

Holier Than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition

Jan 1, 2000



In-Depth Reports

Although Saudi Arabia is popularly perceived as the most religious of Arab countries, the question of who in the kingdom determines its dominant Islamic discourse has been the subject of controversy since the state's founding. The formation of Saudi Arabia in the early twentieth century involved the unique harnessing of the Wahhabi da'wa (creed) in the service of the political aims of the Al Sa'ud, the Saudi family. The regime has not been without its detractors, but for the most part the Al Sa'ud has been able to coopt or repress them. Since the Gulf War, however, the social and economic problems that have plagued the country have led to the rise of a radical Islamic fundamentalist movement that has challenged Saudi Arabia's public persona as the one Islamic country that has successfully combined tradition and modernity.

In this Policy Paper, Joshua Teitelbaum, former Meyerhoff Fellow at the Institute, presents a comprehensive survey of the social and economic conditions that gave rise to the radical fundamentalism movement in Saudi Arabia. Dr. Teitelbaum provides clear answers to the essential questions about this radical challenge to regional stability. Who are the Islamists? What are their goals? How serious is the threat? What can be done to combat it?

- **423 pages**

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