clash.

As a result of the hard power strategy adopted by the Saudi authorities, Al-Qaeda resolved to retaliate by attacking foreigners in the state. Six million foreigners were vulnerable to attack, as the organisation had resolved to use this strategy in order to directly destabilise the Saudi economy. The US was the prime target on the basis that this could further increase the tensions that had been caused by 9/11 (Hegghammer, 2010: 111).

Numerous attacks were carried out in 2004, as a result of the state's traditional hard power measures, which led to the killings of insurgents and the weakening of AQAP. The attacks and shoot-outs in Riyadh served to portray the state as intolerant and heavy handed, and which used the media to discredit the terrorists (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 119).

Nevertheless, this strategy started working for the Government as public opinion and support for Al-Qaeda started to wane (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 121). An objective analysis of this view means that this solution would be temporary as the grievances of the political dissenters seemed to have been defeated by government power and the media.

The Saudi Government had three objectives in mind when combating terrorism. Firstly it set out to fight terrorism using force, secondly to arrest the suspects and finally to bring them to court. According to MacFarquhar (2003), by following these objectives in the aftermath of the 2003 bombings, the Saudi security forces managed to arrest more than 600 suspects who were thought to be linked with the Al-Qaeda organisation.

The security forces carried out several raids against terrorist cells that were planning attacks on Saudi soil and abroad. In doing so, the security forces suffered a number of casualties. However, they managed to seize many explosives and destroy the infrastructure of many groups. More raids and arrests were carried out in 2006, which resulted in the arrest of over 800 individuals with links to terrorist activities (Washington DC: Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2006; Hegghammer, 2010: 216).

The Government stance proves the extent to which it could counter terrorism and it's financing. These arrests, and the current strict security laws, have generated a good image of the Government among the public. According to Fatany (2004), the public has, as a result, supported the Government's counter-terrorism strategy. It has shown its resolve and its intentions by clearly defeating many terrorists and arresting potential ones. According to Al-Mufarih (2004), harsh penalties, such as jail sentences of up to fifteen years and $1.8 million fines for offenders, have clearly helped the Government's general counter-terrorism agenda.

Since the arrests between 2003 and 2006, many of the individuals concerned have 'repented' and admitted their crimes (Asseri, 2009: 98). Among them are a number of high profile clerics who were arrested in the aftermath of May 2003. Asseri (2009: 98) states that these were Ahmed al Khaledi, Nasir Al Fuhaid and Ali Al Khudair. These clerics all admitted wrongdoing and have 'repented' on national television. According to Fatany (2004), this was meant to increase public awareness about the extremists' recruiting methods and how extremist 'deviant' individuals were capable of using religion to perpetrate terrorism.

Despite the above criticism, the measures used by Saudi Arabia were not based on hard power measures alone. They seem calculated and measured. They appear better than the systems used by other Arab countries in dealing with terrorists. In all these incidents, Al-Qaeda had managed to gain a substantial amount of support from the youth and other militant Islamists despite the state security apparatus' victories against the insurgents; this was, and remains, a subject for concern.

The last credible attempt by Al-Qaeda was its assassination attempt on the interior minister and his son in 2004. This attack was staged on the Ministry of the Interior building (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 119). In 2009, an actual assassination attempt was made on Prince Mohammed bin Naif, the principal leader of counter-terrorism in Saudi Arabia (The Guardian, 2009). This attack was staged when the Saudi state was already implementing its soft power measures. It is ironic that the attack occurred, despite the fact that the state was trying to implement innovative strategies for preventing violence. Soon after this, public opinion changed, and the insurgents began to be seen by ordinary people as potential destroyers of the nation's stability.

The hard power approach consequently radicalised prisoners, and former prisoners, within the state prisons and from Guantanamo. There were indications of a need to change

the strategy of handling extremist prisoners, and this resulted in the state adoption of soft measures. These were implemented as a way to sway the sympathies of the youth and the public away from the influence of Al-Qaeda. It is to this issue, the use of soft power in Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism strategy, to which this research now turns.

2.15 Defining de-radicalisation

Herring (2008) states that characterising or defining others as radicalised terrorists serves the interests of the definers, those with power. According to House (2012: 202), Rubin (2011: 27) and Horgan and Braddock (2010) there are doubts as to the extent to which individuals can ever be fully de-radicalised. Rubin (2011: 27) states that it is important to make a distinction between disengagement and de-radicalisation. He observes that it is difficult to conclude if the cessation of terrorist activities, or the disengagement from such activities, by individuals is a result of a temporary or permanent attitudinal change. A one sided identification of the perpetrator of violence could be the problem. In most cases, non-state groups are usually labelled negatively for opposing the political status quo (Herring, 2008).

The aforementioned scholars observe that radicalisation and de-radicalisation are processes in which it is difficult to place the different individuals on a realistic continuum of de-radicalisation or disengagement. The prevailing argument is that disengagement is either physical or psychological. In some contexts, de-radicalisation can be determined by cultural and religious factors, which may need attention from a clerical perspective.

Rubin (2011: 27) and Horgan and Braddock (2010) state that disengagement is the behavioural change away from involvement with terrorist groups and activities. This may or may not accompany an ideological change, but the minimal condition is the cessation of violent activity.

All of these scholars claim that the process of de-radicalisation involves the behavioural and ideological re-orientation of individuals or groups. Horgan and Braddock (2010) emphasize context specific expectations that may relate to some form of coercion and inducement. They conclude that there is no consensus as to what constitutes success in reforming a terrorist, let alone reform in this context. A CTS perspective, considers the need for both state and the non-state actors, the opposition, to be reflexive about their function and effectiveness in the violent processes and their consequences.

According to Khashoggi (2013), the main factors that drive terrorism are the double standards of countries such as the US, the UK and their allies. These, he claims, have created and generated what he calls 'the angry Muslim mindset'. The reasons behind this mindset, he believes, are the fact that Muslims are not fully integrated into society in the West and are treated unequally internationally. Moreover, in the international context these double standards are evident in the treatment and attacks on nations that are purported to be harbouring terrorism, as well as appearing to support those that are perceived to be affected by Islam, especially Israel. In addition, a similar trend in Chechnya seems to have stirred similar sentiments of hatred for the Russian Government's destruction of Grozny (Khashoggi, 2013). Therefore, young Muslims once again seem to be showing this 'angry' mindset, as exemplified by the Tsarnaev brothers during the Boston Marathon Bombings of 2013 (Khashoggi, 2013).

It should be noted that these perceived double standards come with the cost of casualties and injuries to the innocent, as well as the destabilisation of governments, cultures and societies in Islamic nations. Many Muslims consider this to be an attack of their very being, and hence the violent resentment arises. Furthermore, with this observation in mind, it becomes very difficult to conclusively state that there is a possibility of de-radicalising

individuals, bearing in mind that, according to Khashoggi (2013), young Muslims are now self-recruiting using the Internet.

The term de-radicalisation is itself under-defined and hence inadequately conceptualised. Whatever has been termed de-radicalisation may actually be politically prescriptive descriptions of complicated behavioural processes. Most academics, like the ones mentioned above, tend to doubt the authenticity of claims that imply success in 'de-radicalising individuals'. It is not clear whether such claims of successful de-radicalisation are based on the cultural, political, psychological or other terms of reference in this context. It can only be observed that many loud claims of success in this area are mainly political rather than academic and professional.

Horgan and Braddock (2010) and Sedgwick (2010) have contested the meaning and usage of the terms 'radicalisation' and 'de-radicalisation'. Sedgwick (2010) argues that a question of semantics comes into play here, when he states that the term 'radical' denotes three different concepts: these being situated in security, extremist integration and foreign policy contexts. He claims that this risks serious confusion, because different people use it differently. Sedgwick goes on to state that this is compounded by the fact that each of these three contexts has at least two levels: an analytic and official level which is objective empirical and factual, and the public and political level which is more subjective, based on claims regarding anecdotal success rates. He goes on to observe that the nature of the terms 'radical' and 'radicalisation' seem to have assumed an absolute concept, yet their meaning can be contested and debated.

Horgan and Braddock (2010), on the other hand, observe that the term 'de-radicalisation' has been over-emphasized and has assumed a rather biased and politicised meaning. They claim that despite the rather popular and political usage of the term, there is

limited data surrounding even the most basic of facts about the programmes that have been run to prove the empirical reliability of the usage of the terms. It is important to be conscious of the political and academic usage of the term de-radicalisation in the context of this study.

A further analysis of the usage of the term 'radicalisation' reveals the politicisation and institutionalisation of the term (Sedgwick, 2010). It seems to have assumed a new meaning after 9/11, especially in American discourse regarding dissenting Islamist groups in the Middle East. It seemed to brand any opposition to perceived wrong political or western political interference as 'extremist radicalisation'. It has gained a new currency in political and military usage to the extent that it now evokes perceptions of violence and extremism, instead of its original meaning that is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as representing 'an extreme section of a party'. Being so, the term has been misused by its politicisation as referring to violent Islamist extremism. In its current usage it ignores the individual's own thinking and reasoning, the ideology influencing such thinking and the organisations involved in such processes. It blankets out the root causes of individual, ideological and group reactions to external or even internal triggers of political dissent that cause radical thinking in its true and un-politicised sense. The term is therefore conflated and cannot be reliably used for any scientific political, psychological and even empirical usage despite the fact that it has gained so much political, media and academic currency. The seeming absoluteness of the term has resulted in complicating the disengagement and de-radicalisation process. It is the institutionalisation and the conceptualisation of the term that have resulted in the complication of the peaceful and political resolution to the violence in the Middle East.

2.16 Conclusion

The following chapter discusses the various soft power strategies used to counter radical thinking and activities in Saudi Arabia. As discussed above, there seems to be no straightforward solution to issues regarding extremist violence. It could be suggested that the only solution to such threats is to devise strategies that can contain and resist violent extremism. Moreover, the only way to eliminate terrorism is to tackle its causes by having reflective dialogue between the so-called extremists and the governments in power (Herring, 2008).

Chapter 3: An Account of the Soft Power Strategies in Saudi Arabia

3.1 Understanding soft power: a brief theoretical exposition

This section discusses the definition and application of 'soft power'. Although the term itself is new, soft power is not a new concept or a political strategy in Saudi Arabia. Joseph Nye, who coined the term in 2004 (2004b: 34), defined it as:

> "The ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies".

According to Tharoor (2009), Nye argues that:

> "Power is the ability to alter the behaviour of others to get what you want, and there are three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payments (carrots) and attraction (soft power which involves diplomacy and equality in contributing to a solution between opposing camps). If you are able to attract others, you can economise on the sticks and carrots".

The aim of this study is to see how soft power informs counter-terrorism policy and practice in Saudi Arabia and how the concept is understood among its practitioners, as well as how it is applied in practice. Since the policy involves deep political and religious preoccupations, it is essential to evaluate how it is perceived by experts in the field as well as by the beneficiaries. This is crucial in informing state policy and practice by the practitioners. A critical assessment of this is necessary through the study of the different institutions and

actors in the implementation of soft power in Saudi Arabia. The researcher himself has to engage in reflexive practice and thinking since, according to Heath-Kelly (2010) the epistemology of the researcher could contribute to an "uncritical production of knowledge".

To emphasize the relevance of the theoretical term in the context of this research, Dondelinger (2008: 40) states that it is a strategy that refers to:

> "The ability of a political entity to exercise a form of power which alters the behaviour and shapes the preferences of others not through compulsion/coercion or even inducement /payment, but through attraction/co-optation, leading to acquiescence".

The above quote explains the theory of social and political control in its simplest terms. The definition emphasizes the ability of a state to use its power to orient individuals towards its desired outcomes without being violent about it. The objectives of the de-radicalisation programme in Saudi Arabia involve a degree of inducement that is applied to achieve the state's desired political and behavioural outcomes from the perpetrators (Herring, 2008). The desired outcome is de-radicalisation from extremism and consequent disengagement.

Any attempts to enforce soft power without understanding its relevance to particular political, social and cultural systems would lead to further violence as a result of conflicting religious and political disagreement, a trend that is being abused and gaining popularity today. It would seem that the use of soft power strategies empowers and accords individuals the chance to co-operate with the legal and political systems, rather than have force used upon them. As a result, used appropriately, this strategy generally leads to acceptance, rather

than rejection by different individual perpetrators and organisations. This is because the process of soft power involves co-operation rather than imposition.

Horgan and Braddock (2010) and Sedgwick (2010) advocate for behavioural change in the perpetrators of dissent and terrorism. They state the need for such individuals and groups to realise the effects of their actions. This strategy empowers the perpetrators, allowing them to take part in finding the solutions to the problem of their involvement in insurgency.

Nye (2004: 5) further elaborates that, unlike command or hard power, successful soft power is represented in action through attraction, admiration, co-optation and emulation. He goes on to explain that:

> "Soft power works on the basis that the individual, group, institution or state at the receiving end of soft power projection, whether the explicit intended target or mere bystander, identifies its interests as identical to those of the entity from which soft power emanates".

Internationally used soft power, may, if left without revisions, be irrelevant in an Islamic context. Sedgwick (2010: 481), quoting Matthew Herbert, draws attention to the problem of generalising the Muslim context as involving extremist religiously motivated violence. He states that:

> "Lumping all Islamic terrorist groups together at the outset of the analytic process, we prejudice the conclusion that all violent Islamists are driven by religious principles, implacably opposed to anything alien to Islam and irrationally murderous in attitude".

In this case, a general soft power approach is ineffective; a more critical and reflexive approach would be more useful. There are various emotive, cultural, political and personal dynamics to be considered. As Nye (2004a: 30) states, the effects of soft power depend upon audience receptivity. Used in an international, as well as a domestic context, some analysts therefore argue that attracting people through making them accept soft power can be against their perceived social and political survival and that using soft diplomacy is a form of disguised violence, a twisting of minds, rather than a twisting of arms (Dondelinger, 2008: 42).

It should be observed, however, that the soft power approach couldn't be used in isolation from hard power, because "they are two sides of the same coin" (Cooper, 2004: 179). The two complement each other, and this means that either of the strategies can be used when necessary, although soft power is the preferred approach. This seems to have worked in the past, as well as in the present, when dealing with terrorists, dictators and repressive states, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea and Iran.

As described in chapter two, Saudi Arabia has, in the past, used soft measures along with the traditional hard power approach to deal with political and religious dissent. This section, discusses the processes of de-radicalisation in Saudi Arabia and how these have been adopted through the observation and study of other regional countries that have been affected by extremist dissent. Egypt and Yemen have been the focus of terrorist activity and they have used various hard and soft power strategies. The two countries share a similar culture with Saudi Arabia, belong to the same region and have a similar negative experience with various forms of extremist activity. Saudi Arabia's efforts at applying soft power measures have been a result of several studies of such countries' strategies, as well as its own domestic

experiences (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 265; Stracke, 2007; Boucek, 2008; Al-Hadlaq, 2011; Ruben, 2011: 27).

The Prince Mohammed bin Naif Centre for Counselling and Care was opened in 2004 as a centre for social and psychological studies to address terrorism from a different perspective to the traditional hard power approach. Hard power was observed to have inflamed radical extremists. Unsurprisingly, like Foucault, the extremists view the Centre as a government extension of its indoctrination of inmates against extremist religious Islam. The Saudi Government now uses a more comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism, deploying both military and non-military instruments in its quest for social control (Asseri, 2009: 87). This is a balanced approach, in my view, that would lead to an orderly resolution of conflict.

According to Nye (2004: 1-2), "Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants". Therefore, based on this statement, it is the choice of a state to adopt either hard or soft power, or both, in trying to change the behaviour of a targeted political or social group. The Saudi Government has chosen to adopt the soft power approach and use it through the structured processes and departments at the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Centre. This is because soft power is an acknowledgment of the value and involvement of the opposing sides as equals. Moreover, the approach appreciates the polarised political, religious, and ideological stances of the parties involved. It bases its stance on the need to find a common ground for reconciliation between the state and non-state actors (Herring, 2008).

The motive and objective behind such a stance is, in the long term, to build a reasonable amount of tolerance and acceptance of certain political and religious processes by both sides, leading to resolution rather than rejection, in any political or religious dialogue.

This is aimed at creating peaceful processes of de-radicalisation, disengagement and other strategies to prevent violent extremism.

The Saudi Government noticed a need to engage the extremists in an ideological debate, as well as to rehabilitate some of the violent activists whom it considered to have been misled from the correct interpretation of the Qur'an (Ansari, 2008). Asseri, the current Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon, states that the Kingdom initiated the programme for de-radicalisation called *al Munasaha wa al -Islah* aimed at targeting terrorism related individuals (Asseri, 2009: 103). Special committees were instituted in order to use the media and the mosques to quell the threat of youth radicalisation, working in line with a critical analytical approach to engaging opposing views.

Quoting Prince Mohammed bin Naif, Lacey (2009: 256-8) states that the Prince declared the state's readiness to fight terrorism as well as to win the people, since that was the prerogative for winning the war. The media was used in this campaign (Asseri, 2009: 102). It was necessary to engage the perpetrators in discussions on politics, religion and philosophy. These three aspects determine the core of the Departments of Prevention, Rehabilitation and Cure at the Centre. The functions of these departments will be discussed later in this chapter.

This approach was mainly centred on addressing the extremists' views regarding the defence of Islamic lands and cultural practices. An understanding of these sentiments is crucial in dealing with radical and violently extremist individuals.

With the above in mind, the Centre uses behavioural change methods in the targeted individual extremists. Therefore, the strategies used are meant to instil in them a cognitive and ideological realisation of the negative effects of their actions, perceived to be influenced by a misunderstood ideology. In its website, the Department of Rehabilitation at the Prince

Mohammed bin Naif Centre states that its strategy is "correctional rehabilitation". This prepares, designs and executes programmes of care which "reinforce the intellectual security of the beneficiaries" while giving them skills which contribute to their acclimatisation back into the community. This sounds impressive in theory and assumes that the beneficiaries are actively co-operative, which may not always be the case.

3.2 The experiences of Muslim countries with extremist radicalism and de-radicalisation

Although the main concern of the current thesis is to investigate counter-terrorism approaches in Saudi Arabia, it is essential to provide details and some analysis of similar experiences throughout the Arab and Islamic world in general. Such an exposition could be useful in the ultimate determination of strategies that are Middle East specific, not just narrative security studies but critical and reflexive ones too.

This section will focus on Egypt, Yemen, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, their methods in countering terrorism, and their implementation of de-radicalisation. Saudi Arabia has learnt a great deal from other countries, in particular Yemen, Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Algeria and Malaysia (El-Said and Barrett, 2013: 194).

Many of its initiatives were based on a general understanding and approach within the Arab League's terms and agreements, as signed between the respective members of the Arab Council of Ministers of the Interior.

Because the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) binds the countries' policies together, the Saudi Government's alliances have helped to improve its counter-terrorism strategy. Most of the state's original and adopted strategies have been based on evidence and

recommendations from the experiences of other countries, such as Egypt and Yemen (Rubin, 2010: 27; El-Said and Barrett, 2013: 206). One of the strategies of this approach has been de-radicalisation, which it is thought could lead to an appreciable reduction in threat and disengagement (Gunaratna and Rubin, 2011: 1). According to Rubin (2011: 27) disengagement and de-radicalisation are defined as:

"Two continuous processes in which the former may or may not lead to the latter. Disengagement is the behavioural change away from involvement with terrorist groups and activities that may or may not accompany an ideological change. The minimal condition is a cessation of violent activity. This can occur through an individual's or group's own volition or through coercion".

The process involves the re-education or rehabilitation of detainees, in order to change their ideological orientation through behavioural means that will discourage them from pursuing violent political and ideological goals. The terms 're-education' and 'rehabilitation' pre-suppose the fact that individuals are wrong and that it is the state alone, and its power, which is right. According to Horgan and Braddock (2010), countries such as Yemen have also adopted these soft measures in the last few decades. This method has been seen to be relatively effective in de-radicalising detainees, when compared to old hard-power measures. They warn, in Rubin (2011: 27) that:

"Policy implications of cursory readings of empirical data are that observers may draw poor conclusions about the effectiveness of particular counter terrorism policies".

3.2.1 De-radicalising the Egyptian Islamic Group insurgents

In order to de-radicalise the members of the notorious Islamic Group (IG) that had assassinated Anwer Al Sadat in the 1980s, and other related prisoners, the Egyptian Government adopted the soft approach as compared to the hard one that had been used previously. In 2002, many of the detainees who did not have 'blood on their hands' were released, while at the same time being monitored and encouraged to work on changing their ideology and attitude; this approach was non-violent and non-inflammatory. This was meant to facilitate the IG's shift from disengagement with terrorism through to de-radicalisation. According to Rubin (2011: 27) and Sedgwick (2010), these are continuous processes, in which disengagement may or may not lead to de-radicalisation. As Rubin (2011: 27) explains, "Disengagement is the behavioural change away from involvement with terrorist groups and activities that may or may not accompany an ideological change".

According to Rubin (2011: 27) de-radicalisation in Egypt went through two main stages. The first stage of de-radicalisation in Egypt was initiated in the 1980s and the 1990s. The regime used al-Azhari clerics and members of the Muslim Brotherhood as intermediaries to stop the violence and reach an agreement between themselves and the IG. This was done via continuous dialogue between the parties, in an attempt to stop the IG's violent actions towards the Government. This approach was not fruitful, and was stopped in 1993 when the existence of the 'Committee on Mediation' was exposed to the public. The media manipulated this, condemning the Government for entering what they saw as a negotiation process with terrorists (Ashour, 2007: 615-16). The negotiations and the dialogue between the intermediaries and the IG were accepted first on the grounds that the al-Azhar clerics and the Muslim Brotherhood would share similar principles with the members of the IG.

This was viewed as instrumental and decisive in the collective de-radicalisation of the groups. The IG leadership revised and corrected a number of their original interpretations of Islam, which were accepted by rank and file members. This step worked in favour of the regime's efforts to de-radicalise the group. Similar to the cognitive processes in individuals, a re-think and re-assessment of the IG's ideology and operations by its leaders proved to be an advantage to the Government.

However, several questions were raised about the reasons why the group renounced violence. A popular explanation, given by Rubin (2011: 27), is that the historical leadership saw that they had failed to produce the results that they had promised and sought, and that as a result they had accepted that they might have done something wrong. Another reason might be that the chief participants in the dialogues and their followers were not sufficiently educated and trained in religious matters, and that an awareness of this might have resulted in their reconsideration of the IG's principles. This phenomenon is critical because it confirms to all governments and affected organisations that religiously motivated terrorism is mainly influenced by a misconstrued religious ideology, which has led to a war of ideas between the terrorists and the affected governments.

The second stage of the de-radicalisation process in Egypt took place between 1997 and 2002 (Rubin, 2011: 31). At this stage, the historic leadership of the IG, as the new intermediaries, tried to encourage and re-educate the rank and file about the new understandings or ideas that they were planning to adopt after the Initiative of Ceasing Violence. The new ideas were introduced following an attack against foreign tourists in the Temple of Hatshepsut which led to the killing of fifty-eight people, and which once again tarnished the image of the IG amongst the population.

Despite this attack, some members of the IG were surprised about the new changes and felt that they had been betrayed (Rubin, 2011: 31). Rubin (2011: 31) states that the group's understanding of Islam was entirely embodied by its leadership. One of the main difficulties the followers faced were the reasons behind the changes, and the fact that they should follow these new understandings. According to Rubin (2011: 31), it was extremely difficult to convince the disillusioned minions that their interpretation of Islamic principles was controversial. They had to be convinced that their leaders had revised, and that they should accept them.

During the re-education process, the leadership of the IG toured prisons and were allowed to talk to their rank and file in order to de-radicalise them. This is a process that, according to Horgan and Braddock (2010), has also been used in Malaysia's counter-terrorism strategy. During this stage, the IG minions were encouraged to believe and accept the new changes. The fact that many of them were illiterate helped in their acceptance of the new understandings, as the illiterates always looked towards their local sheikhs for guidance without too much questioning.

According to Al-Hadlaq (2011) and Horgan and Braddock (2010), in the Saudi context, a committee of clerics is often used to embark on debates that are not top down, but those that involve the opening up of the perpetrators' views and opinions about what they consider to have been the reasons behind their engagement with violence. From this situation, the discussions and debates take off with the aim of redirecting the individuals towards the state-sanctioned expectations and interpretations of different political and religious concerns in the state. Rubin (2011: 31) states that the topics that were discussed during this re-education were random and at times the security personnel would leave the IG minions with their leadership, to permit them to ask sensitive questions.

Following the process of re-education, the IG ideologues started publishing new sets of interpretations and understandings of Islam. Articles were published and books were written to canonise these new ideas. Consequently, this eased the pressure on the IG followers, of who between15000 to 20000 had been released from the prisons (Rubin, 2011: 31). The Government knew that, when released into Egyptian society, the detainees would face difficulties fitting in as well as seeking employment. They were stigmatised as terrorists and had suffered during their imprisonment. Hence the Government paid compensation to some, and spent money in order to monitor them (Rubin, 2011: 32). According to Rubin (2011: 32), many faced problems finding employment, despite the efforts of public figures and their calls on the business community to provide opportunities.

On the other hand, the Saudi programme's social support system encourages and supports its beneficiaries with job skills development and social support systems that even involve the family (Al-Hadlaq, 2011; Boucek, 2011: 86). The former detainees showed a willingness to reintegrate into society and start their lives anew (Rubin, 2011: 32). Many of them went on to complete university degrees (Rubin, 2011: 32)). The IG had changed its attitude, and now considered itself as a model for society to emulate and look up to (Rubin, 2011: 32).

The main lesson to be learned from these stages of de-radicalisation is that using the IG leaders as intermediaries was a successful decision. It helped in re-educating the followers and gaining their acceptance of their new understanding of Islam. The followers found it easy to accept new religious explanations from their own people. The IG leadership helped the detainees accept the new amendments, as well as helping them reintegrate into their society.

3.2.2 Yemen and the Dialogue Strategy

Yemen was one of the main countries in the Middle East to suffer from the terrorist upsurges of the 1990s. The country received more attention on this front following the 9/11 attacks. According to Al-Hitar (2011: 109), one of the main terrorist attacks against foreigners in the country took place on the 20 December 1998. Sixteen tourists were kidnapped, six of whom were killed in the process. Another major attack occurred against a US warship on the 13October 2000, resulting in the deaths of seventeen sailors. A later terrorist attack bombed a French oil tanker. These attacks caused unrest within the country. The general population was paralyzed by the incidents, although Westerners were the targets. Yemeni society, as a result, suffered from security threats, economic damage and instability (Al-Hitar, 2011: 110).

According to Al-Hitar (2011: 110) the Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, at the time paid a visit to the US following the 9/11 attacks, and since then the country has become a US ally in combating terrorism. As a result, assistance in various areas has been provided to Yemen: military, diplomatic, and financial. Al-Hitar (2011: 110) states that this assistance was meant to help combat terrorism and create stability within the state.

More recently, on the 25 December 2009, a member of Al-Qaeda in Yemen failed in his attempt to attack a commercial airliner. This failed operation attracted the attention of US policy makers, who investigated the situation in Yemen and its capacity to fight terrorism. According to Porges (2010), about ninety out of the one hundred and eighty-eight detainees in Guantanamo Bay Prison (Cuba) were Yemeni. This further shows the popularity of Al-Qaeda and its ideology in Yemen.

The process of de-radicalisation in Yemen started in the early stages of 2000. In a similar manner to Egypt, Yemen was among the first country in the region to implement de-

radicalisation in prisons. This was done through the Religious Dialogue Committee (RDC) (Horgan and Braddock, 2010), and was carried out upon the return of the mujahadin, who had been imprisoned following their return from Afghanistan where they had been fighting the Soviets. De-radicalisation was carried out through dialogue, based on the results of a meeting between religious scholars, chaired by the President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh. The meeting resulted in a committee of scholars who were asked to engage in discussions with the returning mujahadin. The committee's main job was to talk about disputed religious topics and settle them with these groups. The religious dialogue clerics provided clarification and fuller explanations of the main principles that the captured militants were relying on (Al-Hitar, 2011: 111).

Dialogue was seen as the most effective way of re-educating prisoners, making them consciously review their knowledge of Islam. Based on government information, almost 350 prisoners were released into society as a result of the dialogue strategy (Al-Hitar, 2011: 118). They were considered to be de-radicalised and worthy of living a normal life. However, there is little empirical evidence to show the true extent of this success (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Proges, 2010: 120)

According to Al-Hitar (2011: 111), the Arabic word '*hiwar*' is important in this context. It acknowledges the fact that two parties can be equal in establishing an agreement. This process involves the dialogue between the offender and the offended, with the two groups being involved in a revision of values and actions, and where no person is in control of the outcome of the discussion. The dialogue occurs in a quiet way, free from quarrelling and prejudice. This is a process where both parties respect each other's views: the essence of the soft power strategy.

Yemen established a committee called al-Hawar al-Fikri, to conduct intellectual dialogue regarding debates and discussions of Islamic principles in relation to radicalisation. These dialogue situations provided a platform leading to a process of de-radicalisation through a soft power coercive strategy. This accorded the radicalised individuals grounds to discuss, and be persuaded to disengage from, violent radical extremist reasoning and activities. Yemen was seen as successful in using this approach, which thereafter appealed to the Saudi authorities as one of the strategies for de-radicalisation.

The counter-terrorism strategy of dialogue was ineffective in Yemen for various reasons. The key contributors to this failure were the country's different religious interpretations by scholars, tribal and political differences. Its then president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was as a Western backed dictator (El-Said, 2013). His attempt to unite and rule the divided sides of Yemen caused further strife. He was viewed by the South, which was predominantly the Al-Qaeda stronghold, as an unacceptable political figure for Yemen. Because of this strife, there was further economic damage that led to further poverty and political differences due to perceived political corruption and poor administration.

This became the recipe for the failure of the Yemeni strategy of soft power on the radicalised extremists. There were further problems due to Yemen's high number of inmates in prisons and at Guantanamo. The state failed in its approach to de-radicalise the inmates because of a lack of resources and weak staffing in the programme's institutions, where there were mainly clerics who differed with the inmates' views regarding the interpretation of politics and Islam.

Yemen's dialogue programme seems to have been frustrating to all the parties involved. The West viewed it as a failure; until 2006, the Yemeni Government viewed it as a success (El-Said, 2013). It claimed that the circumstance and objectives of the Dialogue

Committee had been achieved. Moreover, this did not last as shown by the resurgence of further terrorist activities in Yemen after 2006. According to El-Said (2013) measuring the success rate of de-radicalisation on the basis of religious dialogue is difficult. He asserts that an evaluation of this process is not an easy one because there are many variables to consider before declaring any empirical or anecdotal success. There should be considerations of the different contexts in which such religious dialogue occurs. Some examples are the political context, the international factors regarding the politics of and relationship of the state to extremism. In this respect, these are factors that must be viewed, guardedly, by politicians in their declarations of successful de-radicalisation. External events for example the war in Syria, the Palestinian situation with Israel, conflict in Afghanistan and in Iraq and even the perceived persecution of Muslims internationally, are factors that can lead to further recidivism.

3.2.3 Indonesia and its de-radicalisation process

Indonesia, on the other hand, used a slightly different approach, co-opting former activists and extremists in its de-radicalisation process. According to Horgan and Braddock (2010), Indonesia did not use many equal dialogue strategies. Instead, the Government involved former extremists in the re-education process of radicalised individuals who had been imprisoned. A lot of intellectual teaching and religious re-direction was used to dissuade the extremist inmates. Terms such as 're-education' and 'de-programming' were used. This top down approach seemed to work for the Indonesian Government where former terrorists were enlisted in the counter-terrorism campaign, as well as having the terrorists prosecuted judiciously and transparently.

The Indonesian system allowed for transparent debate on the issues regarding the rise and sustenance of terrorism openly (Asseri, 2009: 151). Proponents of these de-programming

exercises were bin Abbas and Ali Imron, who were former Jamaah Isalmiyah (JI) figures. They went to the extent of preaching in prisons, and even wrote books to de-radicalise Indonesian extremists. Their stance assumed that the imprisoned individuals had been 'misled' and were 'vulnerable to wrong Islamic teaching'. The imprisoned inmates were given a platform to observe and take part in a mutually respectful discussion of religious issues. These events would occur in the prisons during prayer time, and prisoners would be able to observe state and religious leaders treating them with respect. Horgan and Braddock (2010) describe this as having had a positive impact on the inmates. As a result, some of the inmates were 'de-programmed'; published books and recordings from Imron and Abbas denouncing radicalism, which were given to the inmates and their families, reinforced this (Fink and El-Said, 2011).

According to Fink and El-Said (2011) Indonesia used trial and error in its de-radicalisation strategies. The Government's anti-terror unit used dialogue, including conversations between programme participants and Islamic scholars. It also involved the community, the family and other institutions including business colleges, in order to encourage former rebels not to participate in recidivist activities. This was meant to provide enough support structures for the individuals to be permanently de-radicalised.

The involvement of former Jamaah Islamiyah inmates seemed to work in Indonesia, and the Saudi Government recognized this success and sought to adopt some of these approaches in its own soft power strategy. These strategies were adopted nationally under the co-ordination and supervision of the Mohammed bin Naif Centre.

The objective behind the Indonesian de-radicalisation strategy was to create, in addition to group discussions and dialogue, a modification in behaviour meant to produce a permanent change in radical Islamist thinking and action. Indonesia and Saudi Arabia's

models have been described as similar. According to Fink and El-Said (2011), both countries experienced radicalism in individuals incited by provocative media channels as well as by a perceived external demonization of the Arab and Islamic world and its values. In addition, there was a rather patronising perception in both countries that young people were radicalised through misinformation. A typical example of this radicalisation was the use of the term 'jihad', which the extremists viewed as a key word to incite terrorist activity and sentiments in the young Muslim population, especially young men.

It could be claimed that the weakness in the Indonesian strategy was the limited inter-agency liaison (Fink and El-Said, 2011). The main weakness of the Indonesian system of de-radicalisation was, as stated earlier, a weakness in interagency liaison. A lot of ideas had been identified for use to counter terrorist engagement. These ranged from identifying the main causes behind terrorist engagement, such as religious interpretation, political and economic factors. To address these, systems were put in place to facilitate programmes that provided business ventures and projects for the former terrorists, getting them married, with the assistance of the Community and Social Relations Branch of the police. Furthermore, the state ensured the good health of the individuals, mentally and physically. Strategies that were used by the former terrorists' own bonding techniques, when they were at the front, were adopted for the de-radicalisation programmes. These strategies worked for a while. As stated before, these good ideas were short lived because of a lack of legal frameworks that would guarantee the longevity of these practices. This has been observed by the IPI as being one of the problems in the complete success of the Indonesian de-radicalisation programme.

3.3 Saudi Arabia and the process of de-radicalisation

Combating terrorism has been a mission for many countries around the world. However, in Saudi Arabia this problem has been taken particularly seriously following a number of

terrorist activities in the early years of the last decade. Following the 11 September 2001 bombing of the New York Twin Towers, the US declared a 'war on terror'. Saudi Arabia came under the spotlight as the home country of the majority of the perpetrators (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 122). As stated in chapter two, there was a significant meaning to the recruitment and backgrounds of these fifteen Saudi young men. Their histories were a clear statement of the need to monitor the extremist reaches of Al-Qaeda on the Saudi youth, their religious understanding and sentiments.

After increased Western pressure and criticism, the Saudi leadership have taken responsibility for combating terrorism. Their efforts increased especially after the main attacks in the capital Riyadh on 13 May 2003. This suicide attack was carried out against Western foreigners, especially Americans, who lived in housing compounds within the city. Overall, thirty-four people were killed.

In the aftermath of this incident, Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz issued a statement in which he highlighted the efforts of Saudi Arabia to combat and neutralise the radical few who threatened the security of the country. The King declared his commitment to fight extremism through the state's security machine, as well as the Ministry of Interior's Centre for Rehabilitation which, he declared, would be used to remove the threat of extremism (Asseri, 2009: 82). This centre seems to work along the lines of an analytical and reflective stance regarding political and religious differences.

3.3.1 Saudi's international efforts to counter terrorism

The earlier sections of this study have focused on the many general domestic initiatives taken by the Saudi Government to prevent terrorism and encourage the process of de-radicalising prisoners. However, to comprehensively combat terrorism, the Saudi Government has had to

co-operate and co-ordinate its counter-terrorism efforts with external institutions and other countries, and in particular the US, in order to share intelligence and fight terrorism on all fronts. The Saudi Government has fought terrorism on a regional level with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and on a more international level with the United Nations (UN) (Asseri, 2009: 116-7). This section will focus on the external and international efforts made by the Saudi Government.

3.3.1.1 Saudi co-operation with the USA and other countries

The majority of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of New York on 11 September 2001 were Saudi nationals (Asseri, 2009: 83). The Saudi Government condemned these attacks and united with the US in the war against terror. Since then, there has been a high level of co-operation between the two countries. Both countries have been able to share intelligence, jointly investigate and operate, as well as co-operate in combating terrorist funding via different channels.

In the aftermath of the attacks in Riyadh in May 2003, the Saudi Government and the US established a Joint Task Force to destroy the financial channels that fund terrorism (Asseri, 2009: 118). By doing so, both countries managed to track and solve suspicious financial cases in a short period of time, and away from diplomats (Black, 2004). Furthermore, the Saudi Government, mainly with the help of the US and other governments, have been able to block funds to organisations suspected of financing terrorism (Washington DC: Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2006).

In this respect, it is important to observe the need for the Saudi Government to be sensitive to what could have been a reason for inflaming terrorist insurgency, namely its alliance with the US. The US has been at the centre of criticism, internationally and domestically, because of its seemingly hard power counter-terrorism strategies. One such

example is the Guantanamo Bay Prison. This has been one place that has attracted international attention because of alleged human rights abuses and the levels of vengeful recidivism by former inmates of this notoriously unpopular prison. Such institutions could justifiably be described as functions of 'state terrorism' (Herring, 2008; Erlenbusch, 2011).

According to the Centre for Constitutional Rights document on the Guantanamo prisoner abuses (2006), most of the inmates at Guantanamo claim to have been faced with degrading treatment, torture, and cruel as well as inhuman abuse. Certain counter-terrorism strategies and policies have been shared between the states, but there is also a need for a review of the policies. Therefore, this can be done multilaterally, in order to re-think and correct certain counter-terrorism approaches that would only serve to inflame insurgency and contradict the intended soft power de-radicalisation strategies.

The Al-Qaeda terrorist groups have been, for a long time, the main danger to Saudi Arabia and the US. In 2004, in an effort to stop funding to this group, the Saudi Government submitted the names of four branches of the Al-Haramain Foundation Charity to the UN 1267 Sanction Committee for Worldwide Sanctions (Asseri, 2009: 118). By doing so, they were able to stop its funding and freeze its assets. A total of ten US-Saudi submissions were made to the UN Sanctions Committee. This further shows the strength of the co-operation between the two countries, in their efforts to stop funds from reaching Al-Qaeda (Black, 2004).

In April 2005, the US and Saudi Arabia established a Joint Commission for Strategic Dialogue (Asseri, 2009: 119). This included six different working groups, responsible for military affairs, counter-terrorism, economic and financial affairs, education exchange and human development, consular affairs and partnership. Asseri (2009: 119) states that these groups met often to discuss their challenges and responsibilities.

The Saudi Government's intention to strongly combat terrorism, and the financing thereof, was evident when it proposed an aggressive plan to root out and freeze all terrorist assets globally. The G-20 strongly backed this plan, leading to Saudi Arabia playing a major role in its implementation. To assess its success, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), along with GCC, met in Saudi Arabia in September 2003 (al-Otibi, 2008: 170). The report from both organisations was submitted in February 2004, commending the Saudi ability to fight terrorist financing and money laundering. A comprehensive examination of all Saudi banking, and financial rules and regulations, was conducted. Although the report stated that there was still much more work to be done in the implementation process, the results at the time were very encouraging (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 127-8).

As well as co-operating with many Western countries, Saudi Arabia maintained a bilateral co-operation with Arab countries through the Arab League. The Saudi Government also issued a report on its plans and initiatives in combating terrorism. This report is submitted, on request, every ninety days, and is mainly aimed at reporting to the United Nations Security Council Committees. Over the years, Saudi Arabia has complied with all the resolutions made by the UN in relation to terrorism. By doing so, the Saudi Government has been able to freeze funds of the Taliban regime, based on a request from the UN Security Council Resolution 1267, as well as freezing the funds of a number of individuals based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1333 (Asseri, 2009: 121).

The Saudi Government has also signed an International Convention for the Suppression and Financing of Terrorism, based on the UN Security Resolution 1373. It was also obliged to report to the UN Security Council on the implementation of Resolution 1390, as well as supporting the implementation of Resolution 1368 which relates to the funding of terrorism (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2006).

3.3.1.2 The International Conference on Countering Terrorism

A response from Saudi Arabia to terrorism was an International Conference on Combating Terrorism (al-Otibi, 2008: 128), which was held in the capital Riyadh between the 5 and 8 February 2005. It was aimed at showing the Saudi Government's counter-terrorism plans, as well as explaining the methods it would follow, to the more than fifty countries that were represented.

The participants at the conference included international organisations, Western governments and their security experts, ministers and several related government representatives from most of the countries affected by the scourge of terrorism. Some key players at this conference were Saudi Arabia, the Muslim World League, and regional and specialised organisations. Fifty-one countries and eleven organisations aimed to foster dialogue, co-operation, and tolerance between different nation states, religions and cultures.

According to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013), the objectives for the conference were:

1- To highlight the concepts and causes of terrorism and the historical, ideological and cultural developments fuelling terrorism in human communities.

2- To illustrate the relationships between terrorism and money laundering on one hand, and between terrorism, narcotics and arms trafficking on the other.

3- To identify the structural aspects, composition, and working patterns of terrorist organisations.

4- To share the experiences of participating countries and international organisations in combating international terrorism and to exchange information and expertise.

5- To reach practical conclusions and suggestions to support international efforts in fighting terrorism.

The Conference was comprised of different sessions. These sought to study:

-Terrorist roots, origins, culture and ideology.

-The connection between terrorism and money laundering, arms trade and drug trafficking.

-The experiences of the efforts from other countries in fighting terrorism.

-Terrorist organisations and their formations.

After these sessions more than forty recommendations were made. They involved wholesale international counter-terrorism strategies (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2005).

According to al-Otibi (2008: 128), this conference explained many of the Saudi objectives on countering terrorism while also considering the causes and history behind radicalism, as shown in historic narratives of violence in Saudi Arabia by individuals such as Juhayman, as highlighted in chapter two. It also touched on the relationship between drug trafficking and weapon smuggling, money laundering and how these link to the funding of terrorism. Moreover, the conference facilitated the sharing of experiences between countries while touching on lessons learned from the efforts to combat terrorism internationally. The conference was also used to plot strategies for the immediate future as well as to plan long term; the importance of international co-operation was stressed.

The conference was used by Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz to read a speech about the Saudi efforts. This was done while welcoming countries with different political systems and faiths. He explained the need for an International Centre for Combating Terrorism, where experts in the field of terrorist monitoring could share information and

respond to urgent situations to prevent terrorism (Asseri, 2009: 122). The conference was also used to stress the need for all countries to be involved in working together to achieve success in combating terrorism. The Saudi leader also explained that the existence of the International Centre for Combating Terrorism was essential, while stressing that the UN was the ideal platform for facilitating such co-operation (Asseri, 2009: 123). Part of his speech stated that the conference was:

> "Clear testimony that terrorism, when it strikes its victims, does not differentiate between cultures, faiths, or forms of government. Terrorism does not belong to any culture, or religion, or political system. It is a global crime perpetrated by evil minds filled with hatred towards humanity and consumed with a blind desire to kill and destroy. This conference represents the will of the international community to combat this crime in every aspect by fighting evil with justice confronting (extremist) thought with wisdom and noble ideas, and challenging extremism with moderation and tolerance".

3.3.1.3 The Organization of Islamic Co-operation (OIC)

In an attempt to increase awareness of the acceptable values of Islam worldwide, Saudi Arabia used the Organization of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) through holding conferences and meetings. This helped to unite like-minded Islamic countries that were determined to fight extremism. This alliance was meant to promote the values of moderate Islam and to condemn the killing of innocent people by terrorists in the name of the faith. The OIC was first established between fifty-seven states from four different continents around the world. This inter-governmental organisation is the second largest such, after the UN. It was first established in September 1969 in Rabat, the capital of Morocco, in the aftermath of the criminal arson of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The general aims of this international

conference concerned the protection of Islamic nations, improve co-operation between them at all levels, and to maintain a good image of Islam and its principles.

The OIC's convention on combating terrorism became more important following a number of terrorist attacks, such as that in New York on 11 September 2001, and in Saudi Arabia in May 2003. The OIC was used to promote the generally accepted values in Islam and to condemn extremism and terrorism (Asseri, 2009: 124).

In December 2005, the OIC recommended adopting a plan to overcome the challenges facing Muslim people and nations in the future. This was adopted after recommendations from the Saudi leader, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz. The Summit of the OIC submitted three documents: namely, the Makkah Declaration, the Eminent Person's Report and the Ten-Year Programme of Action (Asseri, 2009: 125). These documents aimed to overcome challenges facing Muslims, especially with regards to the defence of Islam, democracy, development, and enhancing the peaceful image of Islam (Ahmad, 2008).

The OIC received some criticism because it had plans that were viewed as too ambitious and did not touch on issues of terrorism coming from its member states. That is why the Human Rights Watch thought that the OIC should embrace internationally acceptable standards of human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

3.3.1.4 The International Islamic Conference for Dialogue (IICFD)

The IICFD, or the Interfaith Dialogue, was promoted to encourage cross-religious dialogue in order to unite against terrorism and work for peace and tolerance. Religious identity and interpretation had been the cause of divisions among people and nations for many years. The role of the Interfaith Dialogue was to allow scholars and religious leaders to work together on

their differences, to discuss the causes of violence and work for a better future (Asseri, 2009: 88).

The first conference with regards to this matter took place in Makkah in June 2008. It involved more than 500 delegates from different countries around the world. According to the Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University (2008), the aim of this conference, which was led by King Adullah bin Abdul Aziz, was to increase harmony and unity between different religions. The King highlighted, in his speech, that there was a need for improvement in interfaith relations, while also highlighting the danger of Islamist extremism. He explained that Islam faced challenges from small extremist groups, aggressive towards those different from them.

During the three-day conference, participants were able to discuss the Islamic legitimacy of dialogue, rules, methodology and the means for dialogue and regulations, as well as discussing the themes of dialogue and its basis (The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2008).

Because this conference was held in Makkah it was restricted to Muslims, and the King highlighted the importance of uniting the different schools of thought in Islam and the need to unite them against terrorism. After reviewing all the challenges that faced humanity, the conference issued statements to governments, organisations and people from all religious backgrounds, to the effect that Islam believed in God as the creator and that it was him they worshiped since he was the one who sent prophets and messengers. Based on Islamic values, the conference also encouraged tolerance and the need to work together to end wars and challenge injustice (The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2008).

The second interfaith dialogue between religions was conducted in Madrid between the 16 and 18 July 2008, building on the recommendations from the Makkah conference and bringing it to more diverse religions and cultures. The conference included almost 300 delegates, representing Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions. King Abdullah opened the conference, in the presence of the Spanish King Juan Carlos and the then Prime Minister, José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2008).

The conference touched on the importance of dialogue amongst human beings, on the foundational dialogue between religions and civilisations, on the common aspects of dialogue, and finally on ways to evaluate and promote dialogue. It was based on the principle that the heavenly message among religions explains that humankind should be obedient to their creator and seek happiness, justice, peace and security. People were encouraged to respect religions and honour them, and to understand that religion should never be used as an excuse for racism and discrimination.

Moreover, the conference promoted the idea that religion encourages binding agreements, the respect of others, and the maintenance of good relations. It was agreed that people should turn to their creator and stand against all forms of crime such as drug trafficking, corruption and terrorism, while promoting the institution of the family as the main protector of the youth and adults from extremist political and religious behaviour in today's society (SUSRIS, 2008).

To realise the main objectives and principles of this conference, the participants recommended the establishment of a working team to follow these points and work on their success. The working team were to seek to enhance co-operation between religious, educational, cultural and media establishments in order to enhance and consolidate religious

ethical values. It was also to arrange inter-cultural and inter-religious meetings, conduct research, arrange media programmes and promote the culture of peace and co-existence on the Internet and other media sources (Asseri, 2009: 140). The United Nations General Assembly was asked to support the outcomes of this conference, in order that it might reach more audiences and be more successful.

As an extension to the Makkah and the Madrid Interfaith Conferences, King Abdullah initiated a third conference in New York on the 12 and 13 November 2008. This was based on the General Assembly's call to promote tolerance and understanding between cultures and religions through the use of dialogue, while maintaining respect for human rights between faiths, cultures and civilisations (Asseri, 2009: 141).

According to the conference objectives, the general aim of these meetings was to show the world the concept of peaceful moderate Islam and how it rejects extremism. Moreover, it aimed at forming co-operation between religions in order for them to work together towards an improved and peaceful co-existence and tolerance. This Saudi initiative was designed to send clearly a message that the country was willing to co-operate at all levels to provide an understanding between faiths and ensure peace between all cultures, religions and civilisations.

It could be suggested that with such an international stance, as well as a comprehensive domestic counter-terrorism programme, Saudi Arabia positioned itself as an uncompromising protagonist in the fight against religious intolerance and violent extremism.

3.3.2 The Saudi Counter-Terrorism Policy on Prevention, Rehabilitation and Care (PRAC)

Earlier parts of this chapter have analysed general soft power strategies considered by the Saudi Government. This section will focus on the specific strategies that it adopted.

Al-Hadlaq (2011: 61), the general director of ideological and intellectual security in Saudi Arabia's Ministry of the Interior, lists some of the Saudi counter-terrorism strategies for tackling extremism and radicalisation. These are outlined in its Prevention, Rehabilitation and Care document (PRAC). According to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013), PRAC focuses on:

1- Identifying and outlining the goals and challenges for the Saudi authorities against extremism.

2- Identifying ways to combat the spread and appeal of extremist ideologies.

3- Programme interconnecting strategic programmes.

4- Aiming to deter individuals from becoming involved in extremism.

5- Promoting the rehabilitation of extremists and individuals who get involved with them.

6- Providing aftercare programmes to facilitate re-integration into society after release from custody.

According to El-Said (2012), Al-Hadlaq (2011: 59) and Asseri (2009), Saudi counter-terrorism policy seeks to address the underlying factors that have encouraged extremism. This is hoped to prevent the further violent radical thinking and actions of extremist Islamism. The counter-terrorism strategy has been implemented in various contexts, ranging from religious and financial institutions to social sectors like education. Schools have had their syllabuses reviewed to curb radical and extremist thinking. Saudi students have been given access to funding to pursue studies internationally through the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme. This has been designed to provide a wider understanding of the

world outside Saudi Arabia, a general appreciation of international relations and life outside the Kingdom. Public awareness campaigns have been implemented on a massive scale through the use of the media, public places and through preaching at mosques and education institutions (The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2005).

After the war between Afghanistan and Russia, Saudi Arabia suddenly became the base for some followers of Al-Qaeda who, because of their extremism, aimed to destabilise the country and its security. Saudi Arabia has developed a unique soft strategy to counter terrorism and de-radicalise the terrorist leaders and their followers. According to Al-Hadlaq (2011: 61), this strategy involves three main stages. Firstly the prevention of terrorism, followed by the rehabilitation of the detainees and their followers, and then the provision of aftercare, a stage that follows when the detainees are released to re-join society.

Because Saudi Arabia faced sustained domestic insurgency for several years, it had to devise strategies that would be contextually and culturally relevant in order to avoid inflaming and alienating the perpetrators.

The Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre provided a variety of programmes related to this. In particular, the counselling programme drew on several Saudi traditions that included the notion of co-operation and persuasion. This was based on a long Saudi history of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for criminal offenders, and the use of religious figures in the prison system. This was a microcosm of the wider public engagement campaign that the Government had already instituted to address prisoner welfare issues in the Saudi prisons (El-Said, 2012; Mohammed bin Naif Visitors information pamphlet, 2014). As in Yemen, the use of clerics was important because it accorded the process some credibility, since the clerics were viewed by society and by the prisoners as

apolitical, and capable of sharing honest views and advice with the incarcerated as well as with their families.

The Saudi Government saw that using hard power approaches and violence to deter extremism was not effective. They found the soft PRAC strategy to be a better alternative (Al-Hadlaq, 2011: 59). This can be explained by analysing the Saudi counter-terrorism efforts within and outside of the country. These will be discussed in the following sections.

3.3.2.1 Terrorist funding and its investigation

Saudi efforts to stop terrorist funding were visible in the mid-1990s, when the authorities noticed that a number of charity organisations were funding Al-Qaeda. As a result, the Saudi Government banned the unmonitored process of funding charities within the country, unless there was permission from the authorities (SAMA, 2004).

In its executive summary, the SAMA (2004) document, entitled 'A Report on Initiatives and Actions taken by Saudi Arabia to Combat Terrorist Financing and Money Laundering', states that the key objective of its framework is to give a comprehensive guide to monetary institutions. The production of such a guide was achieved in close liaison with UN initiatives against terrorist financing.

This initiative was Saudi specific and was not influenced by outside pressure from countries such as the US. Some of the monitoring and guidance rules that existed before the SAMA document were weak and not specific. The Saudi authorities did not have full control on all charities inside or outside Saudi, because of the weakness of international support systems. The Saudi Government's efforts increased slowly throughout the late 1990s. However, it wasn't until 11 September 2001 when the Government, pressurised by the US, took drastic measures to modify the monitoring process of the funding of charitable

organisations. This was perceived as the remedy for tackling terrorism and money laundering. A Royal Decree was issued in 2003, which effectively criminalised money laundering and the financing of terrorists, terrorist acts and organisations (SAMA, 2004).

3.3.2.2 The role of respected clerics in the religious context of de-radicalisation

Along with the application of strict laws in banks, religion and society in general, the Government instituted security measures that also obliged it to conduct social reforms meant to condemn violent extremism.

One binding commitment was the strict monitoring and rejection of any financing of terrorists, which was supported by the highest Islamic leaders. This was declared at an extraordinary session held in 2010 in Riyadh, where a fatwa was declared against terrorist financing (The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2010).

Following 11 September 2001, religious scholars, such as the members of the Ulama, have condemned terrorist attacks and have regularly and publicly produced statements against extremism and terrorism. Shaikh Salih bin Muhammad al-Luheidan, Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, is a prime example (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2005). These individuals have strongly rejected bin Laden's interpretation of jihad. Furthermore, in February 2003, the leading religious scholars in the Higher Council of the Ulama (religious scholars) produced a clear statement, stating that violent attacks on innocent people were considered criminal acts and nothing to do with jihad (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2003). An extract from the Declaration states:

> "The acts of shedding the blood of innocent people, the bombing of buildings
> and ships, and the destruction of public and private installations are criminal
> acts and against Islam. Those who carry out such acts have deviant beliefs and

misguided ideologies and are to be held responsible for their crimes. Islam and Muslims should not be accountable for the actions of such people. Islamic Law clearly prohibits levelling such charges against non-Muslims, warns against following those who carry such deviant beliefs, and stresses that it is the duty of all Muslims all over the world to consult truthfully, share advice, and cooperate in piety and righteousness".

Asseri (2009: 101) states that the council urged the Saudi Government to bring to court any individuals or scholars who are considered to be extremist and who approve of such acts.

The efforts of the Saudi authorities to control extremist religious clerics continued after May 2003. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs observed how extremist thought was endangering Saudi security. This department made directives to monitor and control religious leaders who were deemed to be an extremist. Some of these clerics were given recommendations to retrain in moderate preaching. This was confirmed by Mustafa Makhdoum, the Dean of the Higher Institute for Imams and Khatibs at Taiba University. He confirmed the need to:

"Remove misunderstanding in the mindset of the traditional preachers besides helping them acquire modern skills of communication thus enabling them to present their ideas in an effective style"(Arab News 2008).

Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz, the Interior Minister, "criticised Saudi Arabia's prayer leaders for not doing enough to convince the country's youth of the dangers posed by extremist ideologies" (Murphy, 2008).

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs suspended or removed 353 religious officials, imams and muezzins (prayer callers), from their positions, while 1367 were suspended to attend further training courses (Alriyadh Newspaper, 2003; Khan, 2003; La Guardia, 2006). This was a move that the Prince saw as necessary, because he viewed most of the clerics as ineffective in guiding young men away from extremist thinking (Murphy, 2008). These officials were deemed to be lacking the acceptable skills and knowledge to work in mosques. Furthermore, these efforts were meant to remove those who had extremist thoughts and to prevent them from interacting with the public in mosques in case they misled them.

Such efforts and the need to explain how the misunderstanding of Islamic principles could be dangerous, especially on issues regarding jihad, was further expressed by the three top clerics in the Kingdom. One of these clerics was Shiekh Abdul Aziz Al-Shiekh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia (Fatany, 2004). The imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, Shiekh Saleh bin-Humaid, and the imam of the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) mosque in Madinah, Shiekh Ali ibn Abdul Rahman were also involved (Fatany, 2004). All of these religious leaders were united in the understanding that terrorism, and the kidnapping and killing of innocent people are totally condemned in Islam. Asseri (2009: 101) states that supporting or sympathizing with such actions is therefore a betrayal of Islamic teachings.

The process of re-defining the preaching approaches of imams was a challenging one; many had taught and preached for decades. De-schooling them of their long practised preaching styles would prove to be a divisive situation that needed strategic government planning. Radical preachers, such as the Al-Shuaybi, Al Fahad, al-Khudayr and their comrades, had advocated jihad and were seen to be in conflict with the state (Hegghammer, 2010: 148). Some of them had even publicly or privately supported the attacks on the Twin Towers, claiming it was a justified attack on the enemy. There developed camps between the

preachers, with some groups opposing the states' stance on the US, while others sided with the state's policies regarding making alliances with the Americans.

To further enhance obedience to the expected understanding of Islam, scholars at the Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University constantly seek to understand the motives behind terrorism (Fatany, 2004). The Religious Police, or *Mutawwas*, are responsible in public places for ensuring that Islamic morals and behaviour are adhered to correctly with no deviations. These police are of great importance in fighting what was deemed to be extremist thinking and terrorism. The religious police are often provided with a programme that aims at improving their skills. Individuals qualify for this role by following a course at the academy of Islamic Police at Umm Al-Qura University in Makkah. This course not only provides the students with physical training, but also teaches them about the psychological aspects of terrorism and the English language. For further political and academic interaction, the Saudi Government and its officials have sponsored a number of conferences to encourage dialogue between religious figures, politicians and academics (Fatany, 2004; Fink and El-Said, 2011; Mohammed bin Naif Visitors information pamphlet, 2014).

3.3.2.3 The media and the Internet

The Government has used the media extensively to reveal how in its view extremist thinking has led to terrorism. In the process, it has clearly explained that Islam is a religion of peace (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005: 126; The Sakina Campaign for Dialogue, 2013). The responsibility of educating people about the values of Islam, and the identification and definition of un-Islamic behaviour, has been the task of many leading clerics. Some of these clerics have been encouraged to participate in Internet platforms run by extremists to counter the reasoning behind extremist thinking (House, 2012; El-Said, 2013). According to Asseri

(2009: 103), the aim behind using the Internet was to show people in and outside of Saudi Arabia that the notion of jihad in Islam is different from what terrorists portray it to mean.

Both the media and the Internet have played an integral part in countering terrorism in Saudi Arabia. A huge campaign was launched in an effort aimed at resisting Al-Qaeda and the people who sympathise with it. The media, in print and electronically, have constantly showed public resentment of terrorism and how wider society in the country condemns all violent acts against innocent people.

Using the media, the Saudi Government thwarted many extremist thoughts, and disqualified, explained and rectified many wrongly understood Islamic issues, especially regarding the use of jihad. A good example for this is the Assakina campaign website (http://www.assakina.com). The process included debates between moderates and hardliners through various forms of the media. Journalists at all levels have regularly written about the advantages of moderate Islamic tolerance while criticising the ideology adopted by a few extremist members of Saudi society. Further efforts from the media were put in place in order to reach the West and non-Muslims worldwide. This was meant to show that moderate Islam, through the efforts of the Government, was striving to put a stop to extremism and terrorism (Fatany, 2004).

Spreading these counter-terrorism efforts via the Internet was also a top priority for the Saudi Government. The aim was to stop radicals from what appeared to be their reaching and corrupting of the hearts of the Saudi people. The destructive influence of the Internet on radicalising young people was exemplified in the Boston marathon bombings that occurred in April 2013 (AlJazera, 2013; BBC, 2013; Khashoggi, 2013; The Guardian, 2013).

Asseri (2009: 106) states that in October 2000, the Presidency for Scientific Research and Religious Edicts (Dar al-Ifta), which is based in the capital Riyadh, built a website that includes fatwas that have been made accessible to the public. There is no room for extremist thinking on this website. It was meant to promote moderate Islam while taking a stand against terrorism (Murajaat Fikryah, http://www.murajaat.com).

However, the increased efforts of radical clerics to recruit young people for jihad as shown by Rudolph (2009: 84) have prompted further de-radicalisation efforts from the Government. Rudolph (2009) lists four types of radical camps that were set on a collision course with the state. The first camp specifically advocated the targeted attacks on Westerners, the second was focused on the preservation of Saudi society hence against any attacks within the state, while the third advocated attacks on Westerners and the family of Saud, with the fourth focusing on attacks on Al Saud and Muslim collaborators in Saudi society.

According to Ansary (2008), one of the main efforts was made through the aforementioned Assakina (Inner Peace) website, which was designed in 2004 by a number of religious scholars in order to let the public engage in debates where questions are answered. Extremist thinking was often debated and discussed to show that such thinking was wrong. This was done by bringing facts and evidence against extremist tendencies in contrast to the acceptable Islamic principles based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. Combating terrorism on the Internet was an essential measure, as the Internet is often seen as the cheapest way of accessing young people, and negatively influencing them by promoting extremist thoughts (Boucek, 2008; Asseri, 2009: 106).

3.3.2.4 Reforms in prisons

A programme was initiated, in the 1990s, through the Saudi Government's reforms in its prison system. This was meant to de-radicalise or rehabilitate certain individuals who were arrested on terrorism charges (Boucek, 2011: 73; El-Said, 2012; Mohammed bin Naif Visitors information pamphlet, 2014). The programme was claimed to be well planned by the state and, as explained earlier, was considered to be uniquely suited to the Saudi context. Yet it adopted the strategies and experiences of other regional states such as Egypt and Yemen (El-Said, 2012).

This was meant to produce a unique, structured and comprehensive system that would prove to be applicable even in the contexts of some of the Arab states in the region. The new reform programme was a response to the anti-US sentiments of the mid 1990s, when major attacks occurred on expatriate residential areas and the US military facilities in Saudi Arabia (Boucek, 2009; Frink and El-Said, 2011;Mohammed bin Naif Visitors information pamphlet, 2014). These attacks harmed more Muslims than non-Muslims.

Further anti-extremist strategies were carried out in 2004 when the Government started the al-Munasaha wa al-aslah (Advice and Reform) programme after a wave of terrorist attacks in 2003. This programme was instituted when the powerful Ministry of Interior was given powers to implement reforms. Such reforms included the establishment of three subcommittees, namely the religious subcommittee, the psychology subcommittee and the security subcommittee (Al-Hadlaq, 2011: 59-61). Many of the detained were young individuals, who were influenced and misguided by extremist thinking, and this reform was meant to correct their thoughts and give them advice on what moderate Islam really promotes.

One of the main targets for this programme was to gain the trust of the prisoners, before using an approach that raises an awareness of the impact of extremist views on the beneficiaries' understanding of Islam. Those who comply with the programme are offered alternatives to incarceration, as long as they are willing to change. In the beginning, this programme was not trusted by many, as the prisoners considered the Government an enemy. Such an attitude can be attributed to the extremist attitudes, which could have resulted from the influence of the extremist radical thought of Juhayman and his successors. Extremist individuals made efforts to warn prisoners against this programme, describing it as misleading government propaganda.

Despite these difficulties and challenges, Saudi officials have attempted to prove the efficiency of this programme. These declarations are obviously from a political viewpoint. It is important to critically view them from an objective and academic point of view. According to Boucek (2008), only 1 to 2 per cent of the hard-line prisoners who took part in the programme between the years 2004 and 2007 went back to extremism. Because the process of de-radicalisation is a complex one, it is difficult to reach definitive conclusions regarding the accuracy and certainty of total disengagement and cognitive de-radicalisation. It would be interesting to know how the results stated in the Boucek research were collected.

The programme has been described as successful, especially with detainees who had not committed any terrorist attacks but had shown signs of vulnerability. This is shown in the ages and backgrounds of some of the inmates who are described as having been very young, some easily persuaded because of their religious sentiments as well as their intellectual competences. According to the state, consultants and specialist researchers in the field of de-radicalisation, the inmates often did not fully understand Islam and its values. Moderate Islamic clerics often had success in correcting this extremist influence (Al-Hadlaq, 2010: 62).

As a result, the state has tried to prove the effectiveness of this programme in re-educating detainees and de-radicalising them. As stated in Boucek (2008), governments declare success by quoting statistics that show levels of success in de-radicalising former perceived terrorists as well as the rates of disengagement by these individuals.

Horgan and Braddock (2010), however, highlight the difficulty of measuring de-radicalisation and disengagement, stating that it is a continuous process that is difficult to measure scientifically since it involves too many variables. There are complex human behaviours and sentiments regarding engaging and disengaging in violence. These cannot be easily explained by simply using uniform processes under the labels of de-radicalisation and disengagement. There are many triggers that cause recidivism and which contradict the statistics of success rates.

The Saudi Government has invested in reforming the prisons (El-Said and Barrett, 2013; Mohammed bin Naif Visitors information pamphlet, 2014). It invested nearly $30 million between 2004 and 2007 to ensure the success of such programmes in prisons. To further ensure the success of this initiative, the Government provided incentives, such as employment and housing, to those who co-operated. In some cases, the Government helped in arranging marriages to provide the detainees with responsibility so that they would be responsible family men and avoid engaging in acts of terrorism. Some detainees received sponsorship to attend university, start businesses, and even get houses (BBC, 2008). Following this programme, more than 1000 detainees were released in an effort to encourage others to co-operate (Asseri, 2009). It is questionable though, how effective these generalised initiatives are. A CTS perspective has been made regarding the politicisation of the de-radicalisation programmes. This depends very much on internal and external contexts and the dynamics of political and military activities that occur.

The next section discusses the methodological considerations that have influenced the execution of this research. The researcher has chosen a detailed and reflexive approach to the study in order to generate effective research strategies of counter-terrorism and extremism in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the identification of the key research philosophies, paradigms, approaches and strategies taken in this study. It discusses the rationale for the selection of the research methods, data collection instruments and sampling procedures employed to select and access participants, and the ethical considerations involved in the present study. The first section mainly discusses the research paradigm and approach used to best address the research questions as stated in the introduction. Research strategies used to yield primary data are then reviewed based on the reasons to justify their use. The data collection methods will be described in detail, and assessed in order to highlight their strengths and weaknesses. The study setting, the participants, and the sampling methods will be described. The ethical considerations will also be discussed, bearing in mind the security environment, the people, their relationships and behavioural actions. The behavioural and psychological stances and histories of the subjects will also be considered (Baker, 1994).

The above outline aims to fulfil the purpose and objectives of the current study, in order to reveal how terrorism within the Kingdom is viewed and combated with specific reference to the role played by the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. Since this case study investigates the participants who have sufficient experience, as part of their work, in combating or reporting terrorism in the Kingdom, this chapter provides insight into how appropriate methodology was adopted to provide the opportunity for understanding how these 'expert' participants construct their meanings and perceptions based on the subjective experiences in their professional lives, which are also deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts. Altogether, both the methodological approach and its underlying philosophical

assumptions have guided the selection of the investigative tools to satisfy the aims and objectives of this research. The aim of the selection is to gain an understanding of the situation from the perspective of the individuals who are actively part of the on-going process of de-radicalisation. In this case study, individuals are expected to provide their own views and conclusions about the process under integration. It is also important to know that the participants and their own privacy pre-occupations, which are compounded by state rules and laws surrounding discussing security information, would affect the research.

4.2 Research philosophies

The importance of looking into the theoretical and philosophical framework cannot be underestimated. Adopting a philosophical framework embedded in a scientific approach involves "beliefs or assumptions regarding ontology (the nature of reality and being), epistemology (the study of knowledge, the acquisition of knowledge, and the relationship between the knower [research participant] and would-be knower [the researcher]), axiology (the role and place of values in the research process), rhetorical structure (the language and presentation of the research), and methodology (the process and procedures of research)" (Ponterotto, 2005:127). A research philosophy identifies how researchers approach the genesis and development of knowledge, and is commonly referred to as a 'paradigm', which subsequently provides the researcher with guidance about the philosophical assumptions, tools, instruments, participants and methods used in the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, to be able to undertake and assess any research, it is essential to clarify its underlying assumptions, as the researcher's beliefs and understandings of any social phenomena can in turn shape the research design (Gill and Johnson, 2005). Also, the philosophical position of one researcher can be significantly different from that of another (Blaikie, 2007). Naturalistic and ethnographic research approaches were adopted in this case

to gather 'insider accounts' of the phenomenon under study, in order to produce and develop a theory about it and generate a de-radicalisation hypothesis.

Research philosophies can be classified on a continuum, with one extreme labelled as objectivism and the other as subjectivism. Objectivism is based on the assumption that the researcher and the topic under investigation are separate, hence independent. In other words, the researcher is able to conduct the study without his views and beliefs influencing the research (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Research rooted in an objective assumption usually follows a positivist approach. On the other hand, subjective research is founded on the assumption that the researcher and the area under investigation are not independent, and that therefore the researcher can adopt an active role in the research (Collis and Hussey, 2003). It is worth noting that neither objectivism nor subjectivism should be considered to be more superior to the other. Rather, the use of either of them relies heavily on the nature of the study and what it intends to investigate. For example, this study mainly aims at gaining an in-depth insight into the soft power strategy in Saudi Arabia, as well as the occupational roles of those involved in the delivery of strategies to counter terrorism. Hence, an approach embedded in subjectivism and ethnography might perhaps prove to be more fruitful and closer to the social reality of the participants than one grounded in objectivism. In the context of this study, the socio-cultural knowledge of the participants, regarding their understanding of the de-radicalisation process using soft power, would make it easier to understand the process.

The two dominant paradigms that have been largely documented in the social science research arena are positivism and phenomenology (also known as interpretivism). Social science methodologists relate to the positivistic and phenomenological paradigms through ontological and epistemological perspectives. Ontological and epistemological stances primarily refer to a person's worldview that in turn determines his or her perception of the relative importance of the different dimensions of reality (Thomas, 2010). One's view of

reality is known as ontology, whilst the view of how one obtains knowledge is known as epistemology (Crotty, 2009).

According to TerreBlanche and Durrheim (1999), any research undertaken usually has three main dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology. Similarly, the research process of the current study revolves around these three core elements, which underlie a robust research paradigm to determine its methodological backbone. According to Grix (2004), a researcher's ontological assumptions shape their epistemological assumptions, which in turn influence their research methodology. In fact, as Crotty (1998) highlights, there is a tendency for ontological assumptions and epistemological assumptions to overlap; and in so doing they form a theoretical perspective (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:202). Hence, this research methodology has been shaped by ontological perspectives of viewing the de-radicalisation process as interpretivist and culturally based, rather than scientific and positivist. The chosen subjects for the research are expected to be subjective, and to express their own views and observations.

4.3 Research paradigms

The interconnectedness between a paradigm and its ontological and epistemological assumptions is such that, when examining the underlying paradigm of a piece of research, it is also possible to assess its ontological and epistemological assumptions. In fact, Guba and Lincoln (1994:106) describe paradigms as "basic belief systems based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions", and this definition overlaps with the aforementioned research principle of TerreBlanche and Durrheim (1999). In other words, a paradigm indicates a pattern, structure and framework that will guide scientific and academic concepts, principles and assumptions (Olsen, Lodwick and Dunlop, 1992:16). The ontological assumption regarding researching extremism, in the Saudi and Middle East

context, posits that political and religious reality is subjective, which shows that the related epistemological assumption needs to focus on the subjective elements of experience and recognize that true-life knowledge is largely shaped by personal experiences. Subsequently the methodological assumption must have a qualitative nature given that past research highlighted the value, appropriateness and need for qualitative research methods in the field of criminology (Tewksbury, 2009).

Objectivism and subjectivism are the two facets of ontology (Collins, 2010; Saunders et al., 2009). Rooted in epistemological assumptions are two significantly competing approaches to the nature of knowledge: positivism, often if not always linked with quantitative research strategies; and interpretivism, which is very often associated with qualitative research strategies (Henn et al., 2009). The positivistic paradigm views the social world as being objective, singular, and holding an external existence without any subjective influence on behalf of the researcher. The phenomenological paradigm considers reality to be subjective and multiple, in line with the various ways in which humans view and relate to the world: hence, it is strongly influenced by epistemological assumptions as these are mainly concerned with the nature of knowledge. These assumptions include: what knowledge can be acquired; how it can be gained; and the relationship between the researcher and the topic under study. Also rooted in objectivism, positivism views the researcher as a separate entity from the area of research, whilst the phenomenological/interpretivist paradigm accepts an inter-relationship between the researchers and researched as supported by subjectivism (Collis and Hussey, 2003). In the context of this research, the researcher and the researched are meant to interact in such a way that the assumptions and conclusions reached are understood by both equally, leading to the development of a shared theoretical conclusion.

4.3.1 The positivist paradigm

The positivist paradigm of studying social reality is founded in the philosophical ideas of August Comte, a French philosopher. He explained that observation and objective reason are the most appropriate and reliable tools to use to understand human behaviour. In fact, according to Comte, true knowledge is derived from the experience of the senses, which can be comprehended through observation and experiment. At the ontological level, positivists maintain that any reality has an objective nature and hence can be measured using properties that are not influenced by both the researcher and his/her instruments. That is, knowledge is seen as being purely objective and quantifiable. In so doing, the positivist paradigm stresses the importance of using scientific methods and quantification to systematise knowledge, as they maximise accuracy in the research process. In a nutshell, positivism is concerned with the unravelling of truth and presenting it through empirical means (Henning et al., 2004: 17). In the field of social science, nowadays, many approaches have been influenced by positivism, despite the fact that it has also been criticised because it does not necessarily apply to qualitative research (Smith, 1998; Gill and Johnson, 2005). It has also been strongly argued, especially by interpretive constructivism, that objectivity needs to give place to subjectivity in the scientific inquiry process (Gephart, 1999). Nevertheless, some aspects of positivism remain strongly supported, especially in Western culture (Johnson and Duberley, 2000) unlike in the Middle East, due to the disparate cultural and civilisation differences.

However, given the qualitative nature of the current study, positivism is not adopted as the research paradigm. Generally speaking, data gathered based on a positivist approach is quantitative (Bell, 2005), and this study is founded on research questions of a qualitative nature, with semi-structured interviews as the main instrument for data collection. In contrast to seeing the social world as an objective entity, this research is mainly inspired by the

assumption that terrorism within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needs to be understood from a perspective that will allow a holistic understanding of the meanings people attribute to their experiences of this phenomenon. Sometimes more valid data can be generated if the researcher immerses themselves in the research context, and uses a range of instruments to gather information. In doing so, terrorism in Saudi Arabia can be best viewed, researched and studied, and perhaps even successfully addressed, while bearing in mind government controls and censorship to access security information.

4.3.2 The interpretivist paradigm

Since the present study is also embedded in cultural aspects which are often associated with human beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, its nature is similar to any other research involving these determinants and in contrast with physical laws or mathematical equations it is mostly phenomenological (Wender, 2004). Moreover, as a result of the ambiguous nature of terrorism, the perceptions of the researcher(s) involved will inevitably have an influence on the research process although such would not necessarily be a desired outcome. Taking the above into account, the research paradigm of the present study is interpretivist, commonly referred to as "a research paradigm that focuses on getting an emphatic understanding of how people feel inside, seeking to interpret individuals' everyday experiences, their deeper meanings and feelings, and the idiosyncratic reasons for their behaviours" (Rubin and Babbie, 2012: 56). That is, interpretive researchers believe that reality is tied to people's subjective experiences of the outside world: hence, they may rely on an inter-subjective epistemology and hold an ontological belief that reality is a socially constructed entity (Thomas, 2010). This is very relevant to the context of this research since Islamic culture is different from other cultures and will impact on methodological processes. According to

Walsham (1993), interpretive researchers mostly aim at generating their constructs from the field through a detailed examination of the research topic.

This paradigm is embedded in a subjective epistemology, and is mostly based on qualitative research tools to investigate theories (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Researchers adopting the interpretive approach are also aware that their interpretation of the findings can be influenced to some extent by their own values, beliefs, culture and experiences (Creswell, 2009). Myers (2009) states that the advantage of interpretive researchers is the access to reality (regardless of whether this reality is given or socially constructed) and is only achievable through social constructions: for example, language, consciousness and shared meanings. Interpretive research is characterised by observation and interpretation and hence, through observation that is contextually relevant, it is possible to collect data about any social phenomenon. By interpreting the data, it is then possible to make sense of it through inferences or any judgment with regards to the match between the information and any underlying abstract pattern (Aikenhead, 1997).

According to Maxwell (2002: 49), "accounts of participants' meanings are never a matter of direct access, but are always constructed by the researcher(s) on the basis of the participants' accounts and other evidence". In fact, interviews and participant observation form the basis of phenomenological research (Aspers, 2004). Creswell (1998: 51) explains that a phenomenological study focuses on "the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon". This normally involves gathering "deep" information and perceptions on the topic under study from the perspective of the participants. Its effectiveness should be greatly appreciated, as it has the potential to question structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). To sum up, the key elements of this paradigm are participation, collaboration and engagement (Henning et al., 2004). The researcher is fully immersed into the research by acting as a participant-observer (Blanche et al., 2006) who gets

involved in the activities and identifies the meanings of actions within the specific social context in which they are exhibited. This research is limited to practitioners, while it would have been richer had the researcher also had access to the beneficiaries.

In this study the researcher will adopt the interpretive paradigm, blended with the phenomenological paradigm, since the research questions are of a qualitative nature. Furthermore, it was not the intention that these questions be answered with statistical data but rather with interpretive information pertaining to Saudi Arabia's social and cultural context in which terrorism is experienced, with a specific focus on the expert participants working in the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. In light of the above discussion on the two existing dominant paradigms in the social science research world, and given the research questions, aims and objectives, the present study is not positivistic, but rather purely interpretive. The interpretivist paradigm is viewed as the primary foundation and backbone for qualitative research methods (Ponterotto, 2005).

4.4 Research approaches

Research approaches usually fall into two groups: the inductive and the deductive. Positivistic research is based on deductive logic, with its starting point being the theoretical background of the topic under study and the generation of hypotheses, followed by data collection to test these hypotheses (Collis and Hussey, 2003). On the other hand, in phenomenological/interpretivist research, the research logic follows the opposite direction, whereby it begins with the gathering of information and then proceeds towards theory development (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

4.4.1 Quantitative and qualitative approaches

These research approaches are generally strategies of enquiry that start off with the underlying assumptions that then lead on to the research design and methods of data collection (Myers, 2009). Although there is a range of research modes with varied distinctions, the most common categories of research approaches are qualitative and quantitative.

4.4.1.1 The qualitative approach
In contrast to the quantitative approach, "qualitative research enables scholars to gather detailed data about the experience of individuals within social contexts in a way that surveys conventionally cannot" (Miller, 2005:10). This approach mainly seeks to probe into the "why", not the "how", of its research topic, through the examination of unstructured information that can be gathered from: interview transcripts and recordings; notes; and many other forms of feedback (Creswell, 2009) as well as observation, including participant observation and the inquirer's impressions and reactions (Myers, 2009). Its strategies of inquiry tend to be narratives, phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory research, and case studies (Creswell, 2003). It is also widely recognized that qualitative research is naturalistic, in the sense that it aims at studying the everyday life of different groups of individuals and communities within their own natural context (Miller, 2005).

Of direct relevance to my case study is the idea that the qualitative approach allows the researcher to make knowledge claims embedded in constructivist perspectives, whereby they take into consideration the multiple meanings of individual experiences (the latter being socially and historically determined) with the ultimate aim of developing a theory. In addition, it is also sensitive to advocacy/participatory perspectives: that is, political, issue-oriented, collaborative and even promoting change (Creswell, 2003). Likewise, Myers (2009)

notes that qualitative research provides a valuable opportunity for researchers to understand people within the social and cultural contexts to which they are exposed on a daily basis. Hence the undeniable importance of qualitative studies is reflected when they successfully pave the way for the discovery and representation of the complexities and differences of "worlds under study" (Philip, 1998: 267).

4.4.1.2 The qualitative versus the quantitative approach
The suitability of a chosen methodological approach needs to be assessed based on the context, purpose and nature of the topic under investigation. It has also been argued that in some cases one approach can actually be considered as an alternative to the other, depending on the type of research topic involved (Thomas, 2010). At the heart of any research is the tough decision regarding whether to adopt a quantitative or a qualitative approach. The differences between both approaches are influenced by the judgment of the different researchers, since each tends to use different methods (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007).

According to Stake (1995:37), there are three main differences in qualitative and quantitative focus: explanation and understanding as the aim of the research; whether the researcher's role needs to be personal or impersonal; and the nature of knowledge gained, discovered or constructed. Furthermore, whilst qualitative research is inductive, quantitative research is deductive. That is, qualitative research does not depend on a hypothesis to start the research, as it relies on inductive data analysis to develop an in-depth understanding of the interaction of various influences which can be mutually related, leading to the development of a theory. It also clarifies the interacting realities and experiences of the individuals involved: namely, the researcher and participant (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Any quantitative study, though, needs to be founded on one or more hypotheses in order to begin. Compared to the quantitative approach, which needs a complete design of the study prior to the start of the investigation, the qualitative strategy allows for the study design to take shape

during the research process, bearing in mind that it is virtually impossible to anticipate the outcome of interactions which are often influenced by the varied perspectives and value systems of both the researcher and participants. Also, these individual differences are powerful enough to influence the interpretation of reality and the outcome of the investigation (Thomas, 2010).

4.4.1.3 Rationale for a qualitative approach
There are numerous motives for people to engage in extremist terror activities, as much as there are different views regarding the understanding, explanation and pacification of such individuals. This lends the case study based on qualitative approach to researching this phenomenon as the most appropriate, due to its tolerance of a broad based exposition of views and solutions. In this context, there is room for a wide spread of views and a variety of solutions and approaches to de-radicalisation.

With reference to terrorism as the research topic of the present study, very little is known about why some people choose to blow themselves to pieces and others do not (O'Connor, 2006; Mhlongo, 2008; Ras, 2008b). According to Blaxter et al. (2010: 65), although quantitative research comprises of relatively large-scale and representative data sets, there is still truth in the fact that it is often falsely "presented or perceived as being about the gathering of 'facts'". As far as qualitative research is concerned, Guba (1981: 76) suggests that when choosing a research approach, "it is proper to select that paradigm whose assumptions are best met by the phenomenon being investigated".

This case study is also about the exploration of the soft power strategy in Saudi Arabia, how far it has been used to counter terrorism, the occupational roles of those involved in the delivery of strategies to counter terrorism, and the various challenges involved. As such, with its main aim being to develop an in-depth understanding of how terrorism is combated in Saudi Arabia, along with the need to also have the research opportunity that

could help to comprehend the processes that characterise this event, it was deemed essential to opt for a qualitative approach instead of a quantitative one. In contrast to quantitative designs, a qualitative methodology would be more effective at providing the necessary detailed insight into the professional workers' role at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre with regards to counter-terrorism and their views of their experience. The argument in favour of a qualitative approach, based on the nature of the topic under study, is strongly supported by Thomas (2010) who adopted a similar approach when studying human learning in its natural setting. He points out that it is widely accepted that qualitative researchers are much more interested in the processes underlying an event, rather than the outcomes that only reflect a fraction of the complex event. This also applies to the study of terrorism in Saudi Arabia, which is certainly intricate and multi-dimensional.

Thomas (2010) highlights the link between constructivism and interpretivism: whilst interpretivism focuses on the essential aspects of shared meaning and understanding, constructivism goes beyond that by also considering knowledge as produced and interpreted. Similarly, in the case of this research, the participants built their own knowledge within a context largely influenced by the social-cultural factors, which are in turning shaped by their prior knowledge and understanding. With this in mind, this researcher had the chance to act as an inquirer from a constructivist epistemological stand-point. Due to its qualitative nature, the outcomes of this case study may assist the people working in the centre in dealing with terrorism more effectively, as they will be better equipped to understand this phenomenon and the ways in which it influences common people to become terrorists.

Engelbrecht (1991: 12) clearly shows in her study that people ("victims") possess "cognitive baggage" that they usually bring along with them. As such, it is essential for the qualitative researcher to probe into those assumptions and expectations that would indicate how these people (in the current study people involved in terrorist activities in Saudi Arabia)

feel about themselves, as well as the environment in which they operate. The flexibility provided by a qualitative approach (Grobler, 2005) is of absolute value to research that is based on a sensitive topic, as this is. Moreover, this flexibility is intended to yield a novel insight into the topic, which could contribute to safety and security in Saudi Arabia and may also favour the emergence of an economically and socially positive society (Ras, 2008a; 2009d).

To further support the choice of approach in this case study, the research questions are exploratory in nature. There is evidence suggesting that a qualitative approach is justified in the case where the nature of research questions demand exploration (Stake, 1995). In fact, a qualitative study allows the researcher to engage in the exploration of feelings or thought processes which are virtually impossible to pull out or examine using conventional positivist research methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Qualitative methods also stress the position of the researcher as an active participant in the research process (Creswell, 2005), and this was equally an important element in the present study, where the researcher was primarily responsible for the data collection as well as the interpretation of the findings (Stake, 1995). With one of the research objectives being the provision of a sociological account of the recent innovations in Saudi Arabia's response to terrorism within its historical context, the qualitative research approach is useful for capturing the wider implications of this particular research question in order to position it in a social, political, and historical context (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

4.5 Ethnographic research

The basis for this research focuses mainly on the ethnographic case study based research (Murchison, 2010) conducted over a three-month period, from 23 December 2013 to 13 March 2014 at the Mohammad bin Naf Counselling and Care Centre. It revolves around the

concept that the approach to de-radicalisation, one of the counter-terrorism strategies in Saudi Arabia, should be culturally centred. This is because of the dynamics of events locally and internationally, and the different conflicts and political innovations that are occurring currently.

The methodological framework of the current study is interpretive ethnography. Van Maanen (1988: 1) highlights that, both fieldwork and culture are "vital notions, of course, because when married in an ethnography they form something of a conceptual union". According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006: 230), "ethnographic research aims to get an in-depth understanding of how individuals in different cultures and subcultures make sense of their lived reality". In other words, with the help of ethnography, the perspectives and behaviours of individuals who live in the same social and cultural group, and hence are constantly engaged in interaction with one another, can be better understood. In fact, this particular attribute of ethnography is directly founded in constructivism whereby it is assumed that the knowledge of meaning and reality is socially and historically constructed by social beings. Moreover, the process through which people construct meaning is based on life experiences and involves different ways, varying from one era to another (Crotty, 1998). Taking the above into account, ethnography was deemed to be an appropriate method for this study, since the latter strived to gain an insight into the meaning and social reality of terrorism in Saudi Arabia which could subsequently help in combating it.

In addition, it is of utmost importance to also recognize that social and cultural worlds revolve around relationships and social interactions that are all grounded in the use of language, whereby individuals rely on personal narratives and culturally available resources to build up meanings and knowledge (Silverman, 2005) as well as cultural patterns to shape ideas of the 'self' and the 'other' (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Therefore, it is important to

trace the views, interpretations and interactions between the research subjects in the de-radicalisation process, using culturally specific means. Walker (2010) concludes that the construction of meaning via language is definitely not a process without complexities. This is the case because language is the core element of the social construction of meaning, and "communication itself, as an element of our common world, is therefore constituted in communication, and what communication becomes for us therefore depends on how we communicate about it" (Craig and Muller, 2007: 60). This point is of direct relevance to the present study, as the phenomenon of terrorism occurs within a social arena characterised by the use of language and communication. It could be suggested that its understanding, and even attempts to minimise its prevalence, are largely dependent on the pattern of communication that underlies it.

In fact, it has been empirically asserted by Keyton (2005) that communication is characterised by both the verbal and non-verbal languages that are embodied in actions, cultural factors, values, norms and assumptions. The essence of communication as part of any social phenomenon cannot be neglected, as there is certainly a need to acknowledge that "communication in the living world is sometimes "successful", but often faulty, unsuccessful, divisive and repressive of some communicative resources at the expense of others" (Cobley, 2004: 288). Whether communication ambiguity affects terrorism in Saudi Arabia would be an interesting area to investigate using ethnography. Findings with regards to this specific aspect could equally shed light on how terrorism is viewed and countered at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre.

Merriam and Simpson (2000: 104) have identified five research methods mostly used in ethnographic studies: "participant observation, in-depth interviewing, life history, documentary analysis, and investigator diaries (records of the researcher's experiences and impressions". In this study, observation, in-depth interviewing using semi structured

questions, and field notes were used. Ethnographic research has a range of strong points, and hence is generally very appealing to academics and researchers. Its main strength is that it can unravel nuances and subtleties that are not usually accurately captured by other methodologies. It also provides the inquirer with a perspective that is far broader compared to other forms of research. This research technique especially suits the investigation of behaviours that can only be captured if they are observed in their natural environment (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As clearly summarised by Van Maanen (1998: 162), the key strength of ethnography "has always been to position individuals in a specific social setting, placing them in a context where action takes place".

With this in mind, the current study aspires to make use of the benefits of ethnography by adopting this approach as its research strategy to explore terrorism and counter-terrorism in Saudi Arabia, and more specifically at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. The researcher mainly justifies this choice by emphasising the need to be in close contact with the people who are influenced, and perhaps lured, into the world of terrorism through interpretations of Islam that need to be challenged. It is only through active participation that a detailed insight into the subject could be achieved, especially with close reference to the importance of communication underlying this phenomenon. This study strongly stresses the need to rely on a qualitative approach with the use of ethnographic research to uncover the complexities of such a sensitive and political issue in Saudi Arabia.

Being Saudi myself, as well as a policeman, I have researched this context as it evolves within the current political and social dynamics as they occur in real time, following how the Government seeks to redress them through soft counter measures. To achieve the most reliable results for this research the views of the practitioners, based on their

experiences and observations in relation to the work done at the de-radicalisation centres, were gathered to complement and further add to what is already being practiced currently.

I consider myself at an advantage in conducting this research, as it involves themes that closely relate to my cultural, professional, as well as personal experiences. With this background in mind, I felt trusted by my respondents as we shared the same professional, language, as well as political and cultural experience. This allowed me to be close to my research subjects, while not losing sight of my position as an objective researcher. In this study I, as a researcher, have remained conscious of my professional role and the need to distance myself from my state influenced understanding, becoming instead a neutral and objectively analytical and critical researcher. I have remained mindful that my employer, the Saudi Government, has sponsored my studies. My choice of methodology is neutral and objective, as evidenced by the approach and tools used in order to reduce or avoid being viewed as critical of the counter-terrorism strategies used.

Ethnographic research involves constant insightful analysis of social events in which interaction is not reduced to a "sterile laboratory experiment with strict control of variable characteristics of science experiments" (Murchison, 2010: 4). In this sense I acknowledged that my research was highly sensitive, that I need to respect the ever-changing political context, especially internationally, and how this has impacted on the de-radicalisation context and the individuals who work at the Centre, without losing sight of my status as a researcher. I had to overcome the restrictive urges, professionally and culturally, that would have limited my research and critical scope, and which may have caused me to become receptive and uncritical.

The challenge of this form of research was its unpredictable nature, especially in terms of the location and determination of the participants' nature of responses. Researching

de-radicalisation in Saudi Arabia is not as easy as one would perceive it to be from an outside's perspective. It is fraught with cultural, professional, and political considerations, in which there are security, safety and personal concerns to be addressed. One of the main challenges of my research pertained to accessing the research context, as well as the scarcity of similar ethnographic studies in the area of researching practitioners involved in de-radicalisation. The reasons, as stated above, revolve around the sensitivity of this culturally and politically sensitive phenomenon.

This is a brief overview of the experiences and the consequent research situations that arose during my fieldwork. The data collection methods were dictated by the research questions, as the condition and events then determined the length of time taken to do the fieldwork. The process was not as linear and deterministic as expected, due to the sensitive nature of the research, as well as the institutional dictates that obviously centred upon the observance of the sensitivity of the process, as well as the conditions under which such a process could be undertaken.

4.6 Culture, openness and access

The context for this research is highly sensitive. There are a lot of security and cultural considerations that have a bearing on the research process and its outcome, because of security reasons and the political nature of the topic under research. Accessing the Centre proved to be challenging, in that the context of this research was bound by cultural norms, which did not match the critically reflective and open academic approach that the research questions would generate. There were a lot of stringent security measures that were taken before I received permission to start my fieldwork. Everything regarding my research was analysed, naturally, from my research aims and objectives to the interview questions. Nothing was changed, and the fieldwork process proceeded soon after. As a result, the research itself

met with a lot of mixed reactions from the research subjects. My impression was that a substantial amount of former practitioners and experts who had worked or collaborated with the Centre would participate in my fieldwork as I expected them to contribute to this process. However, the reality was that they declined to participate as some of them had differing views with the programme's execution. Also this could have been due to their personal views regarding the sensitive and safety issues that the research would raise. One could conclude that they may have felt safer to distance themselves from the process.

This ethnographic research is different from other forms of research that have been carried out on de-radicalisation. Talking to practitioners about their views and experiences in the de-radicalisation process has opened up important themes that are crucial for implementing the strategies at the Centre. On the other hand, some of the staff felt that it was an advantage to participate because they felt that this would open a wide scope and context for debate as to the relationship of the de-radicalisation process, as implemented in the Centre, to the local, regional, and international context. The general trend in some of the respondents' comments was that this would allow for a diversity of views. They stated that it would open up the minds of the institutional authorities, and raise the need to address the approach not only as a localised cultural top-down stance, but a wide-reaching and internationalised one that addressed all the related variables to the challenges and successes of the de-radicalisation strategies.

As a police officer, I had the advantage of gaining access through my connections with workers and academics at the Centre. I had to be careful not to confuse my roles in this research in order to avoid approaching the process itself as a Saudi policeman, but rather as a reflective and critical academic. The research context deals with high profile cases, for example Said al Shihiri, who became the deputy leader of AQAP (Taylor, 2010; Ballen,

2011: 282). This sensitivity consequently limited the speed of the research process in terms of gaining permission to start the interviews, the nature of my questions, and the respondents themselves. I was under strict instructions not to interview or access any of the beneficiaries at the Centre. This therefore had an effect on the nature of the data collection methods used, as well as the intended data collected. The nature of the responses was beyond my control, yet the diversity of the length and content of the responses from the respondents provided an interesting and informative pattern of results.

4.7 The case study

This research is an account of a case study based on the innovative de-radicalisation programme of the Mohammed bin Naif Centre and its practitioners. As stated in the research questions, the main focus of the case study is to investigate the occupational and professional roles of the practitioners and to get as much information regarding their views and opinions regarding their role in the de-radicalisation process at the Centre. It is unique in that it is the first empirical research of this topic in this sensitive context.

According to Dörnyei (2007), the case study offers a rich source of information regarding the establishment of cause and effect. The researcher can observe cause and effect in a real context, while recognising that context is the determinant of cause and effect. The case study occurs in a natural context whose boundaries are determined by the respondents in their natural setting. In this situation the researcher chooses the methods that suit his research, such as the type of questions to be asked and the observations to be made when recording the responses. The unfolding interaction provides the researcher with a full understanding of that case as much as possible in a situation where observation of actions and the extraction of data took place without the researcher having any control over the events or the manner of information he would receive (Zikmund, 2003). The research process is more focused on the

object of the inquiry than the methodology (Silverman, 2010). Hence a variety of methods can be used to capture the rich detail within the case study context (Yin, 2010).

In a qualitative research, the subjects may not necessarily be the researcher's chosen random sample, and this limits the representative nature and expected generalizations of the research results. This limitation can compromise other findings that the researcher could have made. In the context of this research, other subjects, like the beneficiaries could have been interviewed but the sensitive context and limitations of the ethical considerations prevented this from the onset of this research's design. Therefore, this research was designed along the realities and feasible outcomes that the researcher judged would produce outcomes based on his research interests. The cases for analysis were the Mohammed bin Naif Centre and the practitioners therein. Silverman (2010) states that the researcher must seek to preserve the wholeness and integrity of the case. This was done by bearing in mind the ethics and dictates of the Centre as well as the prescribed access by the Government to the agreed cases. According to Silverman (2010), cases allow the generalizability of a sample where broader inferences can be made.

Case studies are predicated on the assumption that the cases are a representative subsection of a specific population and context (Zikmund, 2003). As stated earlier, qualitative research, in this case a case study, does not guarantee an obvious representative sample as qualitative research would. Access to individuals and their responses is not obvious and the researcher has to rely on access to available respondents or subjects. Ideally, case study research is meant to accord other researchers with the opportunity to replicate the same type of research and to get the same results if the opportunity for validation were to arise. It could be argued that case studies may have flaws in this regard.

4.8 Participants' sampling method

Anderson (2009: 201) describes sampling as "the deliberate choice of a number of people to represent a greater population". The sampling method for this study's time frame and logistical realisation was based on convenience sampling, which forms part of the non-probability sampling group: that is, mainly based on the judgement of the researcher with an aim to make generalisations possible, mostly with the use of non-statistical techniques. This choice was made to suit the purpose of this study. It involves the selection of participants based on the feasibility of doing the research, although it is also acknowledged that the chosen sample might not be an accurate representation of the target population (Zikmund, 2003). Since access to the participants was rather limited and very specific to a single institution, this sampling technique was seen as the best option, especially taking into account that it is mainly chosen for the purpose of the study in the case where it satisfies certain practical criteria such as geographical closeness, availability at a particular point in time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to be part of the research (Dörnyei, 2007). In the case of the present study, the two main criteria that were considered were easy accessibility and the willingness of any participant to volunteer.

This study is based on a sample of eleven male participants aged between 30 and 60, who were specialists and experts working at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre between December 2013 to March 2014, when the research concluded. It was a key requirement of this research to recruit participants with sufficient experience and knowledge to combat or report terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This was mainly to ensure that the research questions were adequately addressed with relevant information.

All of the participants had more than seven years of work experience in this specific field. Six of them were specialists and academics holding doctorates in different fields such

as Sociology, Criminology, Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Political Science and Forensic Science from universities in Saudi Arabia, the US and the UK. Five of them were working in Saudi universities and in collaboration with the Centre, based on their own field of specialisation. Of particular interest, and with the potential of providing a significant contribution to this research, was one specific participant who specialised in political violence in Islamic groups, and held a senior political officer's position in the Ministry of Interior Affairs as well as being the head of the Ideological Security Department. This Department is mainly recognized for its active participation in countering terrorism, radicalisation and extremism in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior Affairs, using a soft power strategy. Furthermore, it works hand in hand with other government bodies to design and implement strategies aimed at protecting Saudi society from radicalisation and to give detainees care and counselling.

Amongst the eleven participants were five security officers who specialise in Security Science and are permanently employed by the Centre. Two, of the five security officers, have doctorates in Criminal Sociology and Criminology. Four of them work as heads of different departments inside the Centre, for instance the Counselling Department, the Care and Rehabilitation Department, the Beneficiaries Department and the Subsequent Care Department. The fifth participant is an assistant in the Care and Rehabilitation Department. It was anticipated that this diverse sample would lead to more reliable and valid information.

4.9 Participants' voices/views

The ethnographic research produced a variety of views that can be traced thematically through analysing their voice. The main one was a concern regarding the clash between the efforts of the Centre compared to how this appeared to be undermined by international hard-power counter-terrorism approaches. Examples of this contradiction are reflected in places

like Guantanamo Bay Prison and the unending perceived American and European double standards on the issue of the Palestine and Israel conflict. The Iraq invasion, the current Syrian conflict, as well as the drone attacks seem to rile every Muslim sympathiser with the affected civilians making the de-radicalisation process seem to regress. There was also an undercurrent of views that seemed to point at disgruntlement at rigid official policy, which stifled individual innovation. This could be expected, bearing in mind the sensitivity of the occupation, the culture of respect and not challenging authority, as well as a reliance on unscientifically based de-radicalisation decisions by the authorities, being passed on to people who had researched and studied some approaches to the phenomenon. Academic voices seemed to emerge in protest at official 'red-tape' regarding flexibility in addressing the already arbitrary nature of strategies for de-radicalisation.

A sizeable number of the respondents were pleasantly surprised at the opportunity as they felt they had to speak in an academic forum such as this thesis, where they felt their views would be then aired in a wider and open platform, since this data could be shared internationally. Such an approach is different from other conventional forms of research. The respondents stated as well as being a Saudi problem, this was also an international one. On the other hand there were respondents, whose views were guarded, possibly revealing their status in the academic line of authority. These were individuals who toed the line and were self-preserving, regarding the quality, amount as well as the tone of their responses. I had the advantage of being recommended by the Centre to interview the respondents, which helped in the fact that the interviews were recorded on audio, making the interview process secure and relaxed while the responses were detailed.

Bearing in mind the sensitivity of the job, the conditions of the job itself, for example offering to be interviewed was like a form of self-sacrifice personally, professionally and

academically, the consequences of this participation were unpredictable, hence the need to protect them from harm (Weiss, 1994; Babbie, 2010). The details relayed by the respondents were very crucial in every sense, be they detailed or guarded. This is because they created a pattern of information for redress, as well as insight into the experiences of the practitioners and how this impacted on the overall de-radicalisation process and the threats of recidivism. The process provided a window of opportunity to garner new knowledge regarding the implementation of de-radicalisation, as experienced and considered by the practitioners. This was a crucial primary source that will provide key data in the quest for finding the most appropriate stance to use overall. From the respondents' voices came a plethora of issues ranging from the political, socio economic, the obvious religious issues, personal concerns and points of view regarding the triggers and solutions to radicalisation, the complications of mixing politics and religion, personal concerns, fears and victories as well as challenges. There was a general feeling that radical Islamists were taking advantage of young Muslims for their personal political advantage, as seen today with ISIS (al-Rashed, 2015).

In order to be matched against the overall research focus, and the resultant observations and conclusions in relation to the research topic, the collected data was thematically collated. As stated before, there is a dearth of data regarding primary sources on the first hand experiences and views on the implementation of the de-radicalisation process. A lot of debate prevails around the issue. The very high security and top secret nature of its application causes it to be complicated, resulting in the application process being arbitrary, varied and complex as well as prone to any individual institution or state's interpretation and resolution. Currently, the data that is deemed reliable can only be gleaned from state accredited researchers and the media, whose focus and information could be aligned to various political, academic and social ends.

4.10 Procedure

Recruiting participants for this study was perceived as a real challenge, even prior to the start of the research process. However, since the researcher is a police officer by profession, as well as having access to certain professionals in the field of policing, this challenge was successfully overcome when he was able to get in touch with as many potential expert participants as possible for recruitment purposes. More importantly, he himself worked for the Centre from 23/12/2013 to13/03/2014, and was subsequently able to conduct interviews with relevant personnel in the field of counter-terrorism. Careful consideration was given to one of the main attributes of the participants being the possession of the specific knowledge and expertise required to answer the research questions. Bearing in mind the nature of this topic, which is considered to be highly sensitive especially in a conservative society such as Saudi Arabia, it was a great practical advantage that the researcher was also an authorised student in this field, as this allowed him to have access to information through the interviews in the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. Also, the researcher had prior access to some workers who worked at the Centre during his MSc research in 2010, when he had the opportunity to familiarise himself with the environment while interviewing several expert workers.

To further facilitate the data collection process and with due respect to ethics, verbal consent was gained from the Centre followed by a signed written consent (see Appendix A). The researcher ensured that all necessary information about the aims and objectives of the study was shared with the authorities of the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, which in turn provided full support and access to the expert members of staff involved in the study. Full confidentiality regarding the data was assured, with a constant reminder given to the participants in relation to their right to withdraw from the process

without any consequences. As part of the data collection process, the researcher visited the institution for three months, during which he also observed the work being carried out and then conducted the interviews.

4.11 Data collection methods

With ethnography as its methodological backbone, the present study relied on the use of observation and in-depth recorded interviews to gather data in order to understand the various perspectives of the participants, to facilitate the understanding of how terrorism is viewed and counter-terrorism is practised in Saudi Arabia, with a specific focus on the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre.

4.11.1 Observation of the practitioners in the process

Observation was used informally during the interview. This was an unavoidable part of the research process which complemented the details gathered in the interviews, and because of the scarcity of primary data on de-radicalisation by practitioners, seemed to be necessary. Overlooking this primary source would deprive my research of a rich source of data. Such observations were of, for example, the choice of interview venue, which seemed to determine the atmosphere as well as the content and detail of the interview data. Paralinguistic cues like voice tone, facial expression, the amount of detail, as well as the restraint to venture into certain political topics were very telling. On the other hand, there were respondents who appeared to be authorities in the area and whose detailed responses once again indicated a declaration of the need to open part of the Centre's de-radicalisation programme to an academic platform. Overall, the need for a secure venue was paramount and this was guaranteed.

The respondents' professional and academic statuses were a key component in plotting the pattern of themes and details in the research. Respect, as well as receptiveness, to superiors is a cultural pre-requisite that I as a researcher needed to be conscious of. To achieve the detail I needed, I had to be the sensitive, reflective and academic researcher that I needed to be, divesting myself of the police officer world-view and stance, while adopting a typical researcher disposition. The type of data gathered provides a new insight into the first-hand experiences and views of the practitioners. The fieldwork provided me with the opportunity to obtain close access to primary data from frontline practitioners in de-radicalisation.

This area of research is fairly new and needs to be fully utilised to gather practitioner experiences and views in relation to radicalisation and how to curb it. There are obvious hindrances to this as the area itself is a top secret and highly sensitive one in security terms. The advantage of this research context is its advantage in reducing high dependence on secondary sources. It would open up clearer routes into primary data that can be used to formulate original academic and theoretical bases that can be used in researching radicalisation and de-radicalisation strategies.

Sourcing primary data, especially in the context of researching Islamic radicalisation, is in itself a massive challenge both to Muslim and non-Muslim researchers. I feel that this research will contribute valuable data and new knowledge, despite the reservations that I may have considered as an insider with an assumed degree of partiality towards the Saudi de-radicalisation process. This situation could be thought of as a limitation in itself, yet it is a step towards better access to primary data that could be used progressively. I had the advantage of being Saudi, a fellow security practitioner as well as a former researcher in the same institution. This made me known and allowed open access to some individuals, which

would have been difficult to access otherwise. This experience gave me the opportunity to be reflexive as a researcher, being conscious of the difference between my role a researcher and my professional role as a security agent. The fact that my personal and professional background was secure could have made this research process possible, as well the fact that my research would provide useful information in the academic context of de-radicalisation.

4.11.2 Semi-structured interviews

Davis (2006: 157) defines an interview as a "method of data collection, information or opinion gathering that specifically involves asking a series of questions. Typically, an interview represents a meeting or dialogue between people where personal and social interaction occur". Interviewing is a primary tool for gathering information in qualitative research (Davis and Klopper, 2003). With the use of face-to-face interviews, the researcher has a better opportunity to probe into issues that are considered to have great importance in the eyes of the respondent. In addition, it also assists the interviewer by allowing them to dig into those issues that they consider have high significance for the purpose of satisfying the research objectives (Ras, 2006b; Kalidheen, 2008). Past literature has identified several advantages of interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The current study opted for the use of an interview schedule as its main data collection instrument. For instance, it has been previously documented that the interview method allows direct contact between the researcher and the participants, which paves the way for positive outcomes such as specificity and agreed constructive suggestions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This method is also useful if detailed information is needed on a novel topic with limited participants available, but still enough to yield rich data (Shneiderman and Plaisant, 2005). Since the present study is also based on a novel topic that requires an in-depth investigation but has a small sample size at hand, the above advantages certainly suit its purposes. Merriam and Simpson (2000: 106)

conceptualise the interview as "a conversation with a purpose". More importantly, the above authors highlighted that, interviewing forms an integral part of ethnographic research and is often combined with participant observation with the aim of benefiting from rich and detailed qualitative data.

As previously discussed in this chapter, this research is interpretivist and subjectivist, with an inductive and qualitative nature. With the aim to gain information from the participants and with respect to the paradigms and research approaches highlighted above, the semi-structured interview was believed to be best suited to meet the research objectives, given its flexibility regarding the progression of the interview process. When designing a semi-structured interview protocol, the interviewer works on a set of predetermined key questions that will guide the interview and ensure that each interviewee is questioned about the same areas under investigation. The flexibility of this type of interview is important, given that the interviewee is thereby free to provide further details in relation to any question that they might consider worth elaborating on at any time during the interview session (Thomas, 2010).

Generally speaking, a semi-structured interview is made up of closed as well as open-ended questions. Of more importance is the inclusion of open-ended questions, especially in ethnographic research, as it allows the formation of a trusting relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, which in turn contributes towards the experience of empathetic understanding and interpretation from a cultural perspective (Patton, 2002; Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). In the case of a sensitive study such as this, the above characteristic of the semi-structured interview is very useful, as it can facilitate the data collection process.

Moreover, using this method, the researcher can also probe into the meanings people attach to anything that subsequently influences their epistemologies (Frankl, 1962, 1963,

1969; Ras, 2000, 2006b). With regards to this research, the researcher interviewed a couple of people deemed to be knowledgeable about the practice of counter-terrorism, as well as other related issues or challenges at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, in an endeavour to get hold of useful information that could shed more light on the subject matter (Ras, 2008b). Similarly, past research looking at counter-terrorism measures has opted for this research instrument (Kalidheen, 2008). In this study, the interview phase followed the informal observation phase, as it provided a chance for the researcher to engage in any clarifications and/or further investigation of the participants' construction of meanings. Striving for a successful interview process in this ethnographic research, the inquirer recognized and respected the cultural context, norms and customs of the participants throughout the process (Heyl, 2001). Perhaps this was further facilitated by the fact that the researcher was also from the same cultural background.

4.11.3 The schedule of designing and formulating the semi-structured interview

After reviewing existing literature on the topic, as highlighted in Chapter two, the literature review, and with careful consideration of the research aims and objectives, a set of questions were developed. The supervisor assessed the suitability, appropriateness and relevance of the proposed questions and provided constructive feedback that led to some amendments of the final draft. The first section of the interview protocol tapped into the role and responsibilities of the expert participants working at the Centre, with specific focus on their educational background, work experience and motivation to engage in the work carried out. The second section was made up of a list of questions aimed at collecting data in relation to the participants' views on key concepts closely related to the main topic of counter-terrorism. For instance, looking at de-radicalisation, the relationship between soft power and counter-terrorism, the role played by the Centre and the impact of the media on its strategic approach

towards counter-terrorism. The third section of the interview schedule incorporated questions that probed into the various issues and challenges encountered by the participants while implementing the programmes and counter-terrorism measures. At this stage, the researcher was interested in examining the participants' views about the operation of the Centre and their suggested improvements with regards to both the Centre and their professional roles. The last section was mainly concerned with whether the participants experienced any personal issues as a result of working at the Centre.

Overall, the interview consisted of twenty-one open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions throughout the interview was pre-planned, as they allowed the researcher to encourage the respondents to be fully and naturally engaged in the process (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). The interview questions were cautiously worded and formatted to respect the sensitive nature of the topic while ensuring that all the research themes were covered. Moreover, in line with other qualitative research using interviews, other important factors were also taken into account to pave the way for a successful interview process. These were flexibility consideration of the duration of the interview, the chance to cross-check the responses in terms of their validity, and the clarity of the questions.

4.11.4 Data analysis

Following the data collection phase, the final stage of the research design was the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data, in order to answer the research questions and hence make sense of the research. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) explain that a qualitative researcher needs to be immersed into the whole data set to be able to sort, discover and comprehend the meaning of individual units, as well as all the units together. The choice of data analysis technique is usually influenced by the study's theoretical perspective, methodological framework and research aims (Batch, 2012). Therefore, with careful

consideration of the above, the present study applied a thematic analysis approach. The latter provides an opportunity to clearly identify key themes and, given its flexibility, it allows an extensive margin for in-depth exploration to researchers (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) stated that the thematic analysis is of direct relevance to ethnographic research, as it supports its interpretive nature. Also, this analysis method does not neglect the social and cultural context of the respondents (Lacey and Luff, 2001).

The coding phase is the first stage of the thematic qualitative data analysis and is "the process whereby data are broken down into component parts, which are given names" (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 567). Tait at al. (2010) refer to these codes as words or phrases indicative of themes. Similar to other ethnographic research carried out by Batch (2012), the current study also conducted its thematic analysis systematically, by going through five key steps:

 1) Reading through all the data transcripts several times in order to familiarise oneself with the whole data set, followed by the transcription of the tapes.

2) Classifying emerging key themes based on an inductive identification of its thematic framework.

3) Use of textual codes.

4) Charting thematic information to facilitate reading.

5) Interpreting the data set by looking for patterns and associations so links can be formed.

The field notes made during the observation phase were analysed by firstly sorting them into descriptive and thematic categories with an aim to be able to engage in any clarification of explanations as well as a preliminary analysis. Nonetheless, the researcher

ensured that he constantly reviewed the data analysed from the observation in accordance with the recorded interview data to re-evaluate his overall interpretations of the data set as a whole (Alberty, 2002). The fifth step was critical as the researcher, being from the same social and professional background as the participants, felt intimate with the data, which in turn played a significant role in his decision-making process. In fact, this commonality informed his understanding of the experience and perspectives of the participants, but also perhaps undermined his fidelity to the need to maintain an objective frame of mind as a researcher. However, through the work of Creswell (2009), the researcher was already aware of the potential risk of insider influence and thus attempted, as far as possible, to limit its occurrence.

The researcher was also inspired by a concluding remark made by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) in relation to qualitative data analysis. According to these authors, regardless of the data analysis method adopted, what matters the most is to ensure that it proves to be creative and not mechanical: this is the case in the use of a thematic analysis in the present ethnographic research, given the detail of the data collected. The interview schedule is attached at the end of this thesis (See Appendix B).

4.12 Ethical considerations

This research obtained ethical clearance from the ethics committee of Kent University, following which the process of data collection began. Throughout the study the researcher was in line with the ethical standards of the University and, in fact, an array of important ethical considerations guided this study. It is important to emphasize that any research area touching upon terrorism is regarded as extremely sensitive, and thus demands a thoroughly planned theoretical framework that could effectively guide the whole research process in a very ethical manner.

Since this study is qualitative, the researcher had to constantly interact with the participants, thus entering their personal space (Silverman, 2000). This could have raised some potential ethical issues that might have needed to be addressed at any point during the research. In an attempt to limit the occurrence of ethical issues, the researcher gained the participants' informed consent through the use of an information sheet prior to their participation in the research. However, the researcher encountered some difficulty receiving consent for observation within a public place, such as the rehabilitation centre. Such an overt practice also entailed the necessity of fully informing the people being observed of any risks while not coercing anyone into participating (Batch, 2012), especially bearing in mind that views on terrorism and counter-terrorism were captured. Observation was not used as a full, separate method of research as a result.

The qualitative researcher often inevitably finds themselves analysing and reporting information collected from people with a known identity (Babbie, 2010). Hence, careful consideration was also given to secure their anonymity by using pseudonyms. Furthermore, according to Van den Hoonaard (2002), qualitative research ethics emphasizes the need for obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and privacy as well as ensuring that no harm is caused to the research participants. Therefore, any data provided by the participants was kept purely confidential (also password protected on the computer) and all the participants were specifically reassured about this.

To further deal with the sensitive nature of this study, the researcher stressed the value of the study to the interviewees on an on-going basis, while simultaneously assuring them that he was not oblivious to their interests. Bearing in mind the visible sensitivity of the topic and the later reliance on the responses of the participants as the only source of information, the scheduling of a private interview location of their choice within the institution, respecting their needs and concerns, was a priority for the researcher. He was able to establish trust and

rapport with his participants. They entrusted him with a lot of sensitive information on the topic, which he really prized, since honest perceptions from the participants placed him one step further towards understanding the true social reality of terrorism and the work carried out by the Centre. In fact, a successful ethnographic research is reliant on truthfulness and no deception on behalf of the researcher (Ferrell, 1998).

Of particular relevance to the ethical consideration of ethnographic research is cultural sensitivity, whereby the interaction between the researcher and the participant has to be viewed in accordance with the values of the cultural aspects involved (Silverman, 2000). Although this was not necessarily a barrier to this study, given that the researcher shared the same cultural background, care still had to be taken for him not to be biased by allowing his own socially and culturally shaped views and interpretations to undermine his objective and professional approach towards the data set, especially in the analysis stage. From a different perspective, Kvale (1995) warns against the "validity paradox", whereby in an endeavour to seek too much validity, a researcher actually ends up compromising it. This was a potential risk in this study, as commonalities between the researcher and the participants could also have led to issues such as a lack of probing or clarification, and even potentially having participants responding solely to please the researcher by identifying themselves with the latter. To avoid this issue, the researcher stressed that no answer would be perceived as right or wrong.

4.12.1 Protection from harm

Lastly, the participants were reassured that, as a consequence of their participation in this research, they would not encounter physical or psychological harm (Trochim, 2000). Eleven participants were interviewed, and their statuses and roles varied. The data gathered can best

be described as detailed and authoritative, as most of it was from seasoned and experienced practitioners and academics, some of them being researchers and writers themselves.

Controlling the data output from the respondents was beyond my control, since I had to obtain the responses given without a lot of questioning. This was in order not to compromise the originality and quality of the primary data. In the process, I felt that some of the participants were being self-protective from harm. This was beyond my control, as the data to be shared was in their control. My assumed command of the research process was limited as a result. One could detect that some of the responses were pre-meditated or dictated, an unsurprising development bearing in mind the sensitivity and high security nature of the process. Protection from harm was therefore paramount for the participants' personal safety, their work, families and the institution itself, as well as for the Saudi Government. Confidentiality was guaranteed in the sense that the respondents were only referred to by their number codes and not personal names. As stated earlier, the research context and the responses themselves revealed a degree of consciousness of the sensitivity and their consequent control of the process, something that was beyond my control. Therefore, both the researcher and the researched were instrumental in guaranteeing the absence of harm.

Overall, this chapter has provided an overview of the methodological framework of the present study. The main purpose of this chapter is to establish a strong foundation to guide the understanding of the research results in the next section, where the data collected and analysed will be reported and discussed.

Chapter 5: Interview analysis

This study is an exploration of the soft power strategy used at the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre using semi-structured interviews. The researcher aimed to provide answers to a number of research questions. My aim in what follows will be to address the following questions:

1. What new measures has Saudi Arabia introduced in its effort to combat terrorism?

2. What are the guiding ideas behind these measures?

3. What are their self-professed aims?

4. What is the role of the soft power approach in Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism strategy?

5. How do those involved in delivering the goals of that strategy view their occupational role?

6. What do they consider to be the challenge of combating terrorism in Saudi Arabia?

7. What evidence (if any) is there for the success of Saudi Arabia's new counter-terrorism strategy?

8. How credible are the claims that have been made regarding the progress of the new soft power strategy?

These research questions were translated into interview questions that were directed to the eleven participants from the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. After transcribing all the interviews, the researcher proceeded with a Thematic Analysis that mainly looked at the themes that were provided when answering each of the interview questions (for instance, research questions).

Hence this analysis chapter is divided into sections reflecting the role and responsibility, views on extremism and how to target it, key challenges in the job, personal issues/security such as impact of job on personal life. Each section will include themes that aim to answer the ultimate research questions. The themes are drawn after extensive reading of all interviews.

5.1 Role and responsibility

Under the roles and responsibility, the interview included the following four main questions:

1) Can you give me some information about your educational background, experience and role (personal input) at this centre?

2) How did you get involved in this job?

3) What are your actual duties/roles in the de-radicalisation process?

4) Personally, what motivates you to be part of this process?

This part of the analysis includes general information about the participants. Overall, eleven interviewees participated in this study. They are all considered specialists and experts who had been interviewed at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre and at some universities from 23 December 2013 to 13 March 2014. The Centre holds responsibility for the detainees to implement the Saudi's strategy for fighting terrorism and radicalisation, the following became clear when we asked the first question:

Participants	Area of specialisation
Participant 1	Psychologist
Participant 2	Psychiatrist
Participant 3	Sociologist
Participant 4	Psychologist
Participant 5	Security expert
Participant 6	Security expert
Participant 7	Security expert
Participant 8	Security expert
Participant 9	Security expert
Participant 10	Political violence
Participant 11	Cleric

5.1.1 Educational background and experience

All of the eleven individuals involved in the study have more than seven years of experience in this field, most of which is at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. Eight of them are specialists and academics holding a doctorate from Saudi, American and British universities in different fields, such as Islamic sharia law, sociology, criminology, psychology, clinical psychology, political science and forensic science. Four of them are working in Saudi universities, and co-operating with the Centre. One of the participants

specializes in the area of political violence within Islamic groups and is a senior political official in the Ministry of Interior Affairs. He is the Head of the Ideological Security Department, which holds direct responsibility for countering terrorism, radicalisation and extremism within the Ministry of Interior Affairs' soft power approach. Also it co-ordinates, with other government and non-government institutes, a strategy to protect the Saudi society from radicalisation, and to give detainees care and counsel.

However, the other five participants from the sample are Security Officers who specialize in security science and hold permanent positions at the Centre. Two of them have doctorates in criminal sociology and criminology. Four of them are heads of different departments inside the Centre, namely the Counselling Department, the Care and Rehabilitation Department, the Beneficiaries Department and the Aftercare Department. The fifth participant is an assistant in the Care and Rehabilitation Department.

5.1.2 Opportunity to work at the Centre

The second question explored how the opportunity to work at the Centre arose. The specialists and academics played an important role and their experience was to contribute to the Advisory Committees and Counselling Committees, which were formed by the Ministry of Interior Affaires in 2004, which predated the inception of the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. Their task was to look into the detainees' situation from legal, social and psychological aspects. The specialties and experiences of the security officers involved with the Centre have been taken into account. However, working in a security field would not be enough to give such experience in this particular field.

5.1.3 Duties and responsibilities

One participant is the head of the Ideological Security Department, which is responsible for countering radicalisation with the head being responsible for implementing the strategy. Another participant is an Islamic cleric (advice/counselling member) and specialist in Islamic sharia law policy, problems, strife in conflict and disagreements due to differing religious interpretations and understanding. Two participants are counsellors and one is a clinical psychologist; they are responsible for psychologically evaluating the detainees and beneficiaries when they arrive at the Centre. They also deliver lectures at the Centre and in prison. In addition, they sometimes have to do psychological follow-ups in hospitals and prisons, and make a psychological study about the detainees' family, as there are detainees who have relations with links to terrorism. Two participants are in the field of sociology and social work and are responsible for the social well being of the beneficiaries, and for making a full case review to their social situation. The legal adviser handles all of the legal matters. The heads of four different departments are:

1. The head of the Advisory Department - co-ordinating and managing Islamic scholars who are responsible for the programme (faculty) and counsellors.

2. The head of the Aftercare Department who has responsibility for follow-up care and checks with the beneficiaries after their release, the families of the detainees, deceased and wanted criminals.

3. The head of the Care and Rehabilitation Department, and his assistant, who supervises and develops all the programmes for the beneficiaries.

4. The head of the Beneficiaries Department who gives the initial care for any beneficiary in the, for instance arranging medical services, hosting, general services,

finishing and applying different documents and procedures related to the beneficiary in deferent government institutes, banks and in court.

5.1.4 Motivation to be involved in this work

When we asked the question, 'What are your personal motives for being part of this process?' all participants indicated a similar motive of being involved in countering extremism as 'global, national and humanitarian' at the same time. Therefore, the motives are religious, patriotic, and humanitarian and a social responsibility to protect the country from radicalisation, and to try and promote moderation in their political and religious life. In addition, the Centre is trying to rehabilitate all the beneficiaries and trying to gradually integrate them back into the community. In addition to this, the second interviewee disclosed that:

> "It is my role as a Saudi citizen and as a human being to do this work, it is very rewarding on a humane level. It allows me to make a difference in my society and contribute to the correction of deviant (extremist) ideologies".

Participant 1, stated that, "The issue of radicalisation and extremism is a national, global and a humanitarian issue which means that a personal and external motivation" must be applied to make the individuals aware of how extremism is affecting them and the community in which they live. He stated that he had a humanitarian and social responsibility to guarantee national social security for the Saudi state.

Participants 3 and 4, asserted their claim to guaranteeing community safety and the prevention of delinquency and crime. Both believed that the source of the recruitment of some of the individuals is sometimes because of wayward children who were prone to being exposed to bad influence and intellectual deviation from the moderate teachings of Islam.

Participant 10 stated that he studies and writes about political violence. He stated that his sole responsibility and motivation is the protection of the homeland. As a result of this, he stated that he has knowledge of the relationship between the state and violent extremist views. He stated that he was conversant about the effect of the relationship between the state and extremist activists and that the only way to deal with this conflict is through religious, political, social and psychological education. He stated his commitment to co-ordinating this education process.

Participant11 stated that his only motivation for doing this role was mainly to bring the extremist individuals nearer to God. He stated that his duty was to direct the individuals towards peaceful methods of conflict resolution following religious principles.

5.2 Views on extremism and how to target it

To generate information about the participants' views about extremism and the way this is targeted, the following questions were asked:

1) What does de-radicalisation mean to you and how is your job related to this?

2) What is your understanding of 'soft power' in relation to countering extremism?

3) In your view, what is the general background and motivation of the inmates?

4) What are your views regarding the process of de-radicalisation?

5) How does the Centre operate in relation to other sectors/agencies (views)?

6) What are your views about the international and local acceptance of the strategy?

7) What are your views on the portrayal of the Centre in the different media contexts?

5.2.1 Views of de-radicalisation

Participants were asked their views of de-radicalisation (and extremism) and their job relation to it. The following are the common themes that emerged to answer this question:

5.2.1.1 Global issue

Participants 1, 2 and 5 started by explaining that extremism or radicalisation is a global phenomenon, and should be tackled on a global scale. It was further stressed that such a phenomenon does not know borders. The participants identified a connection between wars in the region, the treatment of prisoners by governments and by Western states, the bombings in the Middle East by Western allies. For example, participant 1, a sociologist stated:

> "First this is a global issue that transcends borders and the de-radicalisation effort must be on a countrywide scale whereas this cannot be assigned to a particular country, but must be a united global effort. Thus, if we succeed in achieving this at the individual level, we can achieve it at the societal level; we can achieve it at global level".

5.2.1.2 Straying from moderate Islam

All participants have narrated their views and agreed that extremism is straying from the moderate nature of the true Islamic beliefs, and through further explanation they stressed that it stems from a brief and limited knowledge of Islam. According to participant 4, such ignorance in Islam leads to susceptibility to extremism, especially among the youth who are newly practising Islam. Participant 5 stated that extremism is simply explained as:

> "Straying from moderation, be it in a positive way or a negative one. Therefore, the reason our youth becoming extremists is their ignorance of

Islamic teachings. What makes many of our youth sometimes lean towards exaggerated extremist ideologies is that they recently became religious".

5.2.1.3 Reinforcing moderate Islam

Participants 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 explained that de-radicalisation or counter-extremism, as it is sometimes referred to, refers to "the reinforcement of moderate Islam" among individuals using non-violent means that target and combat extremist ideologies. For example, participant 9 stated that, "There is no doubt that countering extremism is simply to seek the moderate Islam that the Prophet –peace be upon him- set. Our role is to combat extremist ideology with moderate ideology".

They further explained that they all believe that extremism is a result of zealous ideology. Thus, law enforcement alone is not sufficient to combat it. To a large degree, it must be countered by strategically correcting this ideology. There is a joint effort between law enforcement and ideology. However, the ideological side, through the counter-terrorism strategy used at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre is spearheading this effort. According to participants 5 and 10, this is evident through observations of the current situation in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, which clearly shows that such actions have nothing to do with religion, but are in fact a struggle for power. The difficulty is that this ideology cannot be dealt with in the same manner as one would deal with crime, where the requirement is to enforce the law. Participants 5 and 10 stated that this ideology needs a special kind of treatment and counter-measures that work on the social, religious, economic, psychological and political thinking.

5.2.1.4 Raising awareness in society

In line with the previous theme, participants 10 and 11 mentioned that counter-extremism means raising awareness and positively reinforcing society's awareness against

the threatening dangers of these external extremist ideologies. They believe that these dangers were brought into the country by the extremists from areas of conflict, such as, Afghanistan and others that have influenced some of our youth. Moreover, participant 10 stated:

> "It is important to counter these ideologies and disprove their false arguments, such as, their arguments regarding infidels[1] and their misinterpretation of Jihad and many other ideological arguments between us and these extremist groups. Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups that stemmed from Al-Qaeda are working vigorously to spread their message and influence youth. We counter these messages".

They explained that such extremist groups have a goal to influence society, reinforce their status, spread their ideology, recruit members and to influence society's emotions, whether in the Arab, Islamic or Western countries. It was further explained that such groups know no borders and operate all around the world, using these techniques skilfully and professionally especially when it comes to the use of YouTube, Social media programmes, the Internet and video clips. Hence, there is the need to reinforce the awareness of the effect of such media on society's thinking.

5.2.2 Staff Roles and tasks

All of the participants have explained that they have a duty to help and that is their main role, each in his specialist area, whether it is providing security, religious explanations psychological and sociological solutions.

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[1] The original word used was " تكفير " These are decrees –fatwas- issued by their own extremist clergy that justify the killing, theft and destruction of fellow Muslims, groups, companies, or even entire governments. Also known as Takfiri

5.2.2.1 Lectures

When asked about their roles, it was common amongst the participants to state that they host or deliver different types of lectures to the community, mosques, the media, the education sector namely schools and universities and government bodies, such as the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, with the aim of increasing awareness whether it is inside or outside of the Centre. For example, Participant 10 stated:

> "My role is that this is my job; we spread awareness by hosting lectures, as well as collaborating and working with socialization institutes such as, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs through masjids (mosques), imams, preachers etc. The Ministry of Education through schools, teachers, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, that is through the school environment".

Furthermore, the participants stated that the process is done in co-operation between the Ministry of Higher Education and colleges. As well as lectures, studies from various institutes, organizing and hosting seminars inside and outside of the Kingdom, the process of counter-terrorism had more priority within the country and its specialist counter-terrorism centre as this is a specialist centre intended to be used for the design, dissemination and study of the counter-terrorism strategies.

5.2.2.2 Media

Participants 10 and 11 indicated that they target the media as a way to increase awareness. They consider the media to play an important part, explaining that they collaborate with the national media sources and air programmes relating to reinforcing and raising society's awareness regarding these extremist ideologies. This is achieved through certain television programmes that pertain, for example, to families, although the biggest threat is the control

and usage of social media on the Internet and channels such as You Tube. According to participant 10:

> "There are active groups and individuals doing this out of self-motivation most of whom are volunteers who have a sense of patriotism and passion for religion. Thus, they themselves combat these extremist ideologies. Perhaps we collaborate with and encourage them".

Furthermore, participant 10 stressed:

> "The process of spreading awareness is a broad one. It's paramount that we focus on reinforcing the protection of the youth from these extremist ideologies through the Internet. There are many ways to combat them through social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc.) and we seek to utilise such ways".

5.2.3 Views about Understanding Soft Power Approach

The participants were asked to explain their understanding of soft power measures. Their understanding appears to be similar to their understanding of counter-extremism in general.

5.2.3.1 Ideology against ideology

All the participants stated that their understanding of the soft power strategy is that of fighting extremist ideology through using a counter ideology that promotes moderate Islam. They all agreed that soft power does not promote the use of hard force only. Participant 3, a sociologist, stated:

> "With extremist ideologies we have an ideological problem, not a behavioural one that can be corrected by incarceration, prevention and then by providing

them with a job. The problem is an ideological one because they live and think in that manner. Based on this, there was a notion that there must be another method, thus the Kingdom adopted a methodology that was called 'soft strategy'. This method was to be used alongside the use of force".

All the participants acknowledged that extremists have problems in understanding moderate Islam and hence they have problems with such an ideology. Therefore, targeting such ideologies and correcting them using suitable means is a method of achieving de-radicalisation. When asked about the soft power strategy, participant 1, a sociologist, stated:

"The strategy is based on the saying by HRH. Prince Naif -May he rest in peace- when, during the incidents of 2003, he started that ideology cannot be confronted with anything but ideology. The Centre is based on this philosophy and vision, therefore, alongside the security efforts on the ground there was a larger effort in the ideological sphere. In other words, responding to ideology with ideology means that ideology cannot be intimidated or stopped by force".

In short, this was the common theme of the understanding of what the soft power strategy entails when used in de-radicalisation.

5.2.3.2 Soft power as compared to hard power

It was acknowledged that it is not possible to change ideology by force, weapons, or torture and so forth. It emerged that hard power methods are not always successful and that they have proven their failure time and time again, according to participants 2, 3 and 7. Participant 2 said:

"Fighting extremism can only be through the use of soft means, the use of positive energy and the correction of ideology. I truly believe that torture and hard power can only enhance extremist ideologies and not terminate them".

Participant 4 added:

"This is because we have seen many beneficiaries that come from prisons like Guantanamo who prove to be very difficult to rehabilitate or de-radicalise. Most of them claim that their treatment there was an insult to them and their culture".

5.2.3.3 Ideological problems as compared to behavioural problems

It was further stressed by participants 2, 3, and 7 that, based on their experience, the individuals in the Centre have ideological problems mainly and not behavioural ones in the sense that is correcting behavioural challenges can be achieved through using positive or negative reinforcement alone this would not work. The best way to address this is by using the soft measures combined with self-reflection and discussions during rehabilitation and after care release. By acknowledging that, participant 7 stated:

"Hard punishment may change some behaviour, but cannot be used to change ideology. They stated that extremist individuals live and think in an extremist manner. To combat this ideology the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia went toward the implementation of the soft power approach that was combined with hard power (prison)".

In the prison it was explained that the soft power measure manifested itself in counselling. According to the participants 1 and 3 this period helps the beneficiaries to engage in debates about Islam and the different aspects that may need clarification or debate

without imposition. They claimed that the counselling process therefore involves a two-way discussion that allows the beneficiary and the experts to reflect about their discussions as well as to reach an agreed Islamic interpretation of religious issues that are none extremist. At this stage of the soft power strategy the beneficiaries move to the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, and ultimately they are enabled to cope during the after release phase for their gradual integration into their society.

5.2.4 Background and motives of the detainees

The participants were further asked to explain the general background of the inmates/beneficiaries and what are motives behind their extremism. A number of themes resulted, a lot of which are age related. Age is considered by all participants to be the main factor behind extremism. Age is characterised by many aspects. There seem to be an agreement that the youth in their late teens and twenties are the main individuals attracted to extremism because they are young and impressionable.

5.2.4.1 Emotional motives and manipulation

The participants talked about the war in surrounding regions of the Middle East as being one of the main and crucial causes for extremism, terrorist organisations seem to target young individuals and peddle the idea that external forces are targeting Muslims and that it is an Islamic duty to fight against occupying forces.

Participants 3, 4 and 5 stated that the use of emotions in recruiting individuals was initiated during the jihad/fighting in Afghanistan against the Russians. This was an important factor. They highlighted that individuals that came back had not been looked after. Nor were they rehabilitated and taken care of by their governments or their societies, so that they may re-assimilate. Participant 3 stated:

"In fact, most of them suffered from being pursued and hunted down. Thus, they were neglected and persecuted, whereas before, they were treated as heroes and supported by their governments and America. After that Al-Qaeda was formed and advocated against the injustice done to these oppressed groups around the world and that America was supporting these injustices".

It was explained that, it was from that moment when terrorist organisations appeared to start taking advantage of people's emotions. Participant 3 further stressed:

"That is why we notice that the bulk of their motives are emotional, deceived by various media outlets and online media spreading carefully selected video clips of murder, displacement, torment, rape, and the destruction of Muslim homes and lives in various areas for example, Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, Iraq, Syria and so forth".

It was noticed during the interview that similarly, the human rights violations for example a commonly stated observation, by most of the participants, was that what happened in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib serves as an emotional motive to appeal to the sentiments of activists and sympathises.

5.2.4.2 Sympathy and ignorance in Islam

Interviewees 1, 2, 8 and 9 stated that most of the individuals have limited knowledge of Islam. It was explained that some of them have religious backgrounds but they are generally impulsive and were easily manipulated. Most of them have a limited understanding especially when it comes to Islamic laws regarding jihad. It was also explained that they are sympathetic to what is happening to Muslims in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. Some were influenced by what they saw on the news or in social media about Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and so forth.

So they travel to these areas of conflict, be it in Iraq or Syria etc. with no real foundation in Islamic law. In other words, they don't even know the conditions for the jihad. Consumed by their emotional agitation and emotions they were skilfully misled by the extremists.

Moreover, participant 1, 2 and 10 stated that, due to the extremists' limited knowledge, the majority of them were to areas of conflict initially because of their unfortunate circumstances as legitimate reasons (legitimately based on their own understandings). Such circumstances were identified as the common negative social misdemeanours like crime, broken families and other negative socioeconomic issues.

However, after associating with these groups and organisations the individuals are end up following an extremist path of destruction and *takfirism*[2]. Interviewee 8 mentioned the case of a young man:

> "He was religious and would go to and from his home, masjid (mosque) and school. He was influenced by an individual about jihad in Chechnya and the ordeals of the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time. After being influence by this ideology, the individual brought him to one of their hideouts in Yemen. After arriving there he found himself in Al-Qaeda. He started training and after completing his training he was told that they want him to go back to Saudi Arabia, to fight the infidel Government of Saudi Arabia".

It was further explained that the individual came to the realisation that he had started with a positive motive and was slowly made to shift towards fighting his own country (Saudi Arabia) and his own society. This could be an example of how a poor understanding of religion at a young age can lead to easy manipulation.

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[2] A Takfiri is someone who casts other Muslims, organisations, or even entire governments –and the people working for them- out of Islam and justifies criminal actions against them (killing, stealing etc.)

5.2.4.3 Isolating the newly repented

According to participants 1, 3, 4 and 5, terrorist organisations look for people who are newly repented and become religious (though this is a commonly used term by the interviewees it refers to newly de-radicalised) they look for simpletons. These are the qualities they seek in their soldiers. Participant 3 explained:

> "They start by isolating a candidate from his society. Despite warnings by credible scholars about their danger, these extremist terrorists exploit a gap between moderate credible scholars (the Council of Senior Scholars). They consider these scholars to be the king's scholars or authority clerics and they try to undermine them, so that they don't influence the youth".

Participant 5 explained:

> "This is why some of them will accuse the scholar Abdulaziz bin Baz –may he rest in peace- of being an infidel, because once they isolate the candidate from society, it becomes easy to recruit him".

Participant 4 gave an example of a young man stating that the young man

> "Was a troubled, disobedient, drug addict that repented at the hands of an individual. The person who helped him repent advised him that the only way to atone for his previous sins was to do something grand. The young man asked what the grand act was, and he was advised to engage in jihad, the young man was led to believe that this would erase all his sins. The young man said "How?" The person started to prepare him to go to Iraq and arranged for his travel. The young man went to Iraq to fight, fully believing that he would go to Heaven and all his sins would be forgiven".

Since newly repented individuals often seek salvation, the extremist individuals exploit young people. The extremists recruit newly repented individuals by isolating them from their society in one way or another. Participants 5 stated:

> "They start by isolating them from society, so that they would only listen to them and then lead them down the same road they lead this young man, because at the time they would have had immense issues and this person would appear to give them the solution, like going to engage in jihad against perceived enemies in order to save Muslims".

5.2.4.4 Becoming takfiri

It was also explained that not all individuals are *takfiri*. It was generally accepted that extremists are *takfiri* to start with. However, they are considered naïve because they are later led to believe and get brain washed to believe that many of the moderate scholars are infidels '*kafirs*'. Participant 5 stated that they are manipulated in this manner, and they do not have corrupt ideologies, for some it is just misled passion. It could say most of them are followers like soldiers in an army. Participant 3 stated:

> "Leaders in extremist organisations believe in casting individuals, governments and scholars out of Islam (Takfiri), in order to make them targets and many of the young individuals fall for that due to their limited knowledge in Islam and the excitement of challenging and undermining authority".

5.2.4.5 Social and family problems

Participants 1, 2 and 5 stated that many of the beneficiaries had previous social and family problems. It was explained that they generally come from broken homes, in other words, troubled homes, abusive households with issues between their fathers and mothers. They

have lost all self-respect and especially respect from those around them like their fathers, brothers or relatives. They have lived a life void of an upbringing. Furthermore, in some cases they might suffer from other issues such as economic and psychological ones. It was explained that many of them came from low class families and were generally considered poor compared to the general population, which would explain vulnerable to extremism.

Participant 1 stated that due to such problems they start thinking that they are failures in society, and to prove that they are not failures, they join jihad i.e. fighting in the name of God. Participant 3 explained that beneficiaries normally say that:

> "They love their religion and love Islam yet in reality they running away from the painful reality that they suffer from, whether it is family issue or socially".

5.2.4.6 Previous criminality

Participant 3 explained that previous criminality is one of the factors. Some used to take drugs and were convicted criminals. They find extremism a way of escaping from one experience to another that gives them a place, a purpose and ultimately Heaven. In short by engaging in jihad they see that as a way of compensating for their previous criminality Participant 3 confirmed this when he narrated that:

> "This is a critical point, because as a Muslim your goal is Heaven. They tell them that this is the shortest way to Heaven and so forth. So they atone for the sins that they have committed. What is the shortest way to atone for sins? To go die as a martyr, so they go fight and die for this premise. Moreover, not only do they enter Heaven, but seventy of their relatives as well as Hadith accordingly. So if my father was foolhardy or an addict or inadequate, or my

mother has issues they come with me. These points combined were exploited in this way".

5.2.4.7 Poor social skills

Participant 1, 2 and 3 stated that mental capabilities are very important to an individual. These people lack social intelligence, they might not lack mental intelligence (IQ), but they lack social intelligence, which means that the explanations for the events surrounding them are illogical for example, what happens in Iraq or Syria. It was argued that their actions are based on passion and not intellect. Participant 1 stated that, due to their poor social skills, they are easily influenced by extremist groups:

> "Their passion influences these youth and motivates them to the point that they take action without legitimate restraints, without assessing or looking around them, they don't see the whole picture, and they don't see other countless things".

5.2.4.8 Deprivation

Interviewee 7 and 10 mentioned that the victims are youths in their twenties. Some of them didn't complete their education and come from the middle class and occasionally some come from the higher and lower classes. They feel a sense of deprivation and deprivation is a relatively vital issue. Deprivation can be economic, political, social, or anything that leads to a feeling of being deprived of something especially material and economic wellbeing. Participant 10 stated that:

> "Definition of deprivation is to believe that you deserve something that you didn't get. For example, someone believes that the Government should employ

him, he isn't employed, so he is deprived of a job. You can extrapolate from this economic, political and social deprivation".

Participant 7 gave the example of poverty he explained that, "Some think that the Government is wealthy and so forth and I shouldn't be poor….why is everyone else rich and we are poor as a family?". It was further explained that they are generally angry for being deprived. Therefore, they seek to blame others and hence they go to the extreme of blaming rulers, scholars, society and leaders. Moreover, participant 11 stated:

> "Some of them recently became religious (a few months or a year) then they were influenced by this ideology. Some of them don't even have a high school, middle school or even an elementary level degree. There is no doubt that these conflict areas play a big role in these convictions, without any background, without any conviction, just sympathy towards the Muslims in a certain country".

Participant 7 further explained that Al-Qaeda fuels such feelings and hence they join in and recruit them.

5.2.5 The process of de-radicalisation and operation of the Centre works

Participants were asked about their opinion regarding the way the Centre works and its association with other government bodies or any other organisation. In their answers the participants indicated the extensive programmes ranging from psychological screening tests to after release programmes.

5.2.5.1 The duration and summary of activities at the Centre

All participants indicated that the duration of the programme at the Centre is three months, six weeks of academic and educational courses in Islamic sharia law, psychology and social sciences. Four weeks for honorary activities and two weeks consisting of meetings with experts in psychology, sociology, religious scholars and media figures.

Participant 5 summarized the aims of the Centre in the following points. He mentioned that the Centre aims for counselling, care and rehabilitation, and subsequent care, all of which complement each other. He stated:

> "The Centre is the umbrella for these programmes, even though counselling happens outside of the Centre in prisons and in society. In society through three preventative programmes that divided into three sections. Awareness, Directed Counseling and Prevention in slightly different lines".

Participant 10 mentioned that the goal in the end is to correct the beneficiary's ideology, and after their ideology has been corrected the Centre looks into how to integrate them back into society. Integrating them is not an easy task. There are many difficulties. Thus, the lectures are based on how to integrate them into society and what the issues they might face from members of society are. They are taught how to deal with them. The families are involved and are taught how to treat their son after he gets out of prison and what they need to do to keep him safe.

5.2.5.2 Psychological screening

It was explained by the participants (1, 2, 7, 8 and 9) that one of the main tasks conducted in the Centre during the early stages is psychological screening. This generates an understanding of their psychological wellbeing and their mental capacities. It was explained

that when a beneficiary arrives at the Centre, they start with an initial full diagnosis. Background information collected on their education, vocation, and demographic details. Thereafter, assessors try to figure out the mental capacities and if they qualify to benefit from the programmes on; if he is among those whose mental capabilities are average he is directed to the normal programme. However, if his mental capacity is low, the assessors administer the same globally recognized IQ test, which allows us to administer programmes that adhere to his mental capacity. Participant 2 stated:

> "You cannot send someone with low mental capacity to a programme that is of a higher level, where he will not benefit, because the programme is above his educational and mental level. This is why we must go down to his mental level, so that there will be interaction and a response to what the Centre offers".

It was stressed that the mental capacities are very important on the way the Centre educates and approaches beneficiaries. After this initial assessment, and the psychological assessment of the beneficiary, he can then see other members of the assessment group for instance, those that work with the social and religious issues.

Participant 1 stated the process and stressed that there are cases that they will not admit to the Centre. He stated:

> "The process starts with a psychologist then a sociologist then a specialist in Islam, after that each of them will document their recommendations to establish the end result for the preliminary diagnosis. If the individual suffers from a psychological disorder, there are standards, if he suffers from a severe psychological disorder the policy of the Centre is based on the safety of the

beneficiary and the other people. So if someone is aggressive and we cannot control him, without a doubt we won't admit him to the Centre".

In such cases as those of severe mental health and aggression, the beneficiary is sent to a mental health hospital with frequent assessment. There the beneficiary receives medical and mental health therapy. Also it was explained that the choice of the hospital lies with the family. They will be able to choose it, as they are a crucial part of the rehabilitation process.

5.2.5.3 Setting expectations: benefits in the Centre

Although the Centre is considered a positive and friendly environment by most of the interviews, Western counter-terrorism organisations and even the media, all beneficiaries are told of what is expected of them during the three months rehabilitation. They are asked to co-operate, attend lectures and educational programmes so that they reach the desired standards for release and full rehabilitation. At the end of the three months they are assessed again. They are told that they have to reach seventy points to graduate. These points cover the interaction with the programmes and behaviour throughout. Upon graduation they are told that they will receive a prize of 10,000 S.R ($2,667) to set them up for life after release. Furthermore, they are given privileges in that they and their families receive healthcare at any private hospital if a valid medical report proves the need. The Government will pay all the medical expenses. Participant 5 stated:

> "They are also informed of their rights and what is expected of them (instructions, duties) and that they must benefit from the programme as much as possible and that it will help in their rehabilitation and their return to their families and society. They then sign to this".

It is stressed that they are dealt with as human being and not as prisoners, which often breaks barriers and eases co-operation. They are told of visitation times and seeing their families depending on good behaviour.

5.2.6 The benefits of the programmes

Participant 2 stated that during the three months, the beneficiaries were involved in more than fifteen diverse programmes: the Islamic, psychological, social, sports and art. Therefore, they were expected to benefit from the three-month stay. If they did not reach the desired level they would have to attend another full three months. Programmes are tailored around their needs; some extremists with extreme ideologies are educated separately and consulted separately by suitable people (for example, religious clerics). If they are not likely to benefit from the programmes or are not mentally stable they are sent back to prison or hospitals respectively.

5.2.6.1 Social events

The aim of the programme is to rehabilitate and prepare the beneficiaries to gradually integrate into society. Therefore, during their stay they don't spend the entire time at the Centre. They are allowed to attend special occasions such as weddings, family gatherings, holidays and school vacations. They are allowed to go on leave on routine weekend visits, when they have exams (in college or school). Participant 1 stated:

> "These visits aren't sudden, they are gradual and the beneficiaries come back on their own accord. There hasn't been a single case of escape since the establishment of the Centre in November 2006".

This is explained by the mutual respect between the beneficiary, the families and the Centre. There are also campaigns for visiting the holy places in Makkah and Madinah, such as the Ummra (for the beneficiary only) and Hajj (for the beneficiary and their family).

5.2.6.2 The Role of the family and its co-operation

Participant 1 explained that the family co-operation is a crucial factor. He explained:

> "Sometimes the families take the initiative. We get calls from wives, fathers, and mothers that when the beneficiary was out on vacation they noticed things we hadn't, saying we noticed X, Y and Z. This shows that this is an integrated process between the families of the beneficiaries and the Centre".

It was explained that families are allowed to visit the beneficiaries and that the beneficiaries are allowed to visit their families, and at times they are given money to buy gifts for their family members.

Participant 2 stated that in some cases where there is a mental health issue that requires medication, family involvement is crucial after release. The family is considered responsible for following up with medical help to the beneficiary. It is important that the family makes sure the beneficiary takes his medication and protects him from himself, so that he does not fall back into his old mental state, after he has adapted to certain medication it is hard to return. After rehabilitation and release there is a follow up assessment in some psychological centres.

Participant 2 explained:

> "The Centre pays for the expenses and helps where and when needed. This in cases of severe mental health issues, but it was stressed that in less severe

cases beneficiaries attend the Centre for the three months rehabilitation along with psychological treatment".

5.2.6. 3 Social phobia and the restoration of confidence

According to participant 2, part of the psychological therapy that beneficiaries receive is restoring confidence and self-belief, as this is a common problem. Some of them suffer from what is called 'Social Phobia'. The beneficiaries exhibit social phobia and do not have the ability to say 'no'. As a result the psychologists reinforce their self-confidence, so that they have the ability and awareness to refuse or accept something only after knowing that they can do it and knowing the consequences. Participant 2 stated that beneficiaries should be confident *"they must not be pushovers and let everyone sway them as they please. Therefore, the programme works on self-confidence".*

Further explanation was received by participant 4:

"When you meet them with respect, care and a greeting smile this draws them to you. They need people to look at them, guide them, and respect them. Many of them if not most of them have lost their self-confidence; additionally they lose what is called "the special needs of respect from others", I mean, social respect and appreciation".

5.2.6.4 Restoring positivity

Another main point explained by participants 2 and 4 is that the beneficiaries must feel positive in themselves and those around them. Through special programmes, they are assisted in adopting positive thoughts, which will allow them to revert from negative and pessimistic thoughts to positive and optimistic. Participant 2 stated:

"Some of them say I am done. I was imprisoned for a long time and missed the education train, missed marriage and etc. of depressing things. Here we start with educational treatment whereas we remind him that it's not the end of the world and that we all make mistakes. The problem is when we continue these mistakes without learning from them".

The programmes offered enhance positivity and enable beneficiaries to learn from mistakes and find ways to solve them and move on in life. One of the main things that is generally discussed is education. It is often the main factor that gives them hope in the future and positivity, as it is the way for opening doors.

Part of the positivity is educating them about the value of confidence and positivity as it part of Islamic values. Participant 4 stated when meeting with beneficiaries:

"I said peace be upon you brothers they replied and upon you but with a bad attitude sometimes and some didn't even respond. Their looks were strange at first, after ten minutes those looks became smiles. Thus, I ask them 'brothers I want you to smile. Smiling is charity, the Prophet –peace be upon him- mentioned this more than 1400 year ago'. A Muslim wherever you put him will be content about their situation, if you are a true Muslim you must smile and be content."

Participants see the importance of such positivity in the success of the programme and rehabilitation of the beneficiaries.

5.2.6.5 Continuing education: integration

Education is a word often mentioned by all participants. It is considered crucial in restoring and fully rehabilitating the beneficiaries. However, it is mainly important after rehabilitation, to give the beneficiaries hope and full integration in society. Participant 1 stated:

> "The Centre has an agreement with private and public educational institutes to grant its beneficiaries the ability to continue their studies. This will give him hope for opening a new positive chapter in his life".

The Centre works intensively on their knowledge and we reduce and ease the hardships, so that their attitude will become better as we give them hope. Hope of a positive life once again, guarantees that others cannot manipulate them into recruitment.

5.2.6.6 Family problems: restoring gaps

Participant 1 and 2 stated that if there is a gap between family members the Centre tries, with sociologists, to help them solve it by contacting their families and bringing the perspectives together. Participant 3 stated:

> "We are very interested in the family because it represents 65 to 70 per cent of the rehabilitation process. We have a team of psychologists and sociologists (both genders) that go to the family and try to bring the two perspectives closer. We help to close the gap between the perspectives".

Participate 8 gave an example:

> "A youth's father refused to meet his son and was mad at him and would say 'you are my son and were raised by us in this county, in its safety, security and now you are caught in terrorism case against the safety and security of this

country'! So he swore that he would not meet him even when he was at the Centre he refused to visit him or let him come home. We would cooperate and call the brothers and arrange a visit for them. We have a private facility for family communication. We would gather the family there, but the father would not come. Later we sent a specialist team to the father to his area, because he is outside of Riyadh. We sat down with him and explained the issue to him. Finally, the father understood and accepted his son. He even contributed and assistant to his son coming home and getting married. He helped him buy a home and contributed to his mental and social stability. The son went back to normal life in his community".

For this reason we work on the beneficiaries first to empower them, and then to work on reinforcing the trust between them and their family and others. Thus, when they get released they must realise the challenges that face them and prove to their family and society their good intentions, that they made a mistake and now they have changed their behaviour. This is why initiating the role of the family and their social environment is critical, so that they do not go back to where they started.

5.2.6.7Treating beneficiaries as humans

Almost all the participants stated the important of dealing with beneficiaries as human beings and not prisoners. Participant 2 stated:

> "At the start when the prisoner first comes we tell them that they are at Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, that they will be subject to a three month rehabilitation programme and that there is a big difference between here and prison".

It is also explained that the Centre is like a home, with free movement and friendly staff. There are no interrogations but rather, it is a fully hospitable place to make them feel free and comfortable and offers space and full interaction with the residents, compared to prisons that offer small space and limited interaction.

5.2.6.8 Education and flexibility: personnel involved

Participant 3 stated that education plays a crucial part in helping beneficiaries in de-radicalisation. Education in the form of lectures is often performed by academics in different fields and different times depending on their availability (morning, afternoon or evening). Based on demands and suitability, speakers are invited from different fields. Participant 3 narrated:

> "They are contributors or volunteers at the Centre, as well as, their day jobs at various colleges. Therefore, some of them only have time to come to the Centre for the night session, so most of the programmes start from 4:00pm until 9:00pm. Due to these academics being at their colleges, sometimes programmes are given during the morning session, which are split into lessons (Islamic, psychological, social, economic and political)".

Lectures are given to different groups depending on the time they reached the Centre and whether or not they need it. Participant 3 explained:

> "The beneficiaries are split into groups inside the Centre. Each group has its own programme because they came to the Centre at different times. Each group has on average 15 – 20 people and they have their own programme. Another group might come to the Centre in the middle of the programme, so they are given their own programmes".

5.2.6.9 Achieving dreams and ambitions

As part of the process educating beneficiaries, the aim is to help them in achieving their dreams, as recognized by participants 4, 8 and 9. Participant 4 stated:

> "The team would work on a group level, where we would talk to them as a group, for example one of them said 'I aspire to be a doctor'. We said that it's possible to achieve that goal, he replied 'how?' I said to him everything in possible and the means are available, if you graduate and have the ability, will and motivation for it, it's possible".

Thereafter it was explained that this individual followed the advice and he is currently in the medical school. This is an example of how to help prisoners follow the right path by making them realize their dreams. Participant 9 stated:

> "One of the fundamentals at the Centre is that when they get there they attend programmes where they would need to be ambitious since that shows their desire to change".

5.2.7 Lectures: psychology and behavior modification and other topics

Participant 4 submitted that some of the lectures are psychology related, with a focus on positive behaviours in these lectures. It was explained that they are not dealing with students or with highly educated people; some of them do not even have an elementary level degree. So there is a need to adjust lectures based on capabilities and delivered to them based on relevant psychological needs that suit all as such lectures must appeal to all. Participant 4 explained "this is why we find success, aspiration and acceptance from the detainees in the prison from the beneficiaries at the Centre from our lectures".

5.2.7.1 The lectures: promoting different opinions and creating a concentration on moderation

Participant 4 commented that some of the lectures have to be challenging, to stir different views so that people state their different opinions. This way they would be able to learn tolerance of different views and perspectives. He gave an example by stating:

> "I display an image and ask them their opinion and ask them some questions or I give them a paper that has mistakes on it and ask them to read it. The point is to prove to everyone that there are many things that we don't pay attention to and may not appreciate. So, when you are blindly following someone there might be many things that you don't pay attention to. Moreover, the mind completes things that might be mistakes, but we see it in another way and complete it in our minds, because you didn't ask someone about it or because you aren't looking the right way and can't see the real picture. I point out how opinions about a situation differ despite as all being under one roof, in one place and one society, we all have different opinions sometimes. They are surprised how an image appears in some of the pictures, which is a kind of optical illusion. They say we have been tricked in many things in our lives".

They then get involved in discussions about the way people see things differently and to accept that people are entitled to their opinions. The aim of such lectures is to enrich the beneficiaries and to soften their acceptance of other opinions.

5.2.7.2 Appreciating psychology: the use of religion

It was explained by participant 4 that some beneficiaries do not appreciate the study or lectures in psychology, he stated that they think it is a Western way of dealing with problems,

and in some cases some had a bad attitude towards psychologists due to their previous experiences in foreign prisons. He explained:

> "In 2005 and 2006 they hated psychologists especially those that came from Guantanamo, because the psychologists with them there they would translate, interrogate or carry out other things for the Americans and so forth. So when they meet psychologists you see their discomfort".

Participant 4 explained that it is important that they accept psychology as it is part of Islam and contributes to the education and improved wellbeing. This is often achieved by relating psychology to Islamic scholarship.

5.2.8 Control of emotions and impulsiveness

Part of psychological education is to control emotions and impulsiveness using Islamic teachings as stated by participants 1 and 4. Participant 1 stated that extremism comes from uncontrolled emotion and impulsiveness by many who see the conflicts in nearby countries hence the control of emotions and reasoning is important in rehabilitation. Participant 1 also stated:

> "We give them simplified scientific explanations that they realize in themselves sometimes. Psychodrama, which is very important in adjusting personalities and is not widely known in Saudi Arabia, which means giving them something that effects them psychologically. They talk about their issues unaware, which helps them vent, control themselves, and set a good foundation for their treatment".

5.2.9 Aftercare

Participant 6 stressed the importance of aftercare supervision. He mentioned:

"The subsequent care programme is the last stop in the Centre's programme, and the longest. Because it provides after care for years to the graduates and their relatives and is the largest due to it covering the entire country (thirteen provinces). There is a general goal for the administration which is providing medical, psychological and financial support to all those in its care via three programmes".

5.2.10 Family visits

Participant 7 and10 narrated that one of the objectives is to allow family visits especially in special occasions. Participant 7 stated:

"The time allocated to the programme inside the Centre is twelve weeks with visits to their families and vacations (forty-eight to seventy-two hours) as well as national and religious holidays like (Eid)".

The participant sees great importance in visits as this allows gradual contact with the public and promotes better integration.

5.2.11 Islamic sociological and psychological programme

Participant 7, 8 and 9 stated that the first programmes are Islamic, psychological and guidance as well as sociological programmes. The Islamic programmes are lectures in Islamic law and individual sessions with the specialists in cases where an open dialogue is needed. Here these issues are discussed freely and without judgment or repercussion

regarding what is said, even if it's false, because this is part of building trust. Here questions are asked, discussed and answered so the beneficiaries correct their knowledge of Islam. The Islamic programmes are a continuation of what is in prison, and are based on the report by the counselling programme in prison. In some cases an individual may have some false concepts that were not discussed with the counsellors in prison, but get discussed in the sessions, due to not being able to discuss them in a prison environment. Participant 9 mentioned:

> "There are academic programmes given to the beneficiaries, Aided by the best faculty members in the Kingdom's colleges in every department, especially the Islamic departments. Because the majority of the beneficiaries are totally ignorant when it comes to Islamic Law, especially when it comes to the rules of jihad, suicide and so forth".

They have the right to discuss anything openly, for whatever reason. Furthermore, participant 7 stated:

> "The psychological side and psychological courses are aimed to achieve certain goals to the psyche, it might not be in its general form or name, but they are designed by specialists to give the beneficiary what is needed to reinforce their psyche based on the programmes cases. The sociological as well treats the beneficiary and gives him the abilities to integrate with his family, friends, society, the people at the masjid (Mosque) when he is released".

In other words the psychological and sociological guidance gives the beneficiaries the skills needed to help them deal or adapt to the social environment after release while the Islamic programme helps in correcting misunderstood Islamic matters.

5.2.12 Building personal skills: hiring skilled individuals

One of the main tasks in the rehabilitation part of the programmes is to enhance personal skills. Participant 7 stated:

> "The training programmes are programmes to build personal skills. We attract the best talent and those who have the skills and training as well as the best trainers whether they are in training institutes, private institutes or their own private institutes. We hire them to give training courses. This gives the Centre flexibility in numbers and provision".

It was explained that the Centre and staff would do whatever they could to enhance their personal skills and improve their integration into society.

5.2.13 The role of sports: personality

Participants 8 and 9 explained that they have a sports programme for the entertainment and energy for some during tournaments. Participant 9 stated:

> "The tournament is a mixture of faculty members and beneficiaries. Through this programme we monitor the reactions of some individuals. Some might display signs of introversion or isolation while others still have issues with the Centre that is treating him, so we focus on them and treat them".

Participant 8 mentioned an example:

> "One of the cases in the sports programme was a young man that would intentionally tackle faculty members. Once, twice, but they dealt with him in a positive way, or as we call it sportsmanship. He was surprised, I tackle them

and they laugh and treat me nicely, even though I treat them rudely and with

contempt and hatred".

This is one of the cases that was tackled and dealt with from the sports and
entertainment programmes. This was shown as an example of how sports lead to beneficiary
rehabilitation at the Centre.

5.2.14 The role of the arts

Art also plays part in rehabilitation according to participants 8, and 9. They explained that
they have drawing sessions where the beneficiaries express their imagination in drawings. It
was explained that drawing has shifted from extremist related sceneries such as the
mountains in Afghanistan, to more family based drawings involving children, houses and so
on. This kind of help was explained to help in assessing the personality of the person and the
success of the programme and other programmes.

5.2.15 Computer courses

Furthermore, in educational programmes, participants 8 and 9 stated that there are computer
courses that are certified by the ministry of the civil services and the technical and vocational
training corporation. This helps them get a job and if they are employed and this helps in
getting promotion and bettering employment chances. These programmes are given inside
and outside the Centre.

5.2.16 The English language course

Furthermore, there are courses in English as stated by participant 8 and 9. The beneficiaries
also acknowledged that they will need to learn English if they are to progress in more
scientific and academic fields. There is an internationally certified Cambridge course, which

is equivalent to a three-month course. The English language course is given in an academic manner, so that they benefit from it through using this language for business and academic purposes.

5.2.17 My experience programme: talks by graduates and fathers

A number of participants on the importance of a special programme (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9) called 'My Experience', explained that that some of the beneficiaries that went to these conflict areas, after they came and benefited from the programmes and graduated, contacted them and wanted to participate in the programme. They wanted to narrate their experiences in those conflict areas, to explain what happened, what they saw, how they were manipulated and what the people that haven't gone will actually find there. Participant 8 stated:

> "This programme helped remove some of the ambiguity the youth had. Especially those that wanted to go, but didn't. It's told to them by one of them, someone who has gone through what they are going through. This is one of the programmes that succeeded".

Moreover, participant 1 stated that we have a programme where we occasionally bring a father and have him talk about it from his perspective and their emotions in dealing with extremist sons. Some of these experiences are also televised; some graduates are keen to have their voices heard to increase awareness.

5.2.18 The role of the family in the After Care programme

Participant 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9 stressed the importance of family after the beneficiaries' release. The families help in many ways. They are the considered to be one of the fastest strategies to reintegrate the individual into society. They help to contain the individual and to inform the

Centre when there are any indications or concerns, such as becoming anti-social or re-establishing communication with old contacts and so forth. There is a programme that educates the family to co-operate and understand the situation. This programme allows families to contact the Centre. Then the specialist can contact the graduate to address the issue. Additionally, this programme offers moral and social support, by studying the case and travelling to the individual and meeting his family. Participant 8 stated:

> "We are very interested in the family because it represents 65 to 70 per cent of the rehabilitation process. If the family contributes with us the success rate is 100 per cent, but if the family has problems and we1 find that they really need help. We have a team of psychologists and sociologists (both genders) that go to the family and try to bring the two perspectives closer".

In some cases it was explained that the fathers refuse to talk to the son even after release, in this situation the team is tasked with helping in assessing and helping the beneficiaries in such circumstances.

5.2.19 After care, gradual integration through creating job opportunities, education and marriage

With regards to the aftercare process, participant 6 also explained that the process involves a programme that helps speed integration into society and gives the beneficiaries self-confidence to build a new and productive life. It was explained that the first goal is to get them back to their previous jobs or find them jobs through the training programme, in association with employment organisations. The second goal is to help them continue with their education, especially at college level. There is an agreement with the Ministry of Higher Education in regards to the public colleges, to make it easier for them to continue their

education. The Centre also grants 500 seats for internal scholarships to local private colleges. More than ninety seats have been filled so far, these seats are for the people that have been released and their families. There is also co-ordination with whoever wants to continue with their education at various levels. The third goal is helping them get married. This was by the order of HRH. Mohammed bin Naif who recommended that the beneficiaries should specifically be awarded 50,000 S.R ($13,350) as support when a released individual gets married. This gives them a sense of stability and responsibility towards their families.

5.2.20 The After Care programme and governmental processes

Concerning aftercare, participant 6 also stated that the Centre helps to arrange to obtain and provides help with completing governmental paperwork such as IDs, drivers' licenses, death certificates or with banks and so forth, with focus being centred on:

> "The individuals or their family members themselves who must do the paperwork themselves so that they are responsible for themselves. If their issues are hindered for security reasons we intervene to solve it, otherwise they are responsible, so that they learn to be self-reliant".

5.2.21 Local and international acceptance of the soft power strategy

When asked what their opinion regarding the local and international strategy to counter-terrorism in the Kingdom is, the participants explained that generally the Centre is viewed as successful, unique and has a lot of admirers worldwide.

5.2.22 The unique aspects of the Centre

All the participants explained that the rehabilitation programme is considered unique by international counter-terrorist organisations compared to other related rehabilitation

programmes around the world. International and local academics have also stated how different and effective it is. The Centre has been established for seven years, thus it is new compared to some rehabilitation Centres based around the world. However, despite its relative newness, the expertise and experience it has accumulated has made it unique, not just in the Kingdom, but worldwide. The main uniqueness is that it offers rehabilitation in an open manner to extremists who are ideologically affected. Participant 3 stated:

> "It is unique in two ways, the first is the scope of work. The Centre covers counter-terrorism and extremism and the rehabilitation of those involved in terrorist or extremist acts. There is no Centre as complete as this Centre anywhere in the world. Most rehabilitation centres were designed to deal with criminals, be it drug addicts or crimes such as, theft or sexual crimes and so forth. The other thing that makes the Centre unique is the way in which it operates. The majority of facilities have access to academics from local colleges within the Kingdom. They are specialists in fields that the Centre needs such as Islamic law, psychology, sociology, economics, politics, journalism and art".

The quote summaries the main activities and addresses a majority of participants' needs. This could explain the high success rate that it achieves.

5.2.22.1 International recognition: The Centre's unique aspects compared to other centres

Participants 1, 3, 7, 9, 10 and 11 mentioned that the Centre has been praised internationally, despite there being good counter-terrorism initiatives in other countries. These differ from country to country based on the nature of the programme, the organiser, and the detainees. For example, participant 5 stated:

"The Malaysian or Singapore programme is excellent, however, the number of detainees is low (40 – 50). Furthermore, the Pakistani initiative failed because the number of detainees was over 40,000. This number was above the capacity of the programme's capabilities. The Yemen programme failed, because the counsellors disagreed with the detainees in their interpretation of Islam. The majority of the detainees were from Al-Qaeda. They saw themselves as Salafi, and saw the Yemeni counsellors as Shafi'I scholars who differed from their interpretation of Islam and so forth".

It was explained that each country is different; it has its own issues regarding success and failure, but in general, the Saudi programme was seen to be unique.

5.2.22.2 The Centre's global acknowledgement and its role in the community

Participants 7, 9, 10 and 11 mentioned that the Centre is a part of the community, where many people from the general public and families are involved in the process of rehabilitation. The goal is to correct and return the detainee back as a good and productive citizen for himself and his society. The Centre encompasses the contribution to the prevention aspect. This seems to have achieved success. It was explained that there is a positive atmosphere in the Centre, between the beneficiaries and a positive relationship with families. According to the respondents, it is open to all, and treats people openly and this makes it a respectable institution within the community.

5.2.22.3 Unique work on Islamic values

Furthermore, the Centre is viewed as unique according to participants 7, 9, 10 and11 because its work is based on Islamic principles as it mainly deals with individuals who are affected by their religion and it is recognized that the best way to rehabilitate them is by correcting their religious beliefs as well as other aspects of their personalities. Participant 11 stated:

"This is also a pillar on Islamic Law, to give counsel. This means that this isn't something that was conceived by individuals. It is a pillar of Islam; moreover, it is the principle of Islam which aims to give counsel. It is important that the world knows through their delegates that our work is based on Islam and that Islam demands it".

5.2.23 The Centre and the media

When asked about their opinion regarding what is circulated in the media about the Centre, the participants generally viewed the media as posing no problems to the Centre. However, a number of participants saw challenges here.

5.2.23.1 The media and mixed praises

All the participants stated that the majority of the media coverage regarding the Centre is positive. However, it was acknowledge that in some cases they faced criticism. Participant 5 mentioned: *"The programme is praised from various media sources. However, there are some accusations about the care programme and that it is a kind of reward for them"*. The media queried whether it offers too much to the beneficiaries and gives them benefits that they do not deserve.

However, participant 9 stated: "Sadly, they do not realise the reality and state of most of the detainees. Most of them are simpletons. It's easy to change them, no matter what you do". He further explained that when the Government took care of them and offered them aid, this was not a reward. They would have served their time and are judged by Islamic law, and after serving their sentence they become rightful citizens and citizens have rights just like everyone else.

Now that he is out of prison he is lost and the society may not accept him, so he is in a stating emptiness and instability socially, mentally and ideologically and he will search for someone to accept him. Participant 5 stated that this is duty of the Government and is done through the subsequent care programme. Furthermore, participant 11 mentioned:

> "The local media is falling short with the efforts of the Centre and only reports about the visits or about certain graduates. I wish that there would be a channel or a programme on a news station that shows the efforts of this magnificent work. The Kingdom and its citizens should be proud, but how can they when it's locked up in drawers and shelves".

Clearly there are some mixed opinions about the media, but participant 5 stated that many newspapers have written about the Centre's success stories and some TV channels have invited graduates too.

5.2.23.2 The media and public relations

Participant 11 stated that there is more need for public awareness through the media commenting:

> "There is a need for more circulation and communication between agencies and heads of newspapers and news channels, to give them updates, because these efforts change people's concepts. The work at the Centre and the subsequent care programme, contacting the families and so forth is not disheartening, because their work comes from religious conviction before this becomes a duty or request or contract".

All the participants believe that their work is a religious duty and a national duty that deserves a lot of praise.

5.3 Key challenges in the job

In the third part of the procedure/protocol, the participants were asked about the key challenges that face them in the Centre. They were asked to give their general views.

The following questions were asked:

1) Can you tell me more about the programme used at this centre? What are the problems and challenges facing the Implementation process of soft power?

2) Who are the significant people that are used (professionals) in the intervention strategy and why?

3) What is your view of the interpretation of Islam by the Islamist extremists?

4) How can violent extremism be eradicated?

5) Are there situations when you can use different approaches in your role without following set guidelines and rules? Can you use different methods of de-radicalising individuals?

6) What are your views regarding the challenges to PRAC. Can anything be improved or changed?

The participants were asked what the main challenges that they face in applying soft power in the Centre's programmes are, and what the procedures they take to apply the soft power strategy were. Their answers varied and generated the following themes.

5.3.1 Flexible strategy with organizational structure challenge

All participants said, the strategy is very flexible and it updated periodically. However, the Interviewee 3 mentioned that:

"Despite the flexibility and updating of the strategy, we still find the main challenge is the organizational structure because it is based on trial and error, also despite making new rules and procedures or modifying existing ones we still need a huge and long amount of time to implement rules and regulations, and to become professional".

5.3.2 Gaining trust

A number of participants (1, 3, 7, 8 and 10) explained that the hardest challenge is dealing with human beings and gaining their trust. They all value the trust factor as an essential part in rehabilitation. Participant 10 stated that, "Ideology is intangible and an essential challenge when dealing with humans, and it is very hard to gain their trust in order to capture their hearts and minds at the same time".

5.3.3 Having different cases and challenges from different conflict zones

Another challenge is having individuals from different conflict zones (e.g. Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan). Participants 1, 3, 7, 8 and 10 explained that it is very challenging to deal with different people from different conflict zones. They described the beneficiaries as having different cases and coming from different prisons. The interviewees stated, "This is why it is important to fully study and understand their prison or conflict area experience, backgrounds, mentality and circumstances". Such variables seemed to be challenging and according to the participants the beneficiaries have different acceptance levels of the rehabilitation process.

5.3.4 The media and the recidivism of the beneficiaries

The media is another issue, which seemed to have an important impact on de-radicalisation. Participant 7 and 11 stated that the media focused on the very few individuals who go back to

being extremists after being released. Participant 7 mentioned, "One of the most important challenges is 'recidivism' because unfortunately the media is ignoring the successful cases and focuses on the very few who return to their previous terrorist activities".

5.3.5 The rejection of the programme

Participant 8 indicated that some beneficiaries sometimes do not accept certain aspects of the programmes, and this is a challenge. Participant 8 stated that, *"Often they are exposed to beneficiaries who resist the new ways of de-radicalisation or rehabilitation, and that is the most challenging aspect as the rehabilitation process depends on them accepting the programme"*.

5.3.6 Short programme periods of three months

In some interviews namely, with participants 1, 3 and 8, it was explained that the programme takes only three months, and perhaps there is a need to extend that period to eliminate the chances of the beneficiaries going back to their extremist ideologies. They consider this period to be too short. Interviewee 3 observed, "This was too short a period to successfully change a detainee's ideology".

5.3.7 The grouping of the beneficiaries during the de-radicalisation programme

Participant 11 considers that the main challenge is the teaching strategy. He indicated that, for this programme to be effective there was a need for the beneficiaries and detainees to be separated, depending on their levels of extremist thinking. He suggested that grouping and separating them, according to their level of Islamic understanding, as well as academic ability, could do this. He stated that in his view this should not be done in a way where all the detainees could be taught in the same groups. Also he mentioned the small amount of

provision for the teaching capacity and facilities to deliver the adequate de-radicalisation sessions as these depended on the different challenges that were presented by the beneficiaries.

Also the curriculum itself was considered a challenge because it seemed not to fully address all the individuals' challenges and de-radicalisation needs. In addition participant 11 considers the differentiation in the counselling of the detainees as challenging because it could be used by applying some psychological theories inside the prison yet the main challenge could be that of other beneficiaries trying to recruit the others to follow their thinking. He observed that some of the decisions regarding the curriculum could be controversial, especially regarding some emotional, cultural and historical religious issues and understandings usually based on conflict.

5.3.8 Public opinion

Participant 3 indicated that the main challenges to the programme's success are the different views as observed from public opinion towards the strategy that are implemented. He stated that, "Some of those views indicate that our strategy is a waste of time and public money, and people think that we should only use hard power on the detainees, and some journalists support this view". All the participants observed that this is one of the challenges and there should be better public education and awareness of the causes and effects of radicalisation.

5.3.9 Regional conflict zones

The continuous conflicts in the region, according to four participants (1, 3, 7 and 10), especially in neighbouring countries like Syria, Iraq, the on-going Israel and Palestine conflict and Yemen, are considered a major challenge. They stated that these countries are considered as safe havens for those criminals because of the unstable political situation and

issues about religious differences and violent conflict in those countries. Participant 3 stated that, "Those conflict zones are destroying whatever you are trying to build". He stated that such conflicts increase the chances of the growth of extremism and this ruins some of the work being done by the Centre.

5.3.10 Western solutions: double standards?

International politics were also viewed as a problem as observed by participant 1, 3 and 10. They indicated that some of the Western political solutions, especially those of the US, are helping the extremists to spread their ideology. Participant 10 stated that, "The killing of innocent civilians, and the violation of human rights in prisons such as in Guantanamo and Abu Grabe are causes for extremism". They also stated that it is very important to highlight that some see such 'solutions' as indicators of double standards in the application of Western policies towards resolving Islamic political issues in the Middle East. They cited the situation in Palestine as an example.

5.3.11 Monitoring the social media

Participants 10 and 11 stated that they see the disadvantage of extremists having access to social media, as it is one of the main challenges which is not monitored, and can be easily used to manipulate people. Participant 10 stated that, "Using social media helps them to target the youth and to try to gain their sympathy, for example telling the youth to look at what the enemy is doing to their country or the Islamic community etc". They explained that extremists are using the religious narrative as a cover. The interviewees stated that, to the common man, this cover could be effectively unnoticed and the extremists would succeed in brainwashing. The respondents also observed that the public is weak in knowing that this is a

way to influence people to think negatively about the work of the Centre and spread negative rumours about it and its functions.

5.3.12 Subsequent care

Participants 3 and 6 agreed that one of the main challenges they face is in the subsequent care of the released detainees and their families, detainees inside and outside of the Kingdom and their families, and the families of both the wanted and the deceased. Participant 6 stated that according to Prince Naif:

> "Those families should not be responsible for the criminal activities of their children, and they should receive psychological, financial, medical and social support, also any financial cost on the challenges we face in our indirect battle with terrorist groups and organisations in the hope to try and maintain those groups and organisations using moral and financial support".

5.3.13 Important individuals in the Centre

At this stage the participants were asked who the most experienced individuals to implement the strategy or to hire them to be part of it were and why? They all stressed that the Centre encourages teamwork. However, some participants added their views to this, stating that status is based on experience. The following themes were generated:-

5.3.13.1 Teamwork

All the participants agreed that everyone is part of the team and that they all work as a team. Participant 3 said, "It is wrong to rely on one person, group or one specialty because if you do so you will fail, this was one of the main reasons some programmes and old strategies inside and outside the Kingdom or in other countries were unsuccessful". Participant 4 stated that in

addition to what the staff do the strategy depends on the families, society, many specialists and governmental institutes.

5.3.13.2 The programmes and their acceptance by the detainees

Participant 5 stated that key individuals in the Centre are selected based on the needs of the beneficiaries, as they are different from each other. He stated:

> "Some of them will not accept religious scholars but would be more than happy to talk to a psychiatrist because they may have a mental issue, some other detainees would not accept scientific debates but would start building trust with some of the staff they are exposed to, this means that each detainee has his own personality and needs and this is the main focus".

5.3.13.3 Highly qualified individuals

Participant10 said:

> "The most experienced individuals in the strategy are the ones with highly specialised knowledge in the area of de-radicalisation, they have the knowledge in their areas of specialism and they have more than 6 years experience, so they have the ability to answer any question in their field".

The participants therefore stressed that the more experienced individuals there were, the more important they were to the Centre and to the success of the strategy.

5.3.14 Participant views regarding Islamic extremists

The participants were asked about their views regarding Islamic extremists and the way they see them. The answers varied, and were grouped under the following themes:

5.3.14.1 Young people

Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 emphasized that many detainees are young and they don't have an essential understanding of Islamic knowledge, and are barely scratching the surface. In addition, participants 3 stated:

> "That their lack of knowledge and experience make it easy for extremists to target them and influence their way of thinking by appealing to their sympathy, for example showing them videos about the Abu Gurab prison, stating that such videos would inflame their emotions".

5.3.14.2 The debate about the obligation of participating in jihad

Participant 9 indicated that a lot of terrorists left their countries for conflict zones based on their religious beliefs and the belief that jihad is an obligation. They do this without the permission of the Government leadership or from their families. He stated:

> "When they go to those conflict zones they would start absorbing radical ideas from different groups in that zone, that's why they are distanced from reality because they have absorbed those radical ideas thinking that they will bring back Islamic glory through these ideas".

5.3.14.3 Sympathy

Participant 11 said:

> "From my experience in the field, most of the extremists sympathize with any Muslims, whether they are good or bad Muslims, whatever their ideology is, also without considering if those so called victims are following what he called 'real Islam' or just the fact that they claim to be 'Muslims'".

Hence, the conclusion among most of the participants was that Islamic extremists often sympathise with fellow Muslims and adopt extreme ideologies due to a poor understanding of Islam.

5.3.14.4 Questions on Islam's acceptance of extremism

Furthermore, participant 10 stated that Islam has nothing to do with extremism. He said:

> "Islam is a moderate religion and in many places Islam presents itself as moderate; we can't force people to accept only one interpretation of Islamic teachings, but when an interpretation becomes extreme then that interpretation is not from Islam, because Islam and other religions don't accept extremism".

5.3.15 Eliminating radicalisation

The participants were asked about ways of stopping radicalisation and violence. In answering this they stressed on a number of factors.

5.3.15.1 Promoting moderate Islam

Indirectly almost all the participants, namely 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 agreed that there is a need to promote moderate Islam. They stated that they think it is the main principle behind the Centre and its rehabilitation programme. Hence such an understanding should exist among the general public. In particular, participant No.11 said that:

> "We must spread out the moderate religion everywhere and on all levels like regions, provinces, schools, Mosques, universities, education curriculums and government institutes so they will understand Islam better".

There was emphasis from the participants that there is a need to engage in dialogue and conversation between them and society at large to discuss differences and different

viewpoints. They stated that this could be done through social media and through the press. Participant 3 and 10 stated that, student scholarships under the King Abdullah programme, jobs out of Saudi Arabia and the opportunity to travel and tour outside the country and the region, seemed to help individuals to have open minds because it helped to open people's minds regarding areas such as social and political differences. They said this function exposes individuals to both the good and sometimes bad political influences, as it allows for open minds and tolerance. On the other hand they stated that there could be a danger of individuals meeting radical and extremist thinking, especially in permissive countries where there is little control of extremist political activity. Also they added that the Saudi state now has a policy of national dialogue, which encourages every academic and intellectual to debate and discuss issues regarding the prevention and eradication of extremism.

5.3.15.2 Dealing with social problems

Participant 9, 10 and 11 stated the need to look into many social problems such as poverty, unemployment and international political issues. They stated that the countries should solve such internal problems, as they can be a common cause for individuals, especially the youth, to be radicalised.

5.3.15.3 Family differences and disagreements

Participant 1, 3 and 4 stated that the Government must educate Saudi families about dealing with difficult relationships and how to resolve domestic conflict. This, they thought, would close the gap between them and their relatives. One of the main reasons they observed to be a cause of radicalisation was that some of the young people think they don't relate well to their families. The participants thought that this made it easy for them to be an easy catch for the terrorists to radicalise without the knowledge of their family. Participant 3 stated:

"Unfortunately, we had some cases where we released some of the detainees after giving them some counselling in the Centre, but they reverted back to their ideas due to family break ups, gaps and a lack of understanding".

5.3.15.4 International co-operation

Participant 3 stated that unfortunately, some countries are claiming to fight radicalisation and terrorism, although in reality their actions violate the human rights and freedom of speech, and those countries are claiming to protect those rights. He claimed that this gives the terrorists a justification to be violent and helps them to recruit and brainwash others. He said:

"For example, the film and the comics about the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed, peace be upon him, are disgraceful, also a priest in the USA burned a copy of the Holy Qur'an …etc. We tried many times telling all the foreign delegations in which we receive that every time we build something you destroy it with one reckless act".

He also stressed that Guantanamo prison, among others, must be closed as they are used as an excuse and example for recruiting young sympathisers. He stated that, "Interestingly, Al-Qaeda doesn't want Guantanamo prison to be closed because it is a propaganda justification for their actions".

5.3.15.5 Combining soft and hard powers

Furthermore, participant 10 said that there is a need to solve the issue of radicalisation from its roots, and that there are many root causes for those issues, he asserted that this was the reason why there is a need for different strategies. He stated, "The, first thing we do in our strategy is to use a combination of soft and hard power because we will not achieve any tangible results if we only use one".

5.3.15.6 Opening a channel between young people and scholars

Participant 4 highlighted that:

> "It is important to create an open channel with religious scholars and young people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and that there should not be any gap between them, stating that the relationship between them must be strong".

He emphasized that this relationship would not allow anyone who calls himself a scholar to have any chance in presenting issues just on the surface in which he could lead those young people to their doom.

5.3.15.7 Monitoring educational institutions

Furthermore, all participants stressed that the Government needs to monitor government institutions such as, educational institutions, through the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, whether these were mosques, colleges, schools or any other educational centres. According to participant 4, these are potentially the places where the young people are likely to be radicalised.

5.3.16 Limitations in doing the work

The participants were asked about their flexibility at work and whether it is possible to use different methods outside their prescribed role in the Centre. Further, they were asked if they could use different methods in difficult cases. Generally it was agreed that there were no limitations and that circumstances could dictate the process of choosing and applying these methods.

5.3.16.1 No limitations: allowing for flexibility

Most of the participants, namely 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 10, indicated that there are no limitations to what each of them can do to rehabilitate beneficiaries. Participant 1 stated:

> "The Centre is very flexible and we have complete freedom, and in the end the detainee has the freedom to speak and lay down all his cards on the table, so to counsel with the detainee we must use every possible way, and we have the freedom to debate with the detainee".

They explained that flexibility can be seen when the reasonable demands of the beneficiaries were addressed, so they can feel accommodated and to achieve trust. Participant 6 stated:

> "Sometimes the detainees will want to meet a scholar from outside the Centre, we have a direct command from his Highness to bring that scholar to debate with the detainee, also if the scholar, for example, is very old or his medical condition will not allow him to come to the Centre then we will take the detainee to that scholar".

Participant 10 said that their experience plays an important role in managing a conversation. He mentioned that they talk in a friendly way, without threatening the detainees. The participants stated that experience also plays an important role in prioritising the questions and the topics that they want to discuss, giving room for flexibility.

5.3.16.2 Acknowledging others in the team

Participant 8 indicated that flexibility depends on the ability of the counsellor to deliver the information, where some would play by the book and show no flexibility, where others would apply all the rules but in different ways. This flexibility was preferable to the detainees.

However, the participants stated that flexibility stops when someone in the team steps into a different role. They emphasized that it is important that each individual should take their responsibilities without interference from others.

5.3.16.3 Cautious flexibility

Participants 5 and 11 said that it is important to allow the detainee to speak freely, giving him space to talk and express himself. They explained that the need for flexibility is very important, but the main problem concerns dealing with security issues. They observed that flexibility should be stopped in cases where the result could compromise the security of the individuals, the Centre, family and the general public. Participant 5 stated that, "We do not have to promise things that we cannot deliver and we should be flexible in a way that is not negative, such as giving false hopes, manipulation and issues related to security".

5.3.17 Challenges in the prevention of (PRAC) programme

The participants were asked about the challenges for prevention, rehabilitation and caring. Their answers can be explained in the following themes.

5.3.17.1 The impact of the aftercare programmes on personality

Participants 1, 8, 9 and 10 said they faced challenges based on the developments that are happening internationally and regionally. They also stated that there were challenges that they faced with the beneficiaries in the Centre. They stated that they were trying to improve the self-confidence of the beneficiary and his family, so he would be able to take care of himself. One of the biggest challenges they encountered was with people that had weak personalities. They observed that those people could be absolutely fine in the Centre and when with their families, however, as soon as they get out, others would easily influence

them. They noted that, later some of the beneficiaries would go back to their previous habits simply because they are not strong characters.

5.3.17.2 Offering jobs

Participants 1, 8, 9 and 10 highlighted that there is an agreement between the Centre and all government institutes to give jobs to the detainees, providing them with e something to do and leaving no time to think about extremist ideas, which could lead those detainees to their previous extremist ways. Participant 1 stated:

> "Subsequent care is complicated and it needs a lot of effort, all government institutes should work together including the public and the private sectors to help those detainees, and to give them the best environment to be stable".

However, they highlighted that finding jobs is challenging, and that beneficiaries need a lot of help to find suitable jobs.

5.3.17.3 The environment after release

Participants 4, 6 and 7 spoke about the outside community environment as a negative influence. They stated that after release it is difficult to control what the beneficiaries do outside the Centre, as the environment surrounding the released individual is different and challenging. They explained that the former beneficiaries could be radicalised again if they are not monitored. Participant 4 questioned the process by asking:

> "How is the detainee going to deal with the reality and the environment around him, also how will the environment and the society itself going to deal with that detainee? Subsequent care in my opinion is also hard, because we have to look into the issue economically, socially, psychologically and medically etc".

All of them spoke about not being able to control certain factors such as, the company they keep and the types of access to various factors that may have the potential for them to relapse into recidivism after their release. They stated that this was beyond their control. Hence, they consider the after release environment to be a negative factor.

5.3.17.4 No convictions

Participant 4 mentioned that one of the challenges is that some of the detainees are yet to be convicted or had to go through court trials. He also stated that there is a lack of knowledge about their history and background. As a result, it is difficult to plan programmes and rehabilitate the beneficiaries in the most suitable way.

5.3.17.5 The challenges of not separating the beneficiaries according to levels of extremism

Participants 4 and 11 spoke about a lack of differentiation in the Centre. It was stated that it is important to classify the beneficiaries under different categories and treat them differently from others depending on their challenges and the extent of their extremism. They also acknowledged that classification could be a problem as it might restrict individuals and label them. Hence, according to them, it is important to treat them equally. They said that at least the beneficiaries should be grouped according to their levels of extremism and the staff team should be available to tailor programmes for their de-radicalisation.

5.3.17.6 The need for local co-operation

Participant 5 thought that the Centre has no problems with the level of counselling and the running of programmes, even if there are any challenges on those levels. He stated that these could be easily solved, but he thought that the main challenge was in the recruitment of Islamic scholars, university deans and Islamic religion specialists. He observed that some of them would refuse to come to the Centre, or that they may have other businesses to take care of, while some of them would have an ideology that was deemed to be mismatched with the

Centre's approach. He stated that this could be why they would not attend. Participant 5 explained this by saying:

> "When we started the Centre, the community didn't accept it, so we had a hard time convincing Islamic scholars to come and give lectures or give counselling in the Centre, because they were afraid that the community would have a negative attitude towards them, in my opinion this was one of the main challenges and still is".

5.3.17.7 The media

Participant 5, 7 and 9 stated that another challenge they face is the media and the way it portrays the success of the programme. Participant 5 stated:

> "Sometimes the media would make our job difficult, for example some journalists would write negative titles and articles about the Centre, stating that some 'counsellors need counselling themselves' or 'counselling has become ineffective.' Some journalists also went so far as to write books about the Centre like 'Compelling Persuasion', and that poses a challenge".

The participants stressed that those journalists were poorly informed, had never been to the Centre and had never observed the counselling process.

Social media was also considered to be a problem by all the participants. They observed that this allowed people to debate and challenge authority, anonymously and allowed for uncontrolled and misleading debate although it was accepted that people are entitled to their opinions, as they do not know the full picture.

5.3.17.8 Scholars

Participant 11 stated that one of the challenges that the Kingdom faces in countering terrorism is that some Islamic scholars would not consider some of the bombings that happen in a particular time to be non-Islamic acts. Hence, they thought that this creates some justification for extremism. It was further said:

> "This is considered to be an important challenge because the Government will start having doubts about some of the Islamic scholars, because the Government itself asked that scholar to address those issues and he didn't comply".

However, this participant acknowledged that the Royal Order about classifying the terrorist groups into specific ones was good news to moderate people. He stated that it was bad news to the people who have such ideologies because now they cannot freely talk about and express their ideologies. He stated that an example of that is the Muslim Brotherhood group, which was classified an extremist group by the Government. As a result of this, he said that this labelling of the affiliated individuals and scholars would limit their contributions in discussing their views or the content of their speeches about religious and political issues. The respondent stressed the need to limit these individuals' effect on their targeted audience. They felt that their individuals tended to control and influence radicalisation in individuals.

5.4 Personal issues/security (The impact of the job on personal life)

In the last section of the interview protocol, the participants were asked a number of questions regarding the challenges they face and the impact their jobs have on their lives:

The following were the questions asked:

1) What are your views on the success and the challenges faced by you as a facilitator and the Centre's strategies for de-radicalisation?

2) How does this have an effect on your thinking and way of life?

3) What are your views about the safety of being involved in this kind of job?

4) Do you have anything to add to this interview?

5.4.1 The positive effects of the high success rate

When asked about their opinion regarding the effect of working in the Centre on their lives, participant showed that it is mainly a positive effect. All participants reflected that the high success rate that has been achieved, the Centre has reached a high success rate, due to their hard work and unique soft power approach. Participant 1 answered:

> "The work is successful, we don't claim success, but based on the outcomes of the Centre there are large indications of success that reach up to 90 per cent. This is from examples of groups of beneficiaries from various regions in Saudi that are going to college, continuing their education, and living their lives normally".

They explained that success is measured by changing the individuals' extremist ideology from extremism to the moderate ideology of Islam. There was a consensus that such aims are often achieved and that there are only few cases where the rehabilitation did not reach its full potential. Furthermore, participant 3 stated:

> "The Centre is excellent and successful, because it's able to contribute to transforming people who at one point in time were following bin Laden and were *takfiri* into people who are moderate and stable within their family,

people who have become normal. Our logic is always to treat these youth as our sons when it comes to this behavior and reactions towards others".

Overall, it was agreed that the Centre is relatively successful. However, participant 7 still sees the need for more improvement despite the success and commented:

"Every job needs development, but is the Centre on the right path is what we should ask? Have we reached our objectives? No, but we are still working on it. More importantly, are we on the right path? Yes. Is it going as fast as we want it to? No. What is its level? Good. What is important though is that it's on a satisfactory level in the right way. What does it need to achieve its ambitions? The experience of the Centre is a good one, it's not on par with the correction programmes in other countries that have been around for decades and I mean in regards to correcting the detainees or the prisoners in most countries in the world that have beaten us more than 60 years".

He also explained that the Centre is still relatively new and relatively small. Furthermore participant 10 stated that there is a need for more facilities if more success is to be achieved.

5.4.2 The positive effects of this duty

Participants 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 11 explained that it has a positive effect and also stated that it is a duty. Participant 1 answered that, "The effect was, without a doubt, a positive one, even if it was at the expense of time spent with the family". It was highlighted that such work requires time and patience stating that, this is because the process takes time and patience at the same time. But if we look at it from a humane perspective, from a patriotic perspective, this cause is more than a job it is much more than just a role or job. The participants highlighted that

such work is rewarding from different perspectives and allows the workers to help highly confused individuals with mental health problems and extreme ideologies. They stated that such work is seen as humanitarian and therefore has a positive effect.

Participant 2 mentioned that the interest of the country is above all else and that this work has a longitudinal effect on the next generations, hence this provides the workers an obligation to participate in this work. He stated, "If I do not participate and do my part, this might spread and affect my kids, they aren't isolated from that, hence I feel positive in doing this job".

5.4.3 Increased experience & knowledge

Participants 3, 5, 6 and 10 referred to the benefits of experience and increased knowledge as the main motive for doing this job. Participant 3 mentioned that this work had an effect on his job and his profession. He stated:

> "I learned a lot and furthered the theories that I am working on and using. I use this in college while teaching graduate level students and so forth. Moreover, I found out through direct interaction with them that there isn't a stereotype for all of these cases. The media and society cast generalizations, "anyone in prison is a terrorist" or is an extremist or against the Government or is dangerous etc. whereas by interacting with them is not as the media portrays it".

Participant 3 stated that due to such knowledge they are currently working on this to restore their image and remove this stereotype and thereby increase awareness that these individuals are capable of getting employment and are capable of being good citizens.

Participant 10 mentioned that without a doubt, for the most part there is a positive effect from the Centre's activities. He stated:

> "I have become, with time, an expert in this field. You learn about initiatives. You perform and read studies. My field forces me to read a lot, conduct studies and see the results first hand in the field".

5.4.4 Confidence

A number of participants (3, 5 and 6) stated that they had gained 'confidence'. This had a positive effect on their experience in the job. Interviewee 5 spoke about the confidence he gained from performing this job, he stated that the more he works the better confidence he has to perform his duties. He stated:

> "I am more confident now in my role and job, I deal with many individuals and that enhances my knowledge along with my confidence and that is a crucial thing when you deal with extreme ideologies".

5.4.5 Personal skills

Participants 6, 9 and 11 spoke about the skills that they have gained from performing their job. They stated that it enabled them to understand life's experiences and consequences a lot better. They spoke about interpersonal skills, on how to deal with people in general, and how to appreciate life and educate their children. Participant 6 stated:

> "I am personally developing my intrapersonal skills with all levels of society, I understand religion better and I am more closed to my family members as a result, I understand their problems and help them unconditionally".

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Participant 9 explained that the acquired skills lead to a better understanding of human behavior and interaction. He also stated that it has a positive effect in that it helps with regards to how we deal with our children. He stated:

"When there is a barrier between a father and son the father must first go down to the child's level to have an understanding fatherly conversation with compassion, emotion and good behavior that will have a positive effect on them. This is how we deal with them in regards to understanding their needs and listening to them".

5.4.6 The benefits of the working conditions

Participants 4, 5 and 10 stated that the job offers them good financial rewards and benefits. Participant 4 explained:

"Our salaries are excellent. As a faculty member my salary is excellent and I am a member of a board and other councils. Annually I get extra pay, in combination with what I make in my job, so in a year I get 3 or 4 additional months of pay and I have an income from my personal business".

They also explained that they do not have any issues with wages, and that they benefit from good incentives and regular training.

5.4.7 Limited family and social time

Participant 6 and 10 explained that social time is an issue. They stated that in some instances it limits their ability to socialize and have more time with the family. Although they are still happy with their jobs they see that this could be one of the main negatives in their current job in the Centre. Participant 6 stated:

"As to my way of life, we as security specialists, without a doubt, our private lives are affected by our work. I mean, life has changed a lot because this case has taken all of my time. I no longer have time like I used to. I don't have a group of friends to go to or stay up late with. I am busy night and day. This work has become my life, I have nothing else. It has affected my social and family life".

The response from Participant 2 was:

"My sons are sons of this country. If I do not participate and do my part this might spread and affect my kids, they aren't isolated from that. Even though we teach them and keep them on the right path. But if I ignore this and the next person does the same there will be a day that it gets out of control".

Participant 8 answered as follows:

"Sadly extremist ideologies can have an effect on any member of our family or society at any social class or position. Therefore if your brother, your son or your relative, contribute to fighting this ideology in any way, they will be contributing to the safety of your family and then your society and security".

Participant 11 stated:

"I do pay more attention to my children, due to all the youth I have seen effected by this ideology. I started to see my children in another light. I feel the immense danger that we live in our society. My children are not isolated, I feel more alarmed for them more than before".

Furthermore, both participants highlighted that there are limits to human resources at times and there is a need for more workers. Participant 6 stated that, "Sadly, our human resources are limited and despite that, we work overtime all around the clock, because the work requires us to communicate all hours of the day".

5.4.8 Deception

Participant 10 explained that one of few negatives is deception by the beneficiaries. He explained that his work is based on the information provided regarding an individual. However, he stated that sometimes the beneficiaries use deception to influence staff members and pretend that they are innocent and do not deserve to be in the Centre. As human beings, he explained that staff members can be easily influenced by that and would naturally sympathize. He said:

> "Before, you would assume that anyone who is religious is 100 per cent good. That is not always the case. Another one of the changes might be that someone might seem to everyone as good on the outside, but inside he has problems and a very dangerous side to him".

He further explained that such deception could affect individuals and the way they look at beneficiaries and highlighted the need to be professional and use previous information to deal with beneficiaries.

5.4.9 Safety issues

When asked about their opinion regarding their personal safety, the participants mainly answered that there is generally no threat directed towards them.

5.4.9.1 Precautionary measures to avoid threats

All participants stated that this job does not pose any threat to them whilst at work or in their personal life, although they are aware of the possibility of threats to their lives at any time. However, they all mentioned that they avoid threats by being very professional and taking precautionary measures, especially given their job involves visiting beneficiaries. An example of such caution is mainly evident when the respondents go out to do fieldwork, for instance when visiting the beneficiaries in their homes and neighborhoods. In response to this, participant 8 stated:

> "We take precautionary measures while in transit and when the specialist team goes to study a case at their home. We take our security measures, some of them or their family members might be mentally ill or otherwise. Additionally, there are methods that must be followed at work: transparency, clarity, and honesty. These cornerstones must be observed".

They also explained that they treat their jobs with caution and protect themselves against any threats. They said that this is often achieved through the use of effective strategies with the beneficiaries. Participant 6 stated that, "Those beneficiaries become like family to us and they actually welcome us in their homes, therefore they treat us as we treat them". This was confirmed by participant 3 who stated that, "When treated humanely and respectfully, on the contrary, they praise you which is what we have noticed. Sometimes we get messages from the individuals themselves, not just their families".

5.4.9.2 Rare Threats

Participant 5 mentioned that he was threatened two years ago when his name was included among a group of professors in an Al-Qaeda hit list. He explained that the threat came from the outside but nothing actually happened, he stated that, "I was threatened when my name,

along with a group of other professors, was listed in a manifesto of Al-Qaeda targets two years ago, but –thank God- nothing happened".

Furthermore, participant 11 mentioned that threats are rare, "Twice I was threatened, but not from the people I was counselling, maybe Al-Qaeda members from outside the country and some inside the country". He further stated that in this job they all must be careful, as they will never know what to expect from individuals with extremist ideologies, especially when some of them use deception.

5.4.10 Additional points

Finally, the participants were asked if they would like to add anything, a number of the participants did not have much to add, however, those who chose to add information stated the following:

5.4.10.1 Interesting research

Interviewee 4, 7, 9 and 10 mentioned that the topic of the research is an important one and that more researchers should look into doing more work in this area. They said that the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Centre exerted, and still exerts, enormous efforts into guiding youth and reintegrating them into society. They all stressed the importance of scientific research on beneficiaries' behaviors and ways to de-radicalise them from extremism towards moderate religious and political behaviour. They applauded this research and considered that more should be done, bearing in mind the new and sophisticated ways of radicalisation that are taking hold of the youth from various extremist groups. Participant 3 stated that:

> "I think your study is very important, it will open a lot many eyes and show the great success of the Centre and ways to improve its work, more research is needed and we should promote that within the Centre".

5.4.10.2 More awareness

Participant 4, 6 and 7 explained that there is a need for more awareness. They all mentioned the role of the media in promoting positive awareness and help in combating extremism. They stressed that some media reports undervalue the work of the Centre and its success and how that they need to see the positive side of this process. Participant 6 also mentioned that the awareness of some members of the public is not positive and that they think that such beneficiaries are being rewarded and not punished. Participant 7 stated:

> "What I want is for our society to reach a reasonably high level of awareness so that they know the dangers of extremism and the enemies of Islam and the Government. These enemies could be countries, societies or extremist religious groups that work together on various levels (the Media, financial, organizing, military). Their main goal is to portray Islam as a religion of violence and extremism especially the Sunni's. Thus the awareness and preventative efforts are very important in combating this extremist ideology".

Furthermore, he stated that awareness needs to start from schools, and that there is a need to increase the awareness of extremist groups and their dangers, stating:

> "I hope that there will be psychological social Islamic guidance in our schools starting from elementary all the way through high school and college, which will shed light on the issues of intellectual integrity to the youth. Moreover, to shed light on these groups that corrupts the youth and the rules and regulations of jihad".

5.4.10.3 A combination of reasons

Participants 1, 2 and 3 added that extremism needs to be eliminated by studying the factors leading to its development and explained that the Government needs to look at the economic, social and behavioral problems among the youth. Participant 1 stated:

> "I want to confirm that terrorism and extremism are not a result of economic issues only or social issues or ideological issues or countries or regions and so forth. It is a cluster or group of dimensions that form terrorism or extremism".

5.4.10.4 The international dimension: sharing responsibility

Participant 1 added that extremism is a global problem. He observed that extremists:

> "Don't have a language, a religion, or a country. You can find Americans, Brits, Saudis or any other nationality. Recent events and facts have proven this. Thus, there must be a joint effort, rather than tossing the responsibility and uncalled for accusations around".

Participant 3 echoed this sentiment, commenting:

> "The real problem we face is that sadly, we hear certain countries calling for a join counter-terrorism effort; however, the response inside these countries in reality is as far from it as can be. These acts are under the guise of human rights and freedom of expression".

Furthermore participant 2 added that this work is a national duty that aims to protect the country's citizens and should be treated carefully inside of Saudi Arabia, as well as outside.

5.4.10.5 Eliminating wrong interpretations to justify extremism

Participant 3 further commented that countries must eliminate the justifications for extremism. He stated that most of individuals with extreme ideologies are influenced by the political situation and treatments of fellow Muslims around them. He observed that this gives terrorist organisations the chance to promote extremism. He also stressed that acts against Islam and provocations from the West also fuel such extremism. He stated:

> "What happens in those countries gives terrorists the justifications for extremism on a golden platter and enables their recruiters to do so easily. This is what we have noticed during the issue of the cartoons about the Prophet – peace be upon him- and the disrespectful movie about the Prophet –peace be upon him- and the attempt to burn the Qur'an by the American priest in the America, the banning of hijab, banning minarets. These things and issues are not major in those countries. I lived in American and Britain and I understand Western mentality. These aren't issues of freedom of speech or personal freedoms, nor do they help in bring communities together".

He further explained that such acts need to be stopped and more consideration needs to be given to the feelings of Muslims. He further explained that what happens in Guantanamo prison is still used as a justification for extremism. In a similar response, participant 7 stated the need for the West to become more aware of the Islamic values and the values of moderate Islam to create peace using religion and not barriers.

5.4.10.6 The three M's theory

Participant 10 focused on explaining that extremism could be stopped by using the 'three Ms': – military, money and mindset. He stated that it is reasonable to think that eliminating leaders is a first step in combating terrorism and extremism. He stated that this should be

followed by special measures to stop funding those organisations. Further, he added that this needs to be an international effort and he explained that Saudi Arabia is taking it seriously. Lastly, he stated that the mindset is the last and most important part. The participants explained that this is the role of the Centre, to change ideologies from extremism to moderate Islam. Participant 10 was quoted as saying:

> "This is the first "M" you must create a solution by getting rid of the organisations and extremist leaders. Moreover, you must deal with and solve the problems they face. The second "M" is money. You must take action to stop terrorist funding. Saudi Arabia has a long list of procedures in this regard and established a financial investigative unit that monitors money and money laundering and so forth. Setting strict regulations on charities and donation campaigns is another priority. The third "M" is the mindset. The mentality of this extremist aggressive individual must be dealt with. I mentioned to you that the other strategy that we use for them".

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This research has focused on an investigation of the roles and views of the practitioners based at the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. It has traced, through a literature review, how the extremist activities in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere have, since early 2000, prompted the Saudi Government and all affected countries, to identify and redress the threat of Islamic extremism. Despite criticisms and observations regarding its counter-terrorism strategies, the country has tried to review and implement innovative and culture specific approaches to counter-terrorism.

According to the data gathered from interviews held with the employee participants based at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, the origins of extremism and consequent terrorism are viewed from two perspectives. The first one is the local perception of the relationship between religion and politics, while the second involves government foreign policy, especially its relationship with countries such as the US. According to the interview data on the causes of radicalisation, the main causes of radicalism and extremism are Western foreign policy due to the military and political policies of the US and its allies' in countries such as Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and even in Saudi Arabia itself. The respondents observe that groups such as AQAP, and other extremist groups, view this as a threat to the different religious interpretations and political practices. Part of this extremism, the research interviews reveal, especially in Saudi Arabia, could relate to the fact that local culture has always been protective of its religion. The above stated observations would seem to explain how the participants have developed an understanding of the causes of radicalisation and extremism. Such constructions and definitions of extremism can be

difficult to define conclusively and sometimes, if not always, are constructed on the basis of views and observations. It would be useful for states to review and reflect on the narratives, labels and strategies they use on their opposition since this could either inflame or calm violent extremism and so-called terrorism. A review of CTS has also highlighted the need for states to acknowledge their contribution to the damage they have inflicted on political stability and civilian casualties.

Interestingly, conflicts in countries like Iraq, Syria, Palestine and others have been linked to accusations from the US and its allies and the affected countries in the region, with these nations claiming to be partners in the counter-terrorism effort. It would appear that, currently, the US perception regarding Islamic radicalisation and consequent extremist violence is the product of Sunni-inspired and funded projects to protect Sunni communities from the spread of Shia Islam in the region. According to the participants, the general perception is that extremism results mainly from religious differences and conflicts. On the other hand, there have been accusations by Muslim states, claiming that the US and its allies' counter-terrorism efforts have worsened radicalisation and extremism in the region. This is a theme that has constantly recurred in the interviews.

This research has revealed claims by the participants to the effect that, as stated in the introduction, before 9/11 and after, the US and its allies' hard power measures caused all manner of resentment to be directed at the Saudi Government's alliance with the West, especially the US and the UK, in its fight against Islamic radicalisation and extremism. According to the participants, radicalisation is an emotional reaction in most cases where individuals who may be perceived to have been moderately changed when their fellow religious or community members are affected violently. This is what Boucek (2011) and Horgan and Braddock (2010) refer to as the complication associated with de-radicalisation. It

would appear that the narrative about disengaged youth, in Muslim and non-Muslim communities, is one of the instigators for religious, racial, cultural and emotional sentiments which trigger violent radicalisation. This approach seems to be the solution meant to solve the political problems of the region. This sentiment could explain the appeal of anti-establishment sentiments broadcast online and through social media to Muslims around the world, as well as those in Saudi Arabia. From a CTS perspective, this finding therefore suggests the need for powerful states to be reflexive about their strategies in order to avoid conflict that is fanned by political rhetoric rather than political resolution.

In the context of Saudi Arabia's efforts at de-radicalising extremists or radicalised individuals, the main triggers are political and religious and hence, as stated in the introduction, there is a need to address the phenomenon using political and religious strategies. The participants claim that sentiments regarding religious interpretation tend to clash in this process, and some of the causes of recidivism within individuals deemed to have been de-radicalised at the Prince Mohammed bin Naif for Counselling and Care Centre are said to be fanatical, religious and emotional. This has resulted, in some cases, in the sudden change in attitudes and behaviours of radicalised individuals on their journey towards de-radicalisation and disengagement (Horgan and Braddock, 2010).

The effects of the extremist narrative by scholars and preachers, in radicalising the youth in and outside of Saudi Arabia, are evident on the Internet and in the social media (Asseri, 2009). Combined with the emotional and sectarian political dynamics in the region and internationally, social media narratives and debates have tended to have a devastating impact on the radicalisation of individuals (Hegghammer, 2010). The findings of this research reflect the above conclusions made by the interviewees. As a result, this research reveals that radicalisation is linked to local and international factors. It also highlights that

religious misinterpretation by individuals, young and old, is also a factor that is capitalized upon by extremists to gain ideological support and recruits. It reveals how the process of de-radicalisation has become complicated as a result.

This ethnographic research has also focused on the differing perceptions and interpretations of the Islamic religion. It highlights the differing views regarding religion and how these clash violently. The Saudi Government's solution to this has been the use of political and religious strategies to redress the phenomenon of radicalisation and extremism through the Mohammed bin Naif Centre. As stated in the literature review, the phenomenon of radicalisation is not new to Saudi Arabia. This is due to the differing interpretations of Islam by different individuals, who in some cases express their views and interpretations moderately in the political and religious forums. In some extremist cases such views are expressed violently. This research has therefore focused not only on the positive aspects of the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre, as revealed in the introductory chapters, it has sought to trace the root causes of extremism in relation to religion and the Government's counter-terrorism policy that could render futile the efforts of both the Saudi Government and the Centre. This focus therefore identifies several gaps in knowledge that this research seeks to contribute towards.

There is little empirical research regarding the impact of the military and foreign policy of the US and its allies' in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, except for allusions to it in the media and social media. Despite this, the allegations have been among the factors that have ignited the phenomenon of extremism, which has manifested itself in its worst form through the violent extremist group called ISIS, and other Al-Qaeda inspired extremist groups. It is important to note that there has been a growing area of research regarding the

rise of extremism in Saudi Arabia, the Middle East, and worldwide (Asseri, 2009; Al-Hadlaq, 2010; Hegghammer, 2010; Boucek, 2011; Lacroix, 2011; Bunzel, 2015).

The first research question for this thesis focused on the measures that Saudi Arabia has introduced to combat extremism and terrorism using soft measures. Data on the views of the interviewees in this research has revealed that US-led hard power is one of the key factors that has contributed to radicalisation and extremism, recidivism and, consequently, engagement in extremist violence. It is important, therefore, for this or further studies to explore these views in order to provide an understanding of how the Saudi state responds to the Islamic radicalisation of individuals, and how this phenomenon impacts on Saudi Arabia and internationally.

The second research question focused on the role of soft power in Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism efforts and focuses on the occupational roles of those involved in the delivery of counter-terrorism strategies. This could be a strategy that results from moderate Islamic thinking. It would be interesting to explore when and why the state chose this as its mode of operation and how 'soft' this soft power is. Based on the views of the interviewees, soft power is capable of producing long-term benefits in terms of empirically exploring the causes of and the phenomenon of extremism and how to tackle it. Obtaining official data on the intricacies of the process is a difficult task that has meant that the research has had to rely upon respondent views. The researcher has had to be reflexive, bearing in mind his role as a government worker. Efforts have been made to be as critically analytical as possible in order to avoid generating unreliable information, in an academic sense.

The third research question focuses on the practices and challenges faced by the Mohammed bin Naif Centre's practitioners in countering terrorism.

6.2 The role and responsibility of the participants

A major contribution of this thesis is in its findings regarding the views of the workers involved in the Centre's de-radicalisation programme. It has explored the different factors that lead to extremism, as explained by the practitioners at the Centre. It has traced the dynamics, according to the participants, that explain the causes of radicalisation and extremism, and how it can be addressed and managed. It has highlighted the local and external factors that could lead to the challenges to localised de-radicalisation strategies.

In this context, it is imperative to identify the factors that worsen radicalisation and extremism, making counter-terrorism efforts pointless. The following observations make this an important feature of the research. The details regarding the extensive degree of expertise and length of experience of the people working at the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre reveal the intensity of the Saudi Government's attitude towards tackling radicalisation and extremism in the nation and beyond. This guarantees the relative effectiveness of the Centre and its capacity to adapt to the ever-changing threat and gravity of extremism. The qualifications and experience of the interviewed staff are testament to this claim, as shown in chapter 5. This level of experience and expertise is in recognition of the attractiveness, growth, influence and devastation of the new extremist phenomenon of ISIS, which seems to have overtaken Al-Qaeda in its ideology, impact and violent extremist philosophy (Hegghammer, 2010; Bunzel, 2015).

Faced with such a challenge, the form and function of the counter-terrorism strategies, within and outside of Saudi Arabia, warrant in depth analysis, reflection and review. It is crucial to locate this analysis within the context of the successes and challenges that the de-radicalisation centres face. This has the potential to explain the differences in approach and practice between politically influenced and empirically motivated approaches to studying

politically and religiously motivated radicalisation. According to the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), the specialist workers at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre are empowered to contribute to the advisory and counselling committees (Boucek, 2011).

It is important to note the concerns raised in this research regarding the frustrations of the Centre's efforts in relation to the broader narratives regarding the causes of extremism, as explained locally and internationally in relation to the execution of counter-terrorism strategies. Political solutions to radicalisation and extremism are always located in usually unconvincing political and sociological explanations, which ignore more complicated emotional and psychological factors. Terms such as 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' are framed in the context of troubled individuals from troubled backgrounds, adventurous youth and religiously misguided individuals being influenced by religious extremists. There are wider socio-economic, psychological and cultural variables that could explain the phenomenon of extremism rather than a selective and politically manipulated point of view. This explains the need to look at radicalisation from many perspectives. As explained in chapter two, radicalisation has a long history in its relationship to violence and jihad (Asseri, 2009; Al-Hadlaq, 2010; Lacroix, 2011). This knowledge helps us to understand the motivation of the violent reaction towards the state, and its alliance with the US and its partners in implementing anti-extremist counter-terrorism measures.

Saudi Arabia focuses on the use of localised traditional soft power measures, which include the use of the family and the individual actively working at disengaging and denouncing their former activities and thoughts. The effectiveness of this process is doubted by the Saudi state's partners in the counter-terrorism effort, who prefer to use hard power measures internationally, aggravating the radicalisation of individuals on political and racial grounds (Asseri, 2009; Khashoggi, 2013). This has tended to reverse the process of the

localised de-radicalisation efforts at the Centre, leading to it being described as an ineffective government tool by extremists, the public and some media outlets (Boucek, 2010; Horgan and Braddock, 2010; El-Said and Barrett, 2013). These sectors have lamented the indefinite imprisonment of accused individuals charged with participating in or collaborating with extremists. Generally, the participants raised the common theme of the incongruence of local and US-led counter-terrorism efforts. They highlight the need for a unified approach to counter-terrorism. Such an approach has a universal appeal, and is contextually relevant, rather than made up of disjointed and violent strategies that are characterised by culturally and racially charged consequences. Naturally, such consequences get used by so called 'extremist thinkers' to radicalise individuals.

6.3 Participant views on extremism

Another contribution of this research is based on its findings regarding views on extremism and how to target it. Once again, the history of radicalisation in Saudi Arabia can be traced to the state's formation itself, when there were sometimes violent disagreements and splits on the basis of religious interpretation. This could explain the formations of factional organisations like the JSM and al Sahwa (Rudolph, 2009; Lacroix, 2011).

More recently, the religious, political and philosophical worldviews of these schools of thought, compounded by the growing influence of the Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood, have tended to influence the narrative of Islamic radicalisation and extremism. Political debate has focused on religion as central to the political correctness of the Saudi state's alliances and definitions of jihad. The Saudi Government's focus on de-radicalisation centres on the rather patronising stance of correcting the misled. From an academic and analytical perspective, the process of correction seems to be unilateral, from the top down. Based on the views of the practitioners and on the literature review, one could conclude that one of the causes of

extremism derives from the variously interpreted conceptions of correct Islam and jihad. This phenomenon could be said to be one of the reasons leading to easy recruitment of individuals into terrorist activities.

The central role of the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre is that of Prevention, Rehabilitation and Care (PRAC). However, there have been individuals who have left the Centre unconvinced of its effectiveness in its use of clerics and religious correction (Taylor, 2010; Ballen, 2011: 282). The Government and the clerics allied to it have labelled those critics who prefer hard measures, such as certain media outlets and social media, as extremist (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). It is the patronising, strict and uncompromising stance of the state that has possibly led to some challenges to the de-radicalisation process (Herring, 2008). Such a stance could therefore be derived from a perception that individuals, described as radicalised, have been misled, and hence are benefiting from the de-radicalisation process: hence the term 'beneficiaries' is used to name the inmates.

As stated earlier in the literature review, the use of clerics in the de-radicalisation process has been criticised on the basis of the clerics' affiliation to the state and their bias towards the state'ss perceived 'moderate Islamic philosophy'. This is unacceptable when dealing with fundamentalist extremist views. This observation sets out the challenges for an objective stance on researching and finding solutions for a standard or balanced political approach that could curb extremist thinking and violence. Terms like 'radical', 'extremist' and 'terrorist' have tended to have a stigmatising effect, if not a dangerous one, in the security and even academic contexts locally in Saudi Arabia and internationally (Hoffman, 2006; Asseri, 2009). The perception of the phenomenon of extremist radicalisation can be located in the existing definitions by various political and counter-terrorism agencies within

and across the borders of the state. According to the Saudi state's counter-terrorism strategy, endorsed by Prince Mohammed bin Naif (Lacey, 2009), extremism should be addressed on an international, individual and community level, yet the individual exists in a cultural, religious, political and psychological space. These spaces therefore determine the extent of disengagement or recidivist tendencies, since they are determined by the potential of the individuals to regress at any time. This recidivism can be determined by the social, political and even psychological circumstances of the individual (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). This is the challenge that usually causes recidivism, complicating the process of changing human beings to conform to religious and political demands.

The monitoring of those who are considered to be extremist preachers, and their arrests and dismissals, have led to reduced radicalisation, while the internet and social media has taken over with devastating effect, as seen on YouTube. The control of the media, social media and public awareness campaigns have aided the counter-terrorism effort, yet there is still a rising tide of extremism which can be attributed, as stated earlier, to ethnic and religious biases linked to interpretations of Islamic laws regarding political jihad locally and internationally.

This thesis therefore highlights a new focus on the local measures for de-radicalisation. It suggests that there should be a connection between international measures on counter-terrorism, legal measures and political measures targeted at the interpretation of Islam in relation to jihad. This is because the concept of jihad has been abused, leading to various conceptions of the Islamic rule on the use of fatwas and engaging in jihad. This therefore leaves governments to re-educate the people about the negative potential of this abuse. This necessitates the need to reinforce the inter-relationship between law enforcement and ideology, locally and internationally, in combating terrorism and radicalisation. The

participants acknowledged the need for this relationship, while highlighting the contradictions that beset the international application of counter-terrorism, considering that some extreme measures of incarceration and violence have worsened the phenomenon.

As the practitioners have revealed, there is a need to acknowledge the international nature of the triggers for radicalisation without framing them only on the basis of localised observations and solutions. These factors relate to individualised social and emotional experiences that have been noted to motivate engagement in extremist and terrorist activities. Terms such as 'dis-engaged', 'troubled', 'broken backgrounds' and 'misled' seem to be valid political descriptors to describe people who are susceptible to joining terrorist groups. They may detract from the objective empirical investigations into extremism and radicalisation. This is because there are many variables that explain these tendencies. There are deep-rooted factors such as attacking or defending a culture, a racial stereotype, a religious doctrine, and preserving and protecting an ethnic group. A surface analysis of these can only lead to inadequate de-radicalisation strategies (Horgan, 2009; Boucek, 2010; Hegghammer, 2010).

6.4 An exploration of the background motives of the detainees

It is relevant at this point to link the motives of radicalised individuals in engaging in local, regional and international conflict contexts and how this impacts on individual and community sentiments. As stated in the initial chapters, there are various factors that have stimulated radical and extremist thoughts in individuals that have found themselves engaging in violent extremist conflict situations, and have therefore been detained at the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. Most of these individuals have either had access to influential extremists, such as Al Awlaki, Zarqawi, and bin Laden, that have made them perceive religious, political and international conflicts from radical and extremist perspectives. Additionally, the experiences of communities affected by violence in the

Middle East have developed a certain determination to uphold their religious and political position.

American led commitment and foreign policy has failed in Syria and Iraq. In Iraq, the Maliki Government did not help in calming and resolving the Sunni and Shia differences which blossomed into outright conflict and war which generated the phenomenon of ISIS (Bunzel, 2015). In Syria, the political situation has been fuelled once again by sectarian religious differences that have pitted the different individual jihadi groups against each other on political and religious grounds. This has been fuelled by the never-ending radicalisation that is littering the Internet and social media, fomenting further radicalisation and extremism that has trickled into the minds of Saudi youth and adults (Asseri, 2009). There is a perception by the Government that these individuals are immature and easily influenced (Boucek, 2010). One could argue that there seems to be a deep and calculated method used by the extremists to attract the attention and sympathies of the young and even older people, as shown recently in the increased numbers of people engaging in impromptu attacks, as well as joining Al-Qaeda and ISIS today. According to Bunzel (2015), extremist thinkers purporting to be experts on Islam are contributing to the radicalisation of people on sectarian lines, and managing to turn the sentiments of young people, and even adults, to their extremist designs. As reflected in the data from the interviews, such experts have been identified to be the cause of the confusion of Islamic interpretation and the law, especially on jihad.

The interview data has revealed the participants' views about the influence of the political and violent instability in the Middle East as one of the causes of radicalisation. Events in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria are some of the examples. Terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and recently ISIS are tapping into this sentiment,

encouraging jihad in individuals for them to fight back against perceived injustices. Asseri (2009: 51) and al-Mutlaq (2010: 148) state that the term 'jihad' has several different meanings. One of these refers to the "intense effort of the sword, which corresponds to conflict with enemies of the Islamic community in circumstances where believers are persecuted and their freedom curtailed". As explained above, this manipulated perception of jihad could be the reason why young impressionable individuals find themselves radicalised and engaging in violent political terrorist behaviour.

6.5 The interaction between emotions and radicalisation

Emotions play a vital role in the radicalisation and extremism of individuals, and this has been successfully used by Al-Qaeda, ISIS and the various extremist groups internationally and lately in Syria (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Bunzel, 2015). The Internet and various forms of social media have been used to pass on calculated debates and writings that would attract people to the cause of jihad without any reflection or consideration of the source and effect of the influence. This is what the Centre has to un-teach in the individuals by engaging them in debate and discussions with selected preachers and scholars. This is a Saudi cultural approach used to resolve disagreement by allowing individuals to engage in a debate on social, psychological, religious and political issues that affect them. It is aimed at getting an answer directly through discussion rather than taking orders (Boucek, 2010).

The study of the emotions and the psychology of engaging in jihad is in its early stages (Boucek, 2010) since the impact of the concept of jihadism, which has been a moral form of Islamic protection, has started to trigger a deeper analysis of the loose usage of the term. Extremists have abused this term, for political purposes, to suit their extremist ends (Asseri, 2009; Bunzel, 2015). Initially, engaging in jihad was a well-considered decision taken by responsible Islamic leaders, which when decided upon was followed without

question. Currently it would appear that any individual is able to call for jihad anywhere. Good examples of such instigators can be seen in how bin Laden declared war on his perceived enemies and today we see the ISIS leader doing the same on the Internet and social media. Jihad has been used loosely to the point where it is now just a mobilising call to war that anyone can make using the Internet and social media.

In this study, the participants, describe the detainees as being easily manipulated and impulsive. These descriptions, based on the views of the practitioners, reinforce the role played by emotions in creating extremism in individuals. This is one area that requires deeper study, as there seems to be a research gap in the understanding of emotions and the psychosocial conditions of individuals engaging in extremist behaviour in the name of religion. Researchers, including Horgan and Braddock (2010), Asseri (2009) and Hegghammer (2009), only mention the phenomenon, commenting on generalized views regarding it. There is a need to explore this in a detailed empirical manner that avoids patronising conclusions. This would dismiss explanations of individual engagement in or disengagement from extremism based on political, social, and unsupported religious perceptions alone, which are inadequate. It could be suggested that there is a need for more scholarship into the phenomenon.

According to the participants, being newly co-opted in the religion and being young is the most vulnerable stage for individuals to be radicalised. They state that such individuals seek solace in religion and end up in the extremist claws of terrorist group radicalisation. More people are being radicalised by the effects of sectarian violence without having to repent or be radicalised online. This can be observed in the numbers of combatants that have migrated and are migrating to Iraq and Syria today (Bunzel, 2015). According to Bunzel, experiences and observations of violence influence them to engage in violent extremism.

Based on the above findings, the practitioners conclude that terrorist organisations work strategically to attract specific types of individuals with the desired characteristics that could make them easily exploited through brainwashing techniques where there is no question of motives or debate on what is the correct way to engage in violent extremist activities. This can be seen in the aim of the Mohammed bin Naif Centre to correct the 'deviant' ideology that is influencing Saudi youth (Mohammed bin Naif visitors information pamphlet, 2014)

6.6 How social circumstances play a role in radicalisation

Moreover, the practitioners conclude that the social background of some individuals has an impact on their radicalisation and extremism. The interview data, reflecting the views of the Centre's staff, has revealed that individuals from certain backgrounds are more vulnerable to radicalisation. These conclusions are framed on the basis of sociological perspectives derived from the research conducted by the practitioners and observations as reflected in their academic and professional research projects.

The practitioners observe that relative deprivation, family instability, breakups and poor family relations contribute to individuals' vulnerability to extremism. The interviewees in this research highlighted that some of these individuals have criminal records, poor social skills and poor reflective thinking skills. The above aspects have a negative impact on the psychology of individuals, rendering them vulnerable to easy manipulation by cunning people with terrorist designs. It can be concluded that there is a relationship between negative life experiences and the likelihood of being targeted or easily attracted into extremist thinking and consequent violent behaviour.

6.7 The process of de-radicalisation and how the operations of the Centre work

As far as the functioning of the Centre is concerned, the interviewees stated that extensive programmes ranging from psychological screening tests to after-release programmes were available and were provided over a significant amount of time. Access to diverse programmes over time was deemed necessary to ensure that these programmes are effective, and hence useful to the beneficiaries. Such an endeavour on behalf of the Centre ties in with the philosophy of care which Prince Mohammed bin Naif has advocated for the ultimate benefit of the 'beneficiaries', as they are gradually exposed to the extremist rehabilitation programme (Lacey, 2009: 257). In fact, the motto of the Centre is to ensure that all beneficiaries are cared for, counselled, supported and subsequently rehabilitated.

These findings are supported by al-Abdallah (2010), and Professor al-Attayan, one of the Centre's psychologists. He observes that the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre has significantly invested in the rehabilitation of individuals involved in violent terrorist activities through the use of a number of strategies, rather than merely punishing them into imprisonment. This approach was adopted after reflections on the previous approaches that used hard measures, as well as on the advice based on the research done by the Advisory Committee after 2004, which found that most of the radicalised individuals were presumed to be victims that had been "lied to and misled by the extremist into straying away from true Islam" (Boucek, 2009).

Another finding from this research highlights the importance given to psychological screening at the Centre, with the aim of understanding the beneficiaries' psychological wellbeing and mental capacities. The practitioners state that, by using such an approach, it

seems that the Centre appreciates the adoption of a multifaceted attitude to the rehabilitation of the beneficiaries by giving due recognition to the need to also incorporate a psychological perspective within a religious framework. They claim that doing so helps the Centre to be in a better position to understand its detainees and hence subsequently be better able to tailor specific rehabilitation programmes according to their needs, both prior to and after psychological screening. The way in which the rehabilitation programmes are structured is also noteworthy, since the practitioners state that careful attention is paid to making sure that the detainees are clearly informed of what to expect from the programmes. Furthermore, specific targets are set to measure their success, in order to have an insight into the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes. Moreover, positive behaviours are reinforced by the Centre, which also provides beneficiaries with various opportunities for re-integration into society. In addition, this is achieved by allowing the beneficiaries to attend several social events, even with their families.

According to Sullivan (2015), the Saudi Government essentially puts each inmate's family on welfare and has the philosophy that "Just because someone is a criminal, we do not punish his family, too". Ahmed, an official at one of the affiliate prisons, said, "Our strategy is to take care of these people to make the community better. This is what Islam tells us to do". Therefore, based on the above, it could be suggested that the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre strives to rehabilitate the offenders and does not treat them as outcasts from society. Moreover, a family system approach (Bowen, 1950) is adopted by the Centre, which welcomes the involvement of the family of each detainee on various levels for the sole benefit of the latter. In addition, the Centre encourages family visits on special occasions, so that the detainees' efforts to integrate in the society are maximised and supported. Titelman (2014) has shown a positive relationship between the integration of a family system approach and the betterment of individuals across different psychological

dimensions and in diverse settings. Furthermore, the Centre addresses family problems in order to bridge any gap in differences between family members, which could potentially have a negative impact on the rehabilitation of the offender.

A description of the Centre's main focus also lays considerable emphasis on the need to restore confidence, self-belief and positive thinking in the detainees with the help of psychologists. The concept of counselling complements the traditional approach used in Saudi society. This is based on the notion of co-operation and persuasion (Asseri, 2009: 105). In addition, the psychologists draw attention to the need to treat the detainees as misled individuals rather than offenders, by providing them with a friendly and supportive environment at the Centre. In doing so, it could be suggested that they are working towards preventing the self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) from occurring by not labelling them as offenders in the first place, but rather as misguided people with a right to correction. This can certainly facilitate their rehabilitation. Although not probed in further detail, all these positive endeavours reflect the acceptance of a long-lasting inter-relationship between Islam and various psychological perspectives that combine and complement each other for the well-being of the individual. One participant confirmed this idea by suggesting that positive thinking is part of Islamic values.

Moreover, the Centre uses education as a tool to help the beneficiaries get better as well as reintegrate into society. Al-Hadlaq (2011: 61) identifies more than six teaching programmes that touch upon religion, psychology, politics and social studies. Lectures and seminars are conducted and the detainees are given opportunities to increase their knowledge of various aspects of Islamic scholarship and life, as well as the nature of terrorism and its adverse effects. Along the same lines, they are also taught the importance of adopting a psychological perspective in life whereby they become gradually aware that different people

have different views and hence can choose to live differently, which is in fact their right. This works in line with the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). It could be argued that giving these detainees such an outlook on life through education can indeed push them to reflect on the world around them as well as their own beliefs, which could help to inculcate tolerance and acceptance. This can certainly reinforce their rehabilitation process and even limit any form of relapse where they may feel tempted to resort back to violence after they leave the Centre. Changes occurring on a cognitive rather than a purely behavioural level tend to have a longer lasting effect on individuals' ways of thinking (Longmore and Worrell, 2007).

However, according to some participants, there were a number of beneficiaries who were resistant to the idea of blending Islam with psychology, as the latter tends to be largely associated with Western approaches and is seen as a threat to Islamic traditions. Interestingly, it has been noted that Al-Qaeda uses a similar approach as the above (Lacey 2009; El-Said and Barrett, 2013), a process which also creates anti-Western and fanatical religious interpretations regarding jihad. Professor Turki Al-Attayan plays a key role in discrediting terrorist aims and goals designed in the name of Islam (al-Abdallah, 2010). Trying to forge and use an interdisciplinary approach, that is, one underlying the recognition of the use of psychology as part of Islamic teaching, can perhaps contribute to the combating of extremism or radicalisation through the promotion of moderate Islamic principles. Moreover, this was proposed by the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) (2010), which argued strongly in favour of the soft power approach against terrorism. Furthermore, as stated by some participants, psychological education is also useful, as it has the power to curb uncontrolled emotions and impulsive extremist tendencies. With this in mind, it could be suggested that the Saudi culture should perhaps advocate strongly for the inclusion of psychological education in Islamic teachings for all Saudi citizens. This

could be done with special attention given to the younger generation, who are more likely to be targeted and influenced by terrorist organisations into becoming potential extremists than mature and reflective adults.

In doing so, the Saudi state will be in a better position to support the Centre's efforts while also recognising the need to limit its funding of a strict and unforgiving version of Islam on a global level. A general aftercare programme has been implemented in the Centre and, according to the interviewees, it is mainly related to Islamic values and psychological guidance as well as sociological programmes. Islamic laws are taught to the beneficiaries, and individual sessions with specialists are also provided to allow them to engage in an open dialogue. Previous research by House (2012: 202) and Boucek (2009: 217) has also reported that open discussions about key radicalisation and religious issues between the officials and the detainees were largely promoted. This worked in some cases with co-operative individuals, whereas some 'die-hard extremists' denounced it as a centre for forcing individuals to be docile. This could be useful, as detainees discuss and address any concerns, unfounded beliefs, questions and so on, which could help them to have a more rational and accurate understanding of an Islam which is untainted by violence and terrorism. According to Al-Hadlaq (2011: 61-2), this religious counselling programme helps to indicate to the detainees what the right way to interpret religious doctrines is based on. By redressing the detainees' perceptions of a violent Islam and empowering them to adapt to their new social environment, the Centre releases them back into society and also works on their personal and social skills. This is claimed to work effectively towards ensuring that the de-radicalisation programme, a considerable new rehabilitation strategy, is successful (Al-Hadlaq, 2010; El-Said and Barrett, 2013). According to Boucek (2009: 213) and the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) document (2010), working on the detainees' social skills to empower them can help them have a better life, deal with

stigmatisation, and re-integrate into society. Significant interest in the implementation of this programme at the Centre has been shown by various organisations. For instance, according to El-Said and Barrett (2013), Boucek (2011) and Lacey (2009: 25) many international human rights organisations and scholars have visited the Centre to study and review the process of de-radicalising that the beneficiaries go through. Furthermore, Western governments, such as Britain, the USA and France, have equally acknowledged the potential of this programme in bringing a massive contribution to the field of counter-terrorism (Gulf News, 2007).

It can also be argued that, with the support and positive intervention of the Government, the de-radicalisation programme of the Centre can be further expanded for the benefit of the detainees and the safety of the general population, as well as all Muslim states actively involved in counter-terrorism. Some scholars highlighted that the PRAC programme has received considerable attention and support from the Government and is now viewed as a relatively successful approach for rehabilitating and healing the detainees. In line with the aforementioned report, the participants also pointed to the availability of various sports and educational activities to the beneficiaries with an aim to pave their way towards a successful integration in wider society, including the job market, after their release. In fact, this strategy is strongly founded in religious debate and education, as it helps the detainees to familiarise themselves with the different ways in which Muslims should relate to non-Muslims, with a particular emphasis on how to challenge the *takfiri* ideology (El-Said and Barrett, 2013: 212-3). The use of art has been reported as forming an integral part of the rehabilitation of the detainees at the Centre. House (2012: 202) states that:

> "Art is the expression to find out what is in the minds of those undergoing rehabilitation. Even the bearded religious sheikh who works with the so-called beneficiaries was positive about art".

In other words, drawing pictures can act as a window to the feelings of radicalised individuals undergoing rehabilitation. The individuals are actually given a means through which they can cope with their inner psychological state and hence externalise their thoughts and emotions (Boucek, 2011; ICPVTR, 2010; Boucek, 2011; El-Said and Barrett, 2013), which is also believed to be part of their healing process.

As mentioned previously, family care is one of the main factors at the Centre. In particular, parents have been identified as playing a key role in protecting its members from radicalisation (Lacey, 2009; Al-Hadlaq, 2010; Boucek, 2010; El-Said and Barrett, 2013). That is, as stated by the participants, the family contributes largely to the reintegration of the detainee into society. Saudi culture considers the family as an essential element for the positive behavioural development of the individual. Its main philosophy states the importance of care. According to Prince Mohammed bin Naif, it is of the utmost priority to care for the beneficiaries during the whole process of the extremist rehabilitation programme (Lacey, 2009: 257). The range of opportunities provided to the beneficiaries during their aftercare programme has been witnessed in Ireland as an example of success. The Government there is actively involved in creating various opportunities for former terrorist activists in an endeavour to help them re-integrate into society (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). It is essential to note that the reform programme discussed in this thesis has been positively evaluated and described by observers as one which is professionally run, fully equipped, well-staffed and well managed (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; ICPVTR, 2010; El-Said and Barrett, 2013). Hence, it is difficult to undermine its potential for being classed as a highly successful and effective way to deal with extremists. There is a need, though, to bear in mind the complex variables that are emerging to nullify the Centre's efforts. Some of these variables can range from the international politics and social conflicts that are currently flaring up in the region that end up affecting the local thinking of young Saudis. Al-Hadlaq (2011: 59), Horgan and

Braddock (2010), Khan (2010), and Stracke (2007) concur that the establishment of the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre is likely to be a success with regards to helping former terrorists who are receptive to guidance towards becoming better human beings, willing to reintegrate into mainstream culture.

Furthermore, in line with past empirical observations, the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre benefits from the support of local specialist psychologists, social scientists, psychiatrists, researchers and social workers (Asseri, 2009: 88; Boucek, 2009: 217; Al-Hadlaq, 2010: 64), which together also contribute to the success of its de-radicalisation programme. By also giving due attention to the self-development of the detainees by helping them gain life skills, including for work purposes as previously documented by Al-Hadlaq (2011: 64) and Boucek (2011: 84), the Centre is striving for the successful reintegration of its detainees in society. Hence, it could be argued that perhaps its success relies on the extent to which these individuals are able to do so. There seems to be a dearth in statistical information and any other reliable source of data to measure the success rate of the de-radicalisation programme of the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. Future research needs to address this gap in knowledge.

6.8 Local and international acceptance of the soft power strategy

All the participants emphasized the uniqueness, effectiveness and hence success of the Centre on both a global and international level, despite the fact that the Centre is relatively new. This has been acknowledged by previous research on the Centre (Gulf News, 2007; Lacey, 2009: 256). The sources attribute its success to the nature of its rehabilitation programme, in the sense that it is different, as it strongly addresses the needs of the beneficiaries with the aim of facilitating their re-integration into society following their release. The philosophy of providing care as projected by Prince Mohammed bin Naif, characterizes the approach used

by the Centre (Lacey, 2009). This is in sharp contrast to the traditional punitive way in which extremists are usually treated. The Centre has also been compared to other similar institutions across various other countries. As stated by the participants, its uniqueness still remains in the limelight of counter-terrorism activities. This is perhaps mainly because it relies on a holistic approach that encompasses various principles such as care, positive thinking, education, the dissemination of moderate Islam and the correction of false religious Islamic beliefs.

With regards to the role played by the media and social media in the dissemination of information about the Centre, overall this was perceived by the participants to be positive. However, the participants also expressed concerns about the fact that sometimes the media and social media portrays the Centre's work as reinforcing the negative actions of the extremists through providing them with a considerable amount of financial, medical and even social support on many levels, when in some cases these same beneficiaries can be recidivist. The participants disputed the criticism; they fully support the Centre's positive ideologies and its positive approach. This process is characterised by the de-radicalisation programme and the need to keep pushing for the after-care programme with all the benefits that it entails for the detainees to successfully re-integrate in society after their release. Thus, according to the participants, the media should recognize the above and also encourage public awareness of this matter to further support the efforts of the Centre in making Saudi society a safer place to live in without relying on any form of violence towards anyone.

6.9 Key challenges of the job

Some interesting findings reported by the participants helped to reveal an insight into some challenges that they faced at the Centre in relation to the successful implementation of the soft power strategy. Some of the participants drew attention to the need to build rapport with the beneficiaries in order for them to trust the work carried out by the Centre. Fink and El-

Said (2011) and Lankford and Gillespie (2011) highlight the need to reinforce an in-depth, individualised care programme that is not solely based on political and religious correction. As such, they suggest that there be room for improvement as far as the design of the Centre's de-radicalisation programme is concerned.

Another key challenge was the number of reported cases of extremists who did not embrace the programme, and some of who were subsequently found to resort back to violence following their release. This is a key challenge for the Centre. In addition, it attracts a lot of political debate and media attention. As pointed out by House (2012: 202), Boucek (2011), Rubin (2011: 27), Horgan and Braddock (2010), and Seifert (2010), there is no general consensus regarding the extent to which individuals can be fully de-radicalised. Horgan and Braddock (2010) observe that concluding that an individual has been fully de-radicalised involves complex, if not impossible, processes to reach such a conclusion, since individual circumstances and psychologies are complex and different. They use examples from their observations of the Irish Republican Army during the Irish conflict and conclude that recidivism can be an easy process. In fact, there could be many other factors, perhaps not directly within the control of the Centre's de-radicalisation programme, that could also influence an extremist to go back to previous behaviours (Al-Hadlaq 2010: 60; Horgan and Braddock 2010; Boucek, 2011; Lankford and Gillespie, 2011; House, 2012: 203).

It has been argued that the success of programmes at the Centre may be influenced by political events and motives, and much less by scientific research and measurement (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Boucek, 2011; House, 2012: 203-5). According to the practitioners, rehabilitating the inmates is as equally complex as the intricate, religious interpretations, psychological and social variables that make managing the inmates a challenging task. The state expects the 'beneficiaries' to change by offering them many incentives for example

employment, business opportunities and others. This is in addition to the in-house courses at the Centre itself.

Despite the complexities of attempting to de-radicalise individuals, the state expects the disengagement to be total. There is no secret about the fact that the opposite can happen if they re-engage in violence. As Horgan and Braddock (2010) assert, de-radicalisation cannot be total but there is need to guarantee the reduction of risk. Hard measures are also used in the form of prison sentences and worse. As a result of the aforementioned challenge, Al-Hadlaq (2011: 60) and Lankford and Gillespie (2011) state that the Centre might feel pressured by the Government and society in general to prove its effectiveness. However, the practitioners state that the Centre takes specific measures, such as isolating extremists, to prevent relapse (Fatany, 2004). Moreover, the use of hard power strategies (Lacey, 2009: 258) to deal with this situation has proved to be reasonably successful (Stracke, 2007).

The participants have made some criticisms concerning the design of the programme (for example, its short duration and a need to set up a more sensitive classification system of the detainees according to their individual needs). These shortcomings highlight the importance of evaluating the Centre's de-radicalisation programme on an on-going basis, while also addressing any identified weaknesses as observed and reported by those working at the Centre. This is an important fact, especially when faced by the rise and spread of the influence of ISIS and Al-Qaeda in the creation of the so-called Caliphate.

Other issues such as a lack of public awareness of the causes and effects of radicalisation, the use of media coverage by the extremists themselves to persuade the younger generation, and events in the regional conflict zones, are all significant enough to provide a great challenge to the efforts of the Centre. These factors have also been reported, but with no indication of possible solutions. In addition, although an aftercare programme is

offered by the Centre, some participants feel that there is still scope for further improvement in relation to the subsequent care facilities and support available to individual detainees and their families, following their rehabilitation at the Centre.

All the above seem indicative of the specific areas that need some intervention on behalf of the Government, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of the de-radicalisation programme. Furthermore, a number of participants expressed concerns about the role played by international politics in fuelling terrorism and extremism in various countries by relying on political solutions, which only precipitate violence. Moreover, Khashoggi (2013) raises this issue, observing that terrorism is indirectly promoted by the perceived double standard of the US, which subsequently results in what he calls 'the angry Muslim mindset'. As such, it could be argued that although the Centre is actively engaged in counter-terrorism, these double standards could counteract their efforts at eradicating extremism and radicalisation.

Part of this research's data, especially extracted from the practitioners, indicates that some detainees, especially the young and immature, believed that it was an obligation for them to be part of the jihad, regardless of the opposing views from their families and even the Government. This seems to be a challenge for the Centre to deal with. Hence, perhaps by further encouraging the role played by the committee of clerics in discussing the detainees' views and beliefs in justifying their violent acts for a 'good cause', their reasoning on this matter could be challenged by familiarising them with state-sanctioned expectations, and clarifications of different political and religious views (Horgan and Braddock, 2010; Al-Hadlaq, 2011). This can be a difficult point, bearing in mind that these individuals may disagree with the state.

Many participants advocated a need to promote moderate Islam through an open dialogue between themselves and the general public, in order to also address any misconceptions about the de-radicalisation programme. However, while the media seems to be engaged in highlighting the weaknesses of the programme (Seifert, 2010; Fatany, 2014), it does not seem to be actively involved in helping the Centre to promote an awareness of the positive aspects regarding the usefulness and strengths of the programme. There is a need for government action in practising openness and publicising the Centre in a positive light. Furthermore, input from the Government is essential with regard to ensuring that social problems are addressed internationally to ensure no radicalisation attempts are made by other governments' institutions.

Counselling should be made available to dysfunctional families to avoid the escalation of extremism in the country. Although this point was raised by some participants who stressed the importance of using a combination of counter-terrorism strategies, previous literature which fully supports this strategy of battling extremism using both hard and soft approaches positively reflects the implementation of both a 'security strategy' and 'advocacy and advisory strategies' (Ansary, 2008). Overall, it was generally agreed by most of the participants that they were allowed enough flexibility to judge the use of the best strategy using their expertise and work experience for the betterment of the beneficiaries, based on the latter's needs. Nevertheless, they emphasized the need to be trusted and valued, enabling them to undertake their jobs without any interference. Flexibility was perceived as a desirable work ethic at the Centre, although not at the expense of safety.

With regards to the reported challenges in the prevention of 'Wetr' (PRAC) programme, some participants explained that it is difficult for them to effectively deal with individual differences among the detainees, which could be a result of a lack of training in

this area. In addition, the Centre is not seen as making it easy for them to cope with this issue, as there appears to be no categorisation of the beneficiaries according to their levels of radicalisation and extremism.

Furthermore, they indicated that more work remains to be carried out following the release of the detainees, as the latter are faced with various challenges, such as resistance from the wider society in accepting them. Moreover, a major concern still exists regarding the potential negative influences from terrorist organisations aimed at attracting them back to extremist actions. Some difficulties were highlighted regarding the role played by the Islamic clerics and scholars at the Centre, such as a lack of commitment or a minimal attempt on their behalf to condemn all bombings from an Islamic perspective. Thus, it could be suggested that the collaborative work between these scholars and the Centre needs to be further strengthened to ensure that the detainees fully benefit from their religious teachings.

6.10 The impact of the job on a personal level and the threat to participant security

In general, all the participants reported a positive attitude towards their work and they also enjoyed the positive influence of their job on themselves as well as their personal life. They seemed to be appreciative of the success rate of the Centre, in particular the use of the soft power strategy, which in their opinion defines the Centre. The participants seem to invest fully in their roles through research and time. They consider their job to be more than just a means of earning a living.

Such dedication again reflects the philosophy of care and patriotism (Lacey, 2009: 257) which characterises Saudi society in general, whereby people are socialised to move away from a self-centred attitude to allow the recognition and accommodation of the needs of

others, especially those seeking help to become better individuals, for the interest of the whole country. Some participants have also felt empowered thanks to the wide array of personal benefits that their job provides, such as increased knowledge, work experience, a chance to reassess their own personal beliefs about extremism and a boost in their self-confidence. They have developed improved interpersonal skills, a more positive outlook on life and transferrable work skills to other life spheres, including their family lives.

However, reconciling their work with their family life seemed to be challenging as they felt that they had limited social time, especially with their family, as a result of their commitment to their job. This was related to the issue of understaffing at the Centre. Moreover, some participants were also concerned about the use of deception by the detainees in making the staff believe their innocence, which in some cases unfortunately did work.

With the above findings in mind, it could be suggested that the Centre has to review its practices with regard to the new threats and current observations as highlighted in this research, and address them with the ultimate aim of increasing the success rate of the de-radicalisation programme while simultaneously considering the welfare of the workers. Despite the sensitive nature of their job, all the participants declared that they did not perceive any threat to their personal life both inside and outside the Centre. Such confident declarations, it could be argued, could reflect a robust security system at the Centre: all the workers claim that the institution seems to be fully equipped in terms of respecting the safety measures that have been put in place for safeguarding everyone. Some of the practitioners have claimed that Al-Qaeda has listed their names on the Internet, and that some former inmates have hinted that they might harm them. From the view of the participants, none have been affected violently by these threats.

6.11 Findings and contribution to new knowledge

The triggers for extremist thinking can be linked to the way Islam as a religion, and as a culture, has been managed by different Muslim communities. Historically, it would appear that there have been different interpretations of Islam, which have included the very strict *takfiri*-based principles of non-moderate and intolerant purist Islamic practices that have been claimed to date back to the early days of the formation and expansion of the religion (Bunzel, 2015). This preservation of purity, then and now, has led to the various academic interpretations and debates of what is the 'acceptable' form of moderate Islamic practice.

There are moderate, extreme and 'deviant' forms of the religion. These different categories of Islam seem to always clash and get misused in cases of conflict between communities practising them. Moreover, the US understanding and reporting of politics and religion in Saudi, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, as well as current purist interpretations of Islam by so called Islamic scholars, have led to the misuse and abuse of religious and political issues for political gain. This can be seen in the criticisms of current governance being criticised by the opposition from religious and political perspectives. If possible, it is therefore paramount to have an Arab-centric and diplomatic platform to redress religious and political differences as has been shown recently on the summit regarding the political upheavals in Yemen. This could help to decelerate the frequency of the wars that are the result of such differences through diplomatic platforms.

Currently, the situation in affected countries such as Iraq and Syria is very emotionally charged and based along sectarian lines; only moderate strategies such as diplomacy and peaceful international co-operation can correct it. Without this, there will always be worsened extremism as the different religious sectors fight for control over the region, with genocide as a consequence in the name of what is interpreted as the 'true'

religion (Bunzel, 2015). Such stances have led to the creation of factional fighting that has led to the rise of organisations such as Al-Qaeda. This needs further and deeper scholarship and research in order to stop the tide of emotional and violent extremism, which is affecting everyone currently. The concept and practice of jihad seems to have been abused and used loosely and by almost anyone, something that once again needs responsible Islamic leaders to revisit and resolve it, in order to guarantee the correct principles, especially in situations of conflict. This can be done with the aim of applying the correct rules for the correct practices of the preservation of communities and their religion.

6.12 Addressing discontent

On a broad level, local extremism in Saudi Arabia is a product of the international events that have tended to affect regional and local religious sentiments. The events in Iraq, Palestine and Syria, to name a few, always precipitate radicalisation and leads to violent terrorism in individuals. As stated before, de-radicalisation centres such as the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre operate in the context of national and international policy and politics. De-radicalisation programmes implemented in these places are a product of the country's political will to stop and control political and religious extremism. With the latest events unfolding in Yemen, it would seem that this study is just an initial and minor investigation into the causes and consequences of religious radicalisation and extremism. The Centre's beneficiaries can only benefit if emotional and extremist sentiments are controlled at international and community levels. Failure to do this only leads to individuals being unpredictable in their behaviour and outlook on political and religious issues, as a result of which they would be exposed to engaging in what they see fit if they perceive themselves, their community and religion to be under threat. The CTS as juxtaposed against traditional security studies have revealed the need to reappraise the academic approach to studying

Islamic radicalisation bearing in mind the cultural, political and religious influences on governance in such contexts.

6.13 Possibilities for future research

It is important to trace the origins of radicalisation and how this has developed into a form of mobilisation and violation of Islamic youth and culture. There is a need for further research into the causes of this current culture in order to implement better soft power based prevention and management strategies that will stop extremism while maintaining healthy community and international relations. Recently, there have been violent eruptions not only in Iraq, Libya, Palestine and Syria, but also in Yemen. It is important to trace the origins of this, because the tensions that cause radicalisation and extremism are born out of these political and religious clashes. The history of the co-existence between various political and religious sects must be studied with the view of implementing the practice of governmental moderation. This is a reflexive process that demands political will in the leaders. Without this, parts of the Middle East, it would appear, will burn perennially.

6.14 Conclusion

This research started as an investigation into radicalisation as caused by the Al-Qaeda organisation. According to the practitioners, the events in neighbouring countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen seem to be part of the contributing factors for radicalisation. These events are part of the reasons why the de-radicalisation process gets complicated. The project has revealed in some detail the strategies and practices implemented at one of the de-radicalisation centres in Saudi Arabia. It has revealed, through its literature review, the historical context of radicalisation and extremism as based on religious interpretation. It has also revealed the Mohammed bin Naif Centre's practitioners' views on the origins and

development of the causes and negative effects of extremist thinking, and how this has developed into a complex threat to moderate politics and religious practice. A reflexive stance has also been used in order to study the phenomenon of terrorism from a critical perspective with the view of enlightening academics and state leaders of the need to be aware of their role in preventing or precipitating violent reactions.

It would appear that the Saudi strategy of mainly moderate counter-terrorism could be part of the answer for preventing and managing extremism, since the country's policy is moderate while faced with the extremist ideologies that are radicalising its population. The study has revealed the challenges of de-radicalising individuals from the point of view of the practitioners involved in the process at the Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre. There have been comments from the practitioners relating to the impact of local, regional and international factors on the radicalisation of individuals. The threat of social media on naïve Muslims has been raised, setting the challenge for responsible moderate leaders to implement what can best be done to stop the tide of radicalisation under the guise of preserving religious identity and political survival. The psychology of radicalised individuals has been studied both in the literature review and in the fieldwork for this thesis, revealing that this is a complex phenomenon that warrants further and deeper CTS and research.

It is obvious that a study of this nature, faced with so many current challenging factors on the political landscape regionally today in Palestine, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq, could render it just a small part of a massive local and international political and religious phenomenon. It is paramount that there be an international political will to solve the religious, social and political tensions which are currently threatening the very existence of communities and nations. As outlined in the research questions for this thesis, it is vital to

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examine the role of de-radicalisation in a volatile political context that is caused by both state violence and extremist terrorism on social media, and their influence in neighbouring countries and everywhere. On a macro level, reflexivity and political will, from all the nations concerned, is crucial in making de-radicalisation efforts meaningful. Otherwise such institutions will be made irrelevant, especially in a context where political leadership and international co-operation is being challenged and undermined by extremist thinking.

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Appendices

A. Consent Form

02/12/2013

The School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research (SSPSSR)

(Research consent form)

Counter terrorism in Saudi Arabia:
Narratives, Practices and Challenges

Mohammad Al Maawi   Dr. Simon Cottee

PhD student   Supervisor

ma549@kent.ac.uk   s.cottee@kent.ac.uk

01227 824277

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Mohammad Al Maawi and I am currently a PhD student in The School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research (SSPSSR), Faculty of Social Science at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom. In order for me to obtain my degree I am conducting a research study on **Counter terrorism in Saudi Arabia.**

Subsequently, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview. Before you decide whether or not to take part in this interview, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. If you require any further information or if there are any parts that are not clear, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Please take time to read the following and decide whether or not you wish to take part in this interview:

My research is about '**Counter terrorism in Saudi Arabia: Narratives, Practices and Challenges**'. **This research assessment will focus on terrorism within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia revealing how it is viewed and combated**. The general aim of this current research is to provide a **sociological account** of the recent innovations in Saudi Arabia's response to terrorism.

<u>The Objectives of this study are:</u>

- To explore the soft power strategy in Saudi Arabia and how far it has been used to counter-terrorism.
- To study the occupational roles of those involved in the delivery of strategies to counter-terrorism in Saudi Arabia.
- To examine the role of the practices and challenges faced in countering terrorist activities in the Saudi state.

The University of Kent is organising the study which is funded by the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London.

The interview is completely voluntary and will take approximately one hour to complete. Participants are NOT required to provide any specific personal biographical information. All interviews will be **audio recorded** and data held in accordance with data protection legislation, all files will be password protected with paper records safely stored, and eventually destroyed after the final submission of the study. Therefore, all information will be confidential and only accessed by myself, the member of faculty named above and members of the School's Research Ethics Advisory Group at SSPSSR at the University of Kent.

If you decide to take part in the study you are still free to withdraw at anytime.

Yours in Research

Mohammad Al Maawi

Signature…………………………………   Date…………………………………

B. Interview Protocol

The Questions for the Interview

Role and responsibility:

5) Can you give me some information about your educational background, experience and role (personal input) at this centre?

6) How did you get involved in this job?

7) What are your actual duties/roles in the de-radicalisation process?

8) Personally, what motivates you to be part of this process?

Views on extremism and how to target it:

8) What does de-radicalisation mean to you, how is your job related to this?

9) What is your understanding of Soft Power in relation to countering extremism?

10) What is the general background and motivation of the inmates?

11) What are your views regarding the process of de-radicalisation?

12) How does the centre operate in relation to other sectors/agencies (views)?

13) What are your views about the International and local acceptance of the strategy?

14) What are your views on the portrayal of the centre in the different media contexts?

Key challenges in the job:

7) Can you tell me more about the programme used at this centre? What are the problems and challenges facing the Implementation process of soft-power?

8) Who are the significant people that are used (professionals) in the intervention strategy and why?

9) What is your view of the interpretation of Islam by the Islamist extremists?

10) How can violent extremism be eradicated?

11) Are there situations when you can use different approaches in your role without following set guidelines and rules? Can you use different methods of de-radicalising individuals?

12) What are your views regarding the challenges to PRAC. Can anything be improved or changed?

Personal issues/security (Impact of job on personal life)

5) What are your views on the success and the challenges faced by **you** as a facilitator and the centre's strategies for de-radicalisation?

6) How does this have an effect on your **thinking** and **way of life**?

7) What are your views about the safety of being involved in this kind of job?

8) Do you have anything to add to this interview?

C. Centre Information

الإدارة العامة المركز محمد بن نايف للمناصحة والرعاية

General Administration of Mohammed
bin Nayef Centre For Advise and Care

His Royal Highness Prince
Mohammed bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

Minister of the Interior

He holds the post of Minister of Interior, and he is a son of the late Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz – the former Minister of Interior .

He was born in August 30, 1959, in the city of Jeddah. Prince Mohammed received elementary, intermediate and secondary education at Al-Asimah Institute in Riyadh. He was awarded bachelor's degree in political sciences from Lewis and Clark College in the United States of America in 1401H. He also had a number of local and international advanced military courses on terrorism .

Prince Mohammed had worked in the private sector before a royal order was issued on dated October 13, 1999, appointing him as Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs (Excellent Rank).

On October 16, 1999, Crown Prince, Deputy Premier and Commander of the National Guard King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz granted Prince Mohammed the membership of the Supreme Committee for Information.

In Jumada I 4, 1425H, a royal order was issued, appointing Prince Mohammed as Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs at (Minister Rank).
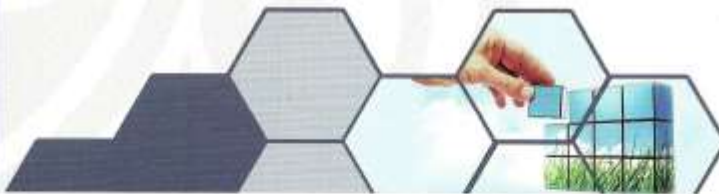
Prince Mohammed has been in charge of the terrorism file since 2002.

The Center is a human, education, rehabilitation institution that aims at correcting ideologies, developing knowledge and reforming behavior through a set of programs supervised by well-educated persons specialized invarious disciplines.

The establishment of the Center had gone through three phases : (Phase I); In 25/11/1425H, it was named Advice Committees (Phase II); In 12/10/1427H, it was renamed Prince Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Advice and Care (Phase III); it was renamed General Administration of Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Advice and Care.

The Center in Lines

Vision

To be a world class model that focuses on achieving intellectual security based on the moderateness of Islam and the enhancement of national loyalty.

Mission

To contribute to the Kingdom's efforts in preventing deviant ideology and rehabilitating deviant groups through scientific and practical programs.

Objective

To contribute to spreading the concept of moderation, rejecting extremism, and achieving intellectual, psychological and social balance for the targeted groups.

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The Center's Supreme Council :

His Royal Highness the Minister of Interior,	President.
Director General of the General Investigation,	Vice President.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Civil Service,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and Information,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labor,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs,	Member.
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance,	Member.
A Number of Assistant Directors of Related Departments.	

The Center's Supreme Council is honored to invite to its membership His Eminency the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and two dignitaries selected by His Royal Highness the President.

General Administration of Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Advice and Care

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Work Strategy:

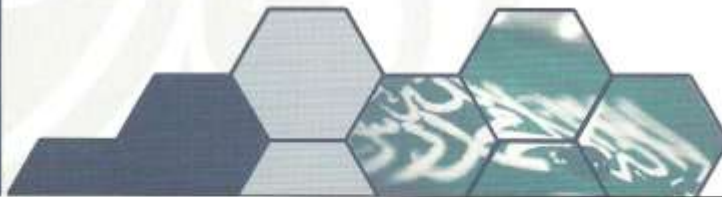The work strategy is carried out in three integral stages as follows:

Prevention : through Advice Program.
Rehabilitation : through Care and Rehabilitation Program.
Care : through Subsequent Care Program.

The three programs complete each other in rehabilitating the beneficiaries, depending on the individual educational or social programs they went through during their imprisonment.

It is worth mentioning that individuals within the center are referred to as beneficiaries not prisoners once they are transferred to the General Administration of Prince Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Advice and Care.

Implementation Phases :

To contribute to the efforts that aim at preventing deviant ideology and rehabilitating deviant groups through scientific and practical programs.

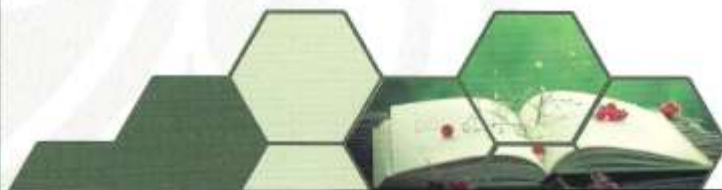| Care	Rehabilitation	Advice
Pre-care	Educational Programs	Preventive Course (outside prison)
Aftercare	Training Programs	Curative Course (inside prison)
	Culture and Sports Programs	

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Phase I   **Prevention**

Prevention

Advice Programs :

They aim at correcting the deviant ideology embraced by targeted groups inside and outside prisons, in accordance with the teachings and moderateness of the true Islam.

They consist of a number of preventive and curative programs that target each case individually or collectively. They also concentrate on responding to the deviant ideology of targeted groups.

Implementation Mechanism of Advice Programs

Advice through the following programs :

I: Preventive Programs :

Awareness Advice: through lectures, seminars and meetings in regions and governorates.

Directed Advice: through dialogue sessions with some families and individuals at their homes in regions and governorates throughout the Kingdom.

Electronic Advice: through internet sites that aim at contributing to the efforts of advice using the internet to correct deviant ideology and misconceptions.

II: Curative Programs:

Individual Advice : through individual dialog sessions with male prisoners inside the prison.

Scientific Courses: systematic lectures by members of Advice Committees inside the prison.

Women Advice : through individual dialogue sessions with female prisoners inside the prison by female specialists.

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Phase II   **Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation

Care and Rehabilitation Programs :

They aim at rehabilitating beneficiaries referred to the Center from prisons, through achieving intellectual, psychological and social balance for the beneficiaries and providing them with necessary skills that allow them to reintegrate in the society.

The Department of Care and Rehabilitation seeks through its educational, training, cultural and sports programs to help the beneficiaries to reintegrate in the society and to motivate them to build an independent balanced personality capable of differentiating between right and wrong. It also seeks to encourage the desire for self-improvement among beneficiaries.

I Educational Programs :

They aim at rehabilitating beneficiaries through the following specialized educational programs:

- Religious Program
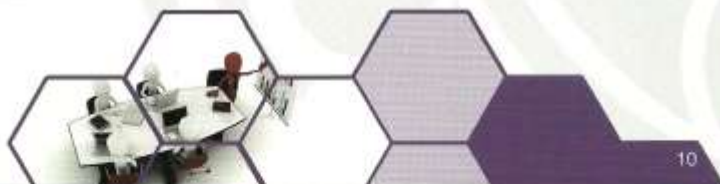- Psychological Program
- Social Program
- Art Therapy Program

Open cultural programs achieve a set of objectives .

Every Wednesday, they host a number of scholars, specialist and some members of the Saudi Supreme Ulema Commission. In fact, Tajribati (my experience) Program is one of the most successful programs where it hosts one of its graduates to share his personal experience at conflict locations.

The center's work strategy is based on studying, improving and assessing the program simplemented inside and outside the Center. Therefore, a number of programs were introduced based on the findings of studies. Such programs are conducted by a number of faculty members of Saudi universities .

Programs introduced since 1431 H

General Administration of Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Advice and Care

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II: Training Programs (Improvement of Capabilities and Skills)

They aim at improving the beneficiaries' abilities so that they can acquire the necessary skills that will help in their re-integration in the society. The programs are carried out inside and outside the Center and they are applied in accordance with the assessment and evaluation standards set forth by the Center. The programs also take into account the different educational and intellectual backgrounds of beneficiaries.

Programs introduced since 1431 H

A number of experienced government and private institutions take part in the rehabilitation and training programs.

Career programs
Self management
PC program
Positive thinking
How to deal with others
Keys to success

Training Programs

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III: Sports and Entertainment Programs:

They aim at maintaining the health of beneficiaries in addition to filling their free time with useful activities through games carried out individually or collectively.

Programs introduced since 1431 H

Beneficiaries are supervised by faculty members to make sure that they participate fully in sports events with the aim of evaluating their level of reintegration.

They provide various services for beneficiaries throughout their stay at the Center.

Hosting Services :

They include reception, food, health, laundry, maintenance and telephone.

Visits and Vacations :

They include Family Reunion, open visits, public visits, private visits, patient visits, occasions, Eids, vacations and urgent visits (in case of death, sickness or marriage).

General Services :

They include general education , institutes , training centers , universities, paperwork follow-up, bank, accounts , authorizations, shopping and picnics.

Pre-care Programs

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Pre-care programs are an extension of the Care and Rehabilitation Programs inside the Center. They provide a number of services that aim at the re-integration of beneficiaries in the society through an on-going assessment and supervision. The programs also make sure that regular visits are held by the beneficiaries' families at times of emergencies. Pre-care program makes the necessary arrangements along with Aftercare program to make sure that the post-graduation services are provided. Arrangements are also made in cooperation with the departments for public relations and information to help organizing open meetings with scholars and specialists.

The Pre-care program provides tours to ministries, departments, universities and hospitals. It is also responsible for finishing all legal procedures concerning the issuance of national IDs for the beneficiaries as well as opening bank accounts on their behalf.

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Care

Aftercare :

The aftercare program is a post-graduation program and is the longest and most comprehensive program provided by the Center. It provides health, social, educational, career and funds services for beneficiaries and families of martyrs, wanted and deceased persons. Cases are studied separately. Then, needs are evaluated based on reports given by relevant committees. In addition, needy families receive winter supplies. All services are provided to assure the smooth reintegration of beneficiaries in the society.

I: Family Care Program:

Its objective is to enhance the family's role in shouldering its social responsibility towards its son and to maintain his straight intellectual and behavioral status. This program is provided through family reunion, open visits and participation in public events, annual trips for Hajj and Umrah.

Care

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II: Graduates Care :

The objective is to help beneficiaries overcome whatever social problems they may face after graduation. Such care is provided in a number of ways, including supporting them financially, professionally and socially. Help in the fields of health and education is provided as well. Concerned committees are tasked with studying individual cases as well as with follow-ups whenever the need arises.

III: Reintegration Program :

The reintegration program makes sure that the beneficiary is adapting well to the society. Relevant committees keep in touch with graduates and their families through going on field trips, attending social occasions (weddings or funerals) and visiting patients . Graduates receive help in finding suitable jobs matching their level of qualification. They also receive training in craftsmanship and their progress is evaluated occasionally. The center also provides support for family members with disabilities and those in need of psychological assistance post-graduation

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