

MERIA

SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED STATES, 1931-2002

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The U.S.-Saudi relationship is one of America's most important, enduring, and complex bilateral connections in the Middle East. It has been tested by many issues, including oil policies, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and confrontation with Iraq. Especially after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America, in which many of those involved were Saudi dissidents, both sides have critiqued and reevaluated that link. This article provides a history of the U.S.-Saudi relationship and discusses its nature, problems, and limits.

The enduring contradictions of the Saudi-American relationship have lately inspired comparisons to a marriage of convenience. Its close economic and security links have often been strained by immense political, cultural, and psychological distances. The breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in September 2000 brought on a difficult time in the relationship, reminiscent of the period leading up to the oil embargo of 1973-1974; moreover, unlike previous crises in U.S.-Saudi relations, its effects are not mitigated by the commonality of purpose experienced during the Cold War, especially during the 1970s and 1980s.

The devastation of September 11, 2001 accordingly dealt a sledgehammer blow to an already unsteady structure. In America, the shock provoked a complicated and angry reassessment, in some ways reminiscent of the reordering of U.S.-Chinese ties after the bloodshed of June 4, 1989 in Tiananmen Square. The Saudis, thrust onto the defensive and frustrated with American policies and undertakings regarding Israel, Afghanistan, and Iraq, have engaged in some reassessment of their own.

The current situation both echoes and diverges from past episodes in the relationship. Both sides continue to navigate the relationship through the narrow channels of a few individuals experienced at maneuvering between their starkly unlike systems and cultures. Notable in this respect on the Saudi side is Prince Bandar bin Sultan, confidant to the ailing King Fahd and

ambassador to the United States since 1983. The dean of the foreign diplomatic corps in Washington, Bandar has served as the virtual personification of the relationship for two decades. On the American side, former President George H.W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, who developed Saudi ties during the Persian Gulf War, have been instrumental in bringing President George W. Bush together with Crown Prince Abdullah, who currently manages the kingdom's affairs in Fahd's stead. At the same time, public sentiment in both countries, fueled by cable television and the Internet, has played an unusually large role in the crisis. Both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia responded with elaborate campaigns to improve their national images.

Today's problems are further complicated by a substantial U.S. Air Force and British Royal Air Force presence on Saudi soil that extends back over a decade to the Persian Gulf War. In the absence of any formal understandings on the status of forces, allied raids against Iraqi air defense sites have become entangled in Saudi domestic sensitivities, with problematic results for the war in Afghanistan, as well as any future war against Iraq. Sustaining the relationship through these difficulties are the same underlying factors that have always sustained it: the Western world's need for uninterrupted access to energy supplies, and the Saudi kingdom's need for defense against predatory neighbors.

THE FOUNDING, AND FOUNDATIONS, OF U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONS

Saudi-American ties began with only the slightest of contacts. Despite the recognition of the kingdom in 1931, no American diplomat visited in a formal capacity until 1940, when the U.S. envoy to Egypt, Bert Fish, was co-accredited to the Kingdom of the Hejaz and Nejd and Its Dependencies, as it was then called. In the year he had left to serve in Cairo, Fish made just a single trip to Jidda to meet the ruler and founder, King Abd al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman al-Saud, also called Ibn Saud. The seeming indifference of the Department of State reflected the extent to which Washington had relegated the remote kingdom to the British sphere. That sentiment was not at all shared by the Saudi king and his advisers, who saw in the Americans a longed-for counterweight to Britain's regional dominance.(1)

More consequential was a 1931 visit by Charles R. Crane, a Chicago millionaire and philanthropist, world traveler, former ambassador, and associate of American presidents.(2) Abd al-Aziz had invited the American at the urging of his expatriate British adviser, St. John Philby, a nominal convert to Islam. The king hoped that Crane might facilitate exploration for assets beneath the soil of the impoverished kingdom, starting with water.

Crane summoned to Jidda an experienced mining engineer, Karl S. Twitchell, who shortly proved instrumental in drawing the attention of a major American oil company to the kingdom's potential to yield up a more fateful commodity: oil. In May 1933, after an extended negotiation by telegraph with Philby, the representatives of Standard Oil of California (Socal) concluded talks in Jidda with the Saudi minister of finance. Philby, who was by then also quietly accepting payments from Socal, advised Abd al-Aziz to accept the results, a 60-year contract offering the exclusive concession for exploration and extraction in the Hasa region, along the shores of the Persian Gulf.(3) In 1938, what was later to be called Aramco--the Arabian American Oil Company--first struck oil in commercial quantities. Shipments abroad commenced the next year.(4)

These first dealings set the pattern for much of what followed. First, as noted above, the human links between the United States and Saudi Arabia were strikingly narrow at the start, largely channeled through the person of Philby. The exchanges of businessmen, diplomats, warriors, students, and tourists expanded these contacts in the years to come, but remained subject to the constraints of Arabia's inhospitable climate and forbidding mores, as well as the religious authorities' resistance to exposing the kingdom's subjects to Westerners and their ways.(5)

Second, what turned out to be the kingdom's unparalleled oil resources laid the foundations of the relationship. Over the following decades, control of Aramco and its revenues passed by steps from American into Saudi hands, but Washington's attention did not flag. Initially, the United States focused on excluding other foreign powers, particularly the British. As one American official viewed the matter in 1944, "The oil in this region is the greatest single prize in all history."(6) Later, the United States instead became concerned with energy security for the entire industrial world. As President George H.W. Bush would tell King Fahd bin Abd al-Aziz on August 4, 1990, just hours after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, "[t]he security of Saudi Arabia is vital--basically fundamental--to U.S. interests and really to the interests of the Western world."(7) American leaders eventually concluded that their ultimate national interest in the Persian Gulf was to keep the prize, and the power that comes with it, out of unfriendly hands, whether they might be those of radical Arabs, the Soviet Union, or revolutionary Iran. Where the profits happened to go was of secondary importance.(8)

The Saudis, for their part, were determined from the first to the last to secure the integrity and sovereignty of the kingdom, and their hold on power within it. Abd al-Aziz reportedly once enumerated to an American the factors behind his decision to seek ties, mentioning American oil expertise, a reputation for respectful relations with other Arabs, greater interest in expanding business relations than in consolidating an imperial

sphere, and, “lastly, you are very far away!”-- in implicit but sharp distinction to the British.(9)

The king’s concerns were underscored in the so-called “anti-imperial” clause of the 1933 contract, which explicitly rejected any company influence over the kingdom’s internal affairs.(10) Never confident of their independent ability to defend their borders, the Saudis have faced a continuing challenge over the decades: keeping America in, but not too far in. The result has been a continuous American military presence from the end of the Second World War to the present, mostly in the form of a small training mission, and only sometimes in the form of larger forces, as has been the case since the Persian Gulf War.

THE COLD WAR PARTNERSHIP

The initial entry of the American armed forces into the kingdom occurred almost incidentally at the end of the Second World War, when the United States requested permission to build a modern airbase at Dhahran, near the Hasa oilfields, to support the movement of men and materiel into the Burma theater. Little progress was made by the end of the war, but the U.S. Army Air Corps saw the project through to completion in 1946. The Air Force leased Dhahran Airfield continuously for over a decade and a half, providing both reassurance and discomfort to their Saudi hosts.(11)

The base in Dhahran set another pattern: an ambivalence concerning the in-country American military presence, and the broader security relationship as well. While the United States might deter a potential aggressor in difficult times, too high an American profile also offered a standing provocation to the ultra-conservative religious authorities, or *ulama*, and handed a powerful propaganda tool to external and internal foes alike. Worse yet, the American commitment might not be so firm that conciliating a regional foe would be considered the more perilous path. For these reasons, Saudi leaders have alternated between seeking closer security ties when feeling especially threatened, and minimizing them when they deemed it too dangerous.(12) The Americans,

in turn, balanced Saudi security concerns against the implementation of their own regional and global strategies for the containment of Soviet power, from alliance-building to nuclear deterrence.(13) The results were a series of highs and lows in the relationship, depending on how closely the security of the Saudi state and the American policy of containment could be aligned at any given time.

The main complications of the early 1950s derived from the American partnership with Britain, then a major regional power whose bases encircled the kingdom, both entangling them in Arabian Peninsula border disputes and aligning them with the Saudis’ traditional rivals in Iraq and Jordan. Both states were ruled by kings of the Hashemite dynasty, which Abd al-Aziz had earlier displaced from the Red Sea emirate of Hejaz, home to the holy places of Mecca and Medina. The Hashemites’ proximity to the oil fields, revanchist ambitions, and British-led and -trained military forces all encouraged the Saudis to conclude a mutual defense assistance pact with the United States in 1951. It included a long-term lease of Dhahran Airfield, which came under the auspices of the Military and Advisory Group (MAAG), known from 1959 to the present as the U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM).(14)

During the early reign of King Saud, the son and successor of Abd al-Aziz, this strategy encountered serious difficulties when the Eisenhower administration set about assembling a new anti-Soviet alliance. The Baghdad Pact, as it came to be called, ultimately encompassed Britain, Iraq, and Iran, as well as Turkey and Pakistan. To the Saudis, this arrangement united America with the kingdom’s regional rivals and foes, for anti-Soviet purposes, perhaps, but at Riyadh’s expense. In February 1954, Saud dismissed the American Point IV aid mission from the country, and in October 1955, he signed a mutual defense pact with Gamal Abdel Nasser’s revolutionary, pro-Moscow Egyptian regime, inviting Egyptian military trainers into the kingdom in uneasy parallel to the Americans.

Saudi-American tensions eased considerably after the Suez Crisis of 1956,

when Eisenhower forcefully opposed the British, French, and Israeli plan to seize Egypt's Suez Canal, concerned that the Europeans' neo-imperial enterprise would throw the region into the Soviet camp. The crisis enhanced America's image in the region; it also turned the newly popular Nasser into the primary threat to the dynasty's rule. With both these considerations in mind, the Saudis renewed the American lease at Dhahran the next year.⁽¹⁵⁾ But in 1958, after the unification of Syria with Egypt and the revolution in Iraq, the kingdom's erstwhile Egyptian ally became too powerful to ignore. Once again, Saudi sought to minimize his American connection. In May 1961, with Egypt's Voice of the Arabs radio virulently denouncing the "imperialist base," the Saudi government announced that it would not renew Dhahran Airfield's lease.⁽¹⁶⁾ USMTM remained in place, but a large, high-visibility American military presence of indefinite duration would not return to the kingdom until 1990.

More limited American military excursions did periodically occur. In late 1962, when Egyptian infiltrators and planes began attacking Saudi territory from bases in Yemen, the Saudis reversed course again, pursuing an expanded U.S. Air Force "training mission," to be based in Jidda.⁽¹⁷⁾ The Americans agreed, but insisted on keeping their aircraft at Dhahran, much farther from the Yemen border, and exercised restrictive rules of engagement.⁽¹⁸⁾ The Kennedy administration's primary concerns were the continuing independence of the kingdom and the security of its oilfields. They regarded the defense of Saudi Arabia's southern border as less significant, certainly in comparison with the need to avoid an unnecessary confrontation with Nasser, whom American policymakers now considered an alternative to Soviet influence. The U.S. warplanes arrived in July 1963 and were withdrawn in January 1964.⁽¹⁹⁾

Calculations of this sort gave rise to recurring concerns in Riyadh about American dependability. The Saudis experienced renewed uncertainty in the fall of 1978, when the Carter administration declined to intervene on behalf of the faltering regime of

the shah of Iran, which had played a significant stabilizing role in the Persian Gulf since the withdrawal of the British in 1971. In early December 1978, the Saudis, who had increased oil production to stabilize prices during the Iranian crisis, asked Senator Robert Byrd, acting as the president's envoy, for America to provide for regional security. The next month, the administration announced that a group of U.S. F-15s would visit the kingdom.

At the same time, not wishing to antagonize the new Iranian government of Shahpour Bakhtiar, which they hoped might turn the country in a more moderate direction, the Americans announced that the planes were unarmed. This irresolute display may have contributed to the Saudis' decision later that year to reduce oil production, driving up prices in hopes of conciliating the new Iranian regime of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which had taken Bakhtiar's place.⁽²⁰⁾ Notwithstanding subsequent declarations by Presidents Carter and Reagan that the U.S. would use force to defend the Persian Gulf, the episode left an lasting impression. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Saudi ambassador Prince Bandar bin Sultan expressed skepticism about America's willingness to come to the kingdom's defense, citing the unarmed F-15s of 1979.⁽²¹⁾

The Cold War struggle did not only strain the security relationship; it also could serve as a unifying factor, especially in the 1970s, when the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen placed a Soviet ally on Saudi Arabia's doorstep. Even more significantly, the dramatic growth of Saudi oil revenues at that time allowed the kingdom to become a major financial contributor to the global struggle against communism. Formerly a recipient of U.S. aid, Saudi Arabia began to send its own money abroad in the mid-1970s, including collaborations with the Americans in sponsoring anti-communist rebel movements in Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan.⁽²²⁾

Still, not all Saudi aid policies were in keeping with American preferences or to America's benefit. Particularly troublesome were Riyadh's payments to the PLO and

rejectionist Arab states as a counter to America's mediation of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1978 and 1979.(23) But also among the most controversial aid policies was one that originated in the White House: in May 1984, at the request of Reagan national security adviser Robert McFarlane, Bandar quietly arranged for over a million dollars a month to go to a Miami bank account belonging to the Nicaraguan *contra* rebels, whose funding Congress had cut off. McFarlane later characterized these as a transfer of a foreign official's "personal funds," while Bandar simply denied the story.(24)

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ARAB OIL WEAPON

The Cold War partnership also had the benefit of normally overshadowing a potential complication: America's connection to Israel, which grew from generalized moral support in the 1940s to an arms supply relationship in the mid-1960s, and became a *de facto* anti-Soviet alliance in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Saudis were inclined and generally able to disregard the issue beyond the rhetorical level, and normally it had little effect on ties with Washington. But moments of open Arab-Israeli conflict tended to polarize the entire region, putting considerable pressure on friends of America. These crises threatened the regime's legitimacy, but by the same token, they also provided it with opportunities to assert its independence from American policy. For the Americans, though, these episodes, like all other disputes touching on oil supplies, had no upside; they were a "recurring bad dream," culminating most nightmarishly in the oil embargo of 1973-1974.(25)

Reflecting Arab sentiment and the kingdom's special identity as the home of the holy places of Islam, Saudi leaders stood opposed to a sovereign Jewish presence in the midst of the Arab world almost from the start.(26) Palestine emerged as a matter of contention even before the first meeting of Saudi and American heads of state took place in 1945 aboard an American warship anchored in the Great Bitter Lake, along the Suez Canal.(27) On that occasion, King Abd

al-Aziz extracted from President Franklin D. Roosevelt a two-part pledge: "(1) He personally, as president, would never do anything which might prove hostile to the Arabs; and (2) the U.S. Government would make no change in its basic policy in Palestine without full and prior consultation with both Jews and Arabs."(28)

President Harry S. Truman renewed his predecessor's pledge, but also supported the UN General Assembly resolution of November 29, 1947, which called for separate Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. By December, Abd al-Aziz indicated to the American minister in Jidda that his own failure to withdraw Aramco's oil concessions in response invited danger from Iraq and Transjordan. He requested assistance against such an eventuality, including arms, which the U.S. government was then reluctant to provide.(29) The next year, soon after Israel's declaration of independence, Aramco President James Terry Duce warned Washington that Abd al-Aziz had threatened possible consequences for the Americans' access to Saudi resources should the United States provide arms to the Jewish state.(30) But the Americans had no plans to do so. The Saudis and other Arab oil exporters would make similar threats against the British and French during the 1956 Suez crisis, ultimately to little avail.(31)

The 1967 crisis was all the more severe, given the increased importance of Arab oil, closer American-Israeli ties than before, and a regional perception of the kingdom as being dependent on the United States. Arab sentiment against America spilled over into criticism of the ruling family, which was seen as doing relatively little to support Egypt. With tensions rising between Israel and Egypt, three bombs exploded at the American embassy and USMTM facilities in Riyadh on June 2. Shaykh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, warned Aramco officials of the consequences of U.S. support for Israel, hinting darkly at nationalization.

On June 6, the second day of the war, Egyptian radio broadcast claims that American and British carrier-based aircraft had attacked Egyptian airfields. Egypt and

five other Arab states broke relations with both countries. The next day, a series of demonstrations broke out in Saudi Arabia, and King Faisal bin Abd al-Aziz proclaimed at a rally in Riyadh that the kingdom would cut off oil supplies “to anyone who aided Israel.” A combination of labor actions and mob violence shut down Aramco’s operations, and Yamani informed Aramco officials that no shipments to the U.S. or Britain would be allowed.(32) Over the next two months, American, Venezuelan, Iranian, and Indonesian oil production surged to fill the gap, and by early September, the Arab producers gave up the embargo. Not until a few years later, when growing demand had outstripped America’s remaining spare oil production and the Arabs gained greater cooperation from other members of the OPEC cartel, did market realities permit the effective deployment of the “oil weapon.”(33)

After the 1967 War, and against the background of the Israeli-Egyptian War of Attrition, Saudi ties to America subjected the royal family to growing pressure from Arab radicals. Faisal, hoping to resolve or at least lessen these tensions, continually urged the Americans to press Israel to withdraw to the pre-war lines.(34) In December 1969, the Nixon administration announced an American peace plan along these lines, called the Rogers Plan, after then-Secretary of State William Rogers. The Israelis resisted the proposal, enabling the Americans to put some distance between themselves and Jerusalem, but accomplishing little else.(35) Eventually, in the face of growing Soviet support for the Egyptians, Rogers’ initiatives gave way to a more pro-Israeli policy.(36)

The contradictions of the Saudi-American relationship reached the breaking point in the crisis of 1973-1974, when high officials in Washington would openly threaten the possibility of seizing Persian Gulf oil fields, either in Saudi Arabia or possibly in neighboring Arab countries.(37) It also marked a decisive shift in the balance of relations in terms of petroleum. Saudi Arabia emerged as the world’s “swing producer,” possessing the bulk of global spare production capacity, and thus the last word on any attempt to drive up prices through cutbacks.

Americans and Saudis stood on opposite sides from the outset of the crisis. Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat’s earlier decisions to end the War of Attrition and then to expel Soviet forces had seemed to Nixon and national security adviser Henry Kissinger to validate their uncompromising Middle East policy. To Faisal, Washington’s failure to reassess aid to Israel after the lessening of the Soviet threat to the region amounted to a betrayal, and he set about providing weapons and aid to Sadat.(38) In May 1973, Faisal warned Aramco officials that American policy placed the kingdom “in danger of being isolated among its Arab friends,” which could jeopardize the oil concessions. In an interview with NBC, the king declared that “America’s complete support for Zionism and against the Arabs makes it extremely difficult for us to continue to supply the United States with oil, or even to remain friends with the United States.”(39) In August, Sadat visited Riyadh to apprise Faisal of his war plans. Faisal offered financial support and the use of the oil weapon.(40)

The coordinated Egyptian and Syrian surprise attacks of October 6 fell not only on the solemn Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, but also during a meeting of OPEC and oil company representatives in Vienna. Unable to settle with the companies on oil prices, the exporters’ delegation adjourned to Kuwait City on October 15, where they proclaimed a unilateral 70% hike. Yamani told his colleagues, “This is a moment for which I have been waiting a long time. The moment has come. We are masters of our own commodity.”(41)

The Arabs soon exercised their newfound mastery to greater effect. On October 17, the Arab oil ministers agreed to cut back production 5% each month. On October 19, in response to Israeli pleas for resupply, the U.S. government announced an immediate, large-scale military aid package. The next day, when word reached Arab capitals that Egypt was facing defeat, the exporters announced the suspension of all oil supplies to the United States, with swift and disruptive effects on America’s domestic life and economy.(42) With the president paralyzed by the unfolding Watergate scandal, Kissinger

undertook an extended program of shuttle diplomacy between Egypt, Israel, and Syria, making side trips to Saudi Arabia. On March 18, 1974, after a long series of threats and inducements, and with an Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement already secured, the Saudis and most other Arab producers agreed to conclude the embargo.(43)

The embargo showed both sides the limits of the relationship. Each subsequent American administration, recognizing the potential for another disaster, would pursue its own Middle East peace plans. The Saudis refrained from brandishing the oil weapon in subsequent Israeli-Arab crises, apparently concerned about the deleterious effects of a renewed embargo on the long-term market for oil, given both its harsh consequences for Western economies and the encouragement it would give to the development of alternative energy sources. A rash American response was also possible. Instead, Saudi policymakers have striven to keep the price of oil in a "sweet spot" intended to maximize demand and revenues over time, a strategy limited only by OPEC's share of world production and ability to cooperate.(44)

THE RISE(S) AND FALL(S) OF AMERICA'S SAUDI ARMS MARKET

Another result of the explosive growth of Saudi oil revenues in the 1970s was the ability of the kingdom to purchase advanced armaments in large quantities. The urgency of national defense needs increased appreciably after the Iranian Revolution and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, which featured Iranian missile attacks on Persian Gulf shipping and probes against Saudi air defenses. The Saudis decided to focus in particular on building up the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF), and selected the United States as their supplier of choice. Sales dropped in the late 1980s after Washington's denial of key arms requests, peaked again after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and then fell off again in the mid-1990s under the twin burdens of Persian Gulf War debt and falling oil revenues. The total value of American arms sales to Saudi Arabia over the past half-century approaches \$100 billion, with over a quarter of the contracts signed in the 1990s

(in dollar terms).(45) These figures include weapons, support equipment, spare parts, support services, and construction.(46)

During the Ford, Carter, and Reagan administrations, arms transactions were sometimes complicated by an increasingly assertive American Jewish community, whose pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), opposed sales of advanced arms to Saudi Arabia on the grounds that they might be employed against Israel. AIPAC's strategy was to seek congressional votes against the administration's arms export decisions; the Saudis, lacking a comparable option, mainly worked through the administration. The biggest battles concerned the transfer of advanced weapons such as Maverick air-to-ground missiles in 1976, F-15 fighter-bombers in 1978, and AWACS airborne early warning aircraft in 1981. In all of these cases, the administration prevailed.(47) But in 1985, AIPAC scored its first major victory, temporarily blocking the sale of additional F-15s by successfully persuading Congress to intervene. The Saudis located alternatives, including a series of major arms deals with Britain.(48)

Saudi Arabia was also denied access to the Lance short-range surface-to-surface missile, the first in a series of setbacks in prospective sales of missiles of all kinds.(49) These developments came at a sensitive moment for the kingdom, which was seeking an answer to Iran's missile capabilities, amply demonstrated during the conflict with Iraq.(50) In July 1985, Ambassador Bandar bin Sultan made a surprise trip to Beijing at King Fahd's behest.(51) The secret purpose of the visit was to explore the possibility that the Chinese might sell Saudi Arabia some of its *Dong Feng-3A* (CSS-2) ballistic missiles, relatively inaccurate weapons with an estimated range of 3,000 to 4,000 km, designed and built to carry nuclear warheads as powerful as three megatons.(52) Secret negotiations during late 1986 and 1987 resulted in a multibillion-dollar deal for an estimated 10-15 mobile launchers and 50-56 specially modified missiles, reportedly carrying heavy conventional warheads that somewhat reduced their range.(53)

American satellite imagery interpreters recognized the missile deployment in early 1988.(54) The Americans were enraged at the subterfuge, and further embarrassed by Bandar's involvement. The Saudis, emphasizing the dangers they faced from Iran, held that their decision to purchase the Chinese missiles had followed the Congress's decision to prevent the sale of F-15s in 1985.(55) Assuring the Americans that the missiles were conventionally armed, they rejected any possibility of inspections.(56) The administration expressed its severe displeasure, pointing out to the Saudis that their new anti-Iranian weapons could provoke an unwanted conflict with Israel, and separate groups of senators and congressmen wrote Secretary of State George Schultz to ask that the administration suspend planned arms sales until the missiles were withdrawn.(57)

Riyadh was unmoved. After delivering a forceful *démarche* to Fahd, Ambassador Hume Horan was recalled from his post. This unprecedented move, reportedly undertaken at Bandar's urging, smoothed the path for an upcoming visit by Schultz to promote the Reagan administration's regional peace initiative.(58) Bandar, for his part, privately expressed glee at Washington's discomfort, indicating that such developments were the consequence of congressional interventions in arms sales.(59)

The breach was not long to mend. Within weeks of Schultz's visit, the Saudis signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, effectively forswearing any nuclear ambitions, and also severed diplomatic relations with Iran. The Americans reciprocated by approving the planned arms sales.(60) The Saudis had successfully demonstrated their independence from American arms export policy, much as they had already done regarding oil policy. In widely published remarks, Fahd told Saudi military and security officials, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not tied to anyone and does not take part in any pact that forces upon it any sort of obligations....if things become complicated with a certain country we will find other countries, regardless of whether they are Eastern or Western... We are buying weapons, not principles."(61)

After Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia signed several major contracts for American weapons systems. In 1993, the Saudis signed a \$7 billion contract for 72 F-15s with advanced capabilities, but this would be the last large-scale deal with the Americans for some time to come. Burdened by debt from the Persian Gulf War and declining oil revenues, the Saudis were forced to renegotiate payments with the U.S. government and American defense contractors.(62) Total agreements fell to \$4 billion for 1993-1997 and to just \$600 million in 1998-2001.(63) European sales exhibited a similar pattern, but appear to be picking up again in 2002, possibly reflecting recent tensions with the U.S. over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the use of Saudi bases against Iraq.(64)

Large arms sales to Saudi Arabia have helped keep American defense contractors' production lines open, and have been quite significant for the balance of trade. Nevertheless, neither the buying sprees of past decades nor recurring moves to alternate suppliers seem to have lessened the kingdom's essential dependence on the United States for its defense and security.(65)

THE U.S. MILITARY RETURNS TO SAUDI ARABIA

The Bush administration recognized immediately that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 3, 1990 posed a direct threat to the security of Saudi Arabia and the interests of all advanced economies. Expediting the return of American forces to the kingdom in large numbers was imperative, yet also a very delicate matter. Three days later, a senior American delegation led by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney briefed Fahd and his advisers in Riyadh. A published account underscores this tension: with Bandar translating, Cheney declared, "After the danger is over, our forces will go home." The account continues, "Under his breath in Arabic, [Crown Prince] Abdullah interjected, 'I would hope so.' Bandar did not translate this."(66)

The triumphant war to defend the Arabian Peninsula and liberate Kuwait marked another high point for the U.S.-Saudi partnership. But

the danger from Iraq persisted, and Cheney's pledge notwithstanding, Western forces remained in the kingdom, even in the absence of any formal agreement on their status. Not only did they remain, to the Saudis' growing discomfort, but their presence became informally established under the rubric of the "dual containment" of Iran and Iraq. The terms of the enforcement of the "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq by British and American warplanes remains a matter of particular sensitivity.

The priority assigned to Saudi-American relations declined substantially with the January 1993 inauguration of President Bill Clinton. In Middle Eastern affairs, the new president was largely preoccupied with Arab-Israeli peacemaking. His administration's overriding policy interest was the health of the domestic economy and, for Saudi Arabia, this meant a focus on balance-of-trade issues, such as the purchase of civilian airliners and, later, oil prices. Bandar's standing in Washington declined accordingly.(67) His special value to American officials also appeared to decline after the incapacitation of his patron, King Fahd, by a series of strokes starting in late 1995.(68) The ambassador's precise standing under the *de facto* regency headed by Fahd's half-brother and designated heir, Crown Prince Abdullah, is unclear.(69)

In the absence of sustained attention from the White House, U.S.-Saudi relations in the 1990s were troubled by the continued presence of American and British forces at Saudi bases. Terrorist bombings killed seven people, including five American servicemen, at a Saudi Arabian National Guard training site in Riyadh in November 1995. Another bomb killed 19 U.S. Air Force personnel at the Khobar Towers housing facility in Dhahran in June 1996. As a defensive measure, Western forces were consolidated at fewer and less accessible sites, particularly Prince Sultan Air Base (PSAB, in American military parlance), in the desert south of Riyadh.(70)

Following the Riyadh and Dhahran attacks, law enforcement cooperation was too limited for Washington's liking.(71) Saudi Arabia also was not closely engaged in the early phases of America's pursuit of

international terrorists in the Middle East. In 1996, when the Americans succeeded in persuading the government of Sudan to expel from its territory a violent Saudi dissident, Usama bin Ladin, Riyadh declined to request his extradition. The scion of an elite Saudi Arabian business family and the head of the al-Qa'ida terrorist organization, bin Ladin opposed both the royal family and the United States on the grounds that the foreign, non-Muslim military presence defiled holy soil. In the absence of an Saudi extradition request, bin Ladin traveled unmolested to Afghanistan, where the United States and Saudi Arabia had supported the anti-Soviet *mujahidin* insurgency in the 1980s, and where he had gotten his start as a sponsor of *mujahid* activity.(72)

Even after the departure of the Soviets, Afghanistan had continued to receive official Saudi attention, mainly in the form of support for the Taliban, the rigidly Islamist militia that controlled most of the country after 1996. Riyadh's sponsorship of the Taliban continued even after bin Ladin, who had been stripped of Saudi citizenship two years before, accepted their hospitality.(73) Only after al-Qa'ida simultaneously bombed America's embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 did the Saudis and Americans alike make serious, if not necessarily well-coordinated, efforts to pressure or bribe the Taliban to hand over bin Ladin.(74) The Saudis pressed on with the Taliban even after the Americans had given up, but their mission, too, was abandoned as fruitless after the launch of cruise missiles from American warships in the Indian Ocean, in a failed attempt to kill the terrorist leader.(75)

In retrospect, the mistrust and lack of coordination between the two sides may have been quite costly. But viewed differently, both bin Ladin's anti-Saudi, anti-American agenda and the seeming inability of Washington and Riyadh to work together smoothly against it have sprung from a common source: the tensions attendant on the indefinite American and British military presence in Saudi Arabia.

THE NEW CRISIS IN SAUDI-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The Clinton administration's energetic devotion to the Middle East peace process served the cause of American relations with Saudi Arabia to the extent that it kept Arab-Israeli issues from overheating for the better part of a decade. Accordingly, the breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the beginning of the second intifada renewed the tensions in Washington's relationship with Riyadh.

At difficult points in the negotiations, the Americans turned to the Jordanians and Egyptians, who by virtue of their peace treaties with Israel could serve as Arab intermediaries. The Saudis maintained their distance.⁽⁷⁶⁾ During the 1999 funeral of King Hussein of Jordan, the Arab leader who had gone to the greatest lengths to identify himself with peace efforts, President Clinton reportedly approached Crown Prince Abdullah without warning, asking if he would like to be introduced to Israel's leaders, then and there. Abdullah is reported to have replied brusquely, saying, "I believe, Your Excellency Mr. President, that there are limits to friendship."⁽⁷⁷⁾ The outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in September 2000 further tested those limits.

Upon entering office in January 2001, the administration of George W. Bush had inherited a largely neglected relationship between the two nations from the Clinton Administration; a relationship that steadily worsened as the fighting between Israelis and Palestinians provoked anti-American reaction in the Middle East. Yet Bush also brought to the presidency two other inheritances that initially seemed like potential mitigating factors.

The first factor was the personal relationship between the Bush family and the Saudi royals, inherited from Clinton's predecessor and the new president's father, George H.W. Bush. This connection seemed to offer hope to Riyadh for a renewal of the relationship through known channels. Like his father, the younger Bush was a former oilman, likely to grasp the importance of U.S.-Saudi relations. The first Bush administration had confronted Israel over the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and brought Prime

Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government to the peace table at Madrid. President George W. Bush had also returned to office two senior officials familiar from a decade before, Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Colin Powell, and presumably was also receptive to his father's advice.

The second factor was heightened expectations inherited from the presidential campaign, in which Bush emerged as the "Arab" candidate, while his Democratic opponent, Vice President Al Gore, chose an Orthodox Jew, Senator Joseph Lieberman, as his running mate.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Governor Bush appealed directly to Arab-American voters during the candidates' second televised debate, and won a plurality of their votes on Election Day.⁽⁷⁹⁾ But what seemed like positives only created considerable misunderstanding and confusion when the new Bush showed little inclination to follow in his father's footsteps in the Middle East.

The informality of the arrangements governing the U.S. and British military presence was also a continuing source of tension, and became a more acute problem in February 2001, after the allies mounted a large air raid from Prince Sultan Air Base against air defense targets around Baghdad, apparently without providing prior notice to the Saudi government. Shortly after a special Pentagon press conference announcing and explaining the attack, President Bush played it down, describing it as "routine."⁽⁸⁰⁾ Following this episode, the Saudis imposed operational restrictions on allied warplanes operating out of PSAB, forbidding them to conduct further offensive operations against Iraq.⁽⁸¹⁾ In June, Interior Minister Prince Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz again underscored the Saudi government's desire to assert its exclusive sovereignty in matters related to hosting foreign forces, ruling out extradition of suspects held in the Khobar Towers bombing case: "[n]o other entity has the right to try or investigate any crimes occurring on Saudi lands."⁽⁸²⁾

In the public sphere, the intifada tended to overshadow these problems. By disrupting the Middle East peace process, it brought to its conclusion a relatively easy period in America's post-Cold War experiment in

balancing relations with both Jewish and Arab allies. A demographic surge, combined with both the coming of age of Arabic-language satellite television news and the recent introduction of the internet to the kingdom, put pressure on the Saudi leadership. The kingdom's youthful populace, inflamed by constant broadcasts of Israeli military actions against the Palestinians, was also enraged at America, widely perceived as backing the Israelis, and angered by the their own authorities' ties with the United States.(83) The Americans, in turn, found themselves caught between Jerusalem's insistence that they ought to support Israel's defense of its citizens against terrorist attacks, and Riyadh's insistence that they intercede forcefully with Israel against its depredations in the territories. In one interview, a senior prince declared that the "reputation of the United States in the Arab region has dropped to zero," adding that "too biased a stand makes an awkward situation for America's friends."(84) Making some space between themselves and Washington, the Saudis pledged \$225 million dollars in aid to the PA in April 2001.(85)

Unable to finesse this situation, the Bush administration shifted from one stance to another, seeking to mollify Saudi Arabia and Israel alternately. One consistent point in the president's personal diplomacy was to shun Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat, while frequently inviting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for consultations at the White House. Possibly in response to this choice, the Crown Prince Abdullah refused an invitation to Washington, preferring to communicate by a series of telephone calls and letters from Riyadh.(86) While maintaining this distance, he repeatedly called on Bush to restrain Israel.(87)

Abdullah's discontent became a sufficiently troubling matter in Washington that in mid-July 2001, the *New York Times*, citing both "a senior administration official" and "a Middle East diplomat," reported that the former President George Bush had phoned the crown prince to engage with him warmly, telling him that his son's "heart is in the right place" and that he was "going to do the right

thing." He again urged the Saudi leader to visit the United States, without success.(88)

The elder Bush's entreaties and assurances notwithstanding, the crown prince eventually turned to brinkmanship behind closed doors, dispatching Bandar to threaten a break in the formerly close relationship. The ambassador's *démarche* indicated that Abdullah had no intention of allowing himself to become the next Shah of Iran: "a time comes when peoples and nations part. We are at a crossroads. It is time for the United States and Saudi Arabia to look to their separate interests."(89)

Less than two days later, the Americans provided the Saudi embassy with a presidential letter, which Bandar carried back to Riyadh. Addressing the crown prince's concerns in two pages, it confirmed Bush's commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state. According to one account, Abdullah shared Bush's letter and the text of his own original complaint with fellow Arab leaders, including Yasir Arafat, whom he summoned to Riyadh. The Saudis then wrote back to Bush, attaching a letter from Arafat pledging to fulfill Bush's requirements for restarting the peace talks, and returned their ambassador to Washington.(90)

This delicate exchange was violently disrupted by the terrorist attacks of September 11, which spawned even more serious problems for the relationship (see below). Even afterwards, Israel and the Palestinians remained on the Saudi agenda. They may have assumed even greater importance, insofar as the unresolved conflict created a hurdle for cooperation with the United States on Afghanistan and especially Iraq. But to Riyadh's frustration, after September 11, Americans tended to regard Israel's situation more sympathetically, even empathetically.(91) On the Bush administration's revised agenda, the Global War on Terrorism outranked many other things, including Middle Eastern conflict resolution.

THE SAUDI PEACE INITIATIVE

It was in this context that Abdullah offered his own peace proposal at an Arab League summit in late March 2002, a possibility he

had hinted at publicly as early as the previous June.(92) The March initiative materialized the previous month, when Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times* quoted the crown prince as saying that his own ideas were “virtually identical” to a suggestion Friedman himself had recently placed in print.(93) The columnist had proposed that the entire Arab League offer Israel “full peace” and security guarantees in exchange for a withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 lines.(94) Abdullah also finally accepted an invitation to the United States, which came up again during a mid-March tour of regional capitals by Vice President Dick Cheney. Apparently determined to round up support for a new war effort against Iraq, Cheney returned with the message that some form of progress on the Israeli-Palestinian front would be necessary first.(95)

Apparently responding to domestic sensitivities, Saudi authorities avoided further elucidation of their concept prior to the Beirut summit, explaining only that they would be offering Israel additional incentives to make peace with its neighbors.(96) While Friedman’s idea had not touched on the fate of the Palestinian refugees, the consensus Arab League plan that emerged from Beirut featured a demand for Israel’s affirmation of the “[a]chievement of a just solution to the Palestinian Refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194,” which is generally understood in the Arab world as providing for a right of return. This language roughly paralleled the Palestinian position at Camp David in July 2000, a point that Palestinian Authority representatives were swift to point out.(97)

The Saudi proposal was, moreover, swiftly overtaken by events on the ground. A particularly shocking and deadly series of terror bombings took place in Israel on and around the Passover holiday, commencing as the summiteers were gathering in Beirut. The Israeli response was a major offensive against the bases of armed Palestinian factions in the heart of West Bank cities, inspiring angry protests in the streets of Arab capitals. Before the end of the summit, Abdullah was reduced to offering bitter denunciations of Israeli

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and announcing to reporters that he had secured from Washington a guarantee of Arafat’s safety during the Israeli invasion of Ramallah. Arafat was not harmed, but the Israelis essentially disregarded President Bush’s public insistence on an immediate withdrawal from Palestinian cities. (98)

The collective results of the summit and Israel’s Operation Defensive Shield were the creation of a single and apparently non-negotiable Arab position and the embarrassment of the Saudi government, both of which complicated American efforts to persuade the Saudi leadership to press Arafat to make concessions and to convince the Palestinian rejectionist organizations to cease conducting their “martyrdom operations” against Israeli civilians.(99) In addition, Crown Prince Abdullah and the Iraqi delegate embraced during the summit, a gesture many perceived as signaling a move toward reconciliation in response to American threats to attack Iraq.(100)

Despite the setback, Abdullah was not prepared to give up, and pressed ahead with the planned visit to President Bush’s Texas ranch in late April. His visit was preceded by anonymous threats in the U.S. press about the possible revival of the “oil weapon” and an end to the security relationship.(101) Over five hours of meetings, Abdullah rejected talk of using the oil weapon, but warned of a “deep rift,” and declined to participate in a joint statement. The Saudis presented the Americans with a proposed eight-point roadmap designed to move the Israelis and Palestinians toward a cease-fire and a peace agreement along the lines of the Beirut Declaration--seemingly an unsubtle indication of Abdullah’s lack of confidence in American mediation efforts to date. As before, the Americans relied on personal relationships to smooth over difficulties; before visiting the ranch, the crown prince met with the Vice President; afterwards, the president’s father took him on a train ride to visit his Presidential Library in College Station, Texas.(102)

Before Abdullah left the country, the Americans persuaded the Israelis to allow Yasir Arafat to leave his surrounded

compound in Ramallah, allowing the crown prince to claim success.(103) But this accomplishment proved minor and short-lived; in late June, after another wave of suicide bombings, President Bush delivered a speech offering American support for a Palestinian state, but demanding that the Palestinians oust Arafat. Saudi royals found themselves in the awkward position of praising some parts of the speech, while defending Arafat's legitimacy on the basis of democratic processes.(104)

To a large extent, the latest Arab-Israeli conflict had returned Saudi-American relations to the patterns of the War of Attrition and the Rogers Plan: complaints and threats from Saudi leaders encouraged their American counterparts to find ways to pressure Israel for concessions, or at least to locate differences with Jerusalem that might ease tensions with Riyadh. In both cases, the Secretary of State and other American mediators spent a substantial amount of time in the Middle East, and in both cases, their ministrations merely temporized in the face of an intractable Arab-Israeli conflict. And in both cases, the Americans ultimately were so antagonized by the behavior of Israel's enemy as to turn against them, to the Saudis' dismay.

AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

The devastating terrorist attacks on the United States by a group of 19 Arabs loyal to Usama bin Ladin, including 15 Saudis, rearranged regional politics and dealt a stunning blow to U.S.-Saudi relations. The immediate reaction of large segments of the Saudi and other Arab publics included spontaneous celebrations.(105) Suddenly on the defensive, the Saudis acted swiftly to stabilize oil prices, and then severed relations with the Taliban as the United States prepared to carry its war onto Afghan soil.(106) Since that time, Saudi police have also arrested suspected terrorists inside the kingdom, including a Sudanese man allegedly responsible for firing a shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile at an American aircraft at Prince Sultan Air Base.(107)

At the same time, the Saudis were unable or unwilling to ignore the heightened tensions and anger of the past year, placing obstacles

in the way of full cooperation against the Taliban and al-Qa'ida. From the start, they restricted the scope and visibility of the American war effort on Saudi territory.(108) Saudi spokesmen ruled out attacks on any other Arab country from their soil, and also hinted in advance that any American request to launch sorties against targets in Afghanistan from their bases would not be welcome. Senior U.S. officials, not wishing to exacerbate the problem, repeatedly asserted in public that the Saudis had cooperated with every American request, and carefully avoided making any requests that might be refused.(109)

Striking the right balance proved tricky. In September, the Department of Defense announced the arrival of Air Force Lieutenant General Charles Wald at the recently completed Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Prince Sultan Air Base, from where he would manage the air war, but not until early October did Crown Prince Abdullah and Defense Minister Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz indicate their assent to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and apparently not without some restrictions.(110) Despite upbeat reports from American officials, accounts of difficulties in securing Saudi cooperation against al-Qa'ida on the financial front also continued to crop up in the news.(111)

In the United States, anger against the kingdom soon reached a point not seen since the 1973-1974 oil embargo. A wave of harshly critical commentary from journalists, commentators, and Congressmen pointed out the limits of Saudi cooperation, and attributed the rise of al-Qa'ida to Saudi (and Egyptian) decisions to encourage virulent anti-American rhetoric in place of dissent, and to export troublemakers to assure internal stability.(112) Other topics that troubled U.S. editorialists included the rigid traditionalism of Saudi society, particularly its treatment of women; Prince Nayif's repeatedly expressed doubts about the involvement of Saudi subjects in the September 11 attacks; and news coverage of a Saudi telethon to support the families of Palestinians killed in the conflict, including those of suicide bombers.(113) Americans were also reminded

of their archenemy's origins upon learning that members of the bin Ladin family residing in the United States had been airlifted home *en masse* at the request of the Saudi government.(114) Most recently, the families of 600 victims of the September 11 attacks have filed suit against Saudi banks, charities, and members of the royal family, among other parties, accusing them of supporting al-Qa'ida.(115)

Americans' anger was reciprocated by the Saudis' own rage at American support for Israel, military action in Afghanistan, and detention of Arab prisoners, reportedly including a large number of Saudis, at a makeshift prison at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba.(116) They expressed their feelings in a fall-off of tourism, consumer boycotts of American products, and the divestment of billions of dollars.(117) Bombing attacks have also killed American and British expatriates in the kingdom.(118)

In public, American officials continued to insist on the soundness of Saudi cooperation, while telling Saudi leaders that the government did not share the views so frequently expressed in the U.S. news media. Saudi officials and editorialists generally accepted these assurances, tending to dismiss all criticism as stemming from hostile concentrations of Jewish power. As Crown Prince Abdullah put it to a *New York Times* correspondent, "The people of the kingdom have not been affected by what certain newspapers publish and you know who is behind this media."(119)

This dubious interpretation did not preclude more sophisticated responses. Saudi officials turned to the tools of modern public opinion management, including radio and television advertisements in major U.S. media markets that invited audiences to keep an open mind about the kingdom.(120) Most unusually, an American-educated adviser to the crown prince, Adel al-Jubayr, systematically made the rounds of television news talk shows to present Saudi views to the American public.(121) At the same time, the American government, dismayed by Arab and Muslim reactions to the September 11 attacks and the personality of Usama bin Ladin, recruited a former advertising executive to

develop and implement its own new "public diplomacy" effort.(122) But neither of these campaigns seemed quite as effective as bin Ladin's, which was based on a steady trickle of videotaped speeches broadcast over al-Jazirah, the controversial Arabic-language satellite news channel.(123)

These tensions grew even more acute after Bush's January State of the Union address assailing an "axis of evil" that included two neighboring states, Iraq and Iran, and his insistence on the urgency of replacing Iraq's regime. Reports that U.S. forces might be asked to leave Saudi Arabia were accompanied by accounts of the construction of a new CAOC in neighboring Qatar.(124) Later, a leaked war plan that appeared in the *New York Times* indicated that Saudi Arabia would not be a base of operations.(125) Following another leak, which revealed that a consultant had delivered a briefing to a Pentagon advisory panel describing the kingdom as an enemy of the United States, Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal once again explicitly ruled out the use of Saudi bases against Iraq.(126)

Barely suppressed anger remains the dominant mode of U.S.-Saudi relations after September 11, and greater tests are likely to come. The consequences of America's anticipated confrontation with Iraq, or of any decisive action by Israel against Yasir Arafat, are difficult to foresee. While Saudi Arabia's present financial conditions seem to preclude use of the "oil weapon" in the near future, the kingdom could conceivably extend its denial of basing rights to a denial of overflight rights, seriously complicating an air war against Iraq. Another move reportedly under discussion in Saudi Arabia is to agree to an OPEC proposal switching the pricing of oil from dollars to euros, a decision likely to have significant effects on the value of the dollar.(127)

These possibilities cannot be dismissed lightly. Still, neither side seems able to locate a meaningful alternative to the other. The present crisis may well worsen, perhaps even to the dimensions of 1973-1974, or even beyond, given the absence of the Cold War framework. But the bonds of over half a century were never those of fondness or

common outlook. Over the long term, the destiny of the relationship appears to be guided, as ever, by the relentless logic of energy and security in the hydrocarbon age.

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NOTES

1. Parker T. Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 35-37. On the early history of the relationship, see also Barry Rubin, The Great Powers in the Middle East, 1941-1947 (London: Frank Cass, 1981).

2. Crane was widely known and respected in the Arab world for his role in the King-Crane Commission of 1919 and his personal opposition to both Zionism and the establishment of the British and French mandates in the Middle East. The 1931 trip was his third visit to the kingdom. He was accompanied to Jidda by a translator, George Antonius, whom he later supported in writing *The Arab Awakening*, which was dedicated to its patron. For a pithy assessment of Crane's involvement in the Middle East, see Robert D. Kaplan, The Arabists: Romance of an American Elite (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 68-72.

3. Socal is now known as Chevron. Anthony Cave Brown, Oil, God, and Gold: The Story of Aramco and the Saudi Kings (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), pp. 9-56; and Alexei Vassiliev, The History of Saudi Arabia (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 316-17.

4. Until 1944, the operation was called the California-Arabian Standard Oil Company (Casoc). Until 1936, Casoc was a subsidiary of Socal; afterward, Socal and the Texas Company (later Texaco) shared equal interests; two other American companies later acquired shares as well. Vassiliev, The History of Saudi Arabia, pp. 316-18.

5. The seemingly incommensurate gap in outlook has also played a starring role in keeping the two sides apart. A visitor to Aramco's fenced-off "company town" in Dhahran during the 1960s "felt as if I were inside an idealised America, like an old cover of the Saturday Evening Post; an America untouched by the turmoil of the sixties, by long hair or drugs, with its citizens watching old movies on Aramco TV, playing baseball or mending their cars." Anthony Sampson, The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies and the World They Shaped (New York: Viking, 1975), p. 235, as cited in Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, p. 268.

The cultural and psychological distance between Westerners and Arabs, according to an American raised in the expatriate business community in Jidda, led Americans living in Saudi Arabia to embrace "the comfort of absolutism." They split into "two distinct camps... those who had too many Arab friends, and those who sat at home and drank their illegal alcohol and bitched about those damn sand niggers and ragheads." Kaplan, The Arabists, p. 136.

American military personnel in particular have tended to experience isolation while in Saudi Arabia. A recent USMTM "newcomer's guide" reads, in part, "Tabuk is a very conservative Moslem community. Rules, regulations, and laws are enforced in the strictest manner. Although Westerners are generally welcome, they are expected to conduct themselves in socially and religiously acceptable ways. Preparing for service here means being mentally prepared to accept the tenets and restrictions of Islamic culture in the fullest sense. Because of these restrictions, close comradeship develops between USMTM members and other Westerners in the area. This tour provides a great opportunity to complete self-study programs such as PME [Professional Military Education], etc., and also gives individuals a great chance to improve personal physical fitness." Text from <<http://globalsecurity.org/military/facility/tabuk.htm>>.

Religious restrictions have proven especially onerous for U.S. forces. During the early decades of the American presence, Air Force

chaplains were forbidden to wear Christian insignia or hold formal services, and Jewish personnel were admitted to the kingdom only on a don't-ask, don't-tell basis. Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, p. 85. During the Persian Gulf War, Bibles entered the country on similar terms, and Jewish services were held offshore. No alcohol was to be permitted to the troops. Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, My American Journey (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 460-61.

6. The individual quoted was a member of a delegation led by Everette Lee DeGolyer, a deputy to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes in the Petroleum Administration for War. Yergin, The Prize, p. 393.

7. George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, A World Transformed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 330.

8. For the renegotiation of the Aramco concession in 1950, see Yergin, The Prize, pp. 445-49. For the introduction of additional Saudi "participation" in 1974 and 1976, see *ibid.*, pp. 651-52. The nationalization process was completed in 1988 with the establishment of "Saudi Aramco" as a Saudi-managed state enterprise. See Ismail Nawwab, ed., Saudi Aramco and Its World: Arabia And The Middle East (Houston, Texas: Aramco Services Company, 1995), pp. 223-28; Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, pp. 359-70.

9. Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, p. 38.

10. Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, p. 52. As it happened, Aramco would play a singular role in the development of the Eastern Province. See Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, pp. 362-64; Nawwab, ed., Saudi Aramco and Its World, pp. 202-68.

11. Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, p. 85-9.

12. Khaled bin Sultan, for example, relates King Fahd's sense that it would be unwise "to tie ourselves to an alliance which was likely to arouse the hostility of the Arab and Muslim world." HRH General Khaled bin Sultan with Patrick Seale, Desert Warrior: A Personal View of the Gulf War by the Joint Forces Commander (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 25.

13. As early as 1949, Dhahran Airfield served as part of a globe-girdling series of aerial refueling stations for Strategic Air Command, America's nuclear-armed long-range bomber force. Bruce D. Callander, "Lucky Lady II," *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 82 No. 2 (March 1999), p. 72.

14. In this case, it was American, not Saudi, reticence that prevented the creation of a formal alliance. Nadav Safran, Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 64-67. For MAAG and USMTM, see Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, p. 261.

15. Safran, Saudi Arabia, pp. 77-82; Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, pp. 64-9.

16. Safran, Saudi Arabia, pp. 88-92; Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, pp. 82-87.

17. Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, 136-62.

18. As a measure of the importance of the new security arrangements, the Saudis outlawed slavery at this time, helping to make the relationship more palatable to Americans. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-229.

19. Safran, Saudi Arabia, pp. 96-97; Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, pp. 210-33.

20. Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, pp. 300-03; Don Oberdorfer, "Frustration Marks Saudi Ties to U.S.," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1979.

21. Bob Woodward, The Commanders (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 240; Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed, p. 325; Powell with Persico, My American Journey, p. 452.

22. Steven V. Roberts, "Prop for U.S. Policy: Secret Saudi Funds," *New York Times*, June 21, 1987. For more aboveboard aid policies, see Thomas W. Lippman, "Saudis Pledge \$1 Billion Aid to Africa; Saudis Pledge \$1 Billion Aid At Afro-Arab Talks in Cairo," *Washington Post*, March 8, 1977.

23. Jonathan C. Randal, "Arabs Approve Multi-Billion War Chest, Anti-Sadat Steps," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1978; Edward Cody, "Sadat Says Saudis Induced Arabs to Sever Relations," *Washington Post*, May 2, 1979.

24. Jeff Gerth, "The White House Crisis; Evidence Points to Big Saudi Role in Iranian and Contra Arms Deals," *New York Times*, November 30, 1986; David B. Ottaway, "Saudi Envoy Has Credibility Woes," *Washington Post*, February 28, 1987; Lawrence E. Walsh, Firewall: The Iran-Contra Conspiracy and Cover-Up (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 389-92.
25. An American official's comment from July 1967, cited in Yergin, The Prize, p. 556.
26. The Saudi anti-Zionist policy appears not to have been inevitable. In 1939, St. John Philby, accompanied by Saudi deputy foreign minister Fuad Bey Hamza, proposed to Zionist leaders Chaim Weizmann and Moshe Shertok (later Sharet) that they pay Abd al-Aziz £20 million to be used to resettle Palestinian Arabs and also support him as the ruler of a unified Arab state--a proposal strikingly similar in the latter respect to Weizmann's abortive agreement with Emir Faisal of Hejaz 20 years previously. Both Weizmann and Abd al-Aziz remained neither committed nor openly opposed to the "Philby Plan," until its namesake disregarded Abd al-Aziz's instructions not to divulge it to anyone else. In 1943, after Harold Hoskins of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) proposed that Abd al-Aziz meet with Weizmann, the king wrote to President Roosevelt, rejecting the "historic fallacies or social and economic theories of the Zionists," asserting that an ages-old enmity between Muslims and Jews was documented in the Qur'an, and moreover proclaiming "a great personal enmity" between himself and Weizmann, "owing to the criminal affront which this person has committed against me by choosing me from among all Arabs and Moslems to charge me with a dastardly thing--that is that I should become a traitor against my religion and my country." Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, pp. 181-85. Timing had probably been fatal to Philby Plan's chances; by 1943, Saudi oil exports, while still small, had grown to the point that the kingdom was no longer dependent on a depressed pilgrimage trade for its revenues. For the growth of oil production and export revenues, see Vassiliev, The History of Saudi Arabia, pp. 319-20, 401.
27. As a manifestation of American military and technological mastery, the setting must have offered the desert ruler a potent counterpoint to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's personal frailty, which in any case was largely matched by his own at that time; the Saudi monarch's legs were failing him. (Roosevelt made him a gift of his spare wheelchair.) To judge by the outcome, in any event, Abd al-Aziz held his own. Yergin, The Prize, pp. 403-5.
28. William A. Eddy, F.D.R. Meets Ibn Sa'ud (New York: American Friends of the Middle East, 1954), as cited in Hart, Saudi Arabia and the United States, pp. 38-39.
29. Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, p. 188.
30. Specifically, he warned that he might be driven "to apply sanctions against the American oil concessions... not because of his desire to do so but because the pressure upon him of Arab public opinion was so great that he could no longer resist it." Yergin, The Prize, p. 426, and Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, pp. 193-94. That pressure was evidently so great that the kingdom contributed fighting men to the invasion of Israel, placing them under Egyptian command. In October 1948, they fought a fierce, close quarters engagement at close quarters with Israel's Givati Brigade at Huleiqat, near Ashkelon. The Israelis prevailed. Chaim Herzog, The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East from the War of Independence through Lebanon (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), pp. 23, 48, 94.
31. The 1956 oil embargo against Britain and France was ineffective until the United States threatened to join it. Once the Europeans conceded, the U.S. was able to overcome the effects of the Arab embargo by supplying Britain and France directly. See Yergin, The Prize, pp. 491-92.
32. Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, pp. 268-80.
33. Yergin, The Prize, pp. 554-58.
34. The lines of June 4, 1967. Facing attacks from Palestinian radicals and the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Faisal was partial to theories about a combined Zionist-Communist plot to seize control of the Middle East. This countered any impression that he had acquiesced to an American-backed Pax Israeliana. Safran,

- Saudi Arabia, pp. 140-1.
35. Ibid.
36. Steven L. Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 181-209.
37. Brown, Oil, God, and Gold, pp. 299-301.
38. Safran, Saudi Arabia, pp. 152-55.
39. Yergin, The Prize, pp. 595-97.
40. Safran, Saudi Arabia, p. 155. Based on equipment captured during the subsequent fighting on the Golan Heights, the Israelis concluded that the Saudis had also contributed men and arms to the war effort. Herzog, The Arab-Israeli Wars, p. 302.
41. Yergin, The Prize, pp. 598-606.
42. Ibid., pp. 606-17; Safran, Saudi Arabia, pp. 156-60.
43. Safran, Saudi Arabia, pp. 165-67.
44. In June 2000, a resurgent OPEC established a price band of \$22 to \$28 per barrel, with the Saudis identifying \$25 as their desired target. Alfred B. Prados, "Saudi Arabia: Current Issues and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service, July 8, 2002, pp. 9-10. See also Nawaf E. Obaid, The Oil Kingdom at 100: Petroleum Policymaking in Saudi Arabia (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), pp. 97-103. The oil price hike of 1979 was an exception that appears to have been aimed at accommodating a newly threatening Iran.
45. Prados, "Saudi Arabia: Current Issues and U.S. Relations," pp. 7-8.
46. Anthony H. Cordesman, Saudi Arabia: Guarding the Desert Kingdom (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 114.
47. Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict, pp. 308-10, 346-49, 398, 407-09.
48. Robin Allen, "Saudi Arabia Builds Defence of the Realm," *Financial Times*, November 23, 1988.
49. Jim Mann, "Threat to Mideast Military Balance; U.S. Caught Napping by Sino-Saudi Missile Deal," *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1988; Bernard Gwertzman, "Big Missile Sale to Saudi Arabia Opposed by Key Congress Panels," *New York Times*, April 24, 1986.
50. Khaled bin Sultan with Seale, Desert Warrior, pp. 143-5.
51. Bandar, who personified the U.S.-Saudi relationship during the Reagan and first Bush administrations, was well-known in Washington as "a specialist in out-of-channel solutions and relationships," and enjoyed an unusual degree of access to senior American figures. Woodward, The Commanders, p. 213.
- Fahd's confidant since the late 1970s, Bandar had been active in the AWACS and F-15 battles as an informal go-between with Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Fahd would charge Bandar with an assortment of special and sensitive diplomatic tasks in an array of foreign capitals, effectively making him an auxiliary foreign minister. He was appointed ambassador in 1983, indicating just how valuable the American connection had become to Riyadh since the Iranian revolution. Situating such a figure in Washington indicated the primacy of the relationship among Saudi interests. David B. Ottaway, "Been There, Done That: Prince Bandar, One of the Great Cold Warriors, Faces the Yawn of a New Era," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1996.
- One of Bandar's later American counterparts would describe his unorthodox modus operandi by an allusion to the main doors to the Department of State: "Every administration comes in determined to make Bandar do the normal thing and come in the C Street entrance. All have failed." Mark Matthews, "Prince Still Charming, But..." *Baltimore Sun*, November 24, 1995.
52. Jim Mann, "Threat to Mideast Military Balance; U.S. Caught Napping by Sino-Saudi Missile Deal," *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1988. Data on the DF-3A is from the Federation of American Scientists; see <<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/china/theater/df-3a.htm>>.
53. For the negotiations, see Khaled bin Sultan with Seale, Desert Warrior, pp. 138-41. For the numbers and characteristics of the missiles and launchers, see Cordesman, Saudi Arabia, p. 179.
54. Mann, "Threat to Mideast Military Balance."
55. By the time the missiles were discovered, administration had approved the sale of 24 additional F-15s. John M. Goshko and Don

Oberdorfer, "Chinese Sell Saudis Missiles Capable of Covering Mideast," *Washington Post*, March 18, 1988.

56. Khaled bin Sultan with Seale, *Desert Warrior*, pp. 150-51. Introducing some ambiguity, the author also describes the missiles, inter alia, as "a deterrent weapon not intended to be used, except as a last resort when it should be able to demoralize the enemy by delivering a painful and decisive blow." Ibid., p. 145.

57. By his own account, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage fumed at Bandar, saying, "I want to congratulate you. This is the law of unintended consequences. You have put Saudi Arabia squarely in the targeting package of the Israelis. You are now number one on the Israeli hit parade. If the balloon goes up anywhere in the Middle East, you're going to get hit first." Quoted in James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), pp. 169-70. Armitage's words were underscored by hints from the Israelis, in word and deed, that they might soon decide to attack the missile sites. The Americans interceded with the Israelis against this possibility. David B. Ottaway, "Talk of Israeli Raid on Saudi Missiles Concerns U.S.," *Washington Post*, March 23, 1988; George C. Wilson and David B. Ottaway, "Saudi-Israeli Tensions Worry U.S.; Bombing Practice May Presage Attack On Missiles in Arabia," *Washington Post*, March 25, 1988; John H. Cushman, Jr., "Reagan Urges Israeli Restraint on Saudi Missiles," *New York Times*, March 26, 1988. For Congressional demands, see Elaine Sciolino, "U.S. Replacing Its Envoy to Saudis," *New York Times*, April 2, 1988; and Elaine Sciolino, "Congress Is Formally Notified of Big Saudi Weapons Deal," *New York Times*, April 28, 1988.

58. Sciolino, "U.S. Replacing Its Envoy to Saudis." The Saudis had regarded Horan with disfavor since his appointment the previous September. For American and Saudi accounts, respectively, of some of the underlying reasons for his removal, see Kaplan, *The Arabists*, pp. 232-33, and Khaled bin Sultan with Seale, *Desert Warrior*, p. 137 and 151. See also Robert G. Kaiser and David

Ottaway, "Oil for Security Fueled Close Ties; But Major Differences Led to Tensions," *Washington Post*, February 11, 2002.

59. Jim Hoagland, "The Turtle Snaps Back," *Washington Post*, April 13, 1988.

60. Sciolino, "Congress Is Formally Notified of Big Saudi Weapons Deal." Some concern remains that Saudi Arabia, like its neighbors, may be seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, apparently by purchase rather than indigenous development. See Richard L. Russell, "A Saudi Nuclear Option?" *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 69-79.

61. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudis Reaffirm a Right to Vary Arms Dealings," *New York Times*, July 28, 1988.

62. John Lancaster and John Mintz, "U.S.-Saudi Agreement Is Reached on \$ 9.2 Billion Arms Purchase Stretchout," *Washington Post*, February 1, 1994.

63. Richard F. Grimmett, "Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1994-2001," Congressional Research Service, August 6, 2002, pp. 28-9.

64. The Spanish press has announced a \$1.5 billion contract for tanks, transport aircraft, and other arms. "Spain to supply Saudi Arabia with arms," *United Press International*, June 30, 2002.

65. Like other Arab states, Saudi Arabia has been hamstrung by a tendency to conceive of defense in terms of advanced weaponry rather than less tangible and less readily attainable "force multipliers." See Norvell De Atkine, "Why Arabs Lose Wars," *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (December 1999).

66. Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 270.

67. By early in Clinton's second term, Bandar acknowledged having gotten off on the wrong foot with the new president, spending less time in the American capital than before, and experiencing boredom in the post-Cold War environment. Ottaway, "Been There, Done That."

In the view of one Washington journalist, the ambassador had become chairman of "the Persian Gulf War Boys' Club... always quick to offer Bush pere and other club members a private jet ride or a British hunting jaunt or a junket at his Aspen mansion--to which he transported a British pub he had dismantled." Maureen Dowd, "This Dynasty Stuff," *New*

York Times, May 1, 2002.

68. Douglas Jehl, "The Wisdom of a Saudi King: Choosing an Heir to the Realm of Abdel Aziz," *New York Times*, May 24, 1999.

69. For Abdullah's role, see Susan Sachs, "Saudi Heir Urges Reform, and Turn From U.S.," *New York Times*, December 4, 2000. Especially after September 11, 2001, Bandar's status increasingly came into question in Washington: "Reports of a rift between the straight-laced Abdullah and his more westernized and pro-U.S. relatives in high positions have been fueled recently by the unexplained, weeks-long absence from Washington of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States... Depending on whom one talks to, he is either seriously 'out of favor' with Abdullah and lying low in Europe, recovering from an illness, or engaged in high-level consultations in Riyadh." Karen DeYoung, "Saudis Seethe Over Media Reports on Anti-Terror Effort," *Washington Post*, November 6, 2001.

70. Steven Lee Myers, "At a Saudi Base, U.S. Digs In, Gingerly, for a Longer Stay," *New York Times*, December 27, 1997; Howard Schneider, "In the Arabian Desert, U.S. Troops Settle In; Temporary Deployment Has Permanent Feel," *Washington Post*, May 3, 2001.

71. Lawrence Wright, "The Counter-Terrorist," *The New Yorker*, January 14, 2002.

72. According to one account, some U.S. officials briefly gave consideration to assassinating bin Laden at this time. Barton Gellman, "U.S. Was Foiled Multiple Times in Efforts To Capture Bin Laden or Have Him Killed; Sudan's Offer to Arrest Militant Fell Through After Saudis Said No," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2001.

73. Some reports have alleged that Saudi intelligence minister Turki bin Faisal, who managed the Taliban account, paid off bin Laden to secure the kingdom's flanks. Seymour Hersh, "King's Ransom," *The New Yorker*, October 22, 2001; Nick Fielding, "Saudis paid Bin Laden £200m," *Sunday Times*, August 25, 2002.

74. For Saudi efforts, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 138-39; and interview with Turki bin Faisal, as cited in F. Gregory Gause III,

"Be Careful What You Wish For: The Future of U.S.-Saudi Relations," *World Policy Journal*, Spring 2002, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 37-49. For American efforts, see David B. Ottaway and Joe Stephens, "Diplomats Met With Taliban on Bin Laden; Some Contend U.S. Missed Its Chance," *Washington Post*, October 29, 2001.

75. Alan Cullison and Andrew Higgins, "A Once-Stormy Terror Alliance Was Solidified by Cruise Missiles," *Wall Street Journal*, August 2, 2002.

76. The Saudi government cut off funding to the PLO following Yasir Arafat's decision to support to Iraq in 1990. Some accounts allege that Riyadh has since provided financial support to Hamas, a violent Islamist Palestinian rejectionist organization responsible for a series of terrorist attacks in Israel and the occupied territories during the 1990s. Jeremy Kahn, "Saudi diplomat seeks asylum," *Financial Times*, June 15, 1994; Mark Matthews, "Saudis shown to aid terror, Israel alleges," *Baltimore Sun*, May 7, 2002; Herb Keinon, "Livnat puts Saudis on defensive," *Jerusalem Post*, May 8, 2002.

77. Elaine Sciolino, "Out Front: A Desert Kingdom Takes the Spotlight," *New York Times*, March 3, 2002.

78. The Voter News Service (VNS) national exit poll found 79% of Jewish respondents to have voted for Gore, the same proportion that voted for Bill Clinton in 1996. George Edmonson, Cox News Service, "One Nation Evenly Divisible; The Razor-Thin Election Day Margin Still Reveals Some Huge Gaps," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 14, 2000.

79. For the debate, see Rachel Donadio, "GOP Woos Arabs, Hawks as Middle East Crisis Puts Democrats on Defensive," *Forward*, October 20, 2000.

According to a Zogby International poll, 45.5% voted for Bush, 38% for Democrat Al Gore, and 13.5% for Ralph Nader of the Green Party, an Arab-American. An estimated 390,000 Arab voters moved from the Democratic into the Republican column between 1996 and 2000. "Almost half of those Democrats who abandoned Gore said that their decision to do so was influenced by the presence of Senator Joseph Lieberman on the Democratic ticket." James Zogby, "How

Arab Americans voted and why,” *Jordan Times*, December 19, 2000. According to a newspaper account, 72% of respondents to a national survey of Muslims conducted by the Council on Islamic-American Relations (CAIR) reported voting for Bush; 85% of these mentioned being influenced by Muslim political organizations’ endorsement of the Republican candidate. See Caryle Murphy, “Muslims See New Clouds Of Suspicion; Mideast Backlash Cited As Ramadan Fasts Begin,” *Washington Post*, November 27, 2000.

The Bush administration also seemed at first to embrace this alignment, built around a “diversity cabinet” that, once completed, included two African-Americans, one Hispanic, two Asian-Americans, three women, and an Arab-American (former Senator Spencer Abraham of Michigan), but no Jews--in the last area, a striking departure from the choices of the previous administration.

80. When asked whether the U.S. had requested Saudi permission or even informed Riyadh of the raid beforehand, Rear Admiral Craig Quigley replied, “Not that I’m aware of, no.” See official transcript at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2001/t02162001_t216iraq.html. For Bush’s response, see Thomas E. Ricks, “American, British Jets Hit 5 Antiaircraft Sites in Iraq; Baghdad Area Bombed in Biggest Airstrike in 2 Years,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2001.

81. Jane Perlez, “Bush Senior, on His Son’s Behalf, Reassures Saudi Leader,” *New York Times*, July 15, 2001; Elaine Sciolino with Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Rethinks Its Role in Saudi Arabia,” *New York Times*, March 10, 2002.

82. Prados, “Saudi Arabia: Current Issues and U.S. Relations,” p. 4.

83. For a survey of Saudi demographic, social, and economic issues, see Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 31-76 For one of many analyses of the “al-Jazirah effect,” see Sharon Waxman, “Arab TV’s Strong Signal: The al-Jazeera Network Offers News the Mideast Never Had Before, and Views That Are All Too Common,” *Washington Post*, December 4, 2001. For an account of Saudi internet access, usage, and restrictions, see Joshua

Teitelbaum, “Dueling for Da’wa: State vs. Society on the Saudi Internet,” *Middle East Journal*, Spring 2002, Vol. 56, No. 2, pp. 222-239.

84. Sachs, “Saudi Heir Urges Reform, and Turn From U.S.”

85. The previous October, the Arab League had pledged \$800 million to preserve the “Arab and Islamic identity of Jerusalem,” plus another \$200 million for families of Palestinians killed in the fighting. How much of this money was ever disbursed is unclear. Yasir Arafat reportedly received \$45 million during a July 2001 visit to Saudi Arabia, which may have counted against the \$225 pledged in April. Prados, “Saudi Arabia: Current Issues and U.S. Relations,” p. 6.

86. Jane Perlez, “Mitchell Report on Mideast Violence May Thaw the Ice; U.S. Gingerly Discusses Taking More Active Role,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2001.

87. The extent to which the Saudi leadership was drawn into the loop of the Israeli-Palestinian problem, or was perceived to have been, was illustrated by an account alleging that Gaza Preventive Security Chief Muhammad Dahlan, having come under fire from Israeli troops on April 5, 2001, complained to Arafat, who called Crown Prince Abdullah, who called Prince Bandar, who phoned Vice President Cheney, quickly spurring a call from Secretary of State Powell to Prime Minister Sharon. Janine Zacharia, “The road to Mecca - via Washington,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 22, 2001.

88. According to one of the sources, the current President Bush was present in the room at the time of the call. Jane Perlez, “Bush Senior, on His Son’s Behalf, Reassures Saudi Leader,” *New York Times*, July 15, 2001.

89. The letter came to light publicly months later, when Abdullah read it to a group of 150 prominent Saudis, apparently indicating to them that Saudi protests had effected some of the desired changes in American policy toward Israel. James M. Dorsey, “Saudi Leader Warns US of ‘Separate Interests,’” *Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 2001. By Bandar’s account, the letter was Abdullah’s impassioned and spontaneous response to an answer given by President Bush during a

press conference on August 24, 2001. Robert G. Kaiser and David Ottaway, "Saudi Leader's Anger Revealed Shaky Ties," *Washington Post*, February 10, 2002. A transcript of the presidential press conference is available at

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010824.html>>. By another account, the letter was delivered in early September. See Sulayman Nimr, article in *Al-Hayat*, November 6, 2001, translated by FBIS. 90. Kaiser and Ottaway, "Saudi Leader's Anger Revealed Shaky Ties."

91. Elaine Sciolino and Patrick E. Tyler, "Saudi Charges Bush With Failure To Broker Mideast Peace," *New York Times*, November 9, 2001.

92. "We are the country with high credibility with all parties in the Arab and Islamic worlds. Maybe we are also the one qualified to persuade all concerned to come to the peace table. But we cannot play this role... while Israel continually frustrates every peace initiative." Roula Khalaf, "Regal reformer: Crown Prince Abdullah, regent to Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, has spearheaded diplomatic and economic change," *Financial Times*, June 25, 2001.

93. Thomas L. Friedman, "An Intriguing Signal From the Saudi Crown Prince," *New York Times*, February 17, 2002. The Saudi peace initiative appeared again four days later, once more on the opinion page of the *New York Times*. Henry Siegman, a specialist in the Middle East peace process and inter-religious relations at the Council on Foreign Relations, formerly the longtime executive director of the American Jewish Congress, wrote that the Crown Prince had communicated a similar idea to him two years previously, in response to Siegman's own private challenge. Siegman further related that he had recently spoken with anonymous Saudi officials, who expressed their willingness to accept an Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 lines, and significantly, would allow for minor border alterations. Henry Siegman, "Will Israel Take a Chance?" *New York Times*, February 21, 2002. In a subsequent interview, Siegman indicated that this conversation had taken place at his own initiative. Marc Perelman, "Saudi Plan

Gets Boost From Dove, Columnist: U.S. Jews Carry Riyadh Message," *Forward*, March 1, 2002. Perelman also describes former ambassadors Chas Freeman, Jr. and James Akins as having heard the same proposal from Abdullah privately.

Ghazi al-Qusaybi, Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom, in an article published in *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* on February 19, 2002, recounted Abdullah's many "contacts with US envoys and messengers from the Western and friendly states worldwide," all of whom supposedly asked the Crown Prince to offer assurances to the Israeli people that a peace agreement would not threaten their country's existence. (FBIS translation.)

94. Thomas L. Friedman, "Dear Arab League," *New York Times*, February 6, 2002.

95. Michael R. Gordon, "Bush Plans Talks With Saudi Prince on Mideast Plan," *New York Times*, March 18, 2002.

96. The official Saudi Press Agency carried the full text of Friedman's column the next day; see "SPA Carries 'Text' of Saudi Crown Prince's NY Times Remarks on Ties With Israel," FBIS transcription. (See also "End occupation for ties, Abdullah tells Israel," *Arab News*, February 18, 2002.) Friedman was known as both a critic of Saudi Arabia and a Jewish journalist; one Saudi observer described the domestic response to the announcement through his column as "confusion and antagonism." Nawaf Obaid, "The Israeli Flag in Riyadh?" *Washington Post*, March 2, 2002. Friedman's account was also cited in a February 18 editorial in *Ukaz*, a daily newspaper published in Jidda. *Ukaz*, apparently clarifying the Crown Prince's intentions for the home audience, emphasized that the burden of peacemaking remained on Israel: "This is the kind of peace we would accept, but not while Sharon escalates his unprecedented violence and oppression of the Palestinian people. Not with surrender and submission to Israeli conniving plans, dictations, conditions, and plans whether from a government by the Likud, Labor, or any other party. Not while denying the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, who have sacrificed so much throughout their struggle. Not by making concessions on Jerusalem and

Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is the key issue of the Kingdom and the Arab and Islamic worlds.” (FBIS translation.)

The peace initiative was not intended as an opening to direct negotiations with Israel. See Barry Schweid, Associated Press, “Abdullah’s Peace Plan Called a Vision,” *USA Today*, February 27, 2002; William Orme, “Saudi Ambassador Berates Israel Before U.N. Council,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 28, 2002.

97. It drew an immediate dismissal from the Israeli Foreign Ministry on the same grounds: “‘We cannot accept the right of return. It would mean a situation where there are two Palestinian states,’ foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nachshon told AFP.” *Agence France Presse*, “Arab initiative is ‘indivisible’: Saud al-Faisal,” March 28, 2002. The text of the Beirut Declaration is available at

http://www.saudiembassy.net/press_release/statements/02-ST-0328-Beirut.htm.

For the Palestinian response, see *Voice of Palestine*, March 26, 2002, FBIS translation. 98. Neil MacFarquhar, “As Arabs Seethe, Saudi Says Uprising Will Go On,” *New York Times*, March 30, 2002; Neil MacFarquhar, “Anger in the Streets Is Exerting Pressure On Arab Moderates,” *New York Times*, April 3, 2002; Serge Schmemmann, “Israel Persisting With Sweep Despite U.S. Calls,” *New York Times*, April 8, 2002. For U.S. intervention with Israel over Arafat’s fate, see Tracy Wilkinson, “Israel Asks: Is It Time For Arafat To Leave?” *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 2002.

99. In an op-ed article appearing in the *Washington Post*, Prince Bandar declared that “[i]t makes no sense to ask President Yasser Arafat, who was elected by the Palestinian people and who is currently under siege inside two rooms, to stop the violence in the occupied territories while the Israeli forces destroy his security apparatus and kill and detain his security officers.” Bandar bin Sultan, “Why Israel Must Stop The Terror,” *Washington Post*, April 5, 2002. Also see Patrick E. Tyler, “New Strategy Set By U.S. And Saudis For Mideast Crisis,” *New York Times*, May 1, 2002; “Saudi-Egyptian-Jordanian Move To Exert Pressure on Arafat

To Reform Authority, End Resistance,” *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, May 2, 2002, FBIS translation; Ze’ev Schiff, “Analysis / Saudi pressure on Arafat has failed,” *Ha’aretz in English*, May 26, 2002.

100. Bassem Mroue, “Senior Iraqi embraces Saudi crown prince at Arab summit,” *Associated Press*, “March 28, 2002.

101. “‘It is a mistake to think that our people will not do what is necessary to survive,’ the person close to the crown prince said, ‘and if that means we move to the right of bin Laden, so be it; to the left of Qaddafi, so be it; or fly to Baghdad and embrace Saddam like a brother, so be it. It’s damned lonely in our part of the world, and we can no longer defend our relationship to our people.’ ...The person close to Abdullah pointed out that Saudi Arabia’s recent assurances that it would use its surplus oil-producing capacity to blunt the effects of Saddam Hussein’s 30-day suspension of Iraqi oil exports could quickly change.” Patrick E. Tyler, “Saudi to Warn Bush of Rupture Over Israel Policy,” *New York Times*, April 25, 2002. See also Howard Schneider, “Saudi Crown Prince To Carry Warning To Visit With Bush; U.S.-Israeli Alliance Frustrating Arab Leaders,” *Washington Post*, April 24, 2002.

102. Elisabeth Bumiller, “Saudi Tells Bush U.S. Must Temper Backing of Israel,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2002; Patrick E. Tyler, “Saudi Proposes Mideast Action Led by U.S.,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2002.

103. James Bennett with Elisabeth Bumiller, “Israelis Approve Plan To End Siege and Free Arafat,” *New York Times*, April 29, 2002.

104. Neil MacFarquhar, “Saudis Support Bush’s Policy but Say It Lacks Vital Details,” *New York Times*, June 27, 2002; interview with Intelligence Minister Nawaf bin Abd al-Aziz published in *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, June 29, FBIS translation.

105. Cameron S. Brown, “The Shot Seen Around the World: The Middle East Reacts to September 11th,” *MERIA Journal*, December 2001, Vol. 5, No. 4.

106. For oil price stabilization, see David B. Ottaway and Robert G. Kaiser, “After Sept. 11, Severe Tests Loom for Relationship,” *Washington Post*, February 12, 2002. For severing ties with the Taliban, see, Neil

MacFarquhar, "Saudis Criticize the Taliban And Halt Diplomatic Ties," *New York Times*, September 26, 2001. Other immediate steps taken by the Saudis are described in Prados, "Saudi Arabia: Current Issues and U.S. Relations," p. 4.

107. Howard Schneider, "Saudis Suspect Al Qaeda Plot Against U.S. Military, Arrest 13," *Washington Post*, June 13, 2002; Eric Schmitt, "Sudanese Says He Fired Missile At U.S. Warplane," *New York Times*, June 14, 2002.

108. Roula Khalaf, "Riyadh fears the fallout from war," *Financial Times*, October 8, 2001.

109. For example, Secretary of State Colin Powell characterized the Saudis as being "very responsive to all the requests we have placed on them," adding, "I don't want to go into what we have not yet asked of them." Tom Bowman, "Transportation, staging areas for troops at issue," *Baltimore Sun*, September 24, 2001.

110. Eric Schmitt and Michael R. Gordon, "Top Air Chief Sent," *New York Times*, September 21, 2002; Vernon Loeb and Dana Priest, "Saudis Balk at U.S. Use of Key Facility; Powell Seeks Reversal of Policy; Refusal Could Delay Airstrikes at Terrorists," *Washington Post*, September 22, 2001; Patrick E. Tyler, "Saudis Feeling Pain of Supporting U.S.," *New York Times*, September 24, 2001; Roula Khalaf, "Saudi Arabia denies agreeing to aid strikes: Foreign minister Prince Saud al-Feisal says the US has not asked for military support," *Financial Times*, October 1, 2001; Thomas E. Ricks, "Rumsfeld Confident Of Use of Saudi Bases; Royal Family Appears to Signal Assent," *Washington Post*, October 4, 2001; William Arkin, "Our Saudi 'Friends,'" [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A39553-2002May6), May 6, 2002, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A39553-2002May6>>.

111. Neil MacFarquhar, "Saudis Reject U.S. Accusation They Balked on Terror Money," *New York Times*, October 14, 2001; Linda Robinson, Peter Cary, Edward T. Pound, Megan Barnett, Lisa Griffin, and Randy Dotinga, "Princely Payments," *U.S. News & World Report*, January 14, 2002; Jimmy Burns, "Tracking of terror funds 'undermined,'" *Financial Times*, June 10,

2002.

112. Hugh Pope, "War Of Words Between U.S., Saudi Media Heightens Tensions In The Crucial Alliance," *Wall Street Journal*, November 21, 2001. For an example, see "Reconsidering Saudi Arabia," editorial, *New York Times*, October 14, 2001.

113. Notable in this vein was a series of columns by Colbert King of the *Washington Post*, proposing a boycott of American firms that acquiesced in a Saudi policy of "sexual apartheid." See, for instance, Colbert I. King, "Saudi Arabia's Apartheid," *Washington Post*, December 22, 2001. Nayif preached agnosticism for months after the attacks: "So far, we've received no evidence or documents from the American authorities that justify the suspicion or accusations raised against Saudi Arabian citizens." Howard Schneider, "Man on Bin Laden Tape Now Said to Be Guerilla," *Washington Post*, December 18, 2001. For the fundraising event, see Neil MacFarquhar, "No Jerry Lewis, but Saudi Telethon Reaches Goal," *New York Times*, November 9, 2001.

114. Patrick Tyler, "Fearing Harm, Bin Laden Kin Fled From U.S.," *New York Times*, September 30, 2001.

115. Susan Schmidt, "Sept. 11 Families Join to Sue Saudis; Banks, Charities and Royals Accused Of Funding al Qaeda Terrorist Network," *New York Times*, August 16, 2002.

116. John Mintz, "Most Detainees Are Saudis, Prince Says; Return to Kingdom Is Sought; Bush Pledges Case-by-Case Decisions," *Washington Post*, January 29, 2002.

117. "Summer vacationers shun the U.S.," *Arab News*, February 15, 2002; Robin Allen, "Bank's deposits hit by 'anti-US protests,'" *Financial Times*, May 24, 2002; Scott Peterson, "Saudis channel anger into charity," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 30, 2002; Roula Khalaf, "Saudi investors pull out billions of dollars from US: Move signals deep alienation following September 11," *Financial Times*, August 21, 2002.

118. Howard Schneider, "Bombing in Saudi City Kills American; Monarchy Braces for Eruption of Popular Dissent Against U.S.," *Washington Post*, October 7, 2001; Robin Allen and Roula Khalaf, "Saudi car bomb kills British banker: Explosion in Riyadh

heightens fears for safety of foreigners in Osama bin Laden's home country," *Financial Times*, June 21, 2002.

119. Elaine Sciolino, "Taking a Rare Peek Inside the Royal House of Saud," *New York Times*, January 28, 2002. This view was also shared and promoted by leading religious figures. In an example from a Friday sermon in Mecca's Grand Mosque, Shaykh Abd al-Rahman Al-Sudais was quoted as saying, "The mask of the Western media has now been removed. It is quite evident that most of the news agencies and satellite television channels are controlled by Zionist organizations, and are dummies in the hands of the Zionist lobby." "Smear campaign unmasks Zionist designs: Sudais," *Arab News*, February 2, 2002. Other examples include Sulayman Nimr, article in *Al-Hayat*, November 6, 2001, FBIS translation; "Words to the Arabs and Deeds to Israel," editorial in *Abha al-Watan*, November 11, 2001, FBIS translation; Karen DeYoung, "Saudis Seethe Over Media Reports on Anti-Terror Effort," *Washington Post*, November 6, 2001; Marc Perelman, "Defensive Saudis Lash Out at 'Zionist' and U.S. Critics," *Forward*, December, 28, 2001; Michael Slackman, "Troubled Current Under Surface of U.S.-Saudi Ties," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2002; "Saudi Defense Minister: Yarmulke-Wearing Congressmen to Blame for Media Attacks on Saudi Arabia," Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Dispatch Series No. 396, July 2, 2002.

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), a privately funded Washington-based organization headed by former Israeli military intelligence official Yigal Carmon, has drawn particular criticism from Saudi and other Arab writers. MEMRI's translations of inflammatory rhetoric in leading Arabic-language periodicals and broadcasts have attracted special attention after September 11, drawing mentions from U.S. Congressmen, editorialists, and columnists. "This same [Western] press has succumbed to the influence of the Washington-based pro-Israel organization that translates the Arab press into English, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). Muslims feel that if Arab Muslims established a group in the United

States to show the hatred published against the Arabs, they would be accused of anti-Semitism. Thus we see a concerted campaign against anything organized for the Muslims anywhere in the world and we all know who is behind this campaign." Khaled Al-Maena, "Friends, not masters," *Arab News*, February 2, 2002.

120. Judy Sarasohn, "Saudi Arabia a 'Fascinating Client' for Qorvis," *Washington Post*, March 21, 2002; Bob Deans, "Saudi Arabia: Media, diplomacy enlisted to improve kingdom's image," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, April 27, 2002; "Saudi Arabia Spends \$3.8M at Qorvis," O'Dwyer's PR <<http://www.odwyerpr.com/0516qorvis.htm>>; Eli Kintisch, "Top D.C. Lobbyists Facing Heat Over Saudi Ads," *Forward*, May 31, 2002; Christopher Marquis, "Worried Saudis Try To Improve Image In The U.S.," *New York Times*, August 29, 2002.

121. Janine Zacharia, "'Michael Jordan' of Saudi diplomacy leading PR full-court press," *Jerusalem Post*, November 11, 2001; Marquis, "Worried Saudis Try To Improve Image In The U.S."

122. Vanessa O'Connell, "Advertising: Veteran Beers Helps US Craft Its Message," *Wall Street Journal*, October 15, 2001; Elizabeth Becker, "In the War on Terrorism, A Battle to Shape Opinion," *New York Times*, November 11, 2001; Elizabeth Becker and James Dao, "Bush Will Keep the Wartime Operation Promoting America," *New York Times*, February 20, 2002; James Dao, "Panel Urges U.S. to Revamp Efforts to Promote Image Abroad," *New York Times*, July 29, 2002; Bill Carter, "Hollywood Group Offers First TV Spot on Tolerance Aimed at Arab World," *New York Times*, September 5, 2002.

123. The last such tape aired in late December, 2001. James Risen, "A Gaunt bin Laden on New Tape," *New York Times*, December 27, 2001.

124. David B. Ottaway and Robert G. Kaiser, "Saudis May Seek U.S. Exit; Military Presence Seen as Political Liability in Arab World," *Washington Post*, January 18, 2002; Bradley Graham and Thomas E. Ricks, "Contingency Plan Shifts Saudi Base To Qatar; U.S. Wants to Lessen Dependence on Riyadh," *Washington Post*, April 6, 2002.

125. “The document envisions tens of thousands of marines and soldiers probably invading from Kuwait. Hundreds of warplanes based in as many as eight countries, possibly including Turkey and Qatar, would unleash a huge air assault... Any mention of using bases in Saudi Arabia, from which the United States staged the bulk of the airstrikes in the gulf war, is conspicuously missing from the document, said an official familiar with the briefing slides. The United States would need permission to use Saudi airspace adjacent to Iraq, if not Saudi bases themselves, officials said.” Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Plan for Iraq Is Said To Include Attack on 3 Sides,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2002.
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Saudi Arabia–United States relations. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Saudi–American relations. In May 1931 the U.S. officially recognized Saudi Arabia by extending full diplomatic recognition.[22][23] At the same time Ibn Saud granted a concession to the U.S. company, Standard Oil of California, allowing them to explore for oil in the country's Eastern Province, al-Hasa.[23] The company gave the Saudi government \$35,000 and also paid assorted rental fees and royalty payments. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America began in 1933, whereas Standard Oil of California was permitted a concession to explore the Saudi Arabian lands for oil. ambassador to the United States since 1983. The dean of the foreign diplomatic corps in Washington, Bandar has served as the virtual personification of the relationship for two decades. On the American side, former President George H.W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, who developed Saudi ties during the Persian Gulf War, have been instrumental in bringing President George W. Bush together with Crown Prince Abdullah, who currently manages the kingdom's affairs in Fahd's stead. At the same time, public sentiment in both countries, fueled by cable television and the Internet, has played an u... 80 Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 6, No. 3 (September, 2002). Saudi Arabia and the United States, 1931-2002. Saudi Arabia–United States relations refers to the bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, which began in 1933 when full diplomatic relations were established and became formalized in the 1951 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement. Despite the differences between the two countries—an ultraconservative Islamic absolute monarchy, and a secular constitutional republic—the two countries have been allies. Former Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama have close and strong relations with senior members of the Saudi Royal Family.[1]. For faster navigation, this Iframe is preloading the Wikiwand page for Saudi Arabia–United States relations. Home. News.