

SAUDI-AMERICAN RELATIONS 1968-78 : A STUDY IN AMBIGUITY

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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To Nahidha

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Abstract

The decade 1968-78 saw three major developments in Middle East politics: these were the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War in 1967, the British withdrawal from East of Suez in 1971 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973. These events stimulated the United States increasingly to involve itself in regional politics in an attempt to maintain stability and continued access to oil. As a major oil producer and the one with the largest proven reserves, Saudi Arabia sought to ensure its security by trading oil for American assistance. This thesis examines Saudi-United States relations from the Six-Day War to the Camp David Agreement of 1978 and the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran and concludes that Saudi interests were not obtained but rather those of the U.S. secured. The thesis looks in particular at Saudi security interests, American arms sales and the political tensions produced by the pervasive Arab-Israeli conflict. It draws extensively on official documentation in both Arabic and English, while recognising the highly personal nature of Saudi political reaction to the constraints and opportunities of the period under review. In the final analysis Saudi leaders paid a very high price for a very limited commitment to their own security while the U.S. was able to maintain and enhance its political commitment to the state of Israel.

Chapter One

THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Geography

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia, lying between the Gulf and the Red Sea, occupies a significant area between Africa and mainland Asia, close to the Suez Canal.

It covers approximately 80 per cent of the Arabian peninsula, which has an area of slightly over a million square miles. Because some of the Saudi boundaries are undefined, the exact size of the kingdom is unknown. Estimates vary between 864,000 square miles and 869,774 square miles.¹ Saudi Arabian government sources indicate an area of 2,240,000 square kilometres.²

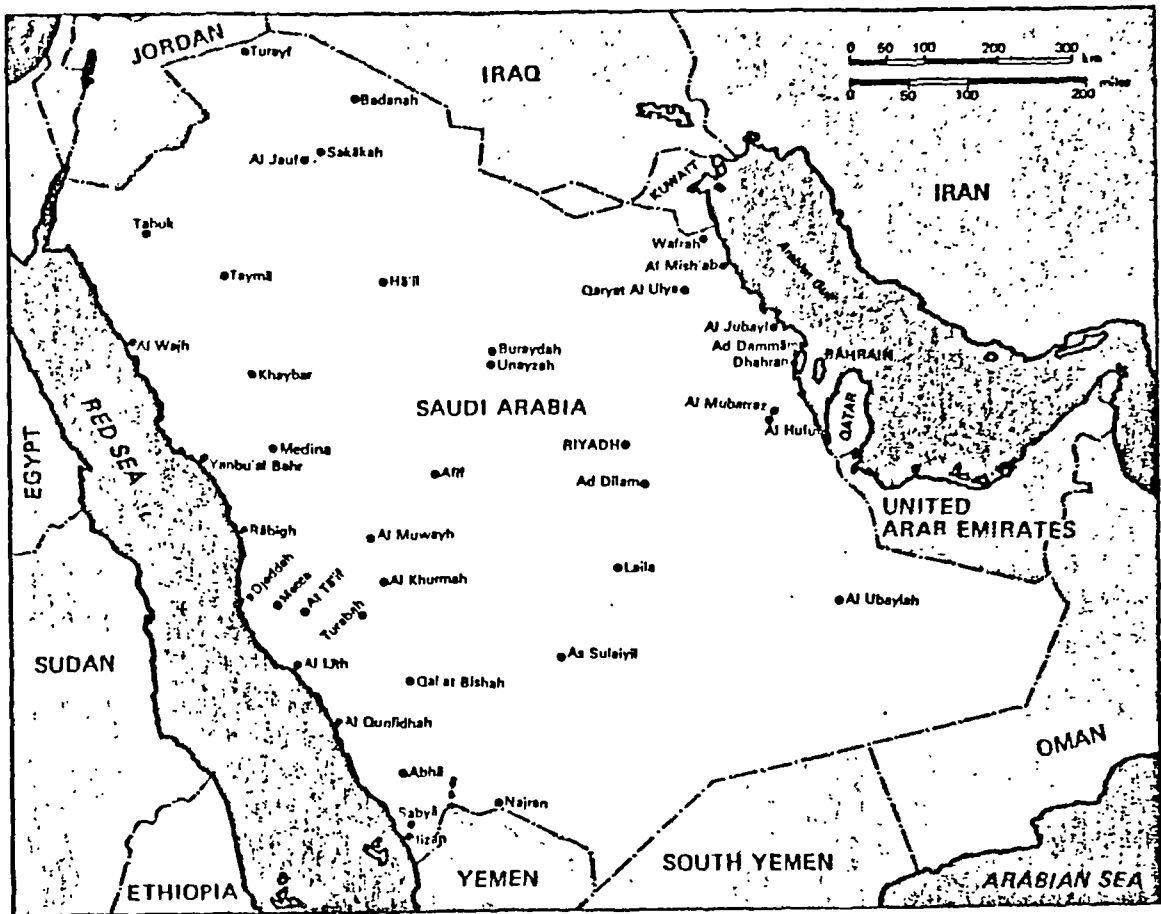
Saudi Arabian territory stretches from the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea on its western shores, to the Gulf in the east. It shares borders with eight countries: Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait to the north; the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) to the south; Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to the east; and the Sultanate of Oman to the south-east. Across the Arabian Gulf, Saudi Arabia faces

¹ Nyrop, Richard F. and others, Area Handbook for Saudi Arabia, 3rd edition, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977, p. 45.

² Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Information, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: facts and figures, Riyadh: Foreign Information, p. 6.

Figure 1.1 : The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Source: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Information, Saudi Arabia and its Place in the World, Riyadh 1979, p.12.



Iran, with Bahrain off its east coast, whilst across the Red Sea are Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. (See Figure 1.1.)

The kingdom is divided into four major provinces: Asir in the south-west; in the west, Hejaz, which contains the two principal holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina; in the centre, Najd, in which is located the capital city of Riyadh; and Hasa, containing the country's oil fields.³ (See Figure 1.2.)

Saudi Arabia is noted for its desert climate, being mainly dry and hot. Summer temperatures can exceed 120° Fahrenheit, but from mid-November to mid-March, the climate is generally pleasant. The country has neither lakes nor rivers, and with the exception of a limited area, rainfall is insufficient to support agriculture. (Only about 1 per cent of the land is suitable for agricultural purposes.⁴) One of the largest empty deserts in the world, known as *Rub' al-Khali* ("the Empty Quarter"), lies within its boundaries.

The emergence of the kingdom

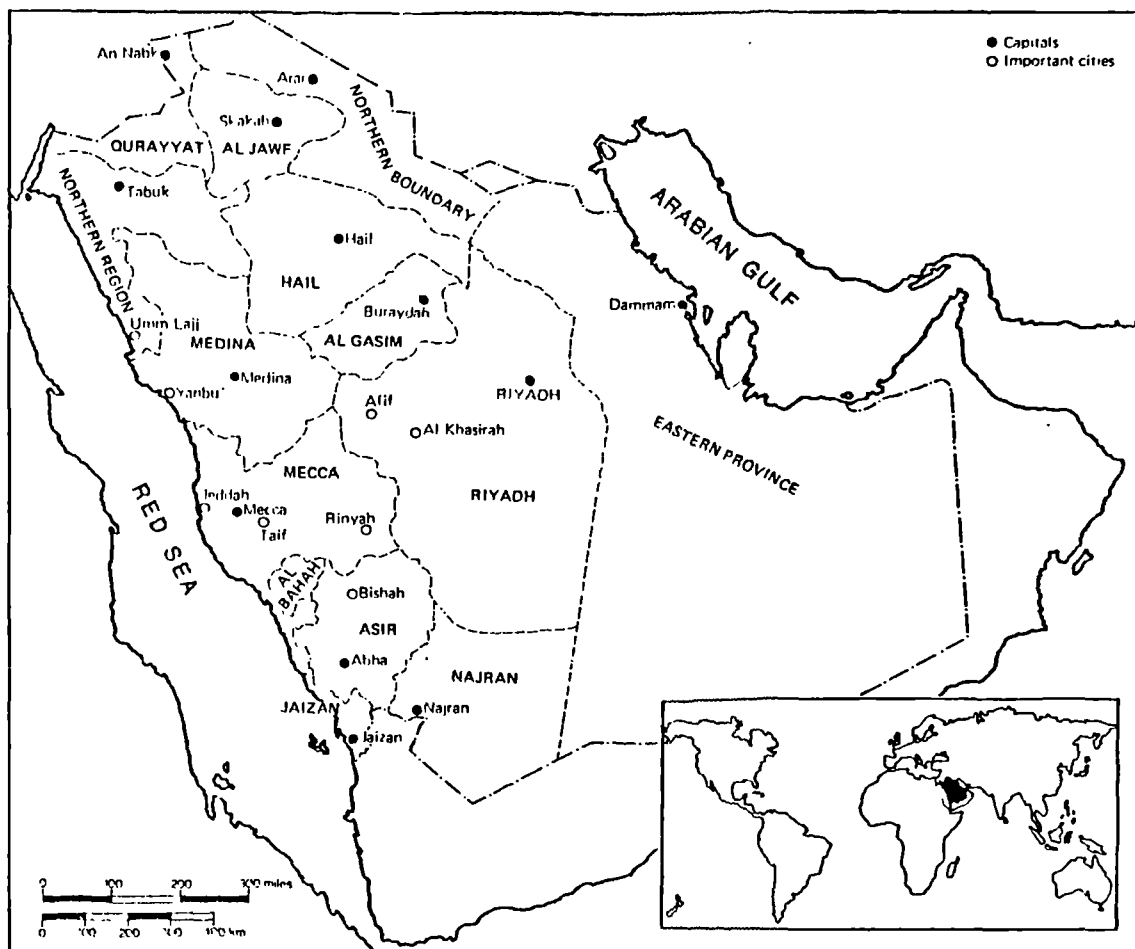
As suggested by the very name of Saudi Arabia, the emergence of the state in contemporary history can be understood only through reference to the history of the Saudi family.

³ The provinces' official names are the Western, the Eastern, the Northern, the Southern and the Central Provinces. For obvious reasons, the Saudi Arabian government has attempted to obscure reference to the former Kingdom of Hejaz and to the Emirates of Hasa, Asir, and Najd.

⁴ Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East, United States Policy, Israel, Oil, and the Arabs, 2nd edition, Washington D.C.: 1975, p. 82.

Figure 1.2 : Administrative Divisions of Saudi Arabia

Sources: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Information, Saudi Arabia and its Place in the World, Riyadh 1979, p.21.



In the early 18th century, the house of Saud was one of families and tribes, each of which ruled various and limited parts of the area. The founder of the current dynasty, Mohammad Ibn Saud, ruled Al-Dir'iyah, a small town in the province of Najd. Towards the middle of the century, under the influence of Sheikh Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, he became an adherent of the Wahhabi sect, which called for a return to the original conservative principles of Islam embodied in the Hanbli teachings. (Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, having met with an unfavourable reaction in his native town of Uyaynah, had been received into Al-Dir'iyah at the time of Ibn Saud's rule.⁵)

Mohammad Ibn Saud and Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab established a theocratic state, ruling jointly over Al-Dir'iyah. The latter received the title of Sheikh, reflecting his religious role, whilst the former received the title of Imam, one of the titles of the head of early Islamic communities. The new state called for the "oneness of God" "*AL DAWĀN ILA AL-TAWHĪD*" and in 1744, which is accepted as the year of its creation, the two Mohammads jointly swore an oath to support and further this cause beyond Al-Dir'iyah.⁶

It was this potent alliance of the House of Saud and the Wahhabi teaching, together with their joint spirit of conquest, which was to be central to the formation of the

⁵ Nyrop, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁶ Rents, George, *The Saudi Monarchy*, in Beling, Willard A. (ed) *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia*, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980, p. 17; Sai'd, Ameen, *Tarikh Al-Dawla Al-Saudiya*, (in Arabic: *The History of the Saudi State*), Vol. 1, Beirut: Arabic Writer Press, n.d., p. 41.

modern state of Saudi Arabia. Indeed, to this day, the Saudi and Al al-Sheikh (i.e. Abd al-Wahhab) families continue to play a key role in the affairs of the nation.

In accordance with tribal tradition, the relationship between the two families was cemented by inter-marriage, the most important being Ibn Saud's marriage to Abd al-Wahhab's daughter at some time during the 1740's.⁷

By the time of Mohammad Ibn Saud's death in 1765, the alliance had conquered and gained control of most of the central area of the Arabian peninsula (Najd), thus acting as a unifying force.⁸

Ibn Saud was succeeded by his son, Abd Al-Aziz (1765-1803). The alliance between the two families was renewed and succeeded in gaining control of the city of Riyadh. The movement faced many enemies on all sides: to the east, the powerful Bani Khalid; to the south-west, the Sharifians of Hejaz and the Zaidis of Yemen; and to the north, the Emirates of Muntafiq. Despite the fact that these powers were politically threatened by the religious Wahhabi movement, they failed to contain its expansion to the Najd. By the time of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's death in 1792, Wahhabism had spread over most of the peninsula.

In 1801, the movement attacked Karbala, an Iraqi city some 200 miles south of Baghdad.⁹ Mindful of the significance to the Muslims of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the Wahhabi were also attempting to gain

⁷ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 25.

⁸ Long, David E. Saudi Arabia, London: Sage Publications, 1976, p. 19.

⁹ Hobday, Peter, Saudi Arabia Today: An Introduction to the Richest Oil Power, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p. 18; Sai'd, op. cit., p. 62.

control of them. In 1803, the army of Abd al-Aziz took Mecca. In the same year, he died, to be succeeded as Imam by his son, Saud (1803-1814), who occupied Medina in 1805.¹⁰

Still in the early nineteenth century, the joint influence of the House of Saud and the Wahhabi teaching was approaching Damascus and Southern Iraq. The Saudi army forced the Sultan of Muscat to pay tribute to them, whilst in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean, their men attacked the ships of "non-believers". The British, who were the dominant Western power in the area, labelled them pirates, and the lower part of the Gulf coast became known as the "Pirate Coast".¹¹

During the 18th century, the two main powers in the area, the British and the Ottoman Empire, had not concerned themselves with what had been happening in the interior of the Arabian peninsula, which they considered to be a tribal conflict posing no threat to their interests. By the early years of the 19th century, however, the government of the Ottoman Empire was forced to take action, particularly in the light of the capture by the Wahhabi of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and its subsequent loss of both income and prestige.

The Ottoman Sultan requested his viceroy in Egypt, Mohammad Ali, to invade Najd to recover their lost territories. Mohammad Ali's forces, led by his son, Tusun, succeeded in recapturing the two holy cities in 1816. In the spring of 1818, another son, Ibrahim Pasha, held siege

¹⁰ Rents, op. cit., p. 20-21.

¹¹ Long, op. cit., p. 19.

at the Saudi capital, Al-Dir'iyah. After five months, Al-Dir'iyah fell and was razed to the ground, and the Saudi Imam, Abdallah Ibn Saud al-Saud (1814-1818), was carried off first to Egypt and then to Istanbul, where he was beheaded.¹²

The British, in alliance with the Ottomans, had been trying - without success - to quell Wahhabi activities in the Gulf between 1805 and 1818. After the collapse of the Saudi-Wahhabi state in 1818, they assembled a large naval and land force at Ras Al-Khaymah, which defeated Wahhabi troops in 1819. In 1820, the opposing sides signed a treaty which marked the beginning of 150 years of British dominance in the area.¹³

Meanwhile, during the years of their occupation, from 1818 to 1822, the Ottomans pitched rival tribes and families against each other, lending their support to those which opposed the Saudi family.¹⁴

Ibrahim Pasha, the leader of the Ottoman-Egyptian troops which had destroyed Al-Dir'iyah, was more concerned with protecting the two holy cities from Saudi-Wahhabi threat than with occupying Najd. Accordingly he transferred his troops from the Najd to the Hejaz province, in which are located the holy cities.

In 1824, Turki Ibn Abdallah Al Saud (1824-1834) marshalled his troops and re-established a Saudi capital in

¹² Rents, op. cit., p. 22; Nyrop, op. cit., p. 27.

¹³ Long, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁴ United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Access to Oil, the United States Relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran. A Report, 95th Congress, 1st session. Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977, p. 35. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, Access to Oil.)

Riyadh, close to the destroyed Al-Dir'iyah. He succeeded in regaining control of all former Saudi territories, with the exception of the Hejaz.¹⁵

Turki's ten year-rule ended in 1834 with his assassination by a rival member of his family. His son Faisal (1834-1838 and 1843-1865), who had been in exile in Cairo since 1827, escaped and became the new Imam. In 1838, another rival claimant emerged, also from Cairo, when Mohammad Ali Pasha sent his troops to gain control of the Arabian peninsula. He took Faisal prisoner, and exiled him to Cairo once again. With the help of the Egyptian army, his cousin Khalid (1838-1841) took his place, his reign lasting just over four years, until 1841, when he was replaced by Abdallah Ibn Thunayan (1841-1843). Less than two years later, Faisal again escaped from Cairo and returned to Najd to resume his position as leader.¹⁶

This second reign of Faisal's, from 1843 to 1865, marked a remarkable period in the history of the House of Saud. (The present Saudi family is officially known as "House of Faisal - House of Saud".)

"...for more reasons than ancestry, Faisal endeavoured like his father to restore order to the land, and like his grandson, Abd Al Aziz, was tough enough to curb the excesses of the bedouins. Pilgrimages could be made in safety, and agricultural and mercantile pursuits were encouraged. Faisal, perhaps because he was so conscientious himself, overestimated the selfless altruism of his sons. To the present day, Saudi rule is based on two determinants: first the family must be kept in order, and then the tribes."¹⁷

In the words of Lewis Pelly, the British resident in the

¹⁵ Long, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁷ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 28.

Gulf, Imam Faisal was -

"a just and extreme ruler who had been unprecedentedly successful in curbing the predatory habits of his tribes, and who was desirous of inculcating among them more settled habits, and of turning their minds towards agriculture and trade."¹⁶

He was also -

"farsighted enough to realise that he could not convert the whole world to Wahhabism, and that if he tried he would again bring ruin on his people and himself... He was a devout Wahhabi, but instead of attacking Karbala (*holy Iraqi city*), he received a British diplomat in his capital."¹⁷

Faisal Ibn Turki died in 1865, having restored order to the Najd and reasserted his authority over much of the Arabian peninsula, from Shammar Mountain in the north, to Oman in the south.²⁰

He was succeeded by his son Abd Allah (1865-71 and 1875-89), but the stability that he had built up was to be destroyed by a conflict between this son and his brother, Saud (1871-75). After Saud's death in 1875, his younger brother, Abd ar Rahman (1875 and 1889-91) assumed power, but initially only for one year, after which Abd Allah regained power until his death in 1889. Abd ar Rahman then regained power²¹, but commanded no real authority. The House of Saud having already collapsed three years earlier, he served briefly as Rashidi governor of Riyadh, his former capital, and in 1891 was sent with his family to Kuwait by Mohammad Ibn Rashid, Amir of Shammar. Among his family was his son, Abd al-Aziz Ibn Abd ar Rahman Ibn Faisal Al-Saud, commonly known as Ibn Saud. It was through the efforts of

¹⁶ Rents, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁷ Winder, R.B. Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century, London: Macmillan, 1965, p. 228.

²⁰ Long, op. cit., p. 21.

²¹ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 28-29.

Ibn Saud that the modern state of Saudi Arabia came into being in the opening years of the twentieth century.²² (For the genealogy of the House of Saud, see Figure 1.3.)

Ibn Saud (1902-1932)

In January 1902, Ibn Saud left Kuwait, returning to the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. With less than fifty men, he travelled south and east. On the night of January 16th, he succeeded in defeating Al Rashid and regaining his family's former capital, Riyadh. This victory roused the former supporters of the House of Saud, and within two years, they had reconquered half of the central area of the peninsula.²³

The Turks sent troops to support Ibn Rashid and succeeded in defeating Ibn Saud at Bukairiya in 1904. He held Riyadh, however, and the struggle continued for more than eight years, until 1912, when the Turks, being unable to support their troops, withdrew.

In the years before World War I, Ibn Saud laid the foundations of his control over central Arabia. The families and tribes were not eliminated, but rather their loyalty was assured by military force or through intermarriage, in accordance with the traditions of desert life.²⁴ Ibn Saud also attempted to unify the families and

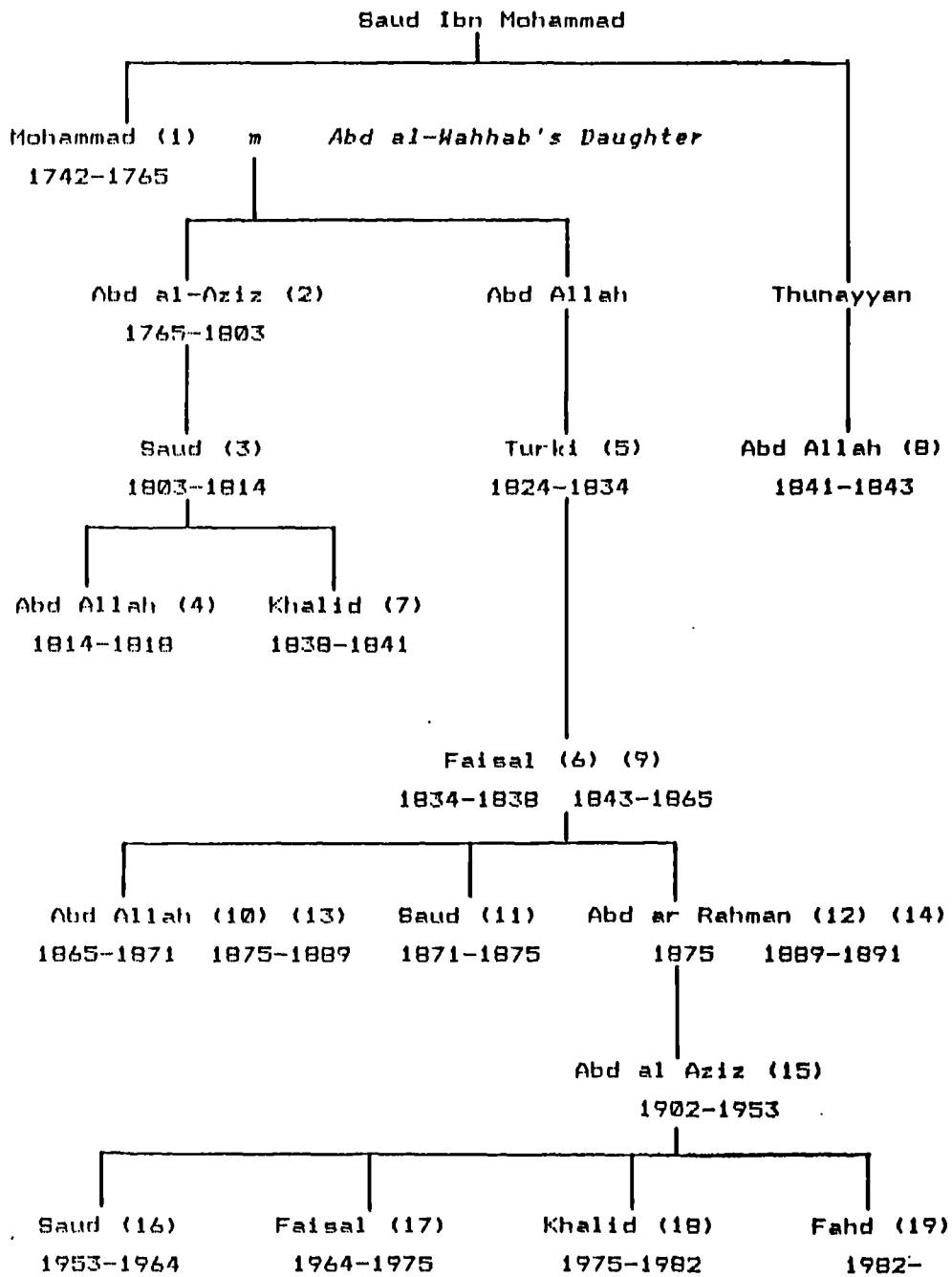
²² Holden, David and Johns, Richard, The House of Saud, London: Pan Books, 1982, p. 2.

²³ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Information, Al-Namlaka Al-Arabia Al-Saudiya, (in Arabic: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Riyadh: 1979, p. 8; The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 6, 15th edition., USA: The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1985, p. 224.

²⁴ U.S. Congress, Access to Oil, p. 36.

Figure 1.3 : The Genealogy of the House of Saud

Note: Numbers in brackets indicate order of rule and dates period of rule.



tribes on a religious basis by assuming the title of Imam, that is a religious leader, and by creating "colonies" (*Al-Hijrat*) which were organized on a non-tribal basis. The first of these *Ikhwan* (or "brotherhood") colonies was established in 1912. During the following fifteen years, some hundred more were established in various parts of Najd. Each was ruled by *Shariah* (religious law) instead of by the customary law of the Bedouin tribes and each had a Wahhabi standing army.²⁵ It is these two elements - the House of Saud's relationship with the tribes and its identification with Wahhabism - which remain central to an understanding of Saudi authority today.

During World War I, the British opposed the Turks and encouraged Ibn Saud to oppose the forces of Saud Ibn Rashid, who was in alliance with the Turks. At the end of 1914, a British officer, Captain W.H.I. Shakespear, helped Ibn Saud to plan a military offensive against Ibn Rashid. The ensuing battle, in January 1915, resulted in a victory for Ibn Saud, but cost Shakespear his life. In December 1915, the British concluded a treaty of friendship with Ibn Saud.²⁶ Nevertheless, Ibn Saud felt threatened by the fact that Colonel T.E. Lawrence (the so-called Lawrence of Arabia) was assisting Sharif Housain of Hejaz to build up his forces, albeit against the Turks.²⁷ In 1917, Ibn Saud was persuaded by Sir John B. Philby to attack Ibn Rashid

²⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 12, 14th edition, Great Britain: Encyclopedia Britannica Ltd., 1961, p. 36.

²⁶ Troeller, Gary, The Birth of Saudi Arabia, Britain and the Rise of the House of Saud, London: Cass, 1976, pp. 254-256.

²⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 36.

and to cooperate with Sharif Housain.²⁹ In the autumn of 1918, this attack took place, but without yielding any clear result. At the end of World War I, Ibn Saud found his domain still within the same boundaries and his two rivals within the peninsula, Ibn Rashid and Sharif Housain, still as powerful as at its outbreak.²⁹

In March 1919, Sharif Housain tried to gain control of the Utaybah tribal region, adjacent to Hejaz. Two months later his Hashemite forces were defeated in a clear victory for Ibn Saud. The following year, Ibn Saud added Asir, in the south-west, to his dominions. In 1922, Ibn Rashid was definitively subdued by the capture of his capital, Hayil, leaving all of central Arabia, with the exception of Hejaz, unified under Ibn Saud's rule.³⁰

After World War I, the creation by the British of the Kingdom of Iraq and the Emirate of Transjordan, headed by two of Sharif Housain's sons - Faisal and Abdullah - hampered Ibn Saud's efforts to expand his rule to the north. The Conference of Kuwait, called by the British in April 1924, failed to resolve this issue. In September of the same year, Ibn Saud's forces began to move into Hejaz, provoked by Sharif Housain having proclaimed himself Caliph of all Muslims. By 1926, the occupation of Hejaz was complete, and Ibn Saud declared himself its king. (In 1927, his official title was King of Hejaz and Sultan of Najd and its Dependencies.³¹

²⁹ Long, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ U.S. Congress, Access to Oil, p. 36.

The British held a series of negotiations with Ibn Saud over frontiers shared by him with British allies. In 1927, Sir Gilbert Clayton concluded a treaty, known as the Treaty of Jeddah, which recognized Ibn Saud's dominions from the Red Sea to the Gulf, and which provided for non-aggression and friendly relations.³²

Despite this, the Ikhwan, inspired by the belief that all non-Wahhabi Muslims were infidels, continued their warring tradition. Ibn Saud failed to prevent them from carrying out further raids and from invading Iraq in 1927. In 1929, he had no choice but to crush his formerly loyal subjects at the Battle of Sibila.³³

This battle marked the beginning of a new era. The defeated Ikhwan were now loyal to the Saudi state, in part because in the early years of the 20th century, the tribal origins of the Wahhabi movement had regained the ascendancy over the religious fervour of the 18th and 19th centuries. Ibn Saud strengthened his control by intermarriage with senior members of the tribes, and with religious leaders,

³² Slugett, Peter and Faruk-Slugett, Marion, The Precarious Monarchy: Britain, Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud and the Establishment of the Kingdom of Hejaz, Najd, and its Dependencies, 1925-1932, in Niblock, Tim, (ed.) State, Society, and Economy in Saudi Arabia, London: Croom Helm, 1982, p. 52; Philby, Harry St. John, Saudi Arabia, New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1955, pp. 302-303.

³³ Knauerhose, Roman, "Saudi Arabia: Our Conservative Muslim Ally", Current History, January 1980, p. 17; Machale, T.R. "A Prospect of Saudi Arabia", International Affairs, Vol. 56, No. 4, Autumn 1980, p. 626.

particularly the Wahhabi family.³⁴ By 1932, the definition of Saudi authority was clear. It was a monarchy, influenced by religious leaders and Bedouin tribal chiefs, but with Ibn Saud and his family remaining the key figures. Ibn Saud was at once king, *imam* - religious leader, and *sheikh* - tribal chief.

How had the kingdom emerged and expanded? According to Fred Halliday,

"no adequate social explanation of this movement has yet been produced..."³⁵

while Tim Niblock surmises that,

"commercial interests in the towns played a more crucial role in the creation and expansion of the Saudi state than did the Bedouins."³⁶

A more reasonable explanation, however, is arguably as follows. In the first place, the creation and expansion of the Saudi state resulted from tribal conflict in the desert interior. Saudi supremacy was owed to the revival of their forces, which were victorious in their struggle against rival tribes and families in the peninsula. In the second place, during the first third of the 20th century, the British had little interest in the interior of the Arabian peninsula, concerning themselves mainly with the coastal

³⁴ Anthony, John Duke, Saudi Arabia: From Tribal Society to Nation State, in El-Mallakh, R. Saudi Arabia, Energy, Developmental Planning and Industrialization, Washington D.C: Heath and Co., 1982, p. 94; Al-Zarakly, Khair Al Dean, Shibh Al-Jazira Fi Ahd Al-Malik Abd al-Aziz (in Arabic: The Peninsula during the reign of King Abd al-Aziz) Vol. 3, Beirut: 1970, p. 956.

³⁵ Halliday, Fred, Arabia Without Sultans, London: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 48.

³⁶ Niblock, Tim, Social Structure and the Development of the Saudi Arabian Political System, in Niblock, Tim, (ed.) State, Society, and Economy in Saudi Arabia, London: Croom Helm, 1982, p. 78.

area from Basrah in the north of the Gulf to Aden in South Yemen.

The reign of King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud (1932-1953)

On 18th September 1932, Ibn Saud proclaimed his domain to be a kingdom and assumed the title of King. Thus did the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (*Al-Mamlakah Al-Arabiyyah Al-Saudiyyah*) come into existence as a state.

Territorial disputes, however, continued. In 1933, King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud was in dispute with the state of Yemen over Asir. He declared war in March 1934. His two eldest sons led an invasion of Yemen and successfully gained control of a large proportion of the country. Imam Yahya of Yemen was obliged to sign a treaty on 23rd June, 1934, in which he acknowledged Asir to be part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.³⁷

Relations with its northern - and Hashemite - neighbour, Iraq, were further strengthened by the signing of a treaty of Arab brotherhood and non-aggression on 3rd April, 1936.³⁸ The only outstanding border dispute remained the Buraimi Oasis, which Saudi Arabia was to claim until 1974, when it withdrew its claim against Oman and Abu Dhabi.³⁹

³⁷ Lenczowski, George, The Middle East in World Affairs, 4th edition, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 579.

³⁸ Howard, Jimmy, The United States and Saudi Arabia: A Special Relationship, Its Birth, Evolution, and Reapportionment, unpublished M.A. dissertation, Naval Postgraduate School, 1981, p. 18.

³⁹ Long, op. cit., p. 21.

During the 30's, it became clear to the king that the overall situation in the area had evolved and that an extremist religious policy was no longer appropriate. If he wished his kingdom to survive, he would have to adopt a moderate policy towards both local powers and greater ones. Hence, although his rule was based on the Wahhabi sect and on tribal custom, he ensured that priority was given to the development of the infrastructure of the state. A system of government began to emerge, firstly in Hejaz.

Administratively, the kingdom was divided into four provinces: Najd, Hejaz, Hasa, and Asir. They were governed by the Crown Prince Saud, Prince Faisal, Abdullah Ibn Jiluwi, (a cousin of the king) and Amir Turki respectively. The latter was a nephew of the king and a member of the Sudairi clan, which played an important part in the history of modern Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰

Administrative structures were slowly created and developed. Several foreign states established legations in the Hejaz. (The United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and the Soviet Union had recognised Saudi authority in 1927.) In 1931, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was set up in Jeddah, headed by Prince Faisal⁴¹, who continued to hold this post, including as King, until his death in 1975. Financial affairs had been managed by Abdullah Sulaiman Al-Hamdan since 1919, and in 1932, the Ministry of Finance was created, with him retaining control as minister. Indeed, he spent freely, treating the country's finances as his

⁴⁰ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 34.

⁴¹ Lackner, Helen, A House Built on Sand - A Political Economy of Saudi Arabia, London: Ithaca Press, 1978, p. 29.

private funds.⁴² A Minister of Defense, Prince Mansur Ibn Abd al-Aziz, was appointed in 1944⁴³, and a Minister of Interior Affairs in 1951. Under pressure from the United States, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (S.A.M.A.) was founded in 1952, mainly to manage the note issue.⁴⁴

In the 1930's, however, the main problem facing the country was shortage of funds. Its income had risen from approximately £50,000 p.a. in the early years of the century, with a United Kingdom grant of £60,000 p.a. from 1916 to 1924, to some £5 million p.a. after the establishment of the Kingdom. There were no apparent means of stimulating the desert economy, except by increasing income from pilgrimage, which had fallen with the world slump. In 1933, however, the king granted an oil concession to an American firm for £50,000, thus solving his immediate financial problems.⁴⁵ Oil in commercial quantities was discovered in 1938, but World War II delayed the development of production and it was not until the end of the war that the kingdom began to reap the benefits of this.

The country's official position in the war was neutral, but King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud's sympathies were undoubtedly with the Allies.⁴⁶ In 1943, the United States' government declared that "the defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the United States." The king signed

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Al-Zarakly, op. cit., p. 990.

⁴⁴ Wilson, Rodney, The Evolution of the Saudi Banking System and its Relationship with Bahrain, in Niblock, Tim, (ed.) State, Society, and Economy in Saudi Arabia, London: Croom Helm, 1982, pp. 278-279.

⁴⁵ Lackner, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴⁶ Philby, op. cit., p. 337.

an agreement allowing the United States airfield base rights, and construction of an airfield at Dhahran, near the oilfields, began. (In the event, the base was not completed until after the war.) Following his meeting with President Roosevelt, and subsequently with Churchill, the king declared war on the Axis powers on 1st March 1945, thus enabling Saudi Arabia to join the United Nations conference in San Francisco.⁴⁷

After the war, oil production was increased, and with it came a dramatic rise in the country's income, from only \$4 million in 1944 to some \$85 million in 1948. Clearly, this enabled a significant amount of internal development to take place, but it proceeded slowly. Although the kingdom was beginning to acquire the trappings of a modern state, King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud himself remained "the state".⁴⁸

"... in no other state in the world is the national destiny held so completely in the hands of one man, the king, as in Saudi Arabia... (he) controlled every aspect of governmental activity..."⁴⁹

There was no constitution. Members of the royal family or close confidants occupied key positions in the government. Indeed, "the government was the House of Saud." Crown Prince Saud was not only governor of the key province of Najd, but also commander of the army. Similarly, Prince Faisal was both governor of another important province,

⁴⁷ Halliday, op. cit., p. 51; Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 581.

⁴⁸ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 34.

⁴⁹ Department of State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 362. Confidential, from American Embassy, Jeddah, to the Department of State, Washington, May 10, 1954. In Al-Rashid, Ibrahim, (ed.) The Struggle between the Two Princes: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Final Days of Ibn Saud, U.S.A Documentary Publications, Chapel Hill Inc., 1985, p. 186.

Hejaz, and foreign minister. Similarly, the national income was regarded as the king's, to be spent as he chose. In October 1953, the king created a Council of Ministers, which officially had legislative and executive power, and appointed Crown Prince Saud as its head. A month later, he died.

King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud had laid the foundations of modern Saudi Arabia. His state was an absolute monarchy, patrimonial, but differing from Western monarchies in also being a tribal state, with religious legitimacy. The king was a tribal leader, to whom any subject could have direct access on any matter. Decisions were personal, and taken on the basis of their effect on the interests and concerns of the royal family. The main duty of the king was to maintain Saudi authority and the security of the kingdom.

The most significant aspect of King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud's reign, however, was his desire for an early American involvement in the area and a special relationship with the United States. He did not trust the British, allies of his traditional enemies, the Hashemite family, and his religious convictions prevented his developing early relations with the Soviet Union. Moreover, in the 1930's the Soviet Union could not have provided the financial aid necessary to support him or to develop the oil industry.

The reign of King Saud Ibn Abd al-Aziz (1953-1964)

King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Saud. King Saud found himself facing new

challenges from both beyond and within Saudi Arabia, including within the royal family, challenges with which he was ill-equipped to cope:

"Saud's first administrative assignment in the new kingdom had been the governorship of the Najd, and this may have contributed to his disastrous rule as king. Governorship of the Najd did not require learning new ways to approach the problems of governing. Saud relied on his father's charismatic leadership and cash to maintain tribal loyalty in the Najd and relaxed to enjoy the fruits of royal privilege and royal income."⁵⁰

He also had no experience of foreign affairs, which were managed from Hejaz by Prince Faisal, whose responsibility they had been since he was 14 years old.

Within Saudi Arabia, there was growing dissatisfaction over alleged wasteful expenditure, and King Saud ruled extravagantly. Spending was dictated by his whims, and at times the treasury was almost depleted, despite the country's vast oil income. He built a number of new palaces at great cost⁵¹, and heavily subsidized the tribal leaders to maintain their loyalty. It must also be said that he funded some projects such as schools and hospitals.⁵²

Dissatisfaction also grew over the lack of political participation. Some liberal Saudi princes and a number of the rising middle class educated abroad were influenced by the Arab nationalist movement, which was extremely effective in arousing nationalism among the Saudis in the 1950's. In August 1954, a leaflet was circulated in the

⁵⁰ Nyrop, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

⁵¹ Sheean, Vincent, Faisal, the King and his Kingdom, London: University Press of Arabia, 1975, p. 114.

⁵² Lackner, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

eastern provinces:

"the leaflet contains a brief but bitter attack on the royal family, 'foreign imperialists' and 'American pigs', and urges the workers to seize the profitable oil company (ARAMCO)."³³

King Saud's first response was to issue a royal decree (*fatwa*) in April 1955, forbidding Saudis from studying abroad. In 1956, the Saudi ARAMCO workers in the eastern province called a strike, characterized by political demands and overtly nationalistic overtones. Another royal decree was issued, forbidding strikes and declaring that any worker taking part in such an action would be dismissed.³⁴

Such positive achievements as there were during King Saud's reign came about thanks to the influence of Prince Faisal, whom King Saud appointed prime minister in 1954. The Council of Ministers published a budget, the first in the country's history. More ministries were created. Plans for modernization were drawn up, particularly for roads, schools, and communications, although many of these were vetoed by the king, who retained full powers over internal and foreign policy, despite the increasing role of the Council of Ministers.³⁵

From outside Saudi Arabia, new demands were resulting from political change in the area. The Egyptian revolution in 1952 overthrew the monarchy and established a republic. About a year later, Gamal Abdul Nasser gained full power in

³³ Department of State, Foreign Service Despatch No. 12. Confidential, from American Consul, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, to the Department of State, Washington, August 25, 1954. In Al-Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

³⁴ Nyrop, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

Egypt, and by 1954 his nationalistic intentions were clear. Together with the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, which had great influence in Eastern Arabia, he spread a call for unity, freedom and socialism throughout the whole Arab homeland.

The situation facing King Saud was considerably more complicated than in his father's day. His foreign policy shifted between Pan-Arabism and conservatism. In the early years of his reign, relations with Nasser were good: King Saud called for neutrality, for the independence of Algeria, for the liberation of Palestine, and opposed the Baghdad pact. He strengthened his ties with Egypt by signing a mutual defense pact in October 1955, and during the Suez crisis supported Nasser by announcing an embargo on oil shipments to the United Kingdom and France, and breaking off diplomatic relations with both. He also backed Nasser financially.

Relations with the United States at first declined. At the time of his father's death, King Saud had telegraphed: "inform U.S. government he was determined continue his father's policies including maintenance close friendship with U.S. (sic)." ⁵⁴ Despite this, in 1954, the king dismissed the United States Point Four mission. Saudi attempts to transport its oil in Greek tankers were considered a violation of the American concession agreement. The Dhahran air-base agreement was not, however, rescinded, and was indeed renewed for another five years,

⁵⁴ Department of State, Secret Security Information. Incoming Telegram from Jeddah to Secretary of State No 218, November 10, 1953. In Al-Rashid, op. cit., p. 146.

following the king's visit in 1957 to the United States to meet President Eisenhower, as a result of which he also declared his support for the Eisenhower doctrine.⁵⁷

Saudi-U.S. relations were thus improving, but the kingdom's Arabian policy was fraught with difficulties. In February 1958, Syria and Egypt declared their two countries to be the United Arab Republic. Two weeks later, the Hashemite family in Iraq and Jordan announced a rival Arab federation under the supervision of Britain. King Saud was unable to subscribe to Arab nationalist policy because it called for the "overthrow of all reactionary Arab kingdoms". Nor could he contemplate a reconciliation with the Hashemite family, particularly since they had asked Britain to annex Kuwait in their federation.⁵⁸

The king was unable to handle this complex situation. In March 1958, the royal family urged him to transfer power to his brother and heir apparent, Prince Faisal. King Saud issued a decree acceding to this, and Prince Faisal assumed full powers of government in internal and foreign affairs. Under the latter's administration, the budget balanced and the internal situation improved significantly. The role of the Council of Ministers was increased. A neutral position was adopted in Arab affairs.⁵⁹ The struggle for power between the king and Prince Faisal continued, however, until in December 1960, the king refused to sign the budget

⁵⁷ Sai'd, Ameen, Tarikh Al-Dawla Al-Saudiya, Ahd Saud Ibn Abd el Aziz, (in Arabic: The History of the Saudi State. The Saud reign,) Vol. 3, Beirut: Dar Al-Katib Al Arabi, n.d., pp. 182-185 and 192-193; Campbell, John C. "From Doctrine to Policy in the Middle East", Foreign Affairs, April 1957, p. 453.

⁵⁸ Lackner, op. cit., p. 133.

⁵⁹ Hobday, op. cit., p. 33.

for the new financial year. He felt his position to be strong enough to force Prince Faisal to offer his resignation in January, 1961.⁴⁰

King Saud formed a new cabinet. He assumed the post of prime minister, appointed Prince Talal Minister of Finance and National Economy, and Abdullah Tariqi Minister of the new Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources.⁴¹ The former was well known as the leader of the "Free Princes", and the latter was to be one of the founders of OPEC. New conflict emerged within the government between the policies adopted by the "Free Princes" and conservative elements. Prince Talal and his supporters called for constitutional monarchy and a parliament. King Saud opposed these, and in September 1961, he dismissed Prince Talal from the cabinet.

Outside Saudi Arabia, the entire area was entering a new phase. In January 1961, when Britain announced the end of its protection treaty with Kuwait, Iraq laid claim not only to Kuwait (as part of its southern province of Basrah) but also to the greater part of Saudi Arabia's Hasa province. As a result, King Saud sent a brigade of troops to Kuwait. In September of the same year, some Syrian officers led a successful coup and announced the secession of Syria from the United Arab Republic on the same day as Saudi Arabia recognised the new regime.⁴²

⁴⁰ For more details see Bligh, Alexander, From Prince to King, Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century, New York: New York University Press, 1984, pp. 64-70.

⁴¹ Niblock, op. cit., p. 100.

⁴² King Saud spent over \$12 million attempting to break up the Union. See Haikel, Mohammad, Nasser, The Cairo Documents, London: New English Library, 1972, p. 182.

Partly because he was unable to cope with these internal and external developments, the king's health declined. In March 1962, Prince Faisal became deputy prime minister as well as foreign minister.⁴³ But conflict over the leadership was not yet resolved.

In September 1962, the army of the Yemen led a revolution, in which the Imam was overthrown and a new republic was proclaimed, confronting Saudi Arabia with a further threat. Within a week, Egyptian troops arrived in the Yemen to support the republican forces and the royalists were regrouping on the Saudi border.

The House of Saud recognising King Saud's total inability to cope with this situation, Prince Faisal again regained full power as prime minister in October 1962. Prince Faisal continued to be de facto leader of the country until 1964, when King Saud was defeated in his last embattled attempt to resume power. The ulama, or religious scholars, the council of the royal family, and the tribal sheikhs sided with Prince Faisal; King Saud was formally dismissed and Faisal was proclaimed king on 2nd November, 1964.⁴⁴

The years of King Saud's reign had witnessed an evolution of the political system in Saudi Arabia. Whilst the decisions of King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud had been his own personal ones, decisions during King Saud's reign became ultimately the decisions of the House of Saud. Several factors lay behind this: firstly, state affairs had become

⁴³ Sheean, Vincent, "King Faisal's First Year", Foreign Affairs, January 1966, p. 306.

⁴⁴ Sai'd, Ameen, Faisal Al-Azeem, (in Arabic: Faisal the Great), Beirut: Dar Al-Katib Al-Arabi, n.d., p. 88.

far more complex than in Ibn Saud's time; secondly, King Saud as an individual did not have his father's ability to deal with new developments; thirdly, the situation of the entire area had evolved to the point where King Saud was driven to abandon his father's policy of isolation; and finally, the rapid increase in oil revenue affected relations between the king, the royal family and the people.

By the end of King Saud's reign, the basis of relations between the Saudi family, the tribal sheikhs, and the ulama was clear. The necessity for the House of Saud hegemony was apparent. The alliance with the west, particularly with the United States, was vital to the interests of the royal family. The kingdom needed a new leader and a new policy: King Faisal and his Islamic policy fulfilled this need.

The reign of King Faisal Ibn Abd al-Aziz (1964-1975)

Since Faisal's assumption of full powers as prime minister in 1962, the kingdom had seen significant developments, despite the government's continuing adherence to traditional principles. On 6th November 1962, only a week after taking power, he had introduced his ten-point programme of modernization, which included the promise of a constitution and a consultative council. Other points

included judicial reform, and education, health and social developments.⁶⁵

After he was proclaimed king in 1964, King Faisal nominated his half-brother, Prince Khalid Ibn Abd al-Aziz, Crown Prince, thus ensuring a peaceful transfer of power after him, and maintaining the royal family hegemony. He also gave high priority to the modernization of the army and the establishment of an air defense system, in order to meet the Egyptian threat in the south.⁶⁶

Within the country, his achievements were self-evident. In education, by 1970 the number of male children in school had risen from some 113,000 in 1960 to nearly 386,000, and there were over 126,000 girls in state schools, compared with none in 1960. The health services were developed. Some social services and more employment, particularly in administration, were provided by the government. But despite significant developments in various sectors, King Faisal sought to ensure the continuation of social structures which would maintain the dominance of traditional values.⁶⁷

In 1970, the government drew up its first five-year development plan, calling for expenditure of \$9.2 billion.⁶⁸ The implementation of this plan met with

⁶⁵ Lenczowski, George, "Tradition and Reform in Saudi Arabia", Current History, February 1967, p. 101; Sheean, op. cit., p. 120-121.

⁶⁶ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 39; Bligh, op. cit., p. 86.

⁶⁷ Lackner, op. cit., p. 67-8.

⁶⁸ For more details of the 1st and 2nd five-year development plans, see Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Planning, Saudi Arabia: Achievements of the First and Second Development Plans (1970-1980), Riyadh: 1982.

problems, but it did achieve many qualitative changes in the country.

At an international level, King Faisal played an important role in resisting Arab nationalist ideas. In 1965, he called an Islamic summit conference to oppose the radical states in the area. He visited Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Morocco, and Tunisia to seek their support for his attempt to organise a conservative camp. At the time, this initiative failed because of the strength of the nationalist movement in the Arab homeland, but it was to succeed after 1967, when the whole situation in the area had changed.

The main problem confronting King Faisal was the civil war in Yemen. Egyptian troops in the Yemen had increased from 8,000 in late 1962 to 70,000 in 1966. Egyptian air-raids on royalist installations and towns were perceived as a direct threat to the kingdom. The king imported huge quantities of arms from the United States and Britain and launched a diplomatic campaign aimed at securing the support of the United States and other Western powers. The United States cancelled its loans to Egypt.

" It was during these years that the American activity in the area began to constitute a crucial element in Saudi calculations and policies."⁴⁷

The Yemen crisis was resolved in 1967, when the 6-day war of June changed the nature of inter-Arab relations. The Khartoum conference of August 1967 brought to an end the confrontation between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Nasser now

⁴⁷ Dawisha, Adeed, Saudi Arabia's Search for Security, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979, p. 3.

being dependent on the financial aid of Saudi Arabia and of other oil-rich states. The political situation of the area had changed dramatically and Saudi Arabia began to play a significant role in its policies.

King Faisal occupies a remarkable position in the history of Saudi Arabia, equal in importance that of his father, King Ibn Saud. Thanks to him, the country became a modern - albeit a highly tribal - state. Important decisions continued to be taken by the king and the princes' committee within the House of Saud. The religious leaders remained an essential social and political force. Increased economic power was translated into political power both within the kingdom and beyond its borders. Links with the United States were as strong as they had ever been.

On 25th March, 1975, King Faisal was assassinated by his nephew. His brother, Crown Prince Khalid, ascended the throne.

The reign of King Khalid Ibn Abd al-Aziz (1975-1978)

King Khalid's rule represents a period of balance of power within the royal family. Another brother, Prince Fahd, was appointed Crown Prince and first deputy Prime Minister. Prince Abdullah retained his position as Commander of the National Guard, as did Prince Sultan as Minister of Defense and Aviation. Most of the day-to-day affairs of the country were conducted by Prince Fahd, as a result of the king's ill-health, but the king was by no

means without power. He and Prince Abdullah were the leading figures of the traditionalist elements of the kingdom, while Prince Fahd and Prince Sultan were at the forefront of the modernist movement.

This ruling team continued to pursue the policies of the late King Faisal, in both internal and external affairs. Within the kingdom, it sought to gain stability by achieving an equilibrium between Islamic traditionalism and the desire for modernization. Thus in October 1975, the king expanded the Council of Ministers from fourteen to twenty members, the majority of whom had higher degrees.⁷⁰ A second five-year development plan, costing \$142 billion, was brought into effect, also in 1975.

In foreign affairs, whilst pursuing the same policies, the government adopted a more active role, and improved its relations with neighbouring states. In March 1976, diplomatic relations with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen were established, principally with the aim of moderating its policies. Relations with the United Arab Emirates were also strengthened, with Ambassadors being exchanged in June 1975. In March 1976, the king visited the small Gulf states to enhance relations with them.

In the third world, it was on Saudi Arabia's initiative that Somalia ended its alliance with the Soviet Union. The kingdom supported the Eritrean movement, particularly after the Marxist coup in Ethiopia. It came to the aid of Zaire's President Mobuto Sese Seko, enabling him

⁷⁰ Eleven had higher degrees, and one had a bachelor's degree. See Braibant, Ralph and Farsy, Fuad, "Saudi Arabia, A Developmental Perspective", Journal of South Asian and Middle East Studies, Fall 1977, p. 22.

to put down a Communist revolt. It supported moderate elements in Sudan, and backed conservative regimes in Asia, giving financial aid to Pakistan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

In the Arab world, the Saudi government actively opposed radical Arab nationalism. It supported the Egyptian government's endeavours to strengthen its relations with the United States and to reach an agreement with Israel and encouraged Syria to do likewise. It also supported moderate elements within the PLO. In short, using its ability to give financial aid as the keystone of its diplomacy, Saudi Arabia played an important role in inter-Arab affairs during this period.

At the same time, the country's close ties with the United States continued to strengthen on all fronts. Within the Saudi royal family, Prince Fahd was unquestionably pro-American, as was Prince Sultan.

By the end of 1978, the "Saudi era" was coming to an end as the region entered a new political phase, the advent of which was marked by the Egyptian-Israeli agreement and the collapse of the Shah of Iran.

The People of Saudi Arabia

Such limited population data as exist are sketchy, and estimates of the population of Saudi Arabia in the 1970's vary greatly. The official Saudi estimate for 1974 was 7.01 million inhabitants.⁷¹ Most observers, however, place the

⁷¹ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Planning, op. cit., p. iii.

figure nearer 5 million in late 1976 ⁷², of whom an estimated 1 million were foreigners.⁷³ In sum, the exact size of the population is unknown.

The main population centres are the capital city of Riyadh, in the Central Province, with an estimated population of 750,000; the commercial city of Jeddah, in the western province, estimated population 450,000; the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, with populations of 250,000 and 150,000 respectively; and Dammam, Dhahran and Al-Khubar, located in the eastern province, each with some 100,000 inhabitants.⁷⁴

The citizens of Saudi Arabia are Arabs. Ninety-nine per cent of them are Muslims, and over ninety per cent are of the Sunni sect, which adheres to Wahhabism. There are no native Christians. Foreign Christians are allowed to work in Saudi Arabia, but are forbidden to enter the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Jews are prevented from entering the country, although one notable exception was the U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger.

Thus the citizens of the kingdom are essentially homogenous. They speak the same language and share the same culture and values. The Shiite of Hasa, who are socially discriminated against, are the only indigenous minority.

There are, however, recognisable regional differences. It was from Najd, in the eighteenth century that the Wahhabi sect emerged, and it was there that the House of

⁷² Welles, Donald, Saudi Arabia Development Strategy, Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1976, p. 9.

⁷³ Long, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷⁴ First National City Bank, Saudi Arabia: A New Economic Survey, New York: 1974, p. 13.

Saud created its powerful forces. Najd has never been occupied by an outside power, and Najdis believe themselves to be racially pure Arabs. Absolutely traditional tribal values still dominate the social life of Najd and the relationship of Najdis with the king is that of tribesmen with their Sheikh. Najdis hold political power throughout the country.

Hejaz was the former kingdom of the Hashemite family. At one time, it had its own constitution and some modern institutions. As a result of the *Hajj* (pilgrimage), its citizens have always had contact with the outside world and they are more highly educated than the Najdis. The Hejazi are renowned merchants: their main cities are commercial centres, and to this day Jeddah is the commercial capital of the country. Following the Najdi invasion of Hejaz in 1926, the Hejazi were isolated from political power, which remained in the hands of the Najdis. No major position in the government has been occupied by the Hejazi.

The eastern province's citizens play no part in the politics or trade of Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that it is from there that comes most of the country's oil wealth. The factors underlying this are firstly, that a sizeable minority of Shiite lives in the area; secondly, that the population's origins are in the small agricultural communities which formed around the oases, and agricultural work was despised by the tribesmen; and thirdly, after the discovery of oil, many of them became workers in the ARAMCO company, and held two major strikes (in 1953 and 1956). The Ibn Jiluwi branch of the House of Saud has always held the

area under very tight control. Thus, although affected by oil wealth, the province has remained essentially unchanged by it.

In the south-west, Asir is an isolated mountainous area. The Asiris, living mainly in small villages, are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Since the Najdis conquered their Emirate in the 1930's, they have played no political part in the country. Elsewhere, some tribes inhabit the desert areas of the province.

Thus the spiritual and political supremacy of the Najdis has remained untouched, despite the economic and social developments which have dramatically affected Saudi life and significantly reduced the differences between the regions.

For example, general education has witnessed phenomenal growth. During the 1970's, the total number of schools rose from some 3,000 to over 11,000, that is to say at an average rate of 2.2 new schools opening every day. During the same decade, the enrolment of boys more than doubled, and that of girls almost quadrupled, rising from approximately 350,000 to 781,000, and from 128,000 to 444,000 respectively. Similarly, by the end of the decade the number of higher education students had risen from 7,000 to 48,000 and the kingdom had six universities and fifty-four colleges and higher education institutes.⁷⁵ In the mid-70's, several thousand students were also studying

⁷⁵ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Planning, op. cit., pp. 48 and 66-67.

semi-skilled workers⁷⁶ - was poor and commanded no political power. But during the 1960's and 1970's, a small segment of the population was rapidly emerging as a Saudi middle class. This included managers, administrators, technicians, clerks, skilled workers, teachers, army officers, and engineers.⁷⁷ In the absence of political institutions, (parliament, political parties...), their impact on Saudi life was unclear, and they had no influence on the public policy of the country, which remained in the hands of the House of Saud.

Despite the fact that Saudi Arabia has approximately 25 per cent of the world's proven resources, and is the largest oil exporter and third largest oil producer, it was described as late as 1975 as "basically undeveloped and ... basically quite poor."⁷⁸ This, of course, is not the case in 1988.

Saudi society is, in short, conservative, traditional, and tribal, with the king acting not only as head of state, but also as chief imam and chief tribal sheikh.

⁷⁶ Al-Saud, Abdulrahman II. The Transition from a Tribal Society to a Nation State, in El-Mallakh, R. (ed.) Saudi Arabia, Energy, Developmental Planning and Industrialization, Washington D.C.: Heath and Co., 1982, p. 101.

⁷⁷ Rugh, William, "Emergence of New Middle Class in Saudi Arabia", Middle East Journal, Winter 1973, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Akins, James, U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, statement in United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, The Persian Gulf 1975: The Continuing Debate on Arms Sales, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, p. 196. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975.)

in the Western world, 3,000 of them in the United States alone.⁷⁶

Such developments in education and in other fields introduced to the country ideas and influences totally foreign to its society. Nevertheless, traditional conservative Islamic values remained predominant.

With modernization, however, came foreigners, and these created a new middle class. During the 1970's, perhaps 40 per cent of the total population consisted of foreigners: 80,000 from the Far East; 300,000 from India and Pakistan; 400,000 from North and South Yemen; 350,000 from Egypt; 50,000 from the United States and Western countries, and 120,000 from elsewhere. They occupied a wide range of positions in the country, from important posts to menial jobs.

"In general, there is great concern within the kingdom regarding the potential social and political influence of these people. The Saudis, therefore, keep them on a tight rein, isolated, on short term contracts, and always subject to immediate deportation at the discretion of the regime. Within the foreign community, there is resentment regarding this status and treatment in Arabia."⁷⁷

Within the country's native population, the social structure also changed as a result of modernization. Until the early 1960's, all political and economic power was held by a very small, but extremely powerful group, consisting of the House of Saud, the tribal sheikhs and the chief *ulama* (religious leaders.) The bulk of the population - nomadic bedouins, semi-nomadic herdsmen, and unskilled or

⁷⁶ Long, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁷⁷ Financial Times, March 1979.

Political Infrastructure

From the creation of the Kingdom in 1932 until his death in 1953, King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud ruled the country directly. In the early days of his reign, he did not have real control throughout the kingdom, but was rather the strongest among the tribal chiefs, his control deriving from their loyalty to him. This in turn was mainly achieved through his many marriages, made to strengthen his relationships with certain tribes, of whom the best known were the Sudairi or the Al al-Sheikh. He also gave subsidies to the tribal chiefs, and after World War II, oil wealth -

"allowed the king to distribute greater sums than ever to tribal leaders. Since this new income came from a source totally outside the traditional economy and accrued directly to the royal family, the latter's power was further increased and other forces weakened."⁸¹

During his reign, little was done to develop a political structure within the kingdom. Modern government institutions did not exist.⁸² The Hejaz had witnessed the setting up of some administrative organisations during the 1920's, but with its capture by Najdi troops, these gradually disappeared. Although he had appointed his eldest son, Saud, governor of Najd, King Ibn Saud directed the province's affairs himself.

The decisions of King Ibn Saud may have been personal, but the king:

"must make special efforts to display the Bedouin Sheikh's attributes of courage, leadership, and

⁸¹ Lackner, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

⁸² Long, op. cit., p. 31.

generosity and must act, ostensibly, on the basis of tribal consensus."⁸³

In addition, his kingship had a religious character.

"(His) authority rests partly on respect for what is almost a religious interpretation..."⁸⁴

Indeed, Ibn Saud had assumed the title of Imam (religious leader), prior to declaring himself also first Sultan and then King, and he continued to use both titles until his death. Gradually, however, the religious nature of the position weakened when King Saud's personal behaviour failed to conform to Islamic teaching.

As has already been shown, the development of administrative structures was slow. Although the Council of Ministers had a purely advisory role,⁸⁵ its creation represented a significant step in developing the political structure of the kingdom. Nevertheless,

"neither the death of Abd al-Aziz in 1953 and assumption of power by the less adept Saud, nor the introduction of a Council of Ministers in 1953... substantially altered the political system."⁸⁶

The Council of Ministers' advisory status continued until 1958, when King Saud was persuaded to permit his brother Prince Faisal to be prime minister. The Council was given some powers to deal with both domestic and foreign affairs, in the face of the financial and political crisis confronting the country in the late 1950's. The number of ministers rose to fourteen in 1970, and to twenty by 1975.

⁸³ Peretz, Don, The Middle East Today, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, p. 402.

⁸⁴ Caroe, Olafk, Walls of Power, London: Macmillan, 1951, p. 36.

⁸⁵ Al-Awaji, Ibrahim, Bureaucracy and Society in Saudi Arabia, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Virginia, 1971, p. 113.

⁸⁶ Niblock, op. cit., p. 95.

The nature and machinery of the Council of Ministers, however, had been defined by royal decree, rather than by a national constitution.

To this day, there is no formal written public constitution in Saudi Arabia. In 1960, under the influence of the "Free Princes", the Council of Ministers called for constitutional monarchy and Parliament, which were opposed by King Saud and the conservative elements of the House of Saud. According to Prince Faisal:

"Our constitution is the Koran and our law is the Shariah of Mohammad (God's peace and blessing be upon him), our system of government is based on the interest of this country, where such interest does not conflict with the principles of our religion and the Shariah."⁸⁷

Similarly, when he came to power, King Faisal's response to public demand for Parliament and a constitution was -

"A constitution, what for? The Koran is the oldest and most efficient constitution in the world. Elections, a Parliament? After the unfortunate experiments which have been attempted in neighbouring countries, it is better to forget all about it. Believe me, Islam is a sufficiently flexible and far-sighted religion to ensure the happiness of our people."⁸⁸

In the absence of a constitution, legislation in Saudi Arabia is by royal decree, and only on minor issues does the Council of Ministers have power to issue regulations. Religious teachings are the source of the legislation,⁸⁹ but where religious teaching does not apply, the king's decree has the force of law. The Shariah, which is the

⁸⁷ Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal Speaks, Washington D.C.: 1962, p. 41.

⁸⁸ Le Monde, Paris, June 24, 1966, adopted from Lackner, op. cit., p. 85.

⁸⁹ Lenczowski, George, Middle East: World-Center, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958, p. 123.

basis of judicial authority, is in turn based on four sources: the Koran, *Sunna* (traditions), *Ijma* (consensus), and *Qiyas* (analogy).⁷⁰ (For the organisation of the judicial system, see Figure 1.4.)

Despite the fact that Saudi Arabia has witnessed important developments in various areas, and that its government has become highly complex, the main decisions remain with the office of the king, which is not defined by any constitution. The king is thus the chief figure of the government and the centre of all political activity, and his powers are extremely wide. In Western terms, he is at one and the same time chief of state, head of government, religious leader, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He also exercises judicial authority, through the Ministry of Justice, (created in 1970,) particularly over cases of political crime. It is the king who appoints all ministers, nominates all ambassadors, selects all senior government officials, appoints governors of the provinces and promotes all military officers above the rank of colonel. In short, the king has full authority in all legislative and executive matters.⁷¹ But the nature of his power depends on his ability and style.

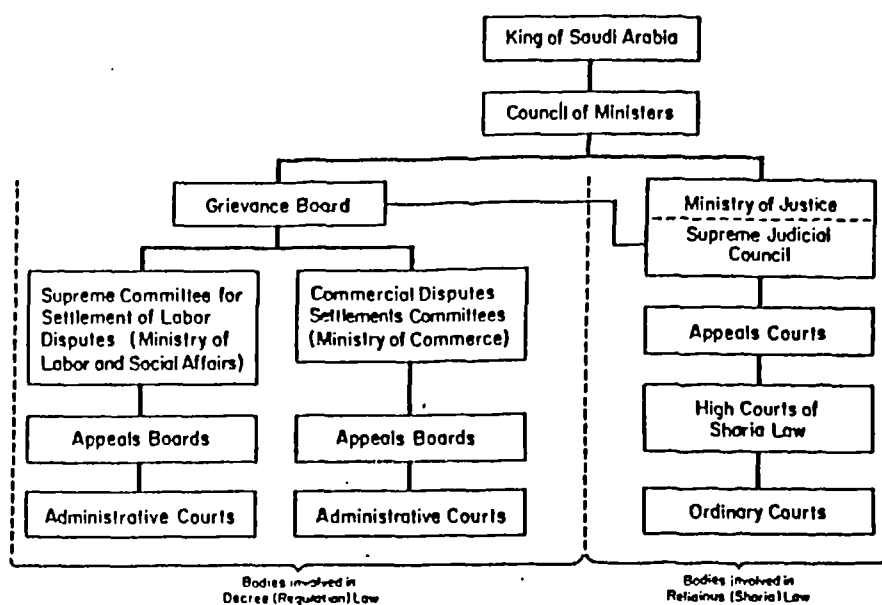
The power of the throne was strengthened during King Faisal's reign (1964-1975). He incorporated the office of prime minister into the king's office under his authority, and thus became not only head of state, but also head of the Council of Ministers. During his predecessor, King Saud's, reign (1953-1964), the separation of state from

⁷⁰ Niblock, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁷¹ U.S. Congress, Access to Oil, p. 53.

Figure 1.4 : Organisation of the Judicial System (1976)

Source: Nyrop, *op. cit.*, p. 189.



government had been caused, among other reasons, by the rivalry between the king and his prime minister, then Prince Faisal. The strength of King Faisal's position derived from his ability to gain the support of the royal family, the religious leaders, and the tribal sheikhs. King Khalid, who succeeded him to the throne in March 1975, remained the head of the government, but commanded less power than his brother. For reasons of personal ill-health, he shared power with Crown Prince Fahd, who thus became the most powerful man in the country.⁷²

The king's authority is limited by a consensus within the House of Saud. Once he can command its support, his decisions are final and definitive, but in the absence of organized political activity in Saudi Arabia, the House of Saud is the central political actor. It serves as the kingdom's constituency. A relatively small group within the royal family participates in the decision-making process. It was this group who deposed King Saud, replacing him with his brother King Faisal in 1964, and who installed King Khalid as the latter's successor eleven years later. The number of the group, and the manner in which they operate are unknown. According to the traditions of Arabian tribes, the man with the most sons (not daughters) or brothers (not sisters), and the greatest wealth, is accorded more power within the tribes than others. This provides the only clue to explaining who wields most influence in the royal family.

⁷² The Times, March 26, 1975.

As we have seen, despite the creation of modern institutions, the political system continues to rest on traditional relationships between the House of Saud, the religious leaders, and the tribes. As a result of oil wealth, the influence of the religious leaders and the tribes is related to their relationships with the royal family, rather than with each other. The influence of technocrats, military officers and businessmen is difficult to judge because it too derives from their ties with certain members of the Saudi family.⁷³

The technocrats may be involved in decision-making, and their views on certain issues are sometimes sought, but final decisions rest with the king. On highly important issues, certain Princes must join the king in taking decisions. For example, in 1977, a meeting of 250 Princes was held to agree upon a Crown Prince to succeed Prince Fahd in the event of his assuming the throne. In 1979, the more influential Princes opposed the Camp David accord, in defiance of Prince Fahd.⁷⁴

Top Saudi officials are members of the royal family. In 1975, the prime minister, (since 1964, a position held by the king,) the first and the second deputy prime ministers, the latter also being Head of the National Guard, were members of the House of Saud, as were the Ministers of Defense and Aviation, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Municipal and Rural Affairs, and Public Works and Housing. Three more ministers were from the Al al-Sheikh

⁷³ U.S. Congress, Access to Oil, p. 54.

⁷⁴ The Economist, September 17, 1977, and April 4, 1979.

religious family closely related to the Saudis. Others were technocrats. (See Table 1.1.)

It must also be emphasized that most of the educated top Saudi officials had studied in the United States. As at 1972, of the 32 who had degrees, 21 had studied in the United States.⁷⁵

The members of the House of Saud number more than five thousand. The weight of their influence, however, varies greatly. Since the death of King Ibn Saud, the crown has remained with his sons - Saud, Faisal, Khalid, and Fahd - passing from brother to brother. The most powerful group within the family is Al-Fahd, so named after its eldest member, Fahd, and also known as the "Seven Sudairis", after their mother, who was from the Al-Sudairi family. (Indeed, the Sudairi family's important position and influence in Saudi politics derives from the fact that King Ibn Saud's mother, as well as the mother of seven of his sons, belonged to this family.⁷⁶) The seven in question are Fahd, Sultan, Salman, Abd ar-Rahman, Nayif, Turki, and Ahmed, and six of them hold prominent government positions, such as Minister of Defense and Minister of the Interior. During the 1970's, the "Seven Sudairi", along with their two half-brothers, King Khalid and Prince Abdullah, and other sons of King Ibn Saud dominated the political life of Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷ Other branches of the House of Saud, the Saud Al-Kabeer, the Ibn Jaluwi and the Thunyans, had some

⁷⁵ Rugh, op. cit., p. 16.

⁷⁶ Deij, Mashaan M. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy 1953-1975, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Idaho, 1979, p. 25.

⁷⁷ Deij, op. cit., p. 23.

Table 1.1 : Principal Government Officials (1975)

Source: Long, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.

King and Prime Minister -	Khalid Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
1st Deputy Prime Minister and Crown Prince -	Fahd Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
2nd Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the National Guard -	Abdallah Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Defense and Aviation -	Sultan Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Foreign Affairs -	Saud Ibn Faisal Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Interior -	Nayif Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs -	Majid Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Public Works and Housing -	Mit'ab Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud
<hr/>	
Minister of Agriculture and Water -	Dr. Abd al-Rahman Ibn Abd al-Aziz Al-al-Sheikh
Minister of Higher Education -	Hassan Ibn Abdallah Al-al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice -	Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Al-al-Sheikh
<hr/>	
Minister of Commerce -	Dr. Suleiman Abd al-Aziz al-Suleiman
Minister of Communications -	Muhammad Umar Tawfiq
Minister of Education -	Dr. Abd Al Aziz Abdallah al-Khuwaiter
Minister of Finance and National Economy -	Muhammad Aba al-Khail
Minister of Health -	Dr. Hussain Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi
Minister of Industry and Electricity -	Dr. Ghazi Abd al-Rahman al-Qusaybi
Minister of Information -	Dr. Muhammad Abdu Yamani
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs -	Ibrahim Ibn Abdallah al-Anqari
Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources -	Ahmad Zaki Yamani
Minister of Pilgrimage Affairs and Religious Affairs -	Abd al-Wahhab Ab al-Wasi
Minister of Planning -	Hisham Muhi al-Din Nazir
Minister of Posts, Telegraph and Telephone -	Dr. Alawi Darwish Kayyal

influence, as did to a lesser extent the grandsons of King Ibn Saud who had been educated in the United States and Britain, and who could be said to be "royal technocrats".⁷⁶

Apart from the House of Saud, other families played an important role in the political life of the kingdom. One of these is the Al al-Sheikh, descended from Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the religious leader responsible, as we have shown, for the Wahhabi movement which emerged in the mid-eighteenth century and for the original alliance between the House of Saud and the Al al-Sheikh, an alliance which was further strengthened by inter-marriage. They were influential in obtaining King Saud's replacement by his brother Faisal. As a religious family, they played a significant part in the judicial process, one of them being Minister of Justice in 1975.⁷⁷

In addition some of the wealthier families in the country have some political influence, as do some powerful Najdi tribes, including the Utaiba, Motair, Shammer, Bani Khalid, Bani Hajar etc.¹⁰⁰ (See Figure 1.5 for the distribution of the Saudi tribes.) Their influence, however, declined over recent years, partly because of the effect of increased Saudi wealth noted above. Nevertheless, the Saudi family still relies on the support of the tribes to maintain internal security.

In conclusion, the Saudi political system can be said to have several key characteristics: first, the House of

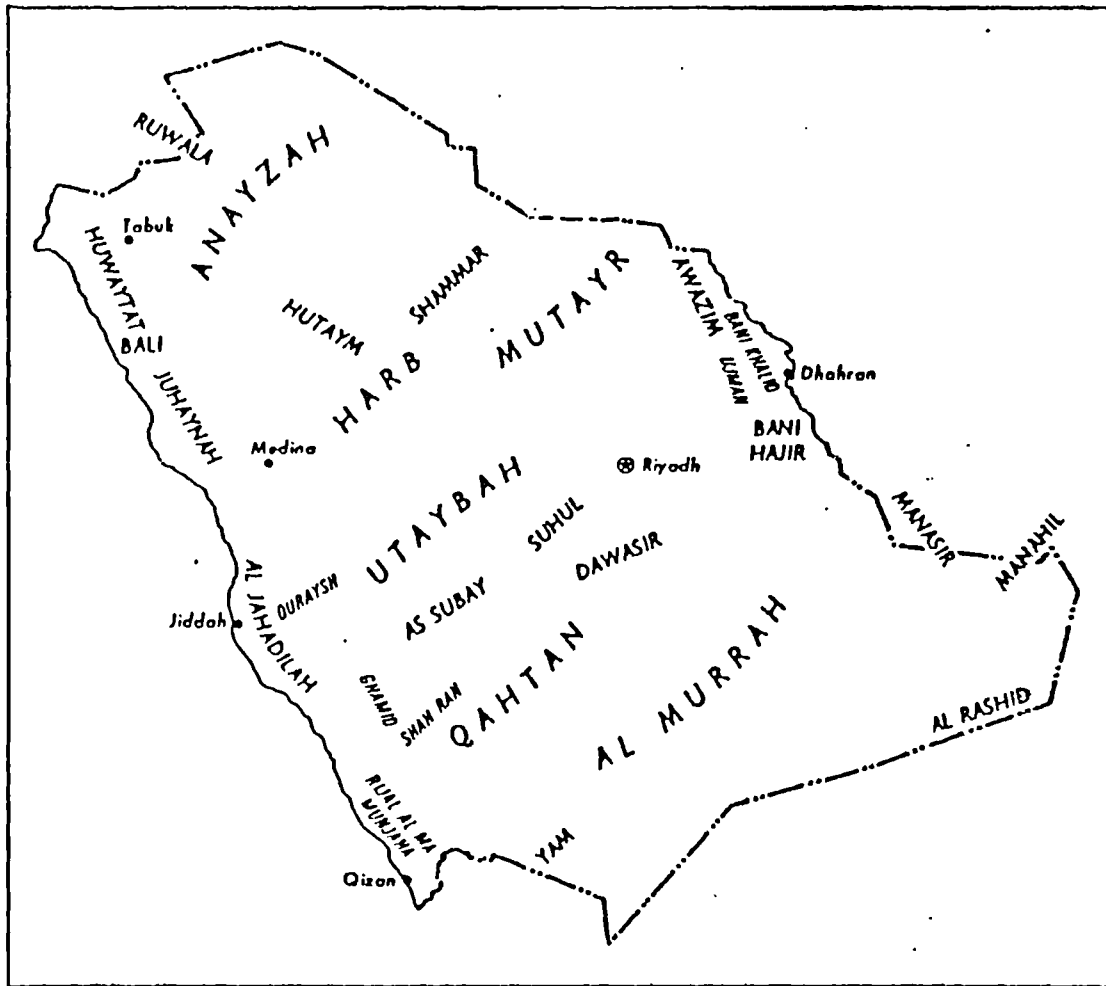
⁷⁶ Long, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

⁷⁷ Ali, Hassan Alyami, "The Coming Instability in Saudi Arabia", New Outlook, Vol. 20, No. 8, September 1977, p. 21; Deij, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁰ Anthony, op. cit., p. 94.

Figure 1.5 : The Saudi Tribes

Source: Nyrop, *op. cit.*, p. 135.



Saud is the dominant power; second, the loyalty and cohesiveness of the royal family is essential to the stability of the country; third, the authority of the House of Saud has religious roots, and religion still influences Saudi life; and finally, the Saudi political system has seen relative stability, compared with other Middle Eastern countries.

Chapter Two

SAUDI-AMERICAN RELATIONS (1928-1967)

Saudi-American relations developed greatly during the four decades 1928 to 1967, from limited economic relations with some American companies and individuals, to the full breadth of a government to government relationship, that is from private economic interests to national interests, embracing oil, military, political and economic considerations.

This is not to say that the United States had no prior relations with the Arabian peninsula. For instance, the peninsula's coastal areas, (Basrah, Kuwait, Oman and Muscat,) were familiar with the activities of American missionaries before the twentieth century. Certain of these missionaries, particularly doctors, had contact with the Saudi family. Although they failed in their religious objectives, thanks to the cultural and medical nature of their activities in the peninsula, they created a suitable climate for the arrival of the American oilmen in coming years.¹

¹ De Nove, John A. American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963, p. 355; Malone, Joseph J. "America and the Arabian peninsula: The First Two Hundred Years", The Middle East Journal, Vol. 30, No. 3, Summer 1976, p. 145.

It must be admitted, however, that the relationship of Ibn Saud with the United States was limited before the 1930's, for the following reasons.

In the first place, Britain had been the dominant foreign power in the area since the defeat of the Ottoman empire in World War I. During the war, Britain supported Ibn Saud and gave him financial aid. At the same time British policy did not address the political situation in the desert interior of the peninsula, simply because Britain considered it to be a traditional conflict between Arabian tribes. The British concerned themselves mainly with the coastal areas of the peninsula, from Basrah in the north to Aden in the south-west. In fact the principal reasons for the good relations that existed between Britain and Ibn Saud were firstly the latter's hostility to the Ottoman government, and secondly his restraining Saudi-Wahhabi forces from attacking British dominions in the area.

In the second place, in general the United States had no active foreign policy until the end of the 30's. Subsequently, its relations with the area were limited. In many cases the State Department asked the Foreign Office to advise it on Arabian peninsula affairs.²

In the third place, mindful of Britain's dominant role, it was under pressure from American oil companies that the United States adopted the so-called "open-door"

² See 890 F.01/29a: The Secretary of State to the Ambassador to Great Britain (Dawes), Washington, February 10, 1931.

policy.³ This policy aimed to gain an American share in Middle East oil concessions. It was important that American companies should have a significant share of Iraqi and Kuwaiti concessions, and monopoly concession agreements with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia before World War II. The "open door" policy marked the beginning of rivalry over oil concessions in the area between the United States and Britain.⁴

During the period between the two World Wars, the United States' economic and cultural interests increased, but the State Department still did not formulate any formal policy on the area.

It is important to appreciate that it was Ibn Saud who took the first steps to foster a relationship between him and the United States, his reasons being as follows.

Firstly, Ibn Saud did not trust British policy on the area. He believed that Britain had supported his rival, Sharif Hussain, the former King of Hejaz, and then his sons, who governed in the Transjordan emirate and the kingdom of Iraq, which lay to the north of Saudi territory, and persisted in this belief all his life. Hence his seeking another foreign power to counterbalance British power in the area. He established relations with the Soviet Union in the early days of his rule, but the Soviet Union had neither the capital nor the technical ability to compete with British oil companies in oil exploration.

³ Stocking, George W. Middle East Oil, Vanderbilt, 1970, p. 113.

⁴ Bryson, T.A. American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East 1784-1975, Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1977, pp. 96-108.

Secondly, in 1923, Ibn Saud had granted oil exploration rights to a British company, the Eastern General Syndicate of London. After two years' prospecting, the company was convinced that there was no oil in commercial quantities. It therefore withdrew and the concession was officially terminated in 1928.⁵

Thirdly, the territories under Ibn Saud's control extended to embrace what is now known as the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The immediate consequence of this extension was that the limited resources of the Arabian peninsula did not meet the expenditure of the new state. Income from pilgrimage, the basic and principle income of the peninsula at the time, decreased as a result of the world slump of the early 1930's. In 1927, the number of pilgrims was 130,000; four years later it had fallen to only 40,000.⁶ This fall in income forced Ibn Saud to look abroad for financial aid.

Fourthly, since the nature of Ibn Saud's authority rested on independence, with religious roots, it resisted any foreign presence on his territory. Thus it was logical to look for a foreign power that had no active presence in the area, and it was the United States who had only commercial and cultural interests. Furthermore, the United States was considered to be unimperialistic in the early part of the century.⁷

⁵ Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁶ Lackner, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁷ King Abd al Aziz Ibn Saud "always appreciated the wisdom by which the bedouin, if they could choose (*preferred a distant ally*) on the grounds that it was less likely to interfere in their own local affairs." Lacey, Robert, *The Kingdom*, Suffolk: Fontana/Collins, 1982, p. 236.

These factors then, together with the British policy on the heart of the peninsula noted already, forced Ibn Saud to seek an American role in the area at a relatively early stage. It comes as no surprise that the first Saudi communication with the United States was in 1928, when the British oil concession was officially terminated.

Early relations

On September 28, 1928, the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a letter to the Department of State sent both directly and via the American legation in Cairo, sought to obtain diplomatic recognition of the kingdom of Hejaz and Najd. The Department of State decided that the time was not ripe to meet this request,⁶ despite the fact that Britain, the Soviet Union, France and the Netherlands had recognized the kingdom in 1927. The main reason behind the American decision was its limited interests and relations in the Arabian peninsula.

Ironically, it was a former British officer, a Muslim convert and advisor to Ibn Saud, Harry St. John Philby, who played an important role in developing relations between Ibn Saud and the United States in both political and economic fields.⁷ Early in 1931, Philby had a meeting with the American Ambassador in Cairo, in which he endeavoured to obtain American diplomatic recognition of the kingdom and to establish diplomatic relations between the two

⁶ 890 F.01/10: The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Egypt (Gunther), Washington, January 7, 1929.

⁷ See Philby, Harry St. John, Forty Years in the Wilderness, London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1957.

countries. The Ambassador subsequently recommended this to the Department of State. In February 1931, the American Ambassador in London requested a meeting with the Hejazi Ambassador in London, to discuss the Saudi request. The Department of State also asked the Foreign Office for their advice on the matter.¹⁰

On May 1, 1931, the State Department informed the Hejazi Ambassador in London that the United States extended full diplomatic recognition to the kingdom of Hejaz and Najd and its dependencies.¹¹

American recognition of Ibn Saud's government formed part of a new general policy towards the area resulting from its increased economic interests there, particularly relating to oil. (Hence also the United States' establishment of relations with the kingdoms of Iraq and Yemen in 1931.) In the same month, May 1931, Philby arranged a meeting in Jeddah between Ibn Saud and a former American diplomat, Charles R. Crane, who had represented the United States' President, Woodrow Wilson, in the King-Crane commission to the Middle East ten years earlier. Crane agreed to conduct a survey of the kingdom at his own expense, the aim being to prospect for water and gold, Ibn Saud's hope of finding oil having vanished after the British failure some years earlier. Crane employed an American mining engineer, Karl Twitchell, and after several months, Twitchell advised the Saudi government that there was insufficient water to develop the agriculture of the

¹⁰ 890 F.01/29a, op. cit.

¹¹ 890 F.01/34a; Telegram. The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Dawes), Washington, May 1, 1931.

kingdom and some hope of finding commercial quantities of gold, but most importantly that he believed that the eastern area of the country contained oil in commercial quantities.¹²

Twitchell returned to the United States to persuade American companies to invest in the eastern area of the kingdom. The Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL), which already had the oil concession in neighbouring Bahrain, and had struck oil there, expressed an interest in doing so. One of the company's executives accompanied Twitchell to Saudi Arabia and an agreement was reached with Ibn Saud, allowing the company a sixty-year oil concession, one of the largest in the world.¹³

Several months later, towards the end of 1933, the State Department signed a treaty of friendship with the Saudi government, giving both countries the most favoured nation status.¹⁴ This in itself did not represent any significant advance in the countries' relations, since the signing of such a treaty was normal State Department policy at the time. Witness the fact that the American administration did not at the time consider it necessary to open a legation in Saudi Arabia.¹⁵

¹² Shwadran, Benjamin, The Middle East, Oil and Great Powers, New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1955, p. 288.

¹³ Twitchell, Karl S. Saudi Arabia: With an Account of the Development of its Natural Resources, 3rd edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, p. 222; Philby, op. cit., p. 331.

¹⁴ 711.96 F2/42: The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Bingham), Washington, October 17, 1933.

¹⁵ Grayson, Benson Lee, Saudi-American Relations, Washington: University Press of America Inc., 1982, p. 8.

In this early stage of bilateral relations, the Palestinian issue was the only one on which the two countries differed. In December 1938, King Ibn Saud informed President Roosevelt by letter of his opinion on this issue, which was that widespread Jewish propaganda was deceiving the American people, and that Jewish immigration would damage the rights of the Palestinians.¹⁶

Prior to this, on July 12, 1937, the oil companies had warned

"that any disposition on the part of this government to support Jewish claims ... might have serious repercussions on American oil interests in Saudi Arabia and might even result in their expulsion."¹⁷

The king's letter indicated the Saudi wish for an early American role in the Palestinian problem, whilst the companies' warning suggested for the first time the link between oil and the Palestinian issue.

On February 15, 1939, the State Department informed the Saudi government that the United States favoured a Jewish homeland, but it did not intervene to support the Jewish claim, because it was the British who had the responsibility for dealing with the problem.¹⁸

Two months later, the State Department realized the need to establish permanent American diplomatic representation in Saudi Arabia. Doubtless, their reason for doing so was not the difference of opinion over the Palestinian issue, but rather the increased number of

¹⁶ 867 N.01/1364: The Chargé in Egypt (Merriam) to the Secretary of State, Cairo, December 15, 1938.

¹⁷ 890 F.6363 Standard Oil Co./93: Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Murray), Washington, July 12, 1937.

¹⁸ Grayson, op. cit., p. 8.

American citizens in Saudi Arabia and the greater American investment in the kingdom, coupled with American oil interests, particularly after the discovery of oil in commercial quantities and under pressure from the oil companies.¹⁷

In July 1939, the American Minister in Cairo was transferred to Saudi Arabia by Roosevelt. Seven months later he presented his credentials to the king. This event marked the end of the early stage of relations between the two countries.

This stage had thus been characterized by limited political relations, American oil interests, and Anglo-American rivalry over the Saudi oil concessions.

World War II

World War II greatly affected bilateral relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. The kingdom declared its neutrality in the war, but was not sheltered from its impact, which caused it great economic hardship. The number of pilgrims declined further and the oil companies simultaneously limited their activities in the country. Together, these events triggered a financial crisis in Saudi Arabia.

To tackle this problem, King Ibn Saud requested financial aid from the oil companies, from the British government and from the United States. Britain granted a subsidy, but its assistance was limited due to war

¹⁷ Ibid.

expenditure. Ibn Saud therefore turned to the California Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC).

CASOC sent a memorandum to President Roosevelt on April 16, 1941, requesting that he provide the Saudi government with financial aid. The justifications for this were Saudi sympathy for the Allies, American investment in the country, the huge quantities of oil discovered in it, and the company's fear of British influence in the kingdom increasing.²⁰

President Roosevelt refused to give direct aid to Saudi Arabia. He informed "... the British of his hope that the British could take care of the financial needs of King Ibn Saud." CASOC came to a financial arrangement with Britain to give Saudi Arabia that assistance.²¹

Despite the fact that the British subsidy relieved some of the Saudi pressure on American companies for aid, they feared that British aid might increase British influence on the king and jeopardize their chances of obtaining the oil concession. They therefore continued to urge the United States to provide direct financial assistance.²²

The State Department, realizing that refusal might harm bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia, sent a telegram

²⁰ 890 F.51/48 1/2: Mr. James A. Moffat to President Roosevelt, Washington, April 16, 1941.

²¹ 890 F.51/29: Telegram. The Secretary of State to the Minister in Egypt (Kirk), Washington, September 26, 1941; Mosley, Leonard, Power Play: Oil in the Middle East, New York: Random House, 1973, pp. 145-148; Joseph Walt - Saudi Arabia and the Americans 1928-1951, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, North Western University, 1960, p. 171-173.

²² Smith, Gaddis, American Diplomacy During the Second World War 1944-1945, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960, p. 108.

on September 26, 1941, to the American legation in Cairo, urging it to do all in its power to notify King Ibn Saud of American concern about Saudi needs. The Department proposed that experts in engineering and agriculture should be supplied, since these were the areas for which assistance had been expressly requested, the cost of such a mission to be met by the United States government.²³ In the same spirit, in a letter to the king, President Roosevelt explained his realization that the war had disturbed the normal economy of Saudi Arabia, referred to the need to destroy "the evil forces of Germany, Italy and Japan," and expressed his hope that King Ibn Saud would strive towards this goal.²⁴

This letter was warmly welcomed by Ibn Saud, who subsequently, in August 1942, allowed American and British overflights, which provided a direct route via Iran to the Soviet Union, who received war material from the Allies.²⁵

Early in 1943, representatives of the American oil companies once again urged the Roosevelt administration to give Saudi Arabia financial support. In return, they offered to sell oil to the government at less than the international rate.²⁶ Their fear that the United States might fall into second place behind the British in Saudi

²³ 890 F.51/29: Telegram. The Secretary of State to the Minister in Egypt (Kirk), Washington, September 26, 1941.

²⁴ 890 F.001 Ibn Saud/30: The Under Secretary of State (Welles) to President Roosevelt, Washington, February 12, 1942.

²⁵ 890 F.7962/27: Telegram. The Chargé in Saudi Arabia (Moose) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, August 29, 1942.

²⁶ Kirk, George E. The Middle East in the War 1939-1946, London: Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 357.

Arabia was shared by the Secretary of State Cordell Hall and others in the administration. Hull warned,

"If Saudi Arabia is permitted to lean too heavily upon the British, there is always the danger that the British will request a quid pro quo in oil. To obviate this danger, it is recommended that this government share the subsidy on an overall basis with the British."²⁷

Hence, on February 18, 1943, President Roosevelt's declaration that "the defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the United States."²⁸

Not only did this declaration make Saudi Arabia eligible for lend-lease assistance, it also marked the beginning of a new phase in Saudi-American relations and a milestone in the development of American policy on the Middle East.

In addition to this, it suggested the beginning of the rivalry between the United States and Britain over political interests in the kingdom. One month before the declaration was made, the American Minister in Cairo had advised the State Department that an American subsidy through British channels would be damaging to American prestige in Saudi Arabia. The day after the declaration, the State Department advised the British Treasury representative in Washington of the United States' government's interest in the stability of Saudi Arabia, due to American oil interests there, and expressed the wish that the British government might inform it about

²⁷ Hull, Cordell, Memoirs, Vol. 2, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948, p. 1515.

²⁸ 890 F.24/32: President Roosevelt to the Lend-Lease Administrator (Stettinius), Washington, February 18, 1943.

discussions between Britain and Saudi Arabia on financial aid, to which America wished to contribute.²⁹

The State Department also recognized the need to raise the level of American diplomatic representation in Saudi Arabia. In its view, this was necessary because Saudi Arabia had the largest proven oil reserves in the world, because an American company held the concession for that oil, and because the War and Navy Departments had an interest in having access to it.³⁰

1943 witnessed further developments. In April, the Saudi government forwarded a request, via the British legation in Jeddah, for arms from the United States. British mediation between Saudi Arabia and the United States was not acceptable to the State Department, and the American government informed Britain and Saudi Arabia that the Saudi government should communicate their request directly.³¹

This the Saudi government duly did on July 9, 1943.

The items requested included -

" (1) equipment for the manufacture of cartridges and arms; (2) equipment for the repair of arms; (3) rifles and cartridges; (4) tanks, armed armoured cars for use on plains, on rough terrain, and in sand; (5) light guns for emergency use; (6) anti-aircraft guns; (7) airplanes to carry mail inside the country and for

²⁹ 890 F.516/1: Memorandum of Conversation by the Adviser on International Economic Affairs (Feis), Washington, February 19, 1943.

³⁰ 124 90F/31a: The Secretary of State to President Roosevelt, Washington, March 30, 1943.

³¹ 800 2415-2543: The Secretary of State to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of Army and Navy, Washington, May 25, 1943; 800.24/981: Telegram. The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winat), Washington, June 19, 1943; 800.24/1000: Telegram. The Ambassador in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, London, July 8, 1943.

other uses; (8) technicians to give instruction in the use of all equipment."³²

The State Department delayed its response, believing that if it met this request, it would lead to direct American intervention in the affairs of the area. It also did not agree that the Saudi government needed this kind of equipment, nor the quantities requested. In fact, it needed only limited equipment to maintain internal stability.

Thus in March 1944, nearly eight months after the Saudi request was forwarded, the United States sent 1,600 rifles and 350,000 rounds of ammunition to its legation in Jeddah for the Saudi government. The military training mission followed in April.

The arrival of this mission was the beginning of a military link between the two countries. Despite the fact that oil remained central to bilateral relations, it was now no longer the only area of mutual interest.

1943 also saw new developments, however, in oil-related aspects of United States-Saudi relations. The idea of direct intervention in the activity of American oil companies working abroad emerged. The Interior and Navy Departments believed that it was not in the interests of national security that the United States government should be dependent on private oil companies to meet its requirements.

As a result, the United States government decided in mid-1943 to establish the Petroleum Reserves Corporation (PRC), the main goal of which was to obtain total or part

³² 890 F.24/41: Telegram. The Appointed Minister Resident in Saudi Arabia (Moose) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, July 9, 1943.

ownership of the Saudi oil concession of the Standard Oil Corporation of California and the Texas Corporation.³³

This new move was opposed by the oil companies, which believed that it was not in their interests, and that

"the acquisition of control by the American government would bring it into the oil business everywhere in the world."³⁴

The government and the oil companies remained fundamentally opposed on this issue.³⁵

In July 1943, President Roosevelt invited King Abd al Aziz or members of the Royal family to visit the United States.³⁶ The invitation was accepted and the king informed the Department of State that his two sons, Princes Faisal and Khalid, would visit Washington. The event was of significance insofar as firstly, it was the first high-level meeting between Saudi and American representatives; secondly, the two princes were subsequently to become kings of Saudi Arabia, (Faisal from 1964 to 1975 and Khalid from 1975 to 1982;) and finally, it laid the foundations for future relations in all fields.

The Princes arrived in Washington in October 1943. They held several meetings with senior officials of the Department of State and were received by President Roosevelt. Prince Faisal told the Department of State that

³³ 800 6363/1234a: Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Roosevelt, Washington, June 14, 1943.

³⁴ Feis, Herbert, Petroleum and American Foreign Policy, California: 1944, p. 39.

³⁵ In fact, the Department of State was coming to doubt the wisdom of this policy; see its view in 800 F.6363/58: Telegram. The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, Cairo, July 27, 1943.

³⁶ 890 F.0011/97: The Minister Resident in Saudi Arabia (Moose) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, October 25, 1943.

"his father and he were very much interested in American policy in the Near East ... (King Ibn Saud) hoped to know something of American opinion, since in dealing with his friends the King did not like to take any action which might interfere with their policies."

He also raised the question of Saudi security, saying that

"King Ibn Saud had information that the Hashemite family was trying to add to the territory under its control... "

The King was also strongly of the opinion that the Hashemite house (in Iraq and Transjordan) was trying to surround Saudi Arabia and to strangle it.

"Amir Faisal made it clear that his father was especially suspicious of Nuri al-Said, Prime Minister of Iraq, and of Amir Abdullah of Transjordan."

The Department of State informed Prince Faisal that American policy was

"in accordance with the terms of the Atlantic charter, that each people should have a government of its own choosing."³⁷

The Saudi government mistrusted British policy in the area, particularly its relations with the Hashemite family in Iraq and Transjordan. It therefore endeavoured to improve its relations with the United States in every field, and in particular in the field of security. For its part, the United States was concerned mainly with the kingdom's oil, and it recognized British political interests within Saudi Arabia.³⁸ King Ibn Saud, however, took a different view. In his meeting with the American Minister, he stated that,

"the British would continue to be his friends because he is grateful for past aid and because he fears they

³⁷ 890 F.0011/102: Memorandum of conversation by the Chief of the Division of Near-Eastern Affairs (Alling).

³⁸ 740 0011E.W Stettinius Mission/112 1/2: The Under Secretary of State (Stettinius) to the Secretary of State, Washington, May 22, 1944.

might loose their restraint on his enemies, such as the Hashemite family. But, he continued, their present policy would ruin his country. His people are sorely tried by wartime conditions and progressive desiccation of Arabia... Therefore additional aid from friendly United States of America would be most welcome. He remarked that one day it might be necessary for Saudi Arabia to look to the United States of America for all its requirements."³⁹

In September 1944, the United States appointed Colonel William Eddy its new Minister Resident in Saudi Arabia. In the course of a long meeting with Shaikh Yussuf Yassin, Deputy Foreign Minister and Private Secretary to King Ibn Saud, Eddy was told, "The King is convinced of the personal friendship of President Roosevelt which he reciprocates." But,

"when the King sees the great nation of America content to have its economic activity in Arabia reduced and defined by its ally, Britain, America in turn will surely understand that Saudi Arabia may be excused if it yields to the same constraint from the same source, not merely to please an ally, but to survive."

He added his desire for

"some large area in which Saudi Arabia and America can collaborate alone, on a basis that leads far beyond the end of the war."⁴⁰

Despite the fact that the Saudi government did not explain the nature of the special relationship which it sought with the United States, the Department of State realized the importance of its relations with Saudi Arabia and the need to develop them, given the expectation that the World War II was about to end and the exceptional importance Saudi oil would have in the post-war period.

³⁹ 890 F.24/164: Telegram. The Minister Resident in Saudi Arabia (Moose) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, April 29, 1944.

⁴⁰ 890 F.50/9-744. The Appointed Minister to Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, April 29, 1944.

In a memorandum to President Roosevelt, the State Department explained why "an American national interest, basically strategic in character, exists in Saudi Arabia" as follows:

- " 1. A strong and independent Saudi Arabian government in the Near East ... is less likely to fall victim to war-breeding aggression...
- " 2. The vast oil reserves of Saudi Arabia ... should be safeguarded and developed in order to supplement western hemisphere oil reserves as a source of world supply.
- " 3. The military authorities urgently desire certain facilities in Saudi Arabia ... such as the right to construct military airfields and flight privileges for military aircraft..."⁴¹

On February 14, 1945, whilst returning from Yalta, President Roosevelt met King Ibn Saud at the Suez Canal⁴² and shortly thereafter the kingdom declared war on the Axis powers. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia sent a delegation to the United Nations Conference in San Francisco. President Roosevelt told the Congress,

"... of the problem with Saudi Arabia, I learned more about the whole problem, the Moslem problem, the Jewish problem, by talking with Ibn Saud for five minutes than I could have learned in exchange of two or three dozen letters."⁴³

As a result of the leaders' meeting, the United States government made a comprehensive plan of aid for Saudi Arabia. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee recommended

" (a) The immediate and interim, although indirect, assistance which can be furnished by the War Department through (1) the construction of military

⁴¹ 890 F.51/12-2044: Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Roosevelt, Washington, December 22, 1944.

⁴² For details of this meeting see Howarth, David, The Desert King: Ibn Saud and his Arabia, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964, pp. 251-256.

⁴³ Sherwood, Robert H. Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History, New York: Harper and Bros., 1948, pp. 871-872.

airfields; (2) the improvement of roads; and (3) the despatching of a military mission; and
 " (b) the longer range and much more important direct assistance which may conceivably be supplied through arrangements relating to the oil resources."⁴⁴

On May 13, 1945, the American Minister in Jeddah informed the Secretary of State,

"King Abdul Aziz grants permission for construction of an airfield at Dhahran ..." and "... use of field by United States forces for period of 3 years after the end of the war."⁴⁵

By the end of the same month, the new President Truman gave his approval to the Department of State's plan for aid to the kingdom.⁴⁶

In late June, the Department of State told the Minister in Jeddah that the Dhahran airfield project was important to American national interests. It was not so, however, on grounds of military necessity.⁴⁷

Less than ten days later, King Ibn Saud told the United States government that he could not accept its planes on military missions. In the American Minister's judgment, the reasons underlying the king's decision were the Saudi reluctance to accept any foreign presence, the

⁴⁴ 890 F.51/2-2245: Report by the Ad Hoc Committee of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee.

⁴⁵ 890 F.248/5-1345: Telegram. The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, May 13, 1945.

⁴⁶ 890 F.51/5-2845: Memorandum of conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State (Acheson), Washington, May 28, 1945.

⁴⁷ 890 F.248/6-2545: Telegram. The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy), Washington, June 25, 1945.

king's fear of Hashemite propoganda against him, and British objections because they had no share in the base.⁴⁶

The Department of State believed that the Saudi attitude "can be explained only in terms of British pressure."⁴⁷

This was not the case. The real reason was to be found in the delay in American financial aid. The American government realizing this, on July 29, 1945, the British and American governments informed the Saudi Minister of Finance of their agreement to donate \$5 million each to his government. America would also provide an additional \$6 million.⁴⁸ From this event followed the increase in American influence and the decrease in British influence in the area.

Less than a week later, the Saudi government "agreed to the construction and operation of (Dhahran) airbase by the United States Army" during war time "and for its continued use by the United States Armed Forces for a period of three years after" the end of the war.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ 890 F.20 Mission/7-445: Telegram. The Vice-Consul at Dhahran (Sands) to the Secretary of State, Dhahran, July 4, 1945; 890 F.20 Mission/7-845: The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, July 8, 1945.

⁴⁷ 890 F.248/7-3045: The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy), Washington, July 13, 1945.

⁴⁸ 890 F.24/7-3045: The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, July 30, 1945.

⁴⁹ 890 F.248/8-845: The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, August 8, 1945. Enclosure I: The American Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Saudi Arabian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs (Yassin), Riyadh, August 5, 1945; Enclosure II: The Saudi Arabian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs (Yassin) to the American Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy), Riyadh, August 6, 1945.

Despite the war with Japan ending on August 14 1945, the United States government decided that the Dhahran airbase should be completed.⁹²

The war years thus witnessed the real beginnings of bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States, which - despite their limitations - were to form the basis of future developments in all fields.

But the war years also brought considerable setbacks over the Palestinian issue. The two governments differed because of the religious nature of the Saudi authority on the one hand, and Zionist pressures on the United States on the other. In March 1943, King Ibn Saud told an American journalist,

"I do not know that the Jews have any justification for their claims in Palestine... The Jews...have no right to the country... It is unjust to the Arabs and Moslems, and...it only creates friction between the Moslems and their friends, the Allies."⁹³

In the course of a meeting with the American Minister in Cairo, who visited Saudi Arabia in April 1943, King Ibn Saud told him that hostility had existed between Arab and Jew since the days of the prophet Mohammed. He also told him that he was more particularly concerned about the situation in Palestine than any other ruler in the area, because the Saudi government had interests in the area's future. He added that the great wealth of the Jewish community had a great influence on the policies of the United States and Britain. The king warned that continued

⁹² Record of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, Lot 52-N45: Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State to President Truman, Washington, undated; Memorandum by President Truman to the Acting Secretary of State, Washington, September 28, 1945.

⁹³ The Times, June 22, 1943.

Jewish immigration to Palestine would damage Allied interests, especially during the war.⁸⁴

On April 30, 1943, Ibn Saud, in a letter to President Roosevelt stated his view that the Jews had the support of the Allies because of the situation which had arisen during the war. He asked him to intervene to halt Jewish immigration to Palestine and suggested that the Allied countries should allow the Jews to settle in their territories.⁸⁵ The President's reply was in general terms. He expressed the hope that Arabs and Jews would resolve their differences in a friendly way. He declared America's opposition to any change in the situation without consultation with both Arabs and Jews. In July 1943, the President's special envoy to the Middle East relayed to King Ibn Saud President Roosevelt's suggestion that he discuss the Palestinian problem with a representative of the Jewish Agency, a suggestion rejected by the king.⁸⁶

On January 12, 1945, President Roosevelt was informed by the Director of American Economic Operations in the Middle East that King Ibn Saud felt very strongly about the Palestinian issue and that there was no middle ground between them on this. Underlying the king's attitude was the strength of his religious beliefs, coupled with the

⁸⁴ 890 F.00/81: Telegram. The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, Cairo, April 17, 1943.

⁸⁵ 890 F.00/89: King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud to President Roosevelt, Saudi Arabia, April 30, 1943.

⁸⁶ 867 N.01/1997 1/2: Memorandum of conversation, by Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Hoskins, Washington, September 27, 1943.

fact that his kingdom contained two of the most important cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina.⁸⁷

Two weeks later, the Saudi government warned the United States legation that if the United States supported Jewish demands, relations between their governments would be affected.⁸⁸

When he met King Ibn Saud on February 14, 1945, President Roosevelt raised the question of the Jews in Europe. The king suggested that they should return to their homes or be given homes in those Axis countries which would accept them. He expressed his strong opposition to the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The President told him that he would not support the Jews against the Arabs.⁸⁹

The Director of the Office of Near East and African Affairs, in a memorandum to the Acting Secretary of State on March 20, 1945, warned that the President's support of Zionism could lead to bloodshed in the Middle East and jeopardize American oil interests in Saudi Arabia.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ The American Director of Economic Operations in the Middle East (Landis) to President Roosevelt. In United States Department of State, Foreign Relations and the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1945, Vol. VIII, The Near East and Africa, Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969, pp. 680-682.

⁸⁸ 867 N.01/2-145: Telegram. The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, February 1, 1945.

⁸⁹ 711 9F/2-1445: Memorandum of conversation between the King of Saudi Arabia (Abdul Aziz Al Saud) and President Roosevelt, February 14, 1945, aboard the U.S.S. "Quincy".

⁹⁰ 867 N.01/3-1845: Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Murray) to the Acting Secretary of State, Washington, March 20, 1945.

In response to recommendations from the State Department, the President, in a letter to King Ibn Saud on April 15, 1945, stated:

"that no decision be taken with respect to the Arabs and Jews ... during our recent conversation I assured you that I would take no action ... which might prove hostile to the Arab people ... the policy of this government in this respect is unchanged."⁴¹

A week later President Roosevelt died. His successor, Harry Truman, ignored this commitment.

The significant effects of the war on Saudi-United States relations can thus be summarized as follows. The United States administration still failed to formulate a clear-cut policy on Saudi Arabia, because it continued to hold the view that Britain was the dominant power in the area. American oil companies persuaded the Administration to develop relations with Saudi Arabia, in order to safeguard its oil interests, this being the prime objective of United States policy, if any. Rivalry between Britain and the United States over oil continued. Financial hardship in Saudi Arabia motivated the Saudi desire to foster a relationship with the United States, a relationship which Saudi Arabia then endeavoured to extend to cover security issues. The two countries' differing stands on the Palestinian issue did not affect their relations in other fields.

⁴¹ Magnus, Ralph H. (ed.) Documents on the Middle East, Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1969, p. 149.

The post-war period

After World War II, the structure of international politics was radically different. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers, the greatest powers the world had ever seen. The ideological rift between them led each to attempt to create client states and to spread its influence over the world. This led to the so-called "cold war" between West and East. Because of its wealth and location, the Middle East experienced the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union to gain influence there.

The Middle East itself also saw many significant developments, the most important being the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine. For Saudi Arabia, this raised the question of its independence and security.

The major issues dominating Saudi-American relations after World War II until the death of King Ibn Saud in 1953 were Palestine, security and oil. The main concern of Saudi Arabia was its security. The United States on the other hand was mainly concerned with its oil interests in the kingdom. The Palestinian issue, despite the deep concern of the Saudi government, continued not to affect other areas of their relations.

Following the war, the United States and Britain set up a twelve member Anglo-American committee of inquiry on the problems of European Jewry and Palestine. The committee's report was published on April 20, 1946. Although it recommended that "Palestine shall be neither a

Jewish nor an Arab state," it also recommended that "100,000 certificates be authorized immediately for the admission into Palestine of Jews" and that "these certificates be awarded as far as possible in 1946."⁶² President Truman announced that he was "very happy that the request which (he) made for the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine has been unanimously endorsed by the (Committee)."⁶³ The Saudi government showed its concern about the report and the American response to it almost immediately. On May 5, Sheikh Yussuf Yassin, Deputy Foreign Minister, informed the American Chargé in Saudi Arabia that "the reaction of the King to the report was 'very bad'. "⁶⁴

On May 28, the Saudi government informed the American Minister in Jeddah of its protest against the Committee proposal to admit 100,000 Jews to immigrate to Palestine. It warned him that because it was "in doubt about the intentions" of his government towards Saudi Arabia, he would understand that "no action can possibly be taken ... on projects such as TWA proposals or Treaty of Commerce and Friendship."⁶⁵

This warning had no effect. In mid-June, President Truman established the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, headed by the Secretary of State and including

⁶² Keessing's Contemporary Archives, May 11-18, 1946, p. 7892.

⁶³ 867 N.01/4-3046: Telegram. The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, Washington, April 30, 1946.

⁶⁴ 867 N.01/5-646. Telegram. The Chargé in Saudi Arabia (Sands) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, May 6, 1946.

⁶⁵ 867 N.01/5-2846: Telegram. The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Eddy) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, May 28, 1946.

the Secretaries of the War and Navy Departments, to handle matters concerning the issue. On June 21, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned the Committee that American military participation in facilitating Jewish immigration would lead to the possibility that the Middle East could well fall into anarchy, and that the Soviet Union might replace the United States and Britain in influence and power throughout the Middle East.⁶⁶

President Truman's support for the admission of Jews into Palestine continued, however, and on October 4, 1946, he called for agreement to immigration without waiting for the termination of the British Mandate over Palestine.⁶⁷ King Ibn Saud reacted to this by sending the President a letter reminding him of the American government's promise that no decision would be taken on the situation in Palestine without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews.⁶⁸

But in reality, the king had a quite different attitude. On September 28, 1946, he had asked General Giles, Regional Director for Trans World Airlines to carry a secret and urgent message to President Truman and told him that "not even Prince Faisal or his Saudi Minister in Washington were aware of it."

"The King expressed to Giles his great hope and faith in the United States and declared that he would always remain ... (America's) friend although on occasion his

⁶⁶ 867 N.01/7-246: Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, Washington, June 21, 1946.

⁶⁷ The Times, October 6, 1946.

⁶⁸ Truman, Harry S. Public Papers of President Harry S. Truman, 1946, Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962, p. 467.

pronouncements in regard to the Palestinian issue might indicate otherwise."⁶⁷

In January 1947, the American Administration issued an invitation to Crown Prince Saud to visit the United States, and he arrived in Washington on January 13, 1947. The main subject of his discussions with the President and other senior officials was the general situation in the Middle East. On the Palestinian issue, he indicated that their different views would not affect their close ties. This was confirmed in December 1947, when King Ibn Saud told the American Minister in Jeddah: "Although we differ enormously on the question of Palestine, but we still have our own mutual interests and friendship to safeguard." He stated:

"I occupy a position of pre-eminence in the Arab world. In the case of Palestine, I have to make common cause with other Arab states. Although the other Arab states may bring pressure to bear on me I do not anticipate that a situation will arise whereby I shall be drawn into conflict with friendly western powers over this question."⁷⁰

This was the attitude maintained by the Saudis until King Ibn Saud's death in 1953.

On May 14, 1948, the "state of Israel" was established and the American administration announced its formal recognition of it on the same day. The Department of State expected this to effect Saudi-American relations, but the events that followed proved their fears to have been exaggerated.

⁶⁷ 890 F.77/10-146: Telegram. The Ambassador in Egypt (Tuck) to the Secretary of State, Cairo, October 1, 1946.

⁷⁰ 890 F.00/12-447: Telegram. The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Childs) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, December 4, 1947.

As has already been stated, King Ibn Saud's overriding and life-long concern was the security of his kingdom. Security considerations were also the main concern of Prince Saud in the course of his visit to Washington in January 1947,⁷¹ when he explained them as follows.

In the first place, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia had had good relations with the British government for many years and hoped that these would continue, but the close economic ties which existed with the United States affected relations with Britain. As a result, the Saudi government felt that Britain had become less frank with it and feared that Britain might support other Arab governments hostile to the kingdom.

In the second place, King Ibn Saud believed very strongly that the Hashemite family, (which he had ousted from the Arabian peninsula during the 1920's, only to see two of its members become heads of state in Iraq and Transjordan,) was naturally hostile to the Saudi family. The king had information that the Hashemites planned to create a "Greater Syria", including Syria, Iraq, Transjordan, Palestine - or part of it - and perhaps Lebanon, under the leadership of one of its members. The Hashemites would be unable to carry out such a plan without British aid and it was possible that Britain was tempted to extend its influence in the Arab world by falling in with such a plan. The Saudi government desired to know the

⁷¹ 890 F.0011/2-747: Report on Crown Prince Saud's Official Visit to America by Richard H. Sanger of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, February 7, 1947; 711 90 F/1-1747: Memorandum of conversation by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson), Washington, January 17, 1947.

American attitude to the idea of Greater Syria. Could the kingdom count on the full support of the United States if it was threatened by the establishment of such a state?

The American administration's reply was in general terms and failed to reassure the Saudi government. It stated firstly that one of America's basic policies in the area was to support Saudi independence and territorial integrity. It would also support the independence and integrity of other countries in the area. Thus, the United States would give full and active support to Saudi Arabia in the United Nations if it was threatened by outside forces. Secondly, the United States would not support one group or one state against another, as this could best maintain peace in the Middle East. Thirdly, the Department of State had no information that Britain had supported such a project as that of Greater Syria, British policy at the time being to maintain the status quo in the area.⁷²

Some months later, King Ibn Saud again raised the question of his kingdom's security with the American Minister in Saudi Arabia. He repeated what his son had explained to the American administration, but in such a way as to link his security interests and American interests. He questioned the American attitude towards Saudi Arabia, asking whether there was an understanding between Britain and the United States to regard his country as being in the British political influence zone. He asked the United States to supply his forces with arms to enable them to

⁷² 711.9F/1-1747: Memorandum of conversation, by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson), Washington, January 17, 1947.

defend themselves against the possibility of trouble arising from Communist propaganda and the Hashemite family on the northern Saudi border

"and precisely to what extent (he) might count upon assistance from the United States ... since the threat was not only involving Saudi Arabia but also vital American interests."⁷³

The American response was not new. The Department of State explained its general policy towards Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries in the area. It told him that "the position of the Saudi family arising from feared intrigues of the Hashemite family are primarily a matter for intra-Arab consideration" and that the Hashemites would not attack his country because of his continuing friendship with the United States and the presence of American oil companies there. The Department of State also assured him that there was no understanding between Britain and the United States to recognize his country as being in the British political influence zone.⁷⁴

Childs, the American Minister in Saudi Arabia, reported that the Saudi government met these replies with "obvious gratification".⁷⁵ But in reality, the Saudi government had been seeking an American commitment to maintain its security, and this they had failed to obtain.⁷⁶

⁷³ 890 F.00/12-447. op. cit.

⁷⁴ 890 F.00/12-847: Telegram. The Acting Secretary of State to the legation in Saudi Arabia, Washington, December 12, 1947.

⁷⁵ 890 F.00/12-1547: Telegram. The Minister in Saudi Arabia (Childs) to the Secretary of State, Jeddah, December 15, 1947.

⁷⁶ The Department of State documents available indicate no such commitment.

Meanwhile, the main concern of the United States was oil. Before World War II, Saudi oil production totalled less than half a million barrels; by the end of the war, it had jumped to over 21 million barrels, and by 1950 had reached nearly 200 million barrels. (See Table 2.1.) The Saudi oil industry was developed very rapidly: American companies discovered and exploited large new fields; a refinery was built at Ras Tanura on the coast; and the American refinery in Bahrain was enlarged to enable it to cope with increasing quantities of Saudi oil. In 1954, a year after Ibn Saud's death, Saudi Arabia became the largest oil-exporting country in the world.⁷⁷

Moreover, after World War II, American oil exports decreased and in 1948, for the first time, American production was outstripped by demand.⁷⁸ Saudi oil therefore became vitally important to the United States and its allies in Europe. The main development in bilateral relations in this respect was the December 1950 agreement, by which the Saudi government shared oil revenues on a fifty-fifty basis.

Other issues touching on the countries' bilateral relations were of lesser importance. In 1949, the United States upgraded its legation in Saudi Arabia to full embassy status. The agreement for the use of the Dhahran air-base was extended in 1949 for one year, in 1950 for a

⁷⁷ Marlowe, John, The Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century, London: The Crescent Press, 1962, p. 172; ARAMCO Handbook: Oil in the Middle East, Dhahran: Arabian American Oil Co., 1968, pp. 134-135.

⁷⁸ Howard, op.cit., p. 39.

Table 2.1 : Total Annual Crude Oil Production of Arab
American Oil Company (ARAMCO) 1933-1967

Source: ARAMCO, ARAMCO Handbook: Oil in the Middle East,
Dhahran: 1968, p. 135.

Year	Million Barrels	Year	Million Barrels
1933	0.5	1953	303.3
1938	3.9	1954	350.8
1940	5.1	1955	356.6
1941	4.3	1956	366.8
1942	4.5	1957	373.7
1943	4.6	1958	385.2
1944	7.3	1959	421.0
1945	21.3	1960	481.4
1946	59.9	1961	540.7
1947	89.9	1962	599.7
1948	142.9	1963	651.9
1949	174.0	1964	694.8
1950	199.5	1965	804.8
1951	278.0	1966	950.0
1952	301.9	1967	1,023.8

further year, and in 1951 for five years.⁷⁹ Also in 1951, an American Point Four technical aid mission was established in the kingdom: at the time of Ibn Saud's death in 1953, it had disbursed less than \$2 million.⁸⁰

In summary, Saudi-American relations during the period 1945 to 1953 strengthened, key points being as follow. The main concern of American policy towards Saudi Arabia was its oil, which became yet more important during the post-war period. The Saudi government for its part sought an American commitment to its security, which it failed to obtain. Despite the American role in the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, close relationships between the United States and Saudi Arabia were maintained, and bilateral economic and political relations were expanded.

Saudi-American relations during the 1950's

When King Saud came to power in the 1950's, the overall situation in the area had changed. In July 1953, a republic was declared in Egypt a year after the military coup there, and a year later, Colonel Gamal Abdal Nasser emerged as the true holder of power in Egypt. His policies

⁷⁹ Dennet, Raymond (ed.) Documents on American Foreign Relations 1951, Vol. XIII, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 549-601.

⁸⁰ Grayson, op. cit., p. 83: "'Point Four' was conceived as a world-wide continuing program of helping underdeveloped nations to help themselves through the sharing of technical information already tested and proved in the United States ... consistent with (American) policies of preventing the expansion of communism in the free world, by helping to ensure the proper development of these countries with adequate food, clothing and living facilities." Also Truman, Harry S. Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope, Vol. II, New York: Doubleday, 1956, p. 232.

pursued anti-western themes, such as the withdrawal of British forces from military bases in Egypt. At the same time, Saudi Arabia was in dispute with Britain over the Buraimi oasis. Meanwhile, the United States involvement in the Middle East increased because of its fear of Soviet expansion.

King Saud sided with Nasser and his policies within the Arab world, despite the differences between Nasser's radical Arab nationalism and the Saudi monarch's conservatism, for various reasons. Firstly, like his father before him and for the same reasons, he did not trust British policy in the area, and moreover considered that British military plans against the Soviet Union in the area were intended to expand British and Hashemite influence. Secondly, the strength of the Arab nationalist movement throughout the Arab land profoundly affected Saudi policies, (and indeed all aspects of Arab life during the 1950's,) and even influenced some of the members of the Saudi Royal family. Thirdly, the rivalry between British interests and those of the United States became apparent in the 1950's, which witnessed the decline of British influence in the Middle East, the last show of British power being its action over the Suez Canal in 1956. Finally, the Saudi government's main objective in its relations with the West in general and with the United States in particular, was maintenance of its security in the face of a perceived Hashemite threat, whereas the United States sought to bolster the Middle East against Soviet expansion.

In April 1954, Pakistan and Turkey agreed a mutual defense treaty. The United States and Britain urged Iraq and Iran to become partners. In the following year, Britain, Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan created the Baghdad Defense Pact.

Meanwhile, in April 1954, Saudi Arabia announced its military cooperation with Egypt, and a year later Syria joined them in a mutual defense treaty set up in opposition to the Baghdad Pact, Saudi Arabia also agreeing on a "unified command" with Egypt. During 1956, Saudi relations with Nasser continued to be good: King Saud supported him against the invasion of Britain, France and Israel, breaking off diplomatic relations with Britain and France, and withholding oil shipments to them.⁸¹

Despite this support for Nasser, Saudi Arabia also intended to maintain good relations with the United States. American personnel continued to operate the Dhahran airbase. The operation of ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia continued and steadily expanded. In 1955, the United States agreed to the sale of M-41 tanks as part of a \$7 million deal with the kingdom. Meanwhile, King Saud announced that he had refused Soviet offers of arms.⁸²

Saudi-American relations suffered a minor setback, however, in 1954, when Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with Aristotle Onassis, giving him the right to transport

⁸¹ Salama, Gassan, Assiyas Al-Khariya Al-Saudiya Munthm A'm 1945, (in Arabic: Saudi Foreign Policy since 1945), Beirut: Arab Development Institute, 1980, p. 626.

⁸² Roberts, Chalmers M. "The Complicated Process of Researching a Stalemate", The Reporter, May 31, 1966, p. 32; Salama, op. cit., p. 626.

part of its oil. The Department of State protested to the Saudi government over what it considered to be "a virtual monopoly" for Onassis.⁸³ The dispute did not seriously affect bilateral relations and was later resolved.

With the end of the Suez crisis of 1956, the area entered a new phase. The Soviet presence was apparent. British influence was in decline. Nasser's prestige increased throughout the Arab world. American policy on the Middle East shifted. As Secretary of State Dulles told the Committee of Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, on January 7 1957:

"Few, if any, of us doubt that it would be a major disaster for the nations and peoples of the world, if that area were to fall into the grip of International Communism."⁸⁴

Hence the United States' aim to promote long-term political stability and security in the Middle East through the so-called "Eisenhower Doctrine". This consisted in three basic components. First, American cooperation with governments of the area to strengthen their economies. Second, an increase in military aid and assistance to any country requesting these. Third, the use of "the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations requesting such aid,

83 Keessing's Contemporary Archives, July 3-10, 1954, p. 13655.

84 United States Department of State, United States policy in the Middle East: Documents, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968, p. 27.

against overt armed aggression by any nation controlled by international communism."⁶³

On January 18-19, 1957, King Saud met Nasser of Egypt, Hussain of Jordan, and the Syrian Prime Minister in Cairo. All except King Saud declared their resistance to the Eisenhower doctrine.⁶⁴

From Cairo, King Saud went straight to Washington. His visit marked the end of the Saudi association with Nasser and the beginning of new close ties with the United States. After the visit a joint communiqué was issued, in which President Eisenhower explained the purposes of his administration's policy on the Middle East, pointing out that his proposals to Congress were "to promote the independence and proper aspirations of the Arab peoples." King Saud "indicated his purpose to continue close cooperation with the United States." They agreed that the strengthening of the kingdom to maintain its stability was "in the interests of world peace." The President "assured ... King Saud of the willingness of the United States to provide assistance for the strengthening of the Saudi Arabian armed forces ... for the purposes of defense and the maintenance of internal security in the kingdom." King Saud confirmed that the United States could continue to use the Dhahran airfield for a further five years.⁶⁷ In return,

⁶³ Crabb, Cecil V. The Doctrines of American Foreign Policy: Their Meaning, Role and Future: Louisiana State University Press, 1982, p. 154; Polk, William R. The United States and the Arab World, 3rd edition: Harvard University Press, 1975, p. 382.

⁶⁴ The Times, January 20, 1957.

⁶⁷ Zinner, Paul (ed.) Documents on American Foreign Relations 1957, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958, pp. 284-286.

the United States agreed to increase its military and economic aid to the kingdom.⁸⁸

King Saud began to take a more pro-Western stance in his policies, maintaining close relations with the United States. Thus both countries would "continue to oppose Communist activities, other forms of imperialism and other dangers threatening peace and stability in the area."⁸⁹

In the light of his new policy, on May 17, 1957, King Saud visited Baghdad, the capital of the pro-Western camp in the Arab world and of his old enemy. The two countries announced "the beginning of a new era of friendship and solidarity" between Iraq and Saudi Arabia and their intention to resist "imperialism, Communism, and Zionism" to uphold "Arab stability, independence and power."⁹⁰

In March 1958, King Saud was urged by members of the Royal family to transfer full executive powers to his brother Faisal. Prince Faisal spent the autumn of 1957 in the United States for medical treatment, met President Eisenhower on September 23, 1957, and expressed his desire to maintain military cooperation with the United States, "regardless of whatever public stance he might be obliged to take because of the demands of Arab nationalist feeling."⁹¹

During 1958, two events rocked the area. On July 14, the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown. On the following day the Americans entered Lebanon at its government's request. The

⁸⁸ Eisenhower, Dwight D. Waging Peace 1956-1961, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965, p. 120.

⁸⁹ Keessing's Contemporary Archives, July 13-20, 1957, p. 15455.

⁹⁰ Ibid, August 1-8, 1957, p. 15581.

⁹¹ Grayson, op. cit., p. 91.

American move comforted Saudi Arabia and other pro-Western elements within the area. After a few months, the Iraqi Communist Party became the only political power in Iraq. The new rivalry between Nasser and General Abdal Kareem Qassim of Iraq began. The Soviet Union supported Qassim. Relations between Nasser and the United States therefore improved, as did Saudi-Egyptian relations.

In early 1960, King Saud regained control of his kingdom and forced the resignation of Prince Faisal from government. A few months later, on March 16, 1961, the Saudi government announced that the five-year agreement of 1957 granting the United States airforce the right to use the Dhahran airbase would not be renewed after its expiration in April 1962.⁷² This did not, however, affect bilateral relations.

In February 1962, King Saud visited the United States for medical treatment and met President Kennedy. On his return, he once again transferred full powers to Prince Faisal. The Faisal era had begun, although he was only to become king two years later.

In summary, relations between King Saud and the United States were strained for two reasons: first, King Saud had no experience of foreign affairs, (unlike Prince Faisal who had handled all the kingdom's foreign affairs); and second, the structure of the Saudi government was such that it was unable to deal with the new circumstances which existed in the Middle East during the 1950's. Hence, the United

⁷² Keessing's Contemporary Archives, April 15-22, 1961, p. 18034.

States' urging King Saud to modernize his government system.

To this must be added that it was on a Saudi initiative, and in particular that of Abdula al Turaky, the Saudi oil Minister, that the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Communities (OPEC) was created in 1960.

Faisal and the United States

The year in which Prince Faisal assumed power, 1962, saw many important developments both within and outside the kingdom. Within it, the "Free Princes" of the Saudi royal family were calling for democratic government and social justice. Outside it, the Yemeni military coup of September posed a new threat.

Prince Faisal had sufficient experience to deal with foreign affairs. Indeed, he had been responsible for the kingdom's foreign relations for more than fifty years, and he continued to deal directly with other countries, without appointing a Foreign Minister, until his death in 1975.

It was in New York, where he was attending the session of the United Nations General Assembly, that Prince Faisal received the news of the overthrow of the Yemeni monarchy. He met President Kennedy on October 6, 1962. At that time, the United States had good relations with Egypt and was backing Nasser to the tune of about \$200 million a year, the biggest aid grant in the Arab world. Prince Faisal tried to convince the Kennedy administration that its interests lay in Saudi Arabia rather than in Egypt. In

fact, for numerous reasons, Egypt was and continues to be more important to the United States than Saudi Arabia. Hence, Prince Faisal's failure to win American support at Nasser's expense or to receive any assurance that the United States would not recognize the new revolutionary regime in North Yemen.⁷³

The new republic of Yemen did create a genuine threat to Saudi Arabia. A few days after the coup, several Saudi pilots defected to Egypt, taking their aircraft with them, showing the dubious loyalty to the royal family of the Saudi armed forces. Worse still, when King Saud asked King Hussain of Jordan to despatch some of his fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia, the Commander-in-Chief of the Jordanian airforce and two of his pilots also defected to Cairo.⁷⁴

Prince Faisal returned to Saudi Arabia on October 17, 1962, and two weeks later formed a new cabinet, with Khalid as Deputy Prime Minister, Fahd as Interior Minister, and Sultan as Defense Minister. These Princes were all to play an important part in the future of the country.

Prince Faisal's policies, in the face of the difficulties confronting him, were to consolidate the position of the royal family within the kingdom and to strengthen ties with the United States. He succeeded in restoring unity within the royal family only after coming to the throne two years later, but his success in winning the support of the American administration was immediate. On October 25, 1962, President Kennedy, in a personal

⁷³ Holden and Johns, op. cit., p. 226.

⁷⁴ For more details on these events, see Holden and Johns, op. cit., p. 277; Mansfield, Peter, The Middle East, London: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 115.

letter to Prince Faisal, stated that he wanted it "clearly understood, that Saudi Arabia can depend upon the friendship and cooperation of the United States in dealing with many tasks that lie before it in the days ahead." He added that, "The United States has deep and abiding interest in Saudi Arabia and in (its) stability and progress." Further, he assured Prince Faisal "of full United States support for the maintenance of Saudi Arabia's integrity."⁷⁵

In November 1962, Egyptian aircraft bombed Saudi villages near the Yemeni border. At Prince Faisal's request, American fighter aircraft were sent to Saudi Arabia to boost its defenses.⁷⁶ But at the same time, the United States, not wishing to harm its relations with Nasser, formally recognized the republican government in Yemen on December 19, 1962.

On January 1, 1963, Egyptian aircraft again attacked Saudi territory. Seven days later, the State Department released the text of the President's letter of October 1962. In April, the President attempted to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Egypt over the Yemeni dispute, sending his personal representative Dr. Ellsworth Bunker to the area.⁷⁷ But the dispute continued until the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967.

⁷⁵ Magnus, op. cit., p. 112; Stookey, R.W. America and the Arab States: An Uneasy Encounter, New York: Wiley, 1975, p. 178; Stebbins, Richard P. (ed.) Documents on American Foreign Relations 1963, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1964, pp. 260-261.

⁷⁶ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 316.

⁷⁷ Holden and Johns, op. cit., p. 233.

From the Saudi point of view, the American attitude to the Yemeni dispute was not as they would have hoped, in contrast to Britain, which adopted a strong position against the republican government, which it did not recognise, and supported Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni royalists. Saudi Arabia therefore reestablished diplomatic relations with Britain, broken off in 1956 as a result of the Suez crisis.

In 1964, the struggle over the leadership within the royal family was resolved when Prince Faisal became King. From this position, he strove to strengthen Saudi Arabia's military capability. To achieve this, he asked Washington for assistance in building up the Saudi infrastructure. As a result, on June 5, 1965, the Saudi government and the United States government concluded an agreement by which the United States Army Corps of Engineers would undertake the planning and administration of the construction of the major military base facilities in the kingdom. There existed "no comparable program elsewhere abroad, either in scope or context."⁷⁹ The agreement therefore indicated the extent of military links between the two countries.

In the same year, Prince Faisal launched his call for "Islamic Solidarity" in an attempt to counter the Arab nationalist call for "Arab Unity". Between December 1965 and September 1966, he visited nine conservative Islamic

⁷⁹ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Activities of the United States Army Corps of Engineers in Saudi Arabia, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, 96th Congress, 1st session, June 25, 1979. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980, p. 40.

states to seek their support. Five of these - Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Guinea and Mali - were non-Arab, the remainder being Jordan, Sudan, Morocco, and Tunisia. This campaign to achieve a pan-Islamic bloc was not entirely successful, mainly because of the strength of the radical pan-Arab movement.

In June 1966, King Faisal paid a state visit to the United States, his first official visit as king. It was apparent that he looked to American support for his Islamic call to counter "Communism and other atheistic movements." In his talks with President Johnson, "no new political commitment emerged."⁹⁹ In a joint statement, however, they "noted and approved the close and cordial relations which have long existed" between the two countries and "the threat posed by International Communism to the free nations ... and their determination to guard against this threat."¹⁰⁰

Suddenly, the situation in the Middle East changed once more with the breakout of the third Arab-Israeli war.

Thus, during the period 1962 to 1967, relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia continued to expand, particularly in military areas. King Faisal's role in achieving this was paramount, but he failed to achieve his overall objective of gaining a clear commitment on Saudi security from the United States, still primarily concerned with oil. The Arab-Israeli conflict had little

⁹⁹ Stebbins, Richard P. The United States in World Affairs 1966, New York: Harper and Row, 1967, p. 206.

¹⁰⁰ Stebbins, Richard P. (ed.) Documents on American Foreign Relations 1966, New York: Harper and Row, 1967, p. 174.

effect on bilateral relations, since the Saudi view was that the real threat came from radical elements in the area.

Table 2.2 : Chronology of Saudi Arabian-United States
Military Relations 1943-1967

Sources: Nyrop, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

- 1943 United States mission arrives in July to determine Saudi requirements for military equipment and training.
- 1944 First United States military training mission arrives in April.
- 1946 Dhahran airfield completed.
- 1951 Dhahran Airbase Agreement and Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement signed June 18.
- 1953 Agreement to establish United States military mission signed June 27.
- 1955 Saudi purchase in August first United States tanks and subsequently reject Soviet arms offer.
- 1957 Dhahran Airbase Agreement renewed in February in exchange for continued military assistance; training starts for Royal Saudi Air Force and first F.86 jets delivered.
- 1963 United States Air Force interceptors temporarily stationed in Dhahran as deterrent after Egypt bombs three Saudi towns in January; Saudis initiate discussions for acquisition of modern air defense system.
- 1965 Agreement signed June 5 for United States Corps of Engineers to supervise construction of military facilities. Initial sales contract for C-130 aircraft signed in September. Letter of intent signed with Roytheon in December for *Hawk* Air Defense System and British *Lightnings*.
- 1966 Saudi Arabia mobility programme signed.

Chapter Three

SAUDI-AMERICAN RELATIONS ON SECURITY

Historically, the Middle East has always been of strategic importance because of its location at the junction of three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Moreover, it is situated on the Soviet Union's southern border. Saudi Arabia, by virtue of its large area and its location, dominates the region. It occupies a vital position in regard to the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. It commands the western coasts of the Arabian Gulf, the eastern coasts of the Red Sea and it is not far from the Indian Ocean in the south. It is also close to three strategic waterways, the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and the Strait of Bab-al-Mandeb.

Oil has further enhanced the significance of the area, particularly for the United States. Before the 1970's, American companies produced 24% of Iraqi oil, 50% of Kuwaiti oil, 40% of Iranian oil, and 100% of Saudi oil. By the end of the decade, the United States was importing almost 50% of its petroleum, of which some 34% came from the Gulf region.

British and American interests had been in competition in the area for a long time, but the region first came to the attention of the Western world in general, and the United States in particular, when, in January 1968, the British government announced its plans to withdraw from

East of Suez three years later. As a result, both local powers, (Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the small Gulf states,) and international interests, (the United States and the Western world,) focussed on filling the so-called vacuum created by the British decision.

For the United States, the British plans to withdraw were badly timed, as it was deeply involved in the Vietnam war. For the Saudi government, it meant becoming more involved in regional affairs and adopting active policies to maintain regional stability and Saudi security in particular.

This chapter considers Saudi internal and external security, Saudi and American interests, threats to the kingdom, and American and Saudi policy. Finally, it will examine if there was in fact any American commitment to defend Saudi Arabia.

The coming into existence of the kingdom in 1932 was, as we have seen, the result of tribal conflict in the Arab peninsula. The great powers, and particularly Britain, were more interested in the Gulf coasts than they had been in the desert interior of the peninsula, and played no part in the establishment of the kingdom. Although Britain had some agreements with the Saudi family and with Al Sharif Hussein, King of Hejaz, Saudi success stemmed from internal tribal factors rather than from any British support. The nature of the establishment of Saudi authority made Ibn Saud mistrust the British dominant role in the area and her

allies, the Hashemite family. He therefore awarded oil concessions to American rather than British companies, believing that the United States had no interest whatsoever in the peninsula's internal affairs. He then urged the oil companies to put more pressure on the American government to play a role in counter-balancing British influence in the area.

Ibn Saud was more concerned with establishing the internal stability of his kingdom than with seeking a regional or international role for it. In the 1930's, he put a stop to Wahhabi attempts to disseminate their faith beyond the peninsula. One of his priorities was to found a stable internal security on loyal tribes and moderate religious men (*imams*) in order to make them his means of implementing internal policy decisions. He left the country only once, to meet President Roosevelt in Egypt.

Moreover, his policy on Arab problems was a reflection of his fears of a Hashemite threat. His concern, therefore, over the Palestinian issue arose from his belief that Prince Abdullah wanted to annex part of Palestine to the Transjordan emirate, (which indeed proved to be true.) Above all else he did not want to see his neighbour in a position of strength.

When King Saud succeeded his father in 1953, the situation in the area had evolved in such a way as to force Saudi Arabia to become more involved in Arab affairs. This was due firstly to the prominent role of radical Arab nationalists, (such as Nasser and the Ba'ath Party); secondly, to the decline of British influence in the area;

and thirdly to the increase in oil revenue to the oil-producing countries of the Middle East.

Not only did the king lack experience and capability, but his policies were also inconsistent, leading him to cooperate with Nasser during the Suez crisis, only to fall out with him in 1957 and align himself with the United States once again.

Saud was toppled by his brother Faisal in 1962. More experienced and capable than Saud, Faisal was the only one to resist Arab nationalism.

In addition to this, in 1967, the British withdrew from South Yemen, leaving it under the control of the National Front, which established the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

In the aftermath of the 1967 6-day war, (in which Saudi Arabia did not take part,) the following factors proved to be vital to Saudi Arabia. Firstly, the Israeli occupation of Sinai meant that the Al-Aqaba Gulf was under Israeli control and consequently the Saudi Sinafair and Tiran Islands were under Israeli domination. Secondly, the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the third holy place of Islam, was of paramount importance, given the Saudi policy of protecting Islam. Thirdly, the defeat of the Arab states was followed by the build-up of Arab forces, in which the Saudi kingdom was bound to participate, as well as developing its own limited military capabilities. Finally, the war had strengthened radical movements in the Arab world, hence the rapid increase in dependence on the Soviet Union in the field of armament in Egypt, Syria, and

Iraq in particular. Those states imported highly sophisticated weapons in comparison with the limited capabilities of the Saudi army.¹

In January 1968, the British government announced its intention to withdraw from East of Suez in 1971. This brought to an end the period during which Saudi Arabia believed that the British presence in the Gulf was sufficient to protect its eastern oilfields as well as its water-ways, and the strait of Hormuz in particular.²

It must be appreciated that although Saudi Arabia occupied a distinguished international position in the early 1970's, this did not mean that it wielded any real power. The predominant concern with security still constituted the priority of Saudi policy. The main factors underlying Saudi fears were the following:

- " - In terms of population and military might, Saudi Arabia remains a small power by Middle East standards.
- " - Regional instability threatens Saudi Arabia directly and indirectly.
- " - The United States-Saudi relationship, long relied upon by Saudi leaders to enhance the kingdom's security, is being called into question.
- " - The Soviet Union is developing positions of strength around Saudi Arabia ... South Yemen, Ethiopia, as well as Libya and Syria."³

Internal Security

This complicated situation drove Saudi Arabia to adopt

¹ Noyes, James H. The Clouded Lens: Persian Gulf Security and United States Policy, California: Haver Institution Publications, Stanford University, 1979, p. 37.

² United States Department of State, INR Conference on Saudi Arabia, September 22, 1981, p. 1.

³ See Cottrell, Alvin J. "British Withdrawal from the Persian Gulf", Military Review, Vol. 50, No. 6, 1970.

a policy which depended basically on its great wealth and its friendship with the United States and its exploitation of the call for "Arab Solidarity and the Defense of Islam" to pursue King Faisal's policies. However, Saudi Arabia did not neglect alternative strategies, such as increasing its military power. The main aim of Saudi policy remained "assuring the defense and internal security of the kingdom,"⁴ which implied above all protecting the rule of the Saudi royal family.

It is important not to underestimate the difficulties inherent in achieving this goal in the Arabian East, despite Saudi success in doing so, difficulties which arose from the great changes in the area since World War II, which came close to touching the Saudi royal family.

What then were the internal threats which endangered the kingdom's security?

During the 1970's, such threats stemmed from within the royal family; from the nature of the structure of Saudi authority itself; and from the tribes. In addition the rapid modernization which the kingdom had reluctantly witnessed had led to the emergence of a new social group of technical and military staff, which was demanding participation in political affairs.

In the 1960's an acute crisis within the royal family over numerous issues, including modernization and relations

⁴ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Development Plan (1975-1980), Central Planning Organization, 1975, p. 1.

with the United States,⁵ resulted in some of the Saudi princes, amongst them Prince Talal Ibn Abdul Aziz, emigrating to Egypt.⁶ Moreover the conflict between Saud and Faisal Abdul Aziz's sons lasted for a considerable period. We have already noted (see chapter one) that although the mechanism of decision-taking within the royal family is unknown, it is clear that some members wield more power than others in such matters as ending disputes. Hence the containment of the crisis to within the family, and hence also the peaceful transition of power to King Khalid in the wake of Faisal's assassination. During the 1970's, however, it must be said that differences within the royal family were few.

The tribal nature of the Saudi political system is such that one of the tribes must emerge as more influential, wealthy and powerful than the others. The bedouin nature of the tribes, their non-identification with territory and their belligerent nomadism, inclined them to resist authority, particularly that of another tribe. Moreover, the Saudis were pressing on with their policy of isolating some of the tribes in Asir and the eastern area,

⁵ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia and the United States, the New Context in an Evolving Special Relationship, Report, August 1981. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981, p. 20. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, Saudi Arabia and the United States.) Also McNacher, Thomas L. Arms and Oil, United States Military Strategy and the Persian Gulf, Washington: The Brookings Institute, 1985, p. 19.

⁶ Lackner, op. cit., pp. 91, 93.

together with the tribes who supported Al Rashid for religious and historical reasons.⁷

One of the aims of the five-year plan 1975-1980 was to "foster social stability under circumstances of rapid social change."⁸ This rapid social change had led to a confrontation between the traditional holders of power, (certain members of the royal family, *imams*, and the bedouin *sheikhs*), and a new aspiring class, which emerged from the development of the kingdom, particularly during the 1970's. These new figures, (principally technocrats and military officers,) were ambitious to play a part in the political process and to benefit from a redistribution of wealth.⁹ It must be remembered that to this day Saudi Arabia has no constitution and no parliament, and that political parties and trade unions are not recognized.

The royal family was not blind to the fact that the political upheavals in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen were led by military officers. It therefore expected that a military coup would be attempted in the 1970's, although technically it had complete control of the expanded army. In the face of this apparent threat, the Saudi authorities arrested several hundred officers, particularly from within the airforce, which they suspected

⁷ Cordesman, Anthony H. The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability. Saudi Arabia, the Military Balance in the Gulf, and the Trends in the Arab-Israeli Military Balance, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984, p. 230.

⁸ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, op. cit., p. 1.

⁹ Eilts, Hermann, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf," International Security, Fall 1980, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 98; McNacher, op. cit., p. 94.

of acting against national stability, (such as in plots to overthrow the government in 1969 and 1977.)¹⁰

The other elements of the new social group, technocrats for example, were equally significant. In the United States alone, there were more than 13,000 Saudi students in the years 1978-79. Every year, between 2,500 and 3,000 Saudi students return home having graduated from well-known American universities.¹¹ They play no part in the political process, but they do share in the wealth of the country. They are also the social group most influenced by opposition movements echoing Nasserite and Ba'athist political calls for an Arab homeland, which have some influence in certain areas, such as Hejaz and the eastern region.¹²

Despite all these factors Saudi Arabia was successful in striking a balance by which it ensured domestic security and maintained the power of the royal family. The means by which this was achieved was the National Guard, known as the "White Army," the garrisons of which are located a small distance from towns. The National Guard was renowned for its complete loyalty to the royal family. This loyalty might not be unconnected to the fact that it consists of individuals and tribes who were always loyal to the Saud family; its officers are sons of tribal *sheikhs*, and to be nominated for the National Guard is a reward for service and the position the individual holds in his tribe.¹³

¹⁰ Cordesman, op.cit., pp. 138, 227; Nyrop, op. cit., p. 346.

¹¹ Salama, op. cit., p. 128.

¹² See Lackner, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

¹³ Salama, op. cit.

In 1973, members of the National Guard numbered 3,500. They then rose to 26,000 in 1974, fell to 16,000 in 1975, only to rise once more to 20,000 in 1976, and 35,000 in 1977. There followed the same fluctuation to 20,000 in 1978, and back to 35,000 in 1979.¹⁴

This apparent variation could be accounted for by the fact that it was entirely up to the *sheikhs* to declare the numbers according to which they received salaries. It was common knowledge, including amongst the government, that thousands of so-called guard members had no connection whatsoever with the National Guard, and the authorities were lenient in verifying the numbers. This would explain the reduction in declared numbers in 1975, the year in which King Faisal was assassinated.

As far as the role of the National Guard is concerned, a publication by official American sources suggests that it played a major part in the failure of the 1969 attempted coup. It goes on to state that the National Guard "continued in the mid-70's to be an effective defender of the security of the state."¹⁵

But in reality, the situation was radically different to that which existed when Ibn Saud was in power, and events were to prove the authors of the book over-optimistic. The Guard failed to intervene in Mecca, for example, in a plot intended basically to overthrow the royal regime, and attempts to modernize the National Guard

¹⁴ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance (1968-1969) and similarly to (1979-1980), London: 1968 to 1979.

¹⁵ Nyrop, op. cit., p. 339.

under the supervision of various American administrations failed to succeed in promoting their stabilizing role.

External threats

Saudi attitudes towards foreign powers, regional and international, were shaped by the overriding objective of maintaining the stability of the kingdom and protecting the rule of the Saudi royal family. Thus the strength of Saudi ties with other countries depended on their connection with internal Saudi stability. During the Nasser era, for example, Egypt was a major source of threat because of its influence within the kingdom: there were many pro-Nasserites in Saudi Arabia and indeed within the royal family itself. Similarly, during the period under study, 1968 to 1978, the Saudi perception of an Iraqi threat stemmed from the fact that the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party, which came to power in Iraq in 1968, had a secret organization inside Saudi Arabia.¹⁴ The Saudi government believed the same to be true of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). It is a fact that the increasingly strong position of such states around the kingdom was encouraging radical nationalist tendencies inside Saudi Arabia.

This inter-relationship between internal stability and external threat shaped the focus of Saudi foreign policy in the 1970's, witness the location of Saudi military bases. A major base was built in the south, near the Yemeni border,

¹⁴ Lackner, op. cit., p. 109.

(at Khamis Mishet,) and an even bigger one in the north-east, near the Iraqi border, (the King Khalid Military City.)

In reality, the kingdom was not subjected to any external attack, with the exception of one from South Yemen (PDRY) in 1969, but Iraq, North and South Yemen, Iran, the Soviet Union and Israel were all perceived as a source of threat.

The collapse of the Iraqi Hashemite family and the declaration of a Republic in 1958 produced tensions between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, which continued throughout the 60's and 70's. The Saudis felt threatened by Iraq's important position to the north of the kingdom, together with the fact that - according to the standards of the area - Iraq had strong military forces, equipped with sophisticated weapons from the Soviet Union. Saudi fears deepened when the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party came to power in 1968, creating what the Saudis considered to be a socialist state with radical ideology, threatening Saudi stability,¹⁷ and indeed Iraq played an important part in the politics of the area in the 1970's, supporting revolutionary movements in the Gulf and Arabian peninsula.¹⁸ For its part, the Ba'ath Party labelled the Saudi royal family, "the tools of imperialism" in the region.¹⁹ Iraq was impervious to so-

¹⁷ Dycus, Billy L. and Fiorillo, Joseph A., An Investigation of the Scope, Purpose and Effects of United States Foreign Military Sales to Saudi Arabia, unpublished thesis, U.S. Air Force, Air University Ohio, 1977, p. 43.

¹⁸ U.S. Congress, Saudi Arabia and the United States, p.7.

¹⁹ The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, The 1968 Revolution in Iraq, Experience and Prospects, The Political Report of the Eighth Regional Congress, January 1974, London: Ithaca Press, 1979, p. 131.

called "Riyal diplomacy", thanks to its own oil wealth, its military capability, and its political heritage. There was some improvement, however, in relations between the two countries in the second half of the 1970's, mainly as a result of the γ solution of border problems. Despite this, the fear of an Iraqi threat remained and the plan to build the King Khalid military base near the Iraqi border was retained.

Iran, located on the other side of the Gulf, had a larger population and was superior to Saudi Arabia in economic and military resources. It played an active role in the area, particularly after the British withdrawal from the Gulf. It persisted in its claim to Bahrain and occupied three small islands, (the two Tumbs and Abu Musa,) in 1971. Despite the fact that both Iran and Saudi Arabia aligned themselves with the United States, Saudi Arabia mistrusted the increasing role of Iran in the region. The United States, on the other hand, discounted any Iranian threat towards Saudi Arabia, considering rather that in protecting Western interests in the area, Iran was also protecting Saudi Arabia. In 1979, Cord Meyer, a former CIA official, expressed this view as follows:

"The disintegration of the Iranian army is seen as an accomplished fact that has already caused a seismic shift in the power balance throughout the entire region. For many years, Iran's army served to keep in check Iraqi ambitions against Israel and Kuwait, protected the Sultan of Oman against the Dhofar guerillas armed by South Yemen and reassured Sadat in Egypt and the Saudi princes."²⁰

Henry Kissinger echoed this view when he wrote:

²⁰ Nixon, Richard, The Real War, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981, p. 92.

"The Shah absorbed the energies of radical Arab neighbours to prevent them from threatening the moderate regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf."²¹

Saudi Arabia did not share this point of view and mistrusted the Iranian role on the Arabian side of the Gulf, especially in Oman and the small Emirates. When Iranian troops finally put a stop to revolutionary activities in Dhofar, Prince Fahd, after a long silence, stated:

"Saudi Arabia opposes any outside interference by any party in the Sultanate of Oman. The Sultanate must be left to manage its own affairs without outside interference."²²

This said, the part played by Iran in keeping a check on Iraqi ambitions in the area was accepted, if not encouraged, by Saudi Arabia, which is why the latter did nothing to further the Iran-Iraq rapprochement of 1975.

The Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) has the largest population in the Arab peninsula. For a long time it was well-known as an extreme conservative state. It was involved in a lengthy dispute with Saudi Arabia over the Asir area, which Saudi Arabia occupied in 1934. To this day, there is a widespread belief in the Yemen that the occupation was illegal.

In 1962, the Yemeni monarchy was overthrown and a republic established. The revolution was led by nationalist officers with Egyptian support, which turned into widespread Egyptian penetration. The conflict between monarchist and republican forces continued until 1967, when

²¹ Kissinger, Henry, White House Years, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979, p. 1262.

²² Lackner, op. cit., p. 127, from Al-Rai al a'm, Kuwait, November 20, 1975.

Egyptian forces withdrew after their defeat in the war of June 1967. Despite the continuation of the republican regime, a balance of power of sorts was reached between monarchists and republicans.

North Yemen did actually violate Saudi security, with Egyptian aircraft attacking Saudi villages on several occasions. This threat diminished after the 1960's, however, basically because Nasser was unable to continue to support the republican forces, and because of his dependence on Saudi aid to rebuild his army.

North Yemen itself also became dependent on Saudi aid. Nevertheless, it maintained its ties with the Soviet Union, which continued to supply it with arms,²³ despite its good relations with the United States and the strength of Saudi influence in the republic. The Saudi government, however, continued to feel under threat from North Yemen, mainly because any new dispute might revive the Yemeni claim to Asir, and because the loyalty of the northern tribes could not be entirely counted on.²⁴ Hence the Saudi military base near the Yemeni border.

Even so, the threat from North Yemen remained limited in comparison to that from South Yemen, from which Britain withdrew in 1967 after more than a century of occupation. The National Liberation Front (NLF) came to power and declared the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), espousing the cause of nationalism and adopting Marxist ideology, the only state in the peninsula to do so. The new republic had good relations with the People's Republic of

²³ McNacher, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 117.

China until the beginning of the 1970's, when its ties with the Soviet Union became stronger. The latter had no permanent bases in South Yemen, but it had use of the facilities of the port of Aden and of Yemeni airports. More than 5,000 Soviet, East German, and Cuban military personnel were stationed in South Yemen, and the army and security forces were equipped by the Soviet Union.²⁵ Political conflict between the PDRY regime and Saudi Arabia ensued, the latter viewing the former as a political threat because of its Marxist ideology. Saudi Arabia tried to moderate South Yemen's policies by the well-tried means of financial aid, but with only limited success.

In 1969, there occurred a military clash, in which the Saudi government succeeded in countering a Yemeni attack, thanks to the support of British and Pakistani pilots.

Before the establishment of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in January 1926, the Soviet Union had established diplomatic relations with Ibn Saud. The two countries' bilateral relations lasted until 1937 when the Soviet government recalled its diplomatic mission. From that time to this, there have been no relations between the two governments, despite the fact that many conservative regimes in the area do have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, (Libya and Yemen since 1955 and 1956 respectively, Jordan and Kuwait since 1963, and the United Arab Emirates since 1971.)²⁶

The Soviet Union's influence in the area began with the sale of arms to Egypt in 1955, at a time when Saudi

²⁵ Lacey, op. cit., p. 448; New York Times, April 19, 1981.

²⁶ Salama, op. cit., pp. 286-287, 290.

Arabia had good relations with Nasser. Saudi Arabia's attitude to the Soviet Union was not made public until April 1957, when King Saud visited the United States, supported the Eisenhower doctrine, and stated that the security of the Middle East was threatened by Communism. This position has been held up to the present day. Saudi Arabia took this stand against communists because they "do not believe in God."²⁷ In the words of King Faisal -

"Our enemies are first Communism, then Zionism, and finally Imperialism. Communism is Zionism's first son. The Jews invented Communism. Communism fights the Arabs, for they created Israel."²⁸

This link of Communism with Zionism does not reflect a failure to understand either, but rather an attempt to excite nationalist and religious feeling against the Soviet Union. Communism did not after all prevent the Saudis from establishing relations with the Soviet Union in the 20's when Ibn Saud and his followers had equally strong religious convictions.

The nature of the perceived Soviet threat remained veiled in the statement quoted above for several reasons. Firstly, such is the nature of Saudi foreign policy; secondly, it was clear to Saudi leaders that Saudi Arabia had no ability to counter any Soviet aggression; and thirdly, if aggression were to occur, it would lead to full-scale war between the two superpowers.

James D. Noyes, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Near Eastern, African and South Asian Affairs, was more explicit:

²⁷ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 December, 1972, p. 584.

²⁸ Des Jardins, Thierry, "Saudi Arabia Next in Line to Revolution", Atlas, September 1970, p. 31.

"The Soviet Union does not represent a threat in terms of potential immediate overt military action. In terms of desire to increase influence, to possibly assist subversion in the area, ... to take other actions detrimental to the stability of the area, I would not want to exclude those threats."²⁷

In fact, during the 1970's, a Soviet presence became increasingly apparent around the Saudi kingdom. The Soviet Union maintained a naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and used military facilities in South Yemen and Somalia. It assisted Iraq, North and South Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia, after communist coups and all in all gained significantly in political, economic, and military influence in the region.³⁰

This spread of influence presented a genuine threat to Western and Saudi interests. The Soviet Union's support of the radical states in the area bolstered radical nationalist movements which in turn jeopardized the stability of the conservative states, especially Saudi Arabia, the most conservative regime in the Middle East.

The Communist movement, actively exploited by the Soviet Union in the area, was not represented in Saudi Arabia. A Marxist organisation known as the Popular Democratic Party existed, but was not active in the Arabian peninsula, nor did it receive support from the Soviet Union.³¹

²⁷ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 100.

³⁰ For more details on the Soviet Union's presence and influence in the area see Halliday, Fred, Threat from the East? Soviet Policy from Afghanistan and Iran to the Horn of Africa, Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1982, p. 84; and Adie, W. Oil, Politics, and Superpower: The Indian Ocean Vortex, New York: National Information Center Inc., 1975, p. 3.

³¹ Lackner, op. cit., p. 109.

The Saudi government considered that Israeli activity threatened the stability of the area, and that any instability would create opportunities for the Soviet Union to increase its influence in the Middle East still further.³²

The Israeli threat to Saudi territory was, however, considered a relatively minor one, despite the Israeli occupation of two Saudi islands during the 1967 war. This point of view is implied in the following:

"The Saudis insist that they intend to use the planes to defend their own airspace with bases at Dhahran to cover the Persian Gulf Oilfields, at Taif to protect Mecca and Jeddah, and at Khamis Mushayt near the hostile regime of South Yemen."³³

One commentator has interpreted this as meaning that neither Saudi Arabia nor the United States "could say that defense mainly meant defense against Israel, so both the Saudis and the administration spoke airily of possible threats from Iraq, South Yemen and Ethiopia."³⁴ The Saudi government, however, told the United States that "the threat from Israel (was) not their primary security concern."³⁵

³² United States Department of State, Saudi Perceptions of the International Environment. Paper prepared by William B. Quandt to the INR Conference on Saudi Arabia, October 26, 1981, p. 2.

³³ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, Vol. XXXVI, No. 14, 8 April 1978, p. 838.

³⁴ Howe, Russell Warren, Weapons: the International Game of Arms, Money and Diplomacy, London: Abacus, 1981, p. 565.

³⁵ United States Department of Commerce, General Accounting Office, Critical Factors Affecting Saudi Arabia's Oil Decisions, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978, p. 33. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Department of Commerce, Critical Factors Affecting Saudi Arabia's Oil Decisions.)

In effect, the real threat to Saudi Arabia was the possibility of a fifth round in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which would strengthen the influence of the radical nationalist Arabs and of the Soviet Union.

American and Saudi interests

We have already shown how American interests in Saudi Arabia went back to the 1930's, when Ibn Saud granted oil concessions to American companies. Their activities were private and remained so for more than four decades. American administrations considered the area to be a British political influence zone and that British arrangements were sufficient to protect Western interests in it.

For its part, Saudi Arabia tried to develop its ties with the United States and to extend them to other fields, including political and military. It failed, however, in its main objective, which was to obtain an American commitment to its security.

During the period under consideration, 1968 to 1978, core American interests in the area were oil and the need to counter the influence of the Soviet Union. For the Saudi Arabian government on the other hand, foremost interests were the kingdom's security, and reducing the influence of the Soviet Union and of radical states in the area. All the two countries' mutual interests derived from these.

Such mutual interests were as follow: the guaranteed flow of oil to the United States, West Europe and Japan;

containment of the influence of the Soviet Union;
containment of nationalist ideology and influence;
enhancement of Saudi defense capabilities; promotion of the
internal security and stability of the kingdom and of other
nations in the area friendly to the United States;
encouragement of cooperation between the conservative
states to maintain the region's stability; achievement of a
peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict; and
continuing improvement of American-Saudi economic and
commercial ties.

The other major American commitment was to the survival of the state of Israel. While Saudi Arabia had no objection to the existence of Israel, it differed from the United States in how best to achieve a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. (See Chapter Five.)

Oil and its continuing flow to the United States and the industrialized world was the primary mutual interest. In his testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, in 1972, Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State, stated: "Obviously, oil is a very, very vital part of this entire area, and certainly vital in terms of the economies of our NATO allies and our friend East of Suez."³⁴ In the same year the Department of State defined the region's oil as being of indirect American

³⁴ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, The United States Interests in and Policy towards the Persian Gulf. Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, 93rd Congress, 1st session, 1973. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972, p. 2. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, The United States Interests in and Policy towards the Persian Gulf.)

strategic interest, because it was vital to the American allies.³⁷ In 1973, the Department of State further stated that oil must be available "at reasonable prices and in sufficient quantities."³⁸ Alfred Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, echoed this in 1974, when he spoke of "maintaining access to the area's oil at reasonable prices."³⁹

Similarly, Henry M. Jackson, Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Senate, in 1977: "These supplies must be continuous and they must be available at prices which do as little damage to the United States economy as possible."⁴⁰ In February 1978, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown said: "Because the area is the world's greatest source of oil, the security of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf cannot be separated from our security and that of NATO and our allies in Asia."⁴¹

³⁷ United States Department of State, "Background Study of the Persian Gulf Area 1972." In U.S. Congress, The United States Interests in and Policy towards the Persian Gulf, p. 139.

³⁸ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf. Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, 93rd Congress, 1st session, 1973. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974, p. 2. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf.)

³⁹ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, The Persian Gulf 1974: Money, Politics, Arms and Power. Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, 93rd Congress, 2nd session, 1974. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, p. 63. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1974.)

⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, Access to Oil, p. 8.

⁴¹ United States Department of Defense, Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, News Release. Remarks prepared for delivery by the Honorable Harold Brown, Secretary of Defense, to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, February 20, 1978, p. 3.

Following the Arab oil embargo of 1973, despite numerous plans to reduce American consumption, the United States became increasingly dependent on the region's oil. In 1973, United States oil imports were 5.5 million barrels per day, of which about 0.6 million were from Saudi Arabia. Five years later, imports had risen to 8.4 million barrels per day, of which 1.3 million from Saudi Arabia. In fact, with the largest proven reserves of oil in the world, and as the largest oil exporter, whose production made up nearly 20% of the oil available on the free market, the importance of Saudi Arabia to the industrialized world, and to the United States in particular, cannot be overstated.

Clearly, Saudi Arabia also had an interest in maintaining the flow of its oil to the United States. In 1972, Ahmad Zaki Yamani, Saudi oil minister, called for an agreement with the United States to "guarantee the United States a continuous flow of oil."⁴² After the 1973 oil crisis, Yamani called for cooperation between producers and consumers, because - "no one group of countries, let alone one country, can hope to solve its problems in isolation from the rest of the world."⁴³

Next to oil, and closely related to it, were commercial and economic interests. Saudi Arabia gradually became an important market for American goods and services.⁴⁴ According to Joseph Sisco, "Beyond oil, there is the question of markets for American industry. There is

⁴² The Middle East Institute, World Energy Demands and the Middle East, Washington D.C.: 1972, Part I, p. 99.

⁴³ Yamani, Ahmad Zaki, "Oil: Toward a new Producer-Consumer Relationship," The World Today, November 1974, p. 483.

⁴⁴ Gordon, Murray, Conflict in the Persian Gulf, New York: Facts on File, 1981, p. 23.

a great need and desire for American technology and expertise."⁴⁵ As Saudi income increased, (jumping from \$8.7 billion in 1973, to \$39.2 billion in 1974,) so opportunities for American imports also grew. By 1978, Saudi Arabia had become the seventh largest market in the world for United States exports. In fact, the Saudi Arabian economy was of great importance because "the value of its accumulated financial surpluses have been tied to the fortunes of the world economy in general and the United States economy in particular."⁴⁶

The other main American interest was maintaining the region's security and stability by strengthening the internal security and stability of the friendly states in the area. In 1975, Joseph Sisco told the Special Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, that one of the United States main policy objectives was "support for collective security and stability in the region".⁴⁷ He also stated that the United States would help Saudi Arabia "to achieve several objectives which they see as critical to their own defense and stability."⁴⁸

Manifestly, Saudi Arabia shared this interest. In 1976, the kingdom normalized its relations with South Yemen to "guarantee the security and stability of the Arab peninsula."⁴⁹ Indeed, it was "greatly concerned about its

⁴⁵ U.S. Congress, The United States Interests in and Policy towards the Persian Gulf, p. 80.

⁴⁶ U.S. Congress, Saudi Arabia and the United States, p. 27.

⁴⁷ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Keessing's Contemporary Archives, May 7, 1976, p. 27712.

security,⁵⁰ and its stated primary objective remained "assuring the defense and internal security of the kingdom."⁵¹

Containment or indeed reduction of the Soviet Union's influence was for the United States a global objective, but as far as the Middle East was concerned it was shared by Saudi Arabia. In addition, when the flow of Saudi oil came to be regarded by the United States as "a national interest",⁵² the reduction of Soviet presence and influence became yet more important to America. In a statement before the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, James Noyes, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense stated that one of the American interests in the area was "to contain Soviet military power within its borders."⁵³ For Saudi Arabia, religious convictions lay behind this interest. The Saudi Arabian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs said in 1972, "We cannot have relations with nations that do not believe in God."⁵⁴

In summary, the mutual objectives of the United States and Saudi Arabia were protecting oil and ensuring its supply for the industrial Western world, reversing or reducing the Soviet influence in the area, finding a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and finally

⁵⁰ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 11.

⁵¹ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, op. cit., p. 1.

⁵² Niblock, Tim, "Can the Gulf State Remove the Superpower?" (Arabic), in Farid, Abdel Majid and others, Oil and security in the Arab Gulf, London: Arab Research Centre, 1982, p. 240.

⁵³ U.S. Congress, New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf, p. 39.

⁵⁴ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 December, 1972, p. 584.

supporting conservative regimes in the area, in order to safeguard its security and stability.

American Policy

Prior to the beginning of the 1970's, the United States had no specific policy towards the Gulf and Arabian peninsula. William Quandt, former staff member and later Head of the Middle East Office in the United States National Security Council, stated:

"In the late 1960's, American policy-makers began to think about one area of the Middle East where there had been little previous involvement, namely, the Persian-Arab Gulf."⁸³

This occurred as a result of the British decision to withdraw its military presence from East of Suez at the end of 1971. There is no doubt that this decision, announced in January 1968, came at a difficult time for the United States, deeply involved as it was in the Vietnam war, which was developing in such a way that the American Congress and public would oppose any direct United States involvement in the area. The day after the announcement, Mike Mansfield, Senate majority leader, said:

"I am sorry the British felt they were forced to take this step because I am certain we will be asked to fill the vacuum east of Suez. I don't know how we can do it, because I don't think we have the men or the resources for it."⁸⁴

⁸³ Quandt, William, United States Policy in the Middle East: Constraints and Choices: The Rand Corporation, February 1970, p. 74. Herman Eilts, American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 1965 to 1970 is of the same opinion. See his article, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf," International Security, Fall 1980, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 103.

⁸⁴ Washington Post, January 17, 1968.

The British decision to disengage was therefore "most unwelcome", creating as it did an opportunity for the Soviet Union to fill the ensuing so-called "power vacuum."⁵⁷ Some officials and congressmen in fact believed that the regional powers, Iran and other Gulf States, would fill the gap,⁵⁸ but the Department of State's view, as stated at a hearing before the Special House Subcommittee on Investigation by Joseph Sisco, was that

"the British are getting out, and we have a huge void here, and we have two alternatives. One would be for the United States to try to fill the void directly ... the second alternative was to try to help the people of the region to help themselves so we can stay out. I happen to believe that this is one policy which is working."⁵⁹

In fact, the situation which had arisen after the 6-day war in any case made an "imperial presence" in the region inappropriate. This was the main reason for the British withdrawal, despite the British government's statement that their decision was taken on economic grounds. Direct American involvement in the region would

⁵⁷ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Review of the Vietnam Conflict and its Impact on United States Military Commitments Abroad. Report of the Special Subcommittee on National Defense Posture, 90th Congress, 2nd session. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969, p. 64.

⁵⁸ United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Executive Agreements with Portugal and Bahrain. Hearing, 92nd Congress, 2nd session. 1972. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972, p. 18; United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, The United States and The Persian Gulf. Report to the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, 92nd Congress, 2nd session, 1972. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972, pp. 10, 13; U.S. Congress, The United States Interests in and Policy towards the Persian Gulf, p. 42.

⁵⁹ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 34.

not therefore have been acceptable to local powers, not even to America's allies, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

In addition, the United States involvement in Vietnam had significantly affected American public opinion, and was to shape its foreign policy for years to come. President Richard Nixon, who came to office in January 1969, appreciated the need to formulate a new foreign policy, especially towards Asia, stating that "once the Vietnam war was settled (the United States) would need a new Asian policy to ensure that there were no more Vietnam in the future."⁴⁰ The basis of this policy was the so-called "Nixon Doctrine" which was adopted during his visit to Guam in July 1969. According to Nixon himself:

"The Nixon Doctrine provided that the United States would supply arms and assistance to nations threatened by aggression, if they were willing to assume the primary responsibility for providing the manpower necessary for their defense."⁴¹

The Nixon Doctrine became the conceptual framework for United States foreign policy during the 1970's.

From it emerged the concept of the "Two Pillars" policy. The Nixon administration attempted to negotiate an informal security pact between Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States, to maintain the status quo in the region. The basic principles of this policy were outlined in August 1972 by Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and Asian Affairs, as follows:

"1) Non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations;

⁴⁰ Nixon, Richard, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, London: Arrow Books, 1978, pp. 394-395.

⁴¹ Nixon, Richard, The Real War, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981, p. 214.

- 2) encouragement of regional cooperation for peace and progress;
- 3) supporting friendly countries in their efforts to provide for their own security and development;
- 4) the principles enunciated at the Moscow summit of avoiding confrontations in such areas of the world; and
- 5) encouraging the international exchange of goods, services and technology."⁴²

In addition, the United States recognized "the role which the British will continue to play as an advisor on security and economic development."⁴³

The first principle was central to American foreign policy during the 1970's, as a result of the American experience in Vietnam. Thus the American presence in the Middle East was minimal. It had had a small naval facility on Bahrain since 1949, and based its Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) - a flagship and two destroyers - there. The base was originally rented from the British government, which governed Bahrain until 1971, at which time the United States and Bahrain signed an agreement permitting continued United States Navy use of these facilities.⁴⁴ Saudi Arabia welcomed an American presence in Bahrain, about twenty miles from the Saudi coast, since any American military presence on Saudi territory would have laid them open to political attack from nationalist and revolutionary regimes in the area. The American base had in effect more political than military importance.

⁴² U.S. Congress, The United States Interests in and Policy towards the Persian Gulf, p. 82.

⁴³ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 10.

⁴⁴ Klare, Michael, "Gunboat Diplomacy, Lightning War and the Nixon Doctrine: United States Military Strategy in the Arabian Gulf", Race and Class, Vol. XVII, No. 3, 1976, p. 306; Sen Gup, Bhabani, Soviet-Asian Relations in the 1970's and Beyond: An Interperceptual Study, New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., 1976, p. 121.

The second principle suggests that - as far as the Middle East is concerned - American policy relied on cooperation between the two friendly conservative states in the region, Iran and Saudi Arabia. In his testimony before the House Special Subcommittee on Investigations in 1975, Joseph Sisco, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, confirmed that United States policy was -

"To continue to promote regional cooperation by encouraging the two strongest riparian states, Iran and Saudi Arabia, to assume increasing responsibilities for the collective security of the region."⁶⁵

The third principle underlay its support for "a reasonable expansion and modernization of regional defense forces, particularly those of Iran and Saudi Arabia."⁶⁶ The United States provided Saudi Arabia and Iran with huge quantities of arms during the 1970's, a policy which strengthened Iran's military capabilities, but failed to give Saudi Arabia any real regional power. (See chapter five.)

The fourth principle "appeared to be more of an expression of hope than a principle of policy (because it) was based on mutual U.S.-Soviet relations in a global context that did not necessarily include the Gulf."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Media Services, Selected Documents No. 4, United States Policy in the Middle East, November 1974 - February 1976, Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1976, p. 104.

⁶⁶ United States Department of State, United States Foreign Policy 1972: A Report of the Secretary of State, Department of State Publications 8699, April 1973. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, p. 387.

⁶⁷ Long, David, The Persian Gulf: An Introduction to its Peoples, Politics, and Economics, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978, p. 140.

The fifth principle addressed American economic interests in the area, related to the basic interest, oil. In effect, this became more important after the October war of 1973, which created the so-called "oil crisis" and had far-reaching economic effects on Western powers.

The "Two Pillars" policy therefore hoped that the development of Iran's military capability, Saudi Arabian political leverage, (mainly derived from its financial might,) and American military and political support would create a regional deterrent.

According to William Quandt, since Saudi Arabia had no military power, the United States relied on Iran to maintain stability and security within the region.⁶⁶

Kissinger said that the United States "attached a great importance to its relations with Iran as well as to the crucial role Iran plays in the security and balance of the whole area."⁶⁷ He wrote -

"The Shah absorbed the energies of radical Arab neighbours to prevent them from threatening the moderate regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf ... Iran under the Shah, in short, was one of America's best, most important, and most loyal friends in the world."⁷⁰

Saudi Arabia on the other hand had gained the capacity to influence other states in the area, and was basically considered a source of oil and a moderating factor within OPEC. According to James Akins, former American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Kissinger's great plan for the Middle East depended on Israel and Iran. He added that Kissinger did

⁶⁶ Sirriyah, Hussein, United States policy in the Gulf 1968-1977, The Aftermath of British Withdrawal, London: Ithaca Press, 1984, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁷ Kissinger, op. cit., p. 1262.

⁷⁰ New York Times, August 7, 1976.

not like the Arabs and did not understand them.⁷¹ In effect, the United States considered that Iran was protecting the Saudi Arabian regime in safeguarding western interests in general and American interests in particular.⁷² America regarded the entire area as being under "the Iranian military umbrella".⁷³ Indeed according to Joseph Sisco, the United States appreciated that "Saudi Arabia has much to protect, but relatively little to protect it with."⁷⁴

The "Two Pillars" policy continued until the collapse of one of them, the Shah's regime, towards the end of 1978.

Meanwhile, the United States sought to strengthen its relations with Saudi Arabia in other areas. Thus on June 8, 1974, the two governments signed an agreement to expand "cooperation in the fields of Economics, Technology, Industry, and Defense." Furthermore, "it was agreed that Saudi Arabia and the United States (would) continue to consult closely on all matters of mutual interest."⁷⁵

Despite the fact that the agreement "heralded an era of increasingly close cooperation", it had little impact in the field of security. The agreement reflected how each

⁷¹ Akins, James, "The Internal and External American Policies and the Arab-Israeli Conflict", (Arabic) In Farid, Abdel Majid and others, Oil and security in the Arab Gulf, London: Arab Research Centre, 1982, p. 172.

⁷² See Nixon, op. cit., p. 92; and Kissinger, op. cit., p. 1262.

⁷³ United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, "United States Policy towards the Persian Gulf," Current Policy, No. 160, April 11, 1980, p. 2.

⁷⁴ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 11.

⁷⁵ United States Department of State, "1974 Cooperation in Fields of Economics, Technology, Industry and Defense Agreement between United States and Saudi Arabia signed June 8, 1974." United States Treaties and other International Agreements, UST25 TIAAS 7974, pp. 3115, 3120.

party considered their bilateral relations. The United States recognized the new role of Saudi Arabia in the region and hoped "that this cooperation would be the benchmark for its evolving relations with the Arab world," whilst Saudi Arabia hoped that it would bring in an era of "peace and security (for) its citizens and for all the people of the area."⁷⁶

Despite this, the American administration and some influential journalists began to voice the possibility of the need to seize the oilfields in the peninsula.⁷⁷ In January 1975, Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, stated that the United States "would consider using military force in the Middle East under circumstances of grave emergency - if say, the industrialized world became threatened with economic strangulation."⁷⁸ A few days later, he added that he had been "speaking hypothetically about an extreme situation."⁷⁹

The aim of any American intervention would be to force OPEC members to change their policies, by occupying a sufficiently important target area. Saudi Arabian oilfields, with their vast reserves and exports, provided a suitable target.⁸⁰ The scenario of possible American military action against the Saudi oilfields was as follows:

"Flown out of the United States without fanfare, briefly staged and refuelled in Israel, the 82nd's

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 3115.

⁷⁷ Ahmad, Egbal and Caploe, David, "The Logic of Military Intervention," Race and Class, Vol. XVII, No. 3, 1976, pp. 319, 324.

⁷⁸ Business Week, January 13, 1975.

⁷⁹ United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, The Secretary of State Interview, January 16 1975, Washington D.C.: 1975, p. 6.

⁸⁰ Ahmad and Caploe, op. cit., p. 321.

heavy C-5 and C-141 jet transports would fly straight across Saudi Arabia to Dhahran, escorted all the way by air refuelled *Phantom* fighters, also based on Israel fields or aboard carriers in the Arabian sea. One or two paratroop batallions would jump to seize the Dhahran airfield, and to take up positions around the United States residents' housing a few miles away. Once the airfield was secured the paratroopers would signal other aircraft waiting overhead to fly in the rest of the troops."^{e1}

The troops would then seize "the Ras Tanura jetties as well as storage tanks;" they could secure "some of the installations of the Ghawar oilfields" and they "could also seize the entire nearby Abqaiq field."^{e2}

Any damage to oil facilities could be repaired. The United States "would be deprived of oil from the occupied area not for eight or nine months, but for three or four months and possibly less."^{e3}

In reality, the American contingency plan to seize Saudi oilfields was part of Kissinger's overall strategy, which linked diplomacy with the threat of force to achieve American objectives in the area.^{e4} This explains why the Saudis did not react very strongly to this threat, stating

^{e1} Ignotus, Miles, "Seizing Arab Oil," Harper's, March 1975, p. 52. According to Harper's, Miles Ignotus was a "Washington-based professor and a defense consultant with intimate links to high-level United States policy-makers." Latin for "unknown soldier", Miles Ignotus is rumoured to be a pseudonym for Edward Luttwak, a well-known conservative "defense" intellectual, close to Washington's defense and intelligence community; Ahmad and Caploe, op. cit., p. 319.

^{e2} Ignotus, op. cit., p. 52.

^{e3} Tucker, Robert E. "Oil: The Issue of American Intervention", Commentary, January 1975, p. 26. "Tucker, a professor of international relations at Johns Hopkins, is a left-of-center liberal who commanded some respect for his early opposition to Vietnam and for his advocacy of reduced American presence abroad." Ahmad and Caploe, op. cit., p. 319.

^{e4} U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1974, p. 263; Ahmad and Caploe, op. cit., p. 325.

simply that they would destroy their wells if any military action occurred.²⁵ Nevertheless, the threat showed that the United States government would intervene to protect not the Saudi Arabian regime, but the oilfields.

In spite of the fact that the region went through a period of relative stability, and Saudi Arabia was not exposed to any genuine threat during the years 1968 to 1978 under study, the aftermath of the "Two Pillars" policy was essentially negative as far as the political situation in the area was concerned. The policy had fuelled the imperial ambitions of the Shah, encouraging him to try to rebuild the Persian empire, and ironically leading to the collapse of his regime. It caused an arms race within the area, with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and other states spending a significant part of their oil income in building up their military capabilities. It created tension between the two major regional powers, Iran and Iraq, which lasted until their rapprochement in March 1975 and sowed the seeds of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. It gave the Soviet Union an opportunity to increase its influence in and around the region: the Soviet Union signed a 15-year friendship agreement with Iraq in 1972; had a Marxist client-state in South Yemen, (the first Arab Communist state;) and gained the use of important facilities in Somalia and subsequently in Ethiopia after the Marxist coup there. For Saudi Arabia, the "Two Pillars" policy raised doubts about Iran's intentions, especially towards the small Gulf states and Oman. Despite huge American military sales to them, Saudi

²⁵ Salama, op. cit., p. 253.

Arabia did not achieve true military strength in comparison with other regional powers, particularly Iraq, Iran and Israel. (See Chapter Four.)

The failure of the policy can be attributed to a number of causes. Firstly, the regional powers in the Gulf realized the limitations of American capabilities in the 1970's, after the global decline in United States power, particularly after its defeats in Vietnam and Angola.^{e6} Secondly, American policy-makers failed to understand the Arab mentality, and were even unsympathetic to it. Thirdly, United States policy depended almost entirely on Iran and Israel, powers considered by the Arabs to be alien for historic reasons. Finally, American policy-makers had no overall experience in the region's affairs.

Saudi Arabian policy

We have already noted the strong congruence of political interests between the Saudi and American governments, whose major mutual objectives were the stability and security of the region, the containment of Soviet influence and radical elements in the area, and finding a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In Saudi Arabia's view, the United States was "the leading anti-Soviet and status quo global power,"^{e7} being the only one able to stand against the Soviet Union, which Saudi Arabia believed to present a major threat to Islam,

^{e6} Cordesman, op. cit., p. 58.

^{e7} Dawisha, Adeed, "Internal Values and External Threats: The Making of Saudi Foreign Policy," ORBIS, Spring 1979, p. 141.

to the security of the region, and particularly to the Saudi regime. Moreover, since 1955, when the Eastern bloc supplied arms to Egypt, the Soviet Union supported radical elements in the Arab world, which also threatened the Saudi regime. Saudi Arabia therefore turned to the United States as a counterbalancing force.

This had been the cornerstone of Saudi foreign policy since 1964 when Faisal became king. With his long experience in foreign affairs, he recognised the decline in British power, France's abandonment under De Gaulle of its former imperialistic policy, and the strength of Soviet influence and of radical movements in the area. During his first three years in power, he had three main objectives: unifying the House of Saud, which had been split during Saud's reign; defeating the republican forces in Yemen which threatened the southern border; and containing the spread of radical Arab nationalism.

These immediate goals reflected his understanding of the intimate link between internal security and external affairs which has dominated Saudi foreign policy to this day. His goals were not, however, achieved until the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli 6-day war in June 1967.

The Arab defeat in that war entirely changed the political complexion of the area. Saudi Arabia gained more than it could have expected. The war in Yemen ended; revolutionary propaganda against the monarchy ceased; and the divided House of Saud was once again unified, when dissident members of the family, who had been supported by Nasser, returned and announced their regret. But the Saudi

government was now forced to play an active part in Arab affairs and to take up clear positions on issues, such as the Palestinian problem and Gulf security. The situation was further complicated by the British withdrawal from South Yemen in 1967, and the announcement within a few months of its withdrawal from East of Suez; by the coming to power of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party in Iraq; and by the growth of radical Palestinian movements.

Saudi Arabia's "shift from a defensive to an offensive position as leader of conservative forces in the area"⁸⁸ began with the Arab states' summit in Khartoum in September 1967. Saudi Arabia succeeded in persuading the Arab states to lift their oil embargo; President Nasser agreed to withdraw Egyptian troops from Yemen and end his support of the republican movement there in return for financial aid from Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich states of \$280 million to Egypt and \$100 million to Jordan. But the main diplomatic victory for Saudi Arabia during this period was its success in holding an Islamic conference in Rabat in September 1969, where it emerged as the leader of the Islamic world. In fact, the Saudi call for an Islamic alliance had begun five years previously, as a stand against pan-Arabism, but had failed hitherto, basically because of Nasser's strength.

1970 marked another shift in Saudi Arabia's role in the region, the main factors underlying this being the coming to power in Syria of the moderate Hafiz Al-Assad;

⁸⁸ Dawisha, Adeed, Saudi Arabia's Search for Security, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979, p. 56.

the Palestinian defeat in Jordan and the subsequent departure of the Palestinians to Lebanon; and the death of Nasser in September 1970. Nasser's successor, Sadat, was pro-West and conservative, and moreover ready to accept Saudi Arabia's role in the region.⁸⁷

During the years 1970 to 1973 then, the Saudi government had pursued an active diplomacy in the Arab world. Saudi financial leverage forced Egypt and Syria to adopt Saudi Arabia's conservative political positions. Similarly, under Saudi pressure, Sadat expelled Soviet advisors from Egypt in July 1972. Saudi Arabia became the dominant power in the peninsula. North Yemen was no longer a source of threat. Its cooperation with Iran enabled it to resist the Iraqi influence in the small Gulf states. The Saudi view of how best to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict was gradually accepted by other Arab governments.⁸⁸

This active role led to the kingdom shouldering the burden of regional problems, which in turn led to differences between it and the United States, especially over the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The United States, however, did not take seriously the Saudi warning that it would use oil as a political weapon, despite the fact that they "soon realized that the desert kingdom was no longer the weak, and somewhat subservient, client it had been in the previous decade."⁸⁹ In any event, Saudi Arabia's deep involvement in the Palestinian issue

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Salama, op. cit., pp. 652-653.

⁸⁹ Dawisha, op. cit., p. 5.

during this period gave the Saudi government no alternative but to join other Arab states in the oil embargo.

With the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 came the beginning of the so-called "Saudi era,"⁷² which was to last until 1978. The Saudi capital, Riyadh, took over the role played by Cairo in the 60's. "The October war in 1973, Saudi financial support of the Egyptian-Syrian war efforts, and the four-fold increase in crude oil prices provided more leverage for Riyadh."⁷³ Saudi participation in the oil embargo gave it political leverage, whilst its huge oil reserves placed it in an important position in the international economy, but the most important aspect of the period was the massive Saudi financial aid to Arab and other Third World states. Aid, in the form of grants and loans, was the major instrument of Saudi foreign policy at this time. \$2.37 billion were disbursed in 1974, \$3.87 billion in 1975, \$3.6 billion in 1976, and \$1.55 billion in 1977.⁷⁴ Saudi aid in 1977 was second only to that of the United States and was the largest in the world as a percentage of its gross national product.⁷⁵ Aid was given strictly according to foreign policy objectives. In 1975, 70% went to Egypt, Syria and Jordan, (see Table 3.1.) The political intentions behind this were obviously to support the moderate stance of these immediate neighbouring states.

⁷² See the articles of Mohammad Haikal in Al-Wattan (Kuwait,) May 10, 22, 23, 1977.

⁷³ Sinder, Lewis and McLaurin, Saudi Arabia's Air Defense Requirements in 1980: A Threat Analysis, Virginia: Abbot Associates Inc., 1979, p. 40; Anthony, John Duke, "Foreign Policy: The View from Riyadh," The Wilson Quarterly, Winter 1979, p. 75.

⁷⁴ The Financial Times, April 23, 1979.

⁷⁵ Dawisha, op. cit., p. 17.

Table 3.1 : Saudi Aid in 1975 and 1976 (%)

Source: *Arabia and the Gulf*, 14 July 1978

Recipients	1975	1976
Bahrain	0.2	4.8
Egypt	53.4	24.0
Jordan	2.9	8.0
Mauritania	-	4.5
Morocco	2.0	-
Oman	4.7	-
Somalia	1.0	1.2
Sudan	5.4	8.0
Syria	13.7	9.1
Tunisia	1.2	-
Yemen (North)	5.4	6.0
Yemen (PDRY)	-	4.8
Afghanistan	1.0	0.4
Cameroun	1.1	-
Chad	0.1	0.005
Comoro Islands	-	0.1
Congo	-	0.2
Ethiopia	0.1	-
Gabon	0.6	-
Guinea	-	0.01
Indonesia	-	0.3
Mali	0.9	-
Niger	0.7	0.1
Pakistan	4.3	25.0
Rwanda	0.3	-
Senegal	-	0.2
Thailand	-	3.6
Togo	0.1	0.05
Turkey	0.3	0.005
	100.0	100.0

If one adds aid given to North Yemen, Oman, Sudan and Somalia, the total becomes 85%, the objective clearly being to reduce Soviet influence in these countries. Similarly, assistance to Pakistan, (25% of the total in 1976,) was intended to achieve the same objective and to balance Saudi relations with Iran, as was the aid given to other Third World states. Certain Western countries were also given aid, and assistance was given to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) to stabilize world economic relations and safeguard the Western economies.⁷⁶ Saudi Arabia did not, however, assist any Eastern bloc state, nor any espousing Marxist ideology, its aid to South Yemen in 1976 being an abortive attempt to encourage moderate factions in the Aden government.

For the United States, the "Saudi era" was the time of a "special relationship" between the two governments,⁷⁷ thanks to which Saudi Arabia virtually became the active American client state within the area, the Third World and OPEC. The main indication of this special relationship was the 1974 agreement to expand cooperation in the fields of economics, technology, industry and defense referred to earlier in this chapter. In 1977, President Carter said:

"I do not believe there is any other nation with whom we have had better friendship and a deeper sense of cooperation than we have found in Saudi Arabia."⁷⁸

Relations with Egypt also strengthened, particularly after Nasser's death in 1970. The pro-Western Sadat shared

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 19.

⁷⁷ U.S. Congress, Saudi Arabia and the United States, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Hoagland, Jim and Smith, J.P., "Saudi Arabia and the United States: Security and Interdependence," Survival, March/April 1978, pp. 81-82.

Saudi Arabia's conservative political leanings. During his presidency, Egypt was an active regional power, mainly because of Saudi financial aid. According to Sadat himself, in 1977:

"Saudi Arabia paid the commitments for the development of the armed forces. It undertook for the next five years commitments to develop the armed forces without us paying a penny."⁹⁹

In return, Egypt supported Saudi activities in the Arabian peninsula, Asia and Africa, including in Sudan, traditionally an area of Egyptian influence.

One event not greeted with any enthusiasm by Saudi Arabia was the Iran-Iraq rapprochement which resulted from their agreement during the OPEC summit in Algiers on March 5, 1975. This agreement was perhaps unique in the region in the 70's, in that Saudi Arabia did not act as a mediator between the two parties. Saudi anxiety over it stemmed from three facts: Iraq, which was seen by the Saudi government as a threat to the kingdom, put down the Kurdish rebellion and achieved stability within its boundaries; as a result of their agreement, Iran recognised the role of Iraq in the area, which Saudi Arabia had long resisted; and finally, Iraq had no need of Saudi aid, being itself an oil-rich state.

King Faisal was assassinated on March 25, 1975, to be succeeded by King Khalid, with his brother Fahd as heir apparent and first deputy prime minister. Fahd conducted most of the day-to-day affairs of the kingdom. More pro-American than his brother the king, he was behind the

⁹⁹ Speech to the Egyptian Arab Socialist Union on July 17, 1977.

strength of Saudi-American relations which were described as the "special relationship".

The "Saudi era" came to an end at the close of 1978, due to several factors. Firstly, the Camp David accord of September 1978 brought to an end the Saudi-Egyptian alliance. Wide and strong Arab opposition to the agreement gave the Saudi government little choice but to align itself with other Arab states. James Akins, former American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, stated that if the Saudi government had supported the Egyptian-Israeli agreement, it would have been overthrown, either from within the royal family, or by some other internal element.¹⁰⁰ The Saudi government was in effect forced to attend the Baghdad Conference in November 1978 and break off diplomatic relations with Cairo. Secondly, the collapse of the Shah's regime in January 1979 not only made the area vulnerable to instability, but also ended the American "Two Pillars" policy. For Saudi Arabia, it also raised doubts about American credibility.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia had no relations with the Soviet Union or other Eastern bloc states. Most Saudi initiatives were designed to contain or reduce Soviet influence in the area and elsewhere. For example, Prince Fahd stated:

"I intend to get the Russians out of Somalia. My policy will be to help the moderate forces in Southern Yemen. I will help the Sudan resist Communist subversion."¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ "Saudi Arabia, A Special Supplement," The Financial Times, April 23, 1979.

¹⁰¹ Hoagland and Smith, op. cit., p. 82.

This policy was variously successful, such as in Somalia, or not, such as in South Yemen.

Relations with Iran improved despite Saudi Arabia's suspicions about the Shah's intentions in the Arab Gulf countries, thanks to the role played by Iran in keeping in check the Iraqi revolutionary tendencies in the area.

Saudi Arabia encouraged the moderate factions in the Palestine Liberation Front (PLO), particularly the Fatah movement and its leader, Yasser Arafat. Most of Saudi aid to the PLO went to the latter. Saudi Arabia also encouraged Nasser to accept the peace initiatives, and it endorsed President Sadat's initiative to end military action.

"... it does not want to risk another war in the Middle East because it does not know what would happen to it. Therefore it is going to use what influence it has in the cause of peace, and that is what really makes it a moderate state."¹⁰²

Clearly, Saudi aid policy and activities within the region and throughout the world served Western interests and in particular those of the United States. In his report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield, said:

"Saudi Arabia is important to the United States for more than its oil. It is a critical factor in the search for peace in the Middle East and for maintaining regional stability."¹⁰³

But in return, was there any American commitment to defend Saudi Arabia?

¹⁰² United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Lebanon. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, 95th Congress, 2nd session, 1978. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978, p. 35.

¹⁰³ United States Senate, A Report on Saudi Arabia. Report presented to the Committee on Foreign Relations, October 1975, Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1975, p. 3.

In June 1977, Newsweek published a report on a secret agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia. According to this report, the Saudi government was permitted to invest 50% of its balance of payments surplus in non-redeemable United States bonds at 7.5% for 25 years, during which time it could not withdraw either capital or interest, but interest would be usable for the purchase of American goods or military equipment. These investments reportedly totalled \$17.2 billion by the end of 1976. The Saudi government also agreed not to increase the posted price of its oil to the United States by more than 5% until 1984, regardless of OPEC prices. For its part, the United States promised the Saudi government to use "its full political, military and economic resources to assist the Saudi Arabian government in any way that may prove necessary."¹⁰⁴

The American administration denied the existence of such an agreement. According to the magazine, it had been endorsed by the Saudis outside the United States. The question remains: was there any American commitment to protect Saudi Arabia?

In March 1979, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William R. Crawford told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East that the administration regarded "the maintenance of the integrity of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as vital to American interests in the Middle East, and (stated) that (the United

¹⁰⁴ Newsweek, June 27, 1976.

States) should be prepared to act in implementation of that consideration." He added,

"We have no formal treaty commitment to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but a succession of American presidents - every American president since Harry Truman - has in word and deed made clear that that is of vital concern to the United States, and that the integrity of the kingdom was of importance to, and would be protected by the United States."¹⁰⁵

This statement was intended to convince the Congress that there was a commitment to the Saudi regime after the collapse of American security arrangements in the area, and reflected American concern about Saudi survival. However, President Truman did not in fact give any such commitment, although it is true that President Roosevelt stated that Saudi Arabia was vital to the United States interests, thus making the kingdom eligible for American loans in 1943. (See chapter two.) The statement was clear, however, on the lack of any "formal treaty commitment."

In 1977, a Senate study indicated that the United States was "extremely important to Saudi Arabia's security." The study went on:

"The Saudis take for granted the United States commitment to defend them against direct Soviet incursions; given the importance of Saudi oil such a Soviet move could only be a step in the movement to general war."¹⁰⁶

Here too, there is no commitment as such to the kingdom's security, but rather to the defense of America's vital oil

¹⁰⁵ United States Congress, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, 96th Congress, 1st session. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Congress, Access to Oil, p. 60.

interests in the event of the outbreak of a third world war. The Saudi government appreciated that distinction.

In 1975, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs stated that the Saudi state was "primarily concerned about neighbours."¹⁰⁷ The same study also addressed this question, stating -

"The Saudis require the further United States commitment to defend them against Arab radicals and they probably have it."¹⁰⁸

It went on to say that "Saudi Arabia requires United States involvement as a counterweight to (Iraq and Iran)."¹⁰⁹

The study was not specific on this issue, but hinted at a secret commitment in statements such as, "There is no United States-Iranian Joint Security Commission, there is one for Saudi Arabia,"¹¹⁰ and "... the Saudis probably assume that United States military personnel in Saudi Arabia would participate in Saudi Arabia's defense."¹¹¹ Is it possible to deduce from this that an American commitment did exist?

In 1978, the Comptroller General of the United States sent a significant report entitled "Critical Factors Affecting Saudi Arabia's Oil Decisions" to the Congress. Its importance stemmed from the fact that it had been compiled on the basis of interviews with many high-ranking Saudi and American officials. It included the statement:

"Although no formal defense agreements exist between the United States and Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia's government is highly dependent on the United States for security. It expects United States support against

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 111.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Congress, Access to Oil, p. 60.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. .

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 60.

external aggression which seriously threatens the security of oil supplies."¹¹²

This makes it clear that there was no American commitment, secret or otherwise, witness the use of the words "support" if the oil supplies are "seriously" threatened. In other words, the Saudis expected support in the event of total war, in which case the United States would defend its vital interests and quite clearly not the Saudi territory or regime.

What then was the purpose of the United States-Saudi Arabia Joint Commission on Security Cooperation?

In the first place it was the United States who asked the Saudi government to create the Joint Commission. The Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, Lee H. Hamilton, told the House of Representatives in January 29, 1975:

"Last year, we urgently instructed the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to tell his government that we wanted to create a new special relationship and to establish special joint commissions with Saudi Arabia to help effect closer ties."¹¹³

This initiative was part of general American policy towards many countries in the region. It established similar joint commissions with Jordan, Israel, India, Egypt and Iran in the same year.¹¹⁴ But in fact, Hamilton was referring to joint commissions in economic fields, rather than in security areas. The only United States joint commission on security was with Saudi Arabia. There is therefore no doubt

¹¹² U.S. General Accounting Office, Critical Factors Affecting Saudi Arabia's Oil Decisions, p. 30.

¹¹³ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 266.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 257.

that it was established on the initiative of the Saudi government.¹¹⁵

The aim of the joint commission on security was -

"To establish a Joint Commission to review programs already underway for modernizing Saudi Arabia's armed forces in light of the kingdom's defense requirements, especially as they relate to training."¹¹⁶

To avoid any misunderstanding about this objective, Alfred Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, told the Congress in August 1974:

"the decision to establish the Joint Commission does not involve any commitment by the United States to assume new defense responsibilities in this area."¹¹⁷

A year later, the Department of State told the same Subcommittee:

"The Commission is consultative and does not - as such - make decisions or formulate policy. ... Its principle purpose in that regard was to give the United States side a clearer perception of Saudi needs and priorities."¹¹⁸

These statements show that the existence of the joint commission did not change the nature of the countries' bilateral relationships, nor constitute an American commitment to defend Saudi Arabia.

Finally, what was the role of the American military personnel in the kingdom? Would they participate in its defense?

¹¹⁵ The primary agreement of cooperation was in April 1974. Meanwhile the two parties agreed to establish the Joint Commission on Security in June of that year, during Prince Fahd's visit to Washington. See the statement of Alfred Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs before the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, on August 7, 1974, in *ibid*, p. 65.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3120.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 65.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 73.

The American Congress in fact became increasingly concerned about the American military personnel and their role within the kingdom. In 1975, Lee H. Hamilton, Chairman of the Special Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, asked the Department of State:

"does not this presence involve us directly in these countries despite the philosophy of the Nixon Doctrine, etc.?"¹¹⁷

In its reply the Department of State said that American personnel were "a major factor in keeping various arms of the Saudi military establishment operational." It went on to say:

"This does not constitute the kind of foreign military involvement by United States forces which the Nixon Doctrine sought to avoid. ... We have no security treaty with Saudi Arabia."¹²⁰

In short, there was no American commitment to defend Saudi Arabia and subsequently the question of Saudi security remained the major area of difference between the two governments. Despite the failure of its attempts to obtain the commitment it sought, the Saudi government gave the impression that it was under the American military umbrella, to deter regional threats. The difference between the two became apparent, however, in late 1978 and early 1979, when the area entered a new phase. The Saudis, on record as considering Communism their first enemy, moderated their tone in a statement by Prince Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs:

"Relations used to exist between us and the Soviets in the past, they were the ones who suspended them. We

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 70.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 71.

would like to emphasize that the absence of diplomatic relations between us does not mean we do not recognize the Soviet Union or the importance of the role played by the Soviet international policy."¹²¹

In conclusion, the following are the key points summarizing Saudi-American relations on security.

The security of the region was the major concern of both governments during the 1970's, mainly because of the British decision to terminate its security commitments in the area in 1971.

The two governments had strong mutual interests, but while the main concern of the Saudi government was its security, that of successive American administrations was the region's oil.

The Saudi regime faced many internal and external challenges during the 1970's, despite the fact that its security and stability was never genuinely at risk.

The Saudi government played an important role in the region, and in the world, in maintaining the interests of the West in general and the United States in particular, especially after 1973.

Saudi Arabia failed in the basic objective of its relations with the United States, which was to obtain an American commitment to protect it, this failure being due mainly to pressure from Congress.

The Saudi government tried to project the impression to the regional powers that it had such a commitment.

Security thus remained the major area of difference between the two governments.

¹²¹ The Middle East Monitor, March 15, 1979, p. 2.

Chapter Four

THE AMERICAN ARMS TRADE TO SAUDI ARABIA

The transfer of arms became a significant feature of the post-war world; the arms trade was far from new, but it now formed part of the international trade and industry picture of the second half of the twentieth century. The two superpowers became deeply involved in the manufacture and sale of arms and related services. The great powers joined in these activities, and some third world countries also became producers and suppliers of weapons.

According to the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, world-wide spending on arms reached \$467 billion in 1971. Ten years later this figure had risen to \$595 billion. In 1980, the Soviet Union had the highest military expenditure, \$188 billion, compared with the United States' expenditure of \$130.5 billion in the same year. Together, the military expenditure of the two superpowers represented 54% of the entire world's expenditure on weaponry. During the 70's, European military expenditure increased from \$254 to \$328 billion by the end of the decade, while in the same period the military expenditure of Middle East countries rose from \$12 to \$41m billion.

The Soviet Union held the lion's share of the world market in arms exports, 33.7% by the end of the 70's, compared with the United States' 25.2%. In the same year,

the Warsaw Pact countries were responsible for 38.8% of remaining arms transfers, and NATO countries 53.2%, together accounting for 92% in total.¹ The majority of these arms were destined for the Middle East, which imported 33.7% of the world's total.² During the seventies the region imported \$47.7 billion's worth of arms from the United States alone.³

During the period under study, (1968-1978), the defense expenditures of the Gulf states increased dramatically - from \$4.1 billion in 1969, to \$27.5 billion in 1978. In the same period, Saudi Arabia's expenditure rose from \$1.2 billion in 1969 to \$10.3 billion in 1978 and totalled \$48 billion. American arms exports to Saudi Arabia were worth \$36.9 million in 1968, and had risen to \$2.4 billion in 1978. American sales of arms and related services to the kingdom during the same period totalled \$5.99 billion.⁴

This huge transfer of arms during the 70's to the region in general and to Saudi Arabia in particular occurred as a result of various factors. Firstly, the region was involved in numerous conflicts: the Arab-Israeli conflict, the conflict in the Horn of Africa, the Yemeni

1 Ibid, p. 27.

2 Ray, Grady Dale, United States Arms Policies in the Middle East: A Case Study. Unpublished dissertation, Stephen F Austin State University, December 1983, p. 5.

3 American Society of Friends, A Compassionate Peace, New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, p. 117.

4 U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Military Expenditure and Arms Transfers 1969-1978, Washington D.C., 1980, Table 1.11; United States Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance, Washington D.C., 1980.

conflict, and Arab-Iranian hostility in the Gulf. Secondly, the huge income of the oil-producing states after the oil embargo of 1973-1974 enabled their governments to make massive purchases of military equipment and services. And thirdly, in addition to the economic benefits to be gained, the two superpowers realized the political significance of arms sales and exploited them as foreign policy tools.

This chapter explores early relations in the military field between the Saudi and American governments, Saudi armament policy during the 1970's, United States' arms sales to the kingdom during the same decade, and the major themes underlying American arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Early relations in the military field

The United States played an important role in modernizing Saudi Arabian armed forces, beginning during the second world war, when the United States sent its first military training mission to the kingdom in December 1943. Whilst the mission itself achieved little insofar as modernizing the Saudi armed forces was concerned, it marked the start of the two countries' mutual relations in this field, relations which have endured until the present day.

The king had announced the creation of the Ministry of Defense in 1940 and had appointed his son, Prince Mansour, minister four years later. On the death of the latter, he was succeeded by his brother, Prince Mishaal. No real progress was made in this field, however, during the lifetime of King Abd al-Aziz. The king remained dependent on

his tribal forces and he and his advisers had no real conception of what was meant by military modernization. Nevertheless, before his death the king concluded - in June 1951 - the country's first formal defense agreement with the United States. This agreement gave the United States the right to continue to use the Dhahran military base in return for military assistance. A further agreement to establish a permanent American military mission in Saudi Arabia was reached in June 1953.⁵

Despite the strain in political relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia during the reign of King Saud (1953-1964), the kingdom continued to rely on the United States for military assistance. Between 1956 and 1958, the United States gave Saudi Arabia 55 M-47 *Patton* tanks, 58 M-41 *Walker Bulldog* light tanks, and 12 F-86 *Sabre* aircraft. In 1957, the Dhahran air base agreement was renewed and the training of the Royal Saudi Air Force began.⁶ But the most significant event of King Saud's reign in this respect was the agreement to end American use of the Dhahran base in 1962, an agreement which did not, however, seriously damage bilateral relations.

It was undoubtedly Prince Faisal, who regained full power in 1962, who was behind the strengthening of Saudi-American bilateral relations in every field, and particularly in the military. Faisal came to power in the wake of a crisis within the royal family and after the kingdom had faced a genuine threat in the south as a result

⁵ Cordesman, op. cit., pp. 95 and 97; Nyrop, op. cit., p. 334.

⁶ Ibid., p. 334.

of the civil war in North Yemen and Egypt's involvement therein. This complex situation led the king to seek the assistance of the United States in the modernization of the Saudi armed forces. He also renewed the country's military ties with the United Kingdom and France. Most important of all, he appointed Prince Fahd minister of the interior, Prince Sultan minister of defense, and Prince Abdullah commander of the National Guard. The significance of these appointments lies in the fact that this team has continued to lead the kingdom until the present day.

In 1963 the Saudi government requested that the American administration send an air defense survey team to study its requirements for a modern air defense system. By the end of 1963 the survey was complete and the team's recommendations were submitted to the Saudi government on 20 January 1964. These were that the kingdom needed 36 supersonic aircraft (either the Northrop F-5 or the Lockheed F-104), surface-to-air (SAM) missiles, and an air defense radar net.⁷ In 1965, to offset British purchases of American F-111 aircraft, the United States and Britain reached agreement to cooperate on supplying an air defense package to Saudi Arabia of which the United Kingdom would supply 49 BAC *Lightning* fighters and radar and communication equipment, and would provide a five-year training and maintenance programme. These British sales totalled nearly \$284 million. For its part, the United States would supply 150 *Hawk* MIM-23A surface-to-air missiles at a cost of \$126 million. The Saudi Ministry of

⁷ Long, David, The United States and Saudi Arabia: Ambivalent Allies, London: Westview Press, 1985, p. 45.

Defense signed agreements to this effect with the Americans on 4 May 1966 and with the British on the following day.⁸ The Anglo-American air defense system proved unsuccessful, but it did lay the foundations for the modernization during the 70's of the Saudi air defense system which was entirely dependent on the United States.

In early 1964, Saudi Arabia requested the assistance of an American Army Corps of Engineers' team for military construction and to study the needs of Saudi armed forces. By mid-1964, the team had established a permanent office in Saudi Arabia. The Corps of Engineers (CoE) were to play a major part in the modernization of the Saudi armed forces, its role becoming increasingly important during the 70's. The CoE became involved to a greater or lesser extent in every military programme and moreover in a number of civil projects, such as the setting up of television and radio systems.

An agreement was signed by the Saudi government and the CoE on 5 June 1965 according to which the CoE would plan and supervise the construction of the military cantonment at Khamis Mushayt near the Yemeni border and of another at Tabuk near the Jordanian border. (The former was completed in 1971 at a cost of \$81.4 million, and the latter in 1972 at a cost of \$81 million.) On 7 September 1966, the Saudi government signed a further agreement with the CoE which accounted for \$147 million's worth of services the following year. This provided for the CoE to

⁸ Sampson, Anthony. The Arms Bazaar The Companies, the Dealers, the Bribes, From Vickers to Lockheed, London: Coronet Books, 1983, p. 334.

supervise a five-year programme for the supply of lorries and spare parts and the introduction of a maintenance system to improve the army's mobility.* (For major Saudi arms purchases prior to 1967, see Table 4.1.)

In general terms, until the 6-day war of 1967, Saudi progress in military fields was limited. The country's major source of equipment and services was the United States, with equipment and services to the Saudi air force being provided by the United Kingdom under American arrangements. (See Table 4.1.) During this period the principal task confronting Saudi armed forces was to deal with the threat from Egyptian and republican forces in North Yemen. King Faisal, however, mistrusted the regular army, because many army officers, as well as some members of the royal family itself, were already in sympathy with the call for Arab nationalism. He therefore took relatively few steps to develop the regular army.

Saudi armament policy during the 1970's

The 6-day war marked the beginning of a new phase in the region's history and in the Saudi role in the area. The war had affected not only political priorities in the Middle East as a whole, but also the position of Saudi Arabia. The war lay behind the termination of the Yemen

* Cordesman, op. cit., p. 128; Nyrop, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

Table 4.1 : Saudi Arabia's major arms purchases prior to the 6-day war of 1967

<u>Year</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Airforce</u>
1956-58	55 M-47 <i>Patton</i> tanks (United States)	12 F-86 <i>Sabre</i> aircraft (United States)
	58 M-41 <i>Walker Bulldog</i> light tanks (United States)	
1964	300 BAC <i>Vigilant</i> anti- tank guided weapons (United Kingdom)	
1965	Construction of military facilities (United States)	14 C-130 <i>Hercules</i> transports (United States)
	150 Raytheon MIM-23A <i>Hawk</i> missiles (United States)	40 <i>Lightning</i> inter- ceptors (United Kingdom)
	37 <i>Thunderbird 1</i> SAM missiles (United Kingdom)	9 <i>Lightning</i> F-52 interceptors and T-54 trainers (United Kingdom)
1966	Army mobility, parts and maintenance programme (United States)	

civil war which had plagued the Saudi regime for more than seven years, since Nasser's defeat left him no choice but to withdraw his troops from North Yemen; with them evaporated the Yemeni-Egyptian threat to the kingdom.

In 1968, the Saudi armed forces totalled some 36,000 men and defense expenditure was \$321 million. The army consisted of approximately 30,000 troops, organised into some five infantry brigades, and was equipped with a limited number of M-47 *Patton* medium tanks, M-24, M-41 and AMX-13 light tanks, and BAC *Vigilant* anti-tank missiles. It also had some AML-90 armoured cars and 6 batteries of *Hawk* surface-to-air missiles. The total navy strength was 1,000, equipped with coastal patrol craft only. The air force commanded 5,000 men and some 40 combat aircraft, (4 *Hunter* interceptors, 24 F-52 and F-53 *Lightning* jet fighters and 11 obsolescent F-86 *Sabre* jet fighters.) It also had 8 C-130E, 10 C-47, and 2 C-118 medium transport planes; 2 *Alouette-3* and 20 AB-205 and AB-206 helicopters; 40 aircraft trainers; and some *Thunderbird* surface-to-air missiles. Finally the National Guard consisted of some 20,000 lightly armed tribesmen.¹⁰

Until 1970, the Saudi government did relatively little to enhance the combat capability of its armed forces. It did, however, import 220 AML-90 *Panhard* armoured fighting

¹⁰ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance (1968-1969), London, 1968, p. 45; Cottrell, Alvin, The Persian Gulf States, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, p. 142; Burrell, R.M. The Persian Gulf: The Implications of British Withdrawal, Washington Paper No. 1, Vol. 1, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., 1969, p. 82; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance (1969-1970), London, 1969, p. 36.

vehicles from France and 25 BAC *Strikemaster* counter-insurgency and training aircraft. These gave the Saudis a measure of capability to withstand any threat from South Yemen or any internal instability within a relatively short time. Having said this, the aircraft were not used against South Yemen in 1969.¹¹

Various factors influenced Saudi defense policy prior to 1970. First, as we have already noted, King Faisal did not trust the regular army. The Middle East had after all witnessed several military coups during the 1950's and 1960's. Hence the king's reluctance to modernize the Saudi regular forces. The 1969 attempted coup in Saudi Arabia served to confirm his suspicions. Second, the Egyptian threat had evaporated as a result of Nasser's defeat in the 1967 war, following which Nasser adopted a moderate policy towards the Arab monarchies until his death in 1970. Third, the kingdom's commitment at the Khartoum summit meeting to provide financial aid to the Arab confrontation states left it with insufficient financial resources to develop its own forces. Fourth, the kingdom had a dearth of manpower able to absorb the skills required by modern technology. (This continued to be a major problem in modernizing the Saudi forces throughout the 1970's.) Finally, the Arab defeat in the 1967 war strengthened the case of the radical Arab camp which sought to put pressure on Saudi Arabia to prevent it from seeking military aid from the United States.

¹¹ Safran, Nadar, Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security, London: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 203.

By the end of this period, Saudi armed forces were the third largest in the Gulf region, but their combat capability still bore no comparison with that of the two other major armed forces, those of Iraq and of Iran. (See Table 4.2.)

The first significant attempt to modernize the Saudi forces was initiated in 1970 when the Saudi government requested that the United States provide a special military mission to evaluate the needs of the Saudi armed forces. The Defense Department duly sent a mission under Major-General Oswald Leahy. Although the Saudi government did not formally adopt the findings of the mission, they did form the agenda for future planning of Saudi military modernization plans throughout the 1970's.¹²

What lay behind the shift in Saudi defense policy in 1970? In the first place, there was Britain's announcement of her intention to withdraw from the region by the end of 1971. From the Saudi point of view, this move would leave Saudi Arabia's western borders vulnerable to threat from Saudi Arabia's two largest neighbours, Iraq and Iran. In the second place, the American role in the area had now clarified. The Saudis from now on did not hesitate to declare their cooperation with the United States. (1970 also witnessed the emergence of conservative elements in the region for a variety of reasons. Nasser moderated his stance in the wake of his defeat in the 6-day war and after his death in September was succeeded by the moderate Sadat. King Hussain of Jordan delivered a crushing blow to the

¹² Long, op. cit., p. 54.

Table 4.2 : Major Saudi Defense Acquisition Programmes
(1968-1978)

Sources: *The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1974-1975 to 1979-1980*, London: 1974 to 1979; *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, World Armaments and Disarmament, SIPRI Yearbook*, Taylor and Francis, London: 1976-1978.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Airforce</u>	<u>Navy</u>
1968	220 AML-90 Panhard armoured fighting vehicles (France)	25 BAC-167 Strike-master counter-insurgency trainers (U.K.)	
1971		55 F-5B/E fighters (U.S.)	
1972	Programme for logistical support system (U.S.)		8 hovercraft (coast guard) (U.K.) 22 patrol boats (coast guard) (U.K.) Agreement on naval program (U.S.)
1973	200 AMX-30 medium tanks (France) 250 armoured personnel carriers (France)		
1974	250 M-60 medium tanks (U.S.) 250 armoured personnel carriers (U.S.) 350 105mm Howitzers (U.S.) 1200 Hawk SAM's (U.S.) 250 Scorpion light tanks 550 armoured cars (U.K. and France)	11 C-130 Hercules transports (U.S.) 38 Mirage III fighters (France) 34 Alouette II helicopters (France)	

contd.

Table 4.2 contd.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Airforce</u>	
1975	300 AMX-30 medium tanks (France) 250 AMX-10 armoured personnel carriers (France)	60 F-5E/B/F fighter/bombers 10 KC-130 <i>Hercules</i> transports 8 C-130 <i>Hercules</i> transports	4 MSC-322 coastal mine-sweepers 1 large missile patrol boat 14 patrol boats 100 <i>Harpoon</i> surface-to-surface missiles
1976	250 M-60 medium tanks (France) 100 M-113 armoured personnel carriers (U.S.) 1650 TOW anti-tank guided weapons (U.S.) 4000 <i>Dragon</i> anti-tank missiles (U.S.) 50-60 <i>Vulcan</i> anti-aircraft guns (U.S.) 6 <i>Hawk</i> surface-to-air missiles (SAM's) (U.S.)	4 F-5F fighter/bombers (U.S.) 17 C-130 <i>Hercules</i> transports (U.S.) 11 BAC <i>Strike-master</i> /counter-insurgency trainers (U.S.) 2000 <i>Sidewinder</i> air-to-air missiles (U.S.) 1650 <i>Maverick</i> air-to-surface missiles (U.S.) 200 <i>Bell 209</i> AHIS attack helicopters (U.S.)	6 large missile patrol boats (U.S.) 12 coastal patrol boats (U.S.) 8 patrol boats (France)
1977	<i>Redeye</i> surface-to-air missiles (SAM's) (U.S.)	10 miscellaneous helicopters (Italy and Japan)	4 <i>Badr</i> class corvettes (U.S.) 9 <i>As-Sadiq</i> class fast-attack craft (U.S.)
1978	250 AML wheeled armoured reconnaissance vehicles (France) 94 V-150 wheeled armoured reconnaissance vehicles and armoured personnel vehicles with anti-tank guided weapons (U.S.) 86 35mm anti-aircraft guns (U.S.)	60 F-15 <i>Eagle</i> fighters (U.S.)	9 <i>Tacoma</i> fast patrol boats (U.S.)

Palestinians in his country, also in September. The moderate politician Hafiz Al-Assad became president of Syria.) In the third place, the Saudi government found itself free of financial constraints. Saudi revenue increased by 69% in the fiscal year 1971 and by an annual average of 53% over the years 1971 to 1973. And last but not least, the Saudi government was prompted into action by the build-up of the armed forces of Iraq and Iran. The Shah was preparing to assume the role of major power in the area, whilst Iraq, sensible of the complicated situation which prevailed in the region, was also building up its armed forces.

Thus between 1970 and 1973 the Saudi government embarked on a serious attempt to modernize its armed forces. On 29 May 1971 it formally requested the United States to sell it 20 F-5E Tiger fighters (to follow its original purchase of F-5A's), as well as 35 F-5B training aircraft. This request included the necessary equipment, spare parts and training personnel. The cost of the fighters was \$171 million, and in 1972 the Saudi Minister of Defense and Aviation signed a \$277 million contract for the training, equipment and construction components of the programme. The F-5 purchase

"gave the Royal Saudi Air Force much better access to training facilities in the United States and led to the stationing of a much larger cadre of U.S.A.F. and U.S. contractor personnel in Saudi Arabia."

As a result of this agreement, the U.S. Military Training Mission was expanded to 250, and the Technical Advisory Field Team was expanded still further.¹³

¹³ Cordesman, op. cit., p. 163.

In May 1973, the Saudi and British governments reached agreement on extending the existing British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) contract for a further five-year period, enabling it to continue to operate the major part of the Royal Saudi Air Force's projects and services. In the same month the United States gave Saudi Arabia its approval in principle for the purchase of F-4 or Jaguar fighters. This approval met fierce opposition from pro-Israeli groups in the United States and despite initial Department of State assurances that any military sales to Saudi Arabia would take "fully into account (America's) long-standing policy of support for Israeli security",¹⁴ was eventually withdrawn.

During the same period (1968-1973), the Saudi army was given a lower priority. Its main source of arms was France. In 1973, the Saudi government purchased 200 AMX-30 medium tanks and 250 armoured personnel carriers. The American role in modernizing the Saudi army was limited to maintenance and repair. These activities were carried out in accordance with the October 1967 agreement which had been concluded between American Secretary of Defense McNamara and the Saudi Minister of Defense and Aviation, Prince Sultan. When the agreement expired in 1972, the Saudi government requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to carry out their programme for a logistical support system for the army. According to an earlier (June 1965) agreement between the American and Saudi governments, the CoE constructed two major military cities, the first at

¹⁴ Long, op. cit., p. 48.

Khamis Mishat:, near the Yemeni border, the second at Tabuk, near the Jordanian border.¹⁵

During these same years (1968-1973), Saudi Arabia could not be said to have been a naval power. In the mid-60's consideration was given to the construction of two naval bases, one on the western Saudi coast and the other on the eastern. In April 1968, the Saudi government formally requested the United States Navy to modernize its navy and to create a credible Saudi naval force. This request was met in the first instance by the arrival (in August 1968) of a three-man U.S. Navy team which completed its study by February 1969. The study recommended the creation of two operational bases at Jeddah and Jubayl, as well as a headquarters in the capital, Riyadh. The study also found that the Saudi navy required six vessels for each base and a ten-year training programme. After a further study, a joint Saudi-American team recommended in 1971 a nineteen-ship navy. This latter recommendation led in February 1972 to a Saudi-American agreement on the establishment of the navy. The agreement, which was known as the Saudi Arabian Naval Expansion Plan (SNEP), allowed for four 700-ton and nine 300-ton guided missile patrol boats, four MSC-322 coastal minecraft and eight other small craft, as well as MK-92 fire-control systems, MK-46 torpedoes, AN/SPS surface search radars, 76mm rapid-fire

¹⁵ For details of the activities of the U.S. Corps of Engineers in Saudi Arabia, see United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas: Past, Present and Future, 95th Congress, 1st session. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977, p. 28.

guns, and *Harpoon* surface-to-surface missiles.¹⁶ Both governments recognising that this plan was over-ambitious, it was trimmed in 1974. The original estimated cost was \$150 million, but by 1977 actual costs had topped \$2 billion.¹⁷

The Saudi government also recognised the need to modernize the National Guard. In September 1971, Prince Abdullah, commander of the National Guard, asked for American help in developing a modernization plan. The two parties reached an agreement for the equipment and training of the National Guard in March 1973,¹⁸ although it was not implemented until 1975. The plan called for the reorganisation of the National Guard into 20 light infantry battalions, including two mechanized infantry battalions and two artillery batteries. This programme was expanded to include four infantry battalions and one supporting artillery battalion. The original estimated cost was \$200 million and the programme was to take four years to implement. The infantry battalions would receive 150 Cadillac Gage V-150 commando armoured cars, 20mm cannon, recoilless rifles, guns, tube-launched optically-tracked wire-guided (TOW) antitank missiles and *Vulcan* 20mm anti-aircraft cannon, while the artillery would receive 105mm M-102 howitzers.¹⁹

¹⁶ Cottrell, op. cit., p. 144.

¹⁷ Holden and Johns, op. cit., p. 361.

¹⁸ Tahtiness, Dale R., National Security Challenges to Saudi Arabia, Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978, p. 17, U.S. Department of State Bulletin, 27 May 1973, p. 866.

¹⁹ Cordesman, op. cit., p. 178.

Thanks to such measures, by the end of this period the Saudi armed forces had risen to 42,000. The army strength was now 36,000, organised into 4 infantry brigades, 1 armoured battalion, 1 reconnaissance battalion, 1 parachute battalion, 1 Royal Guard battalion, 3 artillery battalions, 3 anti-aircraft battalions, and 10 surface-to-air missile batteries, equipped with *Hawk* missiles. The army also had 25 M-47 medium tanks; 60 M-41 light tanks; 200 AML-60 and AML-90, some *Staghound* and *Greyhound* armoured cars; *Ferret* scout cars; as well as field and anti-aircraft guns. The naval strength remained one thousand, but it was now equipped with 2 torpedo boats, 1 motor gunboat, 2 utility craft, 9 coastguard patrol boats and 8 SRN-6 coastguard hovercraft. The Saudi airforce comprised 5,500 men and now boasted 70 combat aircraft: 2 fighter-bomber squadrons equipped with 15 F-86F's; 2 fighter-ground attack squadrons with 35 F-52 and F-53 *Lightnings*; 2 transport squadrons with 10 C-130 and 2 C-140B's; 2 helicopter squadrons with 1 *Alouette III*, 1 AB-204, 8 AB-205 and 20 AB-206, 1 T-33 trainer, 1 *Cessna 310K* and 6 172G light aircraft, as well as 37 *Thunderbird* Mark I surface-to-air missiles. Finally, the National Guard had been completely reorganised into regular and semi-regular battalions.²⁰

It is clear, however, from these details that on the eve of the October 1973 war, Saudi Arabia still had only a very limited combat capability. Hence the United States' failure to take King Faisal's threat of war seriously. The main objective of the build-up of Saudi armed forces had

²⁰ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance (1973-1974), London, 1973, pp. 35-36.

been to maintain the kingdom's internal stability and to deal with limited threats, such as that from South Yemen (PDRY).

The October 1973 war had a dramatic effect on Saudi defense policy. As a result of the oil embargo, oil prices rose sharply, causing Saudi income to soar from \$6.4 billion to \$27.7 billion in the fiscal year 1974-1975. This removed all financial constraints on Saudi defense expenditure. Conversely, oil prices adversely affected potential arms suppliers: the United States and European countries needed funds to alleviate the balance-of-payment problems which had followed the increase in oil prices and they were prepared to provide arms and services to help solve their financial difficulties. At the same time, Saudi Arabia emerged as a major global oil and financial power. It also became effective leader of the wide conservative camp in the region, thanks to the "Royal Policy" of King Faisal, who succeeded in embracing Egypt and Syria under the Saudi umbrella.

In December 1973, the Saudi government once again sought American assistance in modernizing its air force. The Defense department agreed and proposed to undertake a comprehensive study of Saudi defense requirements.²¹ It must be borne in mind that the Saudi request fell during the days of the oil embargo. Two explanations for this apparent paradox can be advanced. The first is that the United States was aware that Saudi participation in the oil embargo was a reluctant response to Arab pressure rather

²¹ Safran, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

than a free choice. The second is that no connection was sought between the overall situation in the Middle East and the sale of American arms and services to Saudi Arabia. In other words American arms sales were not linked to the general American policy on the area.

After 1973, relations between the two governments entered a new phase, that of the so-called "special relationship". In the military field, American involvement deepened, principally thanks to the new-found Saudi wealth: the Saudi government was now in a position to commission virtually every armament and service it desired. Thus in response to the request made by the Saudi government, an American team began its field study in April 1974, completed it in June, and submitted its report in October of the same year. (The study excluded the National Guard which was covered by another American study prepared in 1973, reflecting the Saudi desire to keep the National Guard at one remove from the other Saudi armed forces.²²)

The defense plans of 1974 extended over a ten-year period. During this time, the army was to be expanded from 45,000 to 72,000 men. Four mechanized brigades were to be created with twelve mechanized infantry and three armoured battalions; similarly two armed brigades with six armoured and two mechanized infantry battalions; one airborne brigade with three infantry battalions; and three

²² United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, The United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf. A Report, 94th Congress, 1st Session. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, p. 18. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, The United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf.)

helicopter battalions. The plan also recommended that the Saudi air force be expanded from 14,000 to 22,000 men and called for the 55 F-5B/E aircraft which had been purchased in 1971 to be integrated within 5 years. The air force was moreover to acquire 60 F-5E/F aircraft at a cost of \$769 million, with a further \$1,574 million allocated to construction and training. The plan also recommended that the Lockheed Company continue to provide the support programme for the C-130 *Hercules* transport aircraft.

In 1975, representatives of the Saudi air force visited the United States to evaluate the F-14, F-15, F-16, and F-18 aircraft. In March 1976, they informed the U.S. Department of Defense that they favoured the F-15 for defense purposes and specified that they required 40 of them. This represented a major change in the Saudi plans for the modernization of the air force.²³ There were many reservations about or opposition to the sale from within the Ford and Carter administrations,²⁴ ostensibly because it was felt that the Royal Saudi Air Force was not yet ready to operate the advanced F-15 system. Nevertheless, Presidents Ford and Carter met the Saudi request, agreement being finally reached in May 1978, by which time the number of aircraft had risen to 60. This delay in reaching final agreement was caused by the lobbying of pro-Israeli groups who had campaigned to block the sale,²⁵ in order no doubt to secure more weapons for Israel. In point of fact by the

²³ Safran, op. cit., pp.207-208.

²⁴ New York Times, 8 July 1976; Washington Post, 3 September 1977.

²⁵ See Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, 8 April 1978, p. 838.

time delivery of the aircraft was taken in late 1981, the entire security needs of the kingdom had changed.

We have noted above how the modernization programme for the Saudi navy was adopted by the 1971 American mission, modified in 1972 according to a joint agreement and finalized in 1974. The estimated cost rose to more than \$2.6 billion. Despite this the 70's naval programme was relatively unsuccessful, mainly because the existing navy provided such a poor starting point.

The National Guard was the subject of a separate American study and final agreement on its modernization programme was reached in 1975. The original estimated cost was approximately \$200 million. By 1974 this had risen to a total of \$335 million; \$123 million for equipment; \$63 million for construction and \$149 million for management and training. In 1976, the cost of the construction element rose still further to \$1366 million, bringing the total cost of the programme to \$1.9 billion.²⁶

During this period (1973-1978), the major objective underlying these plans was to deter the so-called "Iraqi threat". A priority was therefore the construction of the large military city (which became known as the King Khalid military city) near the Iraqi border. According to one researcher

"the survey relied on Iran to deter an outright Iraqi invasion; and if such an invasion nevertheless took place, it envisaged a Saudi capacity to fight a delaying action until Iranian, and ultimately American, forces came to the rescue."²⁷

²⁶ Safran, op. cit., p. 208.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 207.

Undoubtedly, it was the Iraqi capability to move its army to the Syrian front in some 48 hours, demonstrated during the October 1973 war, which lay behind Saudi fears. The Saudi oil fields are located about 400 miles from the Iraqi border. Hence the Saudi government's unease at the Iraqi-Iranian rapprochement of March 1975. It is not unreasonable to surmise that they believed that the Shah had left them exposed to an Iraqi threat.

The other major Saudi objective for expanding its defense programmes was to deepen United States involvement in matters relating to Saudi defense, hoping that this would lead to America assuming de facto responsibility for Saudi security. In his report to the House Committee on International Relations, Congressman Pierre S. du Pont IV, who conducted a special study mission to examine United States arms sales to Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia during May 1975, stated:

"Although there is no formal military alliance binding the United States to (Saudi Arabia), the American role in its military development creates ties that could lead to increasingly deeper involvement."²⁸

American involvement was indeed considerable. The Saudi air force for instance could not operate without American personnel. In December 1975, Colonel William A. Fifer, (U.S. Army, Near East and South Asia Region, Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs,) told the House Sub-Committee on International Political and Military Affairs that if

²⁸ U.S. Congress, The United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf, p. 32.

Congress did not accept an extension of the 1971 American-Saudi contract for the support of the Saudi air force,

"we will have to withdraw American people that are there. The Saudi Arabian air force, unquestionably, will not be able to continue to operate in a very short time period thereafter... I think the Saudi Arabian air force would be grounded within a matter of a couple of weeks after the current contract runs out."²⁷

Similarly the Department of State told Congress that American personnel were a major factor in keeping various arms of the Saudi military establishment operational. But it rejected the notion that this placed responsibility for Saudi defense with the United States. (See Chapter Three.)

It should be borne in mind, however, that Saudi plans to modernize its armed forces would take ten years to complete, from 1974 to 1984. In reality the strategic environment in which the plans were to be implemented would change within a few years, especially in the volatile Middle East. This is in effect what occurred when the region entered a new phase after the Camp David accord and the fall of the Shah's regime. (For major Saudi defense acquisition programmes 1968-1978, see Table 4.2.)

By the end of the period with which we are concerned, i.e. 1978, the total strength of Saudi armed forces had risen to 61,500. The army now had 45,000 troops, organised much as in 1973 (see above), but with in addition 1 mechanized division, 2 infantry battalions, and a further 3

²⁷ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Military Sales to Saudi Arabia, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Political and Military Affairs, 94th Congress, 1st Session. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, p. 33. (Subsequently referred to as U.S. Congress, Military Sales to Saudi Arabia.)

anti-aircraft battalions. It was equipped with 400 AMX-30 and 75 M-47/-60 medium tanks; 150 *Scorpion*, AMX-13 light tanks; 200 AML-60/-90, some *Staghound* and *Greyhound* armoured cars; *Ferret* scout cars; M-113; *Panhard* and M-3 commando armoured personnel carriers; 105mm guns; 75mm recoilless rifles; SS-11, *Dragon*, *Vigilant*, *Harpoon* anti-tank guided weapons; anti-aircraft guns; and *Rapier*, *Hawk* surface-to-air missiles. The Navy strength was still a modest 1,500 men, equipped with 1 fast patrol boat with guided missiles, 3 *Jaguar* class fast patrol boats, and 1 large patrol craft in addition to the vessels they had in 1973. The Saudi air force strength had risen from 5,500 (in 1973) to 15,000 men, and its combat aircraft from 70 to 137: 2 fighter bomber squadrons were equipped with 70 F-5E's; 2 counter-insurgency/training squadrons with 30 BAC-167's; 2 interceptor squadrons with 37 *Lightning* F52/F53's; 2 transport squadrons with 39 C-130 E/H's; and 2 helicopter squadrons with 16 AB-206 and 24 AB-205's. Its other aircraft consisted of 4 KC-130 tankers; 1 Boeing 707; 2 *Fakin* 20's; 2 *Jetstar* transports; 12 *Alouette* III's; 1 AB-204 helicopter; and trainers including 20 F-5B, 7 *Lightning* T54/55; 6 *Cessna* T-41A. The National Guard comprised 35,000 men in regular and semi-regular battalions.³⁰

Saudi armed forces were now the third most powerful in the region, but were still far behind the other two - Iraq and Iran (see Table 4.3) insofar as their defense capabilities were concerned. Despite a vast investment, (from 1969 to 1978 Saudi military expenditure reached

³⁰ The Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance (1977-1978), London, 1977, p. 40.

Table 4.3 : The Military Build-up in the Major Gulf States
(1968/69-1977/78)

Sources: *The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance (1968-1969) to (1977-1978), London: 1968 to 1977.*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total armed forces (000's)</u>			<u>Medium tanks</u>			<u>Combat aircraft</u>		
	<u>S.A.</u>	<u>Iraq</u>	<u>Iran</u>	<u>S.A.</u>	<u>Iraq</u>	<u>Iran</u>	<u>S.A.</u>	<u>Iraq</u>	<u>Iran</u>
1968/69	36	82	221	a few	535	n/a	40	215	200
1969/70	34	78	221	a few	535	n/a	43	213	180
1970/71	36	95	161	55	645	n/a	75	229	175
1971/72	41	95	181	25	860	860	75	220	140
1972/73	41	102	191	25	860	860	71	189	160
1973/74	43	102	212	25	990	920	70	224	159
1974/75	43	113	238	55	1390	1160	90	218	212
1975/76	47	135	250	175	1290	1160	95	247	238
1976/77	52	158	300	325	1290	1360	97	299	317
1977/78	62	188	342	475	1400	1620	137	369	341

\$36,241 million, see Table 4.4,) and the purchase of the most advanced weapons systems and services available, the kingdom's defense capability was still problematical, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the kingdom's territories represent a very large geographical area to defend, with over 2,000 miles of coastline along the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea. Secondly, trained manpower was limited, basically because of the small population.³¹ Thirdly, the combat capability of the Saudi armed forces had not been tested outside Saudi borders. The Saudi army, for instance, took no real active part in any Arab-Israeli conflict. And finally, as far as the modernization programmes themselves were concerned, it is important to bear in mind the following points.

In the first place, Saudi spending on infrastructure, construction projects and services absorbed 80% of its military expenditure. The remaining 20% spent on arms was small by comparison with just under a third of the military expenditure of Iran, (the total defense spending of the two countries being roughly equal.)

In the second place, given the nature of the Saudi political system, decisions relating to defense were highly personal. The purchase of a given weapon depended on the king, the defense minister, and in some cases on a few other individuals. The request made by Prince Sultan, Minister of Defense, to purchase F-5 aircraft from the American administration rested on the mere fact that he admired it. (This was to prove an unsuitable choice: in the

³¹ Tahtiness, op. cit., p. 15.

Table 4.4 : Defense Expenditure in the Gulf 1969-1978
(current \$ millions)

Sources: United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Military Expenditures and Transfers 1969-1978 and 1971-1980, Washington D.C.; 1980 and 1983 respectively.

Year	Saudi Arabia	Iran	Iraq
1969	1,182	1,828	826
1970	1,481	2,045	822
1971	1,572	2,505	857
1972	2,115	3,093	977
1973	2,796	3,729	1,304
1974	3,182	6,303	1,686
1975	7,105	8,646	1,738
1976	9,288	9,521	1,837
1977	8,952	8,747	2,007
1978	10,284	10,598	2,136

early 1970's, this advanced aircraft became outdated and the Saudis were unable to operate it without the support of American personnel.)

In the third place, Saudi spending on defense related to the country's huge income, rather than changes in the strategic environment of the region. Expenditure increased when revenues increased.

All these served to diminish the effectiveness of the modernization programmes.

The policy of the United States on arms sales to Saudi Arabia

American policy on arms sales to the Middle East was influenced by various factors during the 70's. Dominating these were the British withdrawal from East of Suez, which left the so-called security vacuum in the area, and the American involvement in Vietnam, which lay behind the adoption of the "Nixon doctrine", calling for a shift of some of the American regional security burden to regional powers. The Nixon doctrine resulted in the "twin pillar" policy, that is to say the United States' reliance on Iran and Saudi Arabia to maintain regional security. In effect, as was shown in Chapter Three, the United States regarded Iran and Israel as the two regional powers capable of securing Western interests in the area, rather than the Saudi regime, simply because the latter had no capability to build a strong military force. Nevertheless, the United

States injected a massive amount of military equipment and services into Saudi Arabia. To what end?

According to Congressman Pierre S. du Pont, in his report to the Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs:

"Arms sales bring several advantages to (*the United States*). They aid the U.S. balance of payments. They also expand U.S. influence within a nation and promote friendly ties with (*the United States*). In addition to this, they promote the security of nations whose security is important to the United States. By selling arms to certain nations the United States can build the defenses of these nations to levels where they are able to insure their own security. In this way, they do not have to rely on the direct intervention by the United States for their protection."³²

There is no doubt that the October 1973 war, in dramatically pushing up oil prices, affected the United States balance of payments. Between 1973 and the end of the decade, the Gulf states imported more than \$21 billion's worth of military equipment and services from the United States. The American arms sales policy was clearly an important part of its petrodollar policy. The arms sales also led to another economic benefit for the United States. The American firms involved in military projects were also involved in civil projects, such as the installation of telephone systems or the construction of hospitals. Thus arms sales opened the markets of the area to non-military sales and activities. In 1974, American exports to Saudi Arabia totalled \$833 million, an increase of 90% over the previous year. Huge arms sales also not only reduced unit production costs, but also created jobs in America in both military and non-military industries.

³² U.S. Congress, The United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf, p. 25.

"For each \$1 billion in military sales, approximately 47,000 jobs are created."³³

In short, economic benefits were an important factor in the American willingness to sell arms to the region, particularly after the October 1973 war.

At the same time the United States exploited its military sales as a major source of political leverage in meeting its diplomatic aims. Lieutenant-General Howard M. Fish, (United States Air Force, Director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency,) told the House of Representative's Sub-committee on International Political and Military Affairs on 17 December 1975:

"The basic reason (*for selling arms*), of course, is that it is a very powerful foreign policy tool. It presumes a relationship of mutuality of interest between the two countries."³⁴

Similarly, the earlier statement of Congressman Lee H. Hamilton, Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, made to the House of Representatives on 31 May 1973:

"These sales will create an important inter-relationship between the United States and these oil-rich states and will, partially because of their need for spare parts in the future, give the United States some useful leverage in our dealings with these states."³⁵

Arms sales unquestionably reinforced American influence in the region and clarified the role of the United States there. Iran, which had built up considerable military strength thanks to American assistance became the region's policeman, safeguarding Western interests and was

³³ Ibid, p. 26.

³⁴ U.S. Congress, Military Sales to Saudi Arabia, p. 31.

³⁵ U.S. Congress, New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf, p. 103.

now an important tool of American policy in the area. During the 70's, Saudi Arabia, which had hesitated to declare its special relationship with the United States in the past, now openly concluded many agreements to promote this special relationship, especially after King Faisal's death in 1975.

Behind the American arms sales policy also lay the desire to pass some of America's regional security burden back to regional powers.³⁶

This is what lay at the heart of the Nixon doctrine which emerged in the wake of the American experience in Vietnam. According to this policy, the United States would supply arms rather than troops and would provide its regional allies with substantial military equipment and services in key areas. Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs stated on 6 June 1973:

"... this whole policy is based on the assumption of the Nixon doctrine that we would like to help these people help themselves wherever they want our help and, frankly, it is a way of avoiding direct involvement."³⁷

This policy proved successful, especially where Iran was concerned, making of it the guardian of Western interests and a major tool of American policy in the area.

In addition to this, American arms sales and assistance would give to purchasing nations the security of which was important to the United States the capability of

³⁶ Fukuyama, Francis, Military Aspects of U.S.-Soviet Competition in the Third World, in Shulman, Marshall D. (ed.), East-West Tensions in the Third World, London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1986, pp. 194-195.

³⁷ U.S. Congress, New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf, p.33.

building up armed forces for their own defense. President Richard Nixon wrote in his memoirs:

"I said, we would furnish only the material and the military and economic assistance to those nations willing to accept the responsibility of supplying the manpower to defend themselves."³⁸

Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard expressed the same notion when he stated in 1970:

"The best hope of reducing our overseas involvements and expenditures lies in getting allied and friendly nations to do even more in their own defense. To realise that hope, however, requires that we must continue, if requested, to give or sell them the tools they need for the bigger load we are urging them to assume."³⁹

To implement this policy, American foreign military sales reached \$3.9 billion in 1973. In 1974, after the oil crisis, total foreign military sales rose to \$8.3 billion, nearly half of which sum was accounted for by sales to Iran.⁴⁰ In fact the American administration agreed to sell Iran "virtually any conventional weapons it wanted."⁴¹ Here again, one must bear in mind that the United States was intending Iran and not Saudi Arabia to become the strong regional power in the Gulf on which it could rely to protect its interests there.

The final justification for American sales to the Gulf states was a simple one: there was nothing to stop oil-rich states from meeting their defense needs from other sources. Amos A. Jordan, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of

³⁸ Nixon, Richard, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, Arrow Books, London, 1978, p. 395.

³⁹ Sampson, op. cit., p. 239.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 241.

⁴¹ United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Relations, Military Sales to Iran. A Report, 94th Congress, 2nd session. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, p. 41.

Defense for Near Eastern, African, and South Asian Affairs, bluntly told the House Committee on International Relations on 18 June 1975,

"If we do not sell our equipment to them, they will purchase them elsewhere."⁴²

This was not only undeniable, it also underlined the absence of any selective policy for arms sales to the area, and especially to Saudi Arabia. We have already noted that American arms sales formed part of its petrodollar strategy. This did not, however, prevent Congress from continually questioning this throughout the 1970's. The administration could give no convincing answer. From the time of the announcement of the British intention to withdraw in 1968 until the Iraqi-Iranian agreement of 1975, the American administration argued that its arms shipments to the region were a response to Soviet threats. This was an argument which convinced no-one, simply because neither Iran nor Saudi Arabia had the ability to stand against any Russian attack. After 1975 -

"... the threat, they say, is Iraq with a history of ideological hostility to the conservative Saudi monarchy. The Saudis need a first-class fighter, they say, to fend off the much larger Iraqi army and air force which is equipped with the latest Soviet fighters."⁴³

This reasoning also lay behind the Saudi decision to build a large military city (King Khalid) near the Iraqi border. But events were to prove the justification to be untrue. It is important to recognise that the American administration was anxious to justify its military sales to

⁴² U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 107.

⁴³ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, 8 April 1978, p. 838.

Saudi Arabia in order to answer criticism from Congressmen representing the Israeli lobby in Washington, with the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) at its head. The major aim of AIPAC was to obtain more support and aid for Israel, and in this they succeeded. This remained true even in the case of the Saudi purchase of 60 F-15 fighters which was approved in 1978 and which some observers interpreted as "the Israeli lobby (*having*) finally lost on a major issue."⁴⁴ The Saudi F-15's were impotent against mass threats because they had no digital data links between their computers and a sensor and control system such as the AWACS. The F-15 computer programme was not designed for combat with Israeli F-15, A-4, or F-16 fighters. It had no mapping or moving indicator capability, which made it capable of detecting city-sized targets only. It was not equipped with anti-tank missiles and had no accurate means of distinguishing between potential targets as "friend or foe".⁴⁵ The Saudis agreed not to use their fighters against Israel, not to transfer them to other countries, and undertook not to acquire any other fighters from any other country whilst preparing for and taking delivery of them.⁴⁶ The Saudis were moreover willing to pay nearly \$42 million per unit, compared with a cost of \$17 million. At the same time the American administration agreed to sell Israel 15 F-15 fighters, in addition to the 25 which had already been agreed upon together with 75 F-16's at a price of \$17 million per F-15 and \$7 million per

⁴⁴ Howe, op. cit., p. 566.

⁴⁵ Cordesman, op. cit., p. 246.

⁴⁶ Howe, op. cit., p. 566.

F-16.⁴⁷ Thus the total cost of the Saudi-American deal was \$2.5 billion, compared with \$1.9 billion for the Israeli-American sale.⁴⁸ In the same year (1977) total American military aid and security assistance to Israel came to nearly \$2.5 billion.⁴⁹ Does this not suggest that the Saudi government had subsidized a large part of the cost of the fighters supplied to Israel? It had after all paid more than \$1.3 billion for a less advanced version of the F-15 than that which Israel received as part of American aid. It could hardly be argued that the Israeli lobby had "finally lost on a major issue."

Major themes underlying American arms sales to Saudi Arabia

We have shown how, during the period 1968-1978, the United States provided Saudi Arabia with huge military sales and services. These rose from \$36.9 million in 1968 to \$2.4 billion in 1978, and totalled \$5.99 billion over the whole period. The United States became involved in every aspect of these, from simple English language courses to the complex training of fighter pilots, as well as supplying all manner of armaments, from infantry light weapons to highly sophisticated fighters like the F-15. This deep involvement became crucial to bilateral relations during the 70's. It failed, however, to make Saudi Arabia a

⁴⁷ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, 28 May 1977, p. 1078.

⁴⁸ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, 8 April 1978, p. 835.

⁴⁹ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, 28 May and 25 June 1978, p. 1078 and p. 1305 respectively.

significant power by Middle East standards. What then were the main themes underlying these sales?

First of all, Saudi Arabia did not face any serious military threat during the period under study (1968-1978). In 1969 there was a minor clash between Saudi Arabia and South Yemen (PDRY). This did not, however, represent a significant threat, simply because South Yemen had only limited military capabilities and its economy was too weak for it to sustain a prolonged confrontation. The American administration attempted to justify its arms sales to the kingdom on the grounds that there existed a real threat from the Soviet Union (particularly in the light of the British withdrawal from the area in 1971) and an Iraqi threat (particularly after the Iran-Iraq rapprochement of 1975). In reality, no threats existed at all.

Another noteworthy factor is the lack of connection between arms sale and the overall situation in the region. Hence the surprising American decision to sell arms to Saudi Arabia during late December 1973, when the Saudi government was deeply involved in the oil embargo and the area had just come to the end of another round of war. This underlines that the sale of American arms and services to the kingdom was quite divorced from its overall policy on the area.

On the other hand the arms and services sales were closely connected to the American petrodollar policy. Table 4.5 shows that arms sale steadily increased at the same time as oil prices rose, forcing the United States to pay more for its imported oil. This was the single most

Table 4.5 : American Oil Imports and Military Sales to Saudi Arabia 1970-1978 (in \$ millions)

Sources: United States Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts, Washington D.C., December 1980; International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics, Vol. XXX, November 1977; Vol. XXXII, November 1979.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Oil imports</u>	<u>Military sales</u>
1970	2,760	32
1971	3,320	64
1972	4,330	160
1973	7,550	211
1974	26,120	330
1975	26,530	324
1976*	34,110	927
1977	44,210	1,502
1978	41,600	2,369

* includes transitional quarter (fiscal year 1977)

important factor behind the huge United States arms sales to the kingdom. It also explains why the sales remained unlinked to overall policy on the situation in the region, which had - needless to say - resulted in the high oil prices in the first place. The United States was well aware that its arms sales to Saudi Arabia would not affect the military balance in the area, that is to say that they would not create a sufficiently powerful military force in Saudi Arabia.

It is also worth pointing out that during the 70's all Saudi plans to modernize its military forces were based on the findings of American studies. From 1970 until the end of the decade all the sales agreed between the two governments had been recommended by advisors of the American defense department. These encouraged the Saudis either to purchase more than their requirements, or to buy weapons of such sophistication that they were unable to operate them.⁵⁰ (We have also noted the assertion of Colonel William Fifer that in his opinion "the Saudi Arabian Royal Air Force would be grounded within a matter of a couple of weeks" if American personnel were withdrawn.)

In addition, the true value of Saudi purchases of American arms and services was exaggerated. Between the years 1968 and 1978 agreements between the two governments accounted for a total of \$21,167 million, but the value of actual deliveries was only \$5,988 million. (See Table 4.6.) Furthermore, this amount was not paid for hardware alone.

⁵⁰ Cordesman, op. cit., p. 167.

Table 4.6 : Growth in Military Sales to Saudi Arabia
1950-1978 (\$ 000's)

Source: United States Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts, Washington D.C.: December 1980.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Value of agreements</u>	<u>Value of deliveries</u>
1950-67	574,080	121,037
1968	13,696	36,856 —
1969	4,214	32,086 —
1970	80,910	31,937
1971	15,863	64,059 —
1972	371,004	159,646
1973	709,259	211,159
1974	2,031,250	329,971
1975	3,614,819	324,239
1976*	7,742,087	926,882
1977	1,888,155	1,502,104
1978	4,121,519	2,368,921
TOTAL	21,166,856	6,108,887

* includes transitional quarter (fiscal year 1977)

According to White House background papers, 60% went on construction, 20% on training and only 20% on hardware.⁵¹ Thus the actual cost of Saudi arms purchased from the United States was around \$1,200 million. Bearing in mind also, as has been noted above, that the price tag on these weapons was two or three times higher than their original cost, it could be argued that the true value of Saudi military purchases lay between \$400 and \$600 million.

In addition, the Saudi purchase of arms was subject to so-called "commissions". As Anthony Sampson recorded in his book, "The Arms Bazaar",

"By August 1973 Lockheed found that the original two per cent it had agreed to pay for the sale of *Hercules* transports ... had escalated to eight per cent, an increase, Khashaggi explained, 'due to more players getting involved and the necessity to satisfy their requirements in order to get the contracts signed'."⁵²

In 1971, Adnan Khashaggi told the Northrop Company that it must give General Hashim, the head of the Saudi air force, \$250,000 to ensure that the sale of *Tiger* aircraft would go through as agreed. He subsequently told the company that General Hashim having been replaced by General Zuhair, a further \$200,000 should be paid to the latter.⁵³ According to Lockheed these payments were "under-the-table compensation to Saudi officials".⁵⁴

By the mid-70's, Adnan Khashaggi's "commissions" came to more than \$154 million from Lockheed and Northrop

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 188.

⁵² Sampson, op. cit., p. 195.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 194.

⁵⁴ United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Multinational Corporations and U.S. Foreign Policy, Part 12. 94th Congress, 2nd Session. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, p. 1088.

alone.⁸⁸ These payments - bribes - were the subject of Congressional investigations by the mid-70's, and as a result of the publicity these generated, arms sales became the subject of government-to government contracts in the late 1970's.

Finally, American arms sales were behind the arms race in the Gulf region. Huge arms sales to Iran and Saudi Arabia left other nations no choice but to spend more to build up strong armed forces and the entire area saw massive military expenditure throughout the 70's.

To summarize, American arms and services sales to Saudi Arabia formed part of its petrodollar policy. The United States had no formal policy on arms sales to the kingdom simply because they were relying on Iran and Israel to safeguard their interests in the area. For its part the Saudi government was not blind to this fact, but aimed to deepen American involvement in the military field in order to obtain from the United States some de facto commitment to their security.

⁸⁸ Lacey, op. cit., p. 468.

Chapter Five

SAUDI-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Of all the conflicts in the Middle East, it is the Arab-Israeli dispute which dominates all others, hence its being commonly referred to as "the Middle East dispute".

The conflict is a long-standing, lasting, and bitter one; long-standing because it dates back to earlier this century, according to some to when Balfour, then British foreign secretary, declared in 1917 that Palestine would be the Jewish homeland; (Ibn Saud believed that the conflict dated back to the time of the Prophet Mohammad¹); lasting because it remains unresolved and dominates the region's affairs; and bitter because it has resulted in four full-scale wars erupting in the area in the years 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973.

Superficially, it is a conflict between Arab and Jew, but in reality the Arab countries adopt a variety of stances. Egypt and Syria were directly involved in the conflict with Israel in all four wars. Jordan was less so, given that it did not take active part in the fourth war. Other Arab countries were involved in different ways, Iraq directly so, while others were less effective and lent their support in ways similar to those of non-Arab countries such as Pakistan, (motivated by religious

¹ Rubin, Barry, The Arab States and the Palestinian Conflict, 1st edition, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980, p. 153.

convictions), and China, (which acted in the light of its ideological conflict with the United States and the Soviet Union).

Before the creation of the state of Israel, the parties concerned in the conflict were the Palestinians, the Jews and Britain - the mandate state. From 1948 until 1967, the conflict involved Israel, Egypt and Jordan (because of the control it had over the West Bank), and from 1967 until the late 1970's - Israel, Egypt and Syria. Other Arab countries which did not share a border with Israel played a supporting role.

Saudi Arabia, located not far from Israel, falls into the latter category. Thus, although it could have intervened in military terms, it failed to do so, because the particular nature of Saudi policy and the implications of policy decisions were dependent on considerations outside the Arab-Israeli conflict, in spite of the effect the conflict had on the policies of the Middle East as a whole.

Saudi concern with the Palestinian issue, then the Arab-Israeli conflict, began in the thirties as a result of various pressures, (religious conviction, Arabism ...) At the same time, the United States' interest was a response to Zionist pressures, although it was Britain who was the major power in the area at the time.

Prior to World War II, United States involvement was limited, because of the nature of American foreign policy at the time. Saudi Arabia sought to obtain greater American

involvement, and to this day believes that a solution rests with the United States.

The United States and Saudi Arabia were most deeply involved at the time of the outbreak of the third war in 1967. Before then, the United States' relations with Israel consisted of a kind of moral commitment. In 1967, American aid to Israel exceeded all prior aid since the establishment of the state. The arms Israel had used in the 1956 war had been made in the Soviet Union, France, and Britain. In the 1967 war, they were made principally in West Germany and France, and to a lesser extent in the United States and Britain. After 1967, Israel was equipped with massive and sophisticated American-made weapons.

In general, American policy in the Middle East rested on Israel, the Iran of the Shah, and Saudi Arabia.

There may have been no major differences between the policies of the United States and Saudi Arabia as far as oil, security and arms sales were concerned, but at first sight there appear to be differences in their policies on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This chapter will discuss Saudi policy in relation to the dispute; similarly United States policy; Saudi-American relations in this regard during the years 1967-1973 and 1973-1978; and the role played by Saudi oil.

Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli conflict

As with any policy, various factors affected Saudi policy on the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli

conflict, the main ones being the nature of the establishment of the kingdom as a sovereign-state with religious roots; the extension of Saudi power to embrace Hejaz, formerly controlled by Sharif Hussain who was calling for Arab unity under his leadership; and the concern of the Saudi family for their security, linked to the security of the kingdom.

As far as the nature of the establishment of the kingdom is concerned, although - as has been shown - Saudi authority was founded on tribal traditions, its basic ideology was Wahhabism. The Wahhabbi sect is fanatical in its condemnation of other sects as atheistic. How then do they view Judaism? Both Christians and Jews are in fact considered to be "people of the book", as stated in the Quran, but there was much controversy about the status of Jews in the Islamic religion.

The Saudis, given their self-appointed role as leaders of the Islamic world because of the location of the holy cities within their territory, came under pressure to adopt a hostile attitude towards the Jews, especially in the light of the occupation of Jerusalem, the third holy city of Islam. Ibn Saud stated that the Palestinian issue was an Islamic one. The same belief was expressed by King Saud when he came to power in 1953, likewise by King Faisal in 1964, and by King Khalid in 1975.²

² Salama, op. cit., p. 544; Sai'd, Ameen, Tarikh Al-Dawla Al-Saudiya (in Arabic: The History of the Saudi State), Vol. 3, Beirut: 1965, p. 19.

Thus Jews were forbidden entry to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia until 1976, when this restriction was lifted, but only under pressure from the United States.³

As far as the second factor - political developments within the peninsula - is concerned, King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud had extended his kingdom by occupying the then kingdom of Hejaz. He shouldered all the burdens of the occupation. Hejaz had witnessed some political progress, including a constitution, (unlike Saudi Arabia, which to this day has none), and had called for Arab unity under the leadership of King Hussain. For a short time, Ibn Saud proposed that he should be made king of all Arabs,⁴ but realizing this was beyond his ability, he abandoned this idea. The trend towards Arabism in Saudi policy has been a weak one, except during Saud's reign, under the influence of Nasserism in the 1950's. Generally speaking, the Saudis are uncomfortable with the notion of Arabism, because of its unpleasant associations with Nasser, the Ba'ath Party, and the war in Yemen.⁵

But it is the third factor - Saudi concern for the security of the kingdom, and therefore of the Saudi family - that still dominates their policies.⁶ This explains why they sought an early American role in the area, believing

3 U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 198.

4 Salama, op. cit., p. 132.

5 Dawisha, Adeed, Saudi Arabia's Search for Security, Adelphi Paper No. 158, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979, pp. 2-3.

6 Hoagland and Smith, p. 81.

that Britain was supporting their traditional enemies, the Hashemite family, who ruled Iraq and Trans-Jordan.⁷

Ibn Saud believed that the Hashemite family sought to exploit the Palestinian problem by annexing the West Bank to Transjordan in order to form the kingdom of Jordan. Hence Ibn Saud's desire for an early resolution of the problem. He wrote to Britain, the mandate state, seeking a solution; he sent his son Faisal to the London conference of 1939; and finally turned to America, the first Arab leader to seek to involve America in the area.⁸ After World War II, realizing that American policy on this issue was not as he would have wished, he sent a secret letter to the United States President. In this letter

"the King ... expressed his great hope and faith in the United States and declared that he would always remain 'America's friend, although on occasion his pronouncements in regard to the Palestinian question might indicate otherwise.'"⁹

In the 1950's, the newly enthroned King Saud joined the Cairo-Damascus axis because he believed that the Baghdad Pact had been created to support the Hashemite family in Iraq; hence his hard line against Israel. In the 1960's, the situation changed dramatically with the involvement of Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the Yemen war. It was then that Saudi Arabia realized that Arabism was more of a threat than they had expected.

7 711.90F/1-1946: Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Egypt (Tuck), Washington, January 19, 1946.

8 867N.01/1364 No. 1473, The Chargé in Egypt (Merriam) to the Secretary of State, Cairo, December 15, 1938.

9 890F.77/10-146: Telegram. The Ambassador in Egypt (Tuck) to the Secretary of State, Cairo, October 1, 1946.

As a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the Yemen war came to an end and the "leadership" of the Arabs transferred from Egypt to Saudi Arabia.¹⁰

After 1967, Saudi Arabia believed that any new war in the area could affect them in two ways. Firstly, the Soviet Union's involvement in the area would increase thanks to their supporting the Arab side by supplying them with weapons. Secondly, any new conflict would strengthen the radical wings of the Arab world in general and of the Palestinians in particular. For these reasons, Saudi Arabia took part in the fourth war (1973) in an attempt to limit it both in terms of action and scope. This also explains their good relations with the moderate wing of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Fateh organisation.

The ambiguity and inscrutability of Saudi attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli conflict can be attributed to their overriding concern with security.

The Saudi role in the Arab-Israeli conflict in fact remained obscure for a long period, it could be argued until 1973, when the world was questioning the role of Saudi oil in the conflict. In actual fact, Saudi Arabia did not play an active part until 1967, when the third war ended in an Israeli victory. Saudi Arabia benefited from this insofar as it resulted in the ending of the Yemen war, and Saudi Arabia achieving a dominant position in the area.

¹⁰ Dawisha, Adeed, "Internal Values and External Threats: The Making of Saudi Foreign Policy," ORBIS, Spring 1979, p. 129.

The part played by Saudi Arabia in the military confrontation, in giving financial aid to the front-line states and to the PLO, in the Arab boycott of Israel, and finally in diplomatic efforts must therefore be reviewed.

Saudi Arabia neither joined directly in military activities nor took active part in the wars with Israel. Saudi statements about their supposed participation were a part of their political propaganda. (The Zionist lobby made a vigorous attempt to establish Saudi participation before the Foreign Relations Committee in the United States Congress, but failed to do so.¹¹) In 1948, the Arab League resolved to fight the Jews in Palestine. News reports indicated that 60 - 200 Saudi soldiers were with the Egyptian army in the Nakab desert, but they were inadequately equipped and there was no evidence that they engaged in any military activity, despite Ibn Saud's promises to other Arab states on 10 May 1948 that Saudi Arabia would play her part.¹² At the time of the second war (1956), Saudi Arabia enjoyed good relations with Egypt.¹³ The two countries had a joint defense agreement and a five-year military treaty. Nevertheless, Saudi forces entered Jordan in March 1957, when the war was already over.

In 1967, at the outbreak of the third war, Saudi Arabia's relations with Egypt had deteriorated as a result of the Yemen war. The Saudi army was positioned on the southern Saudi border in order to repulse Yemeni republican

11 U.S. Congress, Military Sales to Saudi Arabia 1975, p. 19.

12 Al-Zarakly, op. cit., p. 1288.

13 Sai'd, op. cit., pp. 160-174.

forces. Thus, despite its declaration of war on Israel, Saudi Arabia again failed to play any active part.¹⁴

In October 1973, Saudi Arabia's relations with Egypt were once again friendly, and Saudi Arabia was the third state to be informed of Egypt's intention to wage war against Israel. Contrary to Saudi media reports, however, Saudi Arabia did not take part in any military activity. The Saudi presence on the fronts with Israel was limited to a small number of soldiers in Egypt, about a thousand in Jordan, and some jet-fighters which were subsequently transferred to Syria.¹⁵

Given the inefficiency of its army, Saudi military participation could scarcely be other than weak. Financial aid to the front-line states and to the PLO was therefore the Saudi substitute for direct engagement and was considered to be equivalent to participating in the conflict. Aid was given first to Nasser, the most influential figure in the area at the time, to obtain his agreement to the lifting of the oil embargo in 1967. At the Khartoum summit of August 1967, Saudi Arabia undertook to donate \$140 million a year to Egypt.¹⁶ The Arab summit conference in Rabat in October 1974 agreed that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates would donate 2.35 billion dollars to Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the PLO. The bulk of this financial aid came from Saudi Arabia, which made its payments regularly and sometimes exceeded

14 Arab Report and Record, 1-15 June 1967, p. 177.

15 U.S. Congress, Military Sales to Saudi Arabia 1975, p. 19.

16 Haikal, Mohammad, The Road to Ramadan, New York: The New York Times Co., 1975, p. 268.

its allocated share. Egypt was the main recipient of aid, particularly under Sadat.¹⁷ In some cases, Saudi Arabia funded arms supplies to these countries.¹⁸

Saudi financial aid influenced the conflict in two ways: firstly, it improved the front-line states' capacities, particularly in the case of Egypt, to bear the costs of the war; and secondly, it served to moderate the policies of the PLO, especially the Fateh wing, which enjoyed a special relationship with Saudi Arabia.

The Arab boycott of Israel was another weapon intended to paralyze the Israeli economy. The Arab League established a "boycott bureau", whose task was to punish companies found to be dealing with Israel. In theory, Saudi Arabia, as a member of the Arab League, was committed to abiding by its decisions, but in practice it failed to comply to the letter with the regulations. In 1975, James E. Akins, former United States Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said,

"I would say they are not overly zealous in application of the boycott regulations, on the other hand they are certainly not in the lead of those who are disposed to relax the regulations."¹⁹

Underlying all Saudi diplomatic activity was the fact that war was not their preferred option. Even their participation in the October 1973 war was interpreted as a reaction to the United States' ignoring Faisal's call on them to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from Arab occupied territories. King Faisal threatened the United

17 U.S. Department of Commerce, Critical Factors affecting Saudi Arabia's Oil Decisions, p. 29.

18 U.S. Congress, The Persian Gulf 1975, p. 29.

19 Ibid., p. 198.

States with his intention to go to war against Israel, but this was not taken seriously.²⁰ Saudi policy had a long history of seeking a diplomatic solution. The period following the October war saw an intensification of diplomatic efforts to find a solution.

Saudi Arabia was the leading moderate state in the area. This was amply demonstrated by the Khartoum summit conference in 1967, at which Faisal succeeded in convincing the other Arab states to give up the oil embargo. The financial aid given to Nasser compelled him to accept United Nations resolution 242, which confirmed the right to exist of the state of Israel. This in turn implied his belief that Israel could maintain its external security.²¹

The key elements of the political compromise sought by Saudi Arabia were the recognition of Israel, in return for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories; the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza; and the return of Jerusalem - as a Muslim holy place - to Arab sovereignty.²² This formed the general framework for Saudi policy during the 1970's.

Saudi diplomatic efforts concentrated on attempting to reduce Soviet influence in the area, to obtain Palestinian participation in the search for a settlement, and to involve the United States, whom they believed could find a solution.

²⁰ Ambrose, Stephen E. Rise to Globalism, 2nd edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980, p. 359.

²¹ Quandt, William B. Decade of Decisions: American Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976, Berkely: University of California Press, 1977, p. 65.

²² Dawisha, Adeed, Saudi Arabia's Search for Security, Adelphi Paper No. 158, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979, p. 23.

Hence King Faisal's trying to convince the Egyptian president of the need to reduce the Soviet presence in Egypt.²³ In the event, Egypt expelled all Soviets on 18 July 1972.²⁴ From 1967, the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France were the great powers concerned with the dispute. After the 1973 war, it was principally the United States and the Soviet Union who were involved,²⁵ until the United States became master of the situation and became the third party in the Camp David accords.

The second main focus of diplomatic activity was seeking Palestinian involvement in a solution. Saudi Arabia had only limited success in persuading the United States to recognize the PLO, but did succeed in convincing the PLO that they should participate in the search for a solution.

Finally, there was Saudi Arabia's belief - clearly apparent in the 1970's - that only the United States was able to find a compromise which would provide a comprehensive solution to the problem.

In summary, the Saudis had no alternative but to be involved in the conflict, but the security of the kingdom continued to be uppermost in their minds, and this remained the case throughout the reigns of King Abd Al-Aziz and of his sons Saud, Faisal, and Khalid. The search for a diplomatic solution dominated their policy, and even their

23 Haikal, op. cit., p. 120.

24 Kissinger, op. cit., p. 1295; Sheehan, Edward R. The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger: A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East, New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976, p. 65.

25 United States Congress, House of Representatives, The Search for Peace in the Middle East, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1979, p. 157.

participation in the October 1973 war had this ultimate aim. The mainstay of their diplomatic efforts was massive financial aid, and their policy objectives were two-fold: to moderate the policies of other Arab states and to convince the United States of the need to put pressure on Israel to moderate her stand. Were they successful in meeting these objectives? This will be the subject of a later discussion.

The United States and the Arab-Israeli conflict

Since World War II, United States' Middle East policy has been determined by three main objectives: the containment of Soviet presence and influence in the area; securing a steady supply of Arab oil for the western world and Japan; and maintaining their commitment to the security and survival of the state of Israel.

As far as the latter objective is concerned, after 1967 the United States did more than any other country to maintain Israel's security, their commitment being sustained not only in the light of their strategic interests, but also in response to considerable public support for the special relationship with Israel demanded by the influential Jewish community in the United States.²⁶

As part of its global defense strategy against the Soviet Union, the United States sought to secure both bases and allies in the region. During the post-war period, it

²⁶ Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East: United States Policy, Israel, Oil and the Arabs, 5th edition, Washington D.C.: 1981, p. 11.

succeeded in doing so until 1955, when the Soviet Union gained a foothold by supplying Egypt with weapons. The American response was to attempt to outbid the Soviet Union for Egypt's favours and to support conservative forces in the region including Israel.²⁷ After the significant changes which took place in the area during the 50's and 60's, the United States recognized that Israel was a real ally in the region. In 1962, President Kennedy became the first American president publicly to acknowledge this.²⁸ After the Israeli victory in the 1967 war, which made Israel the dominant power in the region, the United States regarded Israel as the guardian of Western interests, and enormously increased their support for Israel, notwithstanding the importance of American interests in Arab countries.

United States policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict has also been shaped and influenced by the Jewish American community. Although Jews make up less than 3% of the population, they have been able to influence United States policy-makers and public opinion, thanks to a highly organized, well-financed and very active pro-Israeli lobby. The Jewish vote and their financial muscle can affect the outcome of United States elections, particularly at national level, putting considerable pressure on candidates and decision-makers.²⁹ This said, does this 3% minority genuinely influence American policy?

27 Quandt, op. cit., p. 5.

28 Eveland, Wilbur C. Ropes of Sand: The American's Failure in the Middle East, London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1980, p. 321.

29 Isaac, Stephen, Jews and American Politics, New York: Doubleday, 1974, p. 12.

In effect, the policy of the United States, given its superpower status, is shaped by national interests. But

"more often, interest groups provide a useful excuse for a policy-maker to do what he intended to do for other reasons."³⁰

United States support for Israel prior to 1967 took the form mainly of financial aid, with little direct military aid. Under the latter heading, in 1962, Israel was supplied with surface-to-air *Hawk* anti-aircraft missiles; in 1965, with U.S. *Patton* tanks; and in 1966, an agreement was reached for the sale of 48 A-4 *Skyhawk* fighter-bombers.³¹ After the 1967 war, United States support was virtually unlimited:

"to provide Israel with an adequate deterrent force capable of preventing future Arab aggression by offsetting sophisticated weapons received by the Arab states and to replace losses suffered by Israel in the 1967 conflict."³²

During two and a half years of the Nixon-Ford administration, the United States provided Israel with more than \$3 billion worth of weapons.³³ The United States became Israel's major source of support, forcing the Arabs to turn to the Soviet Union.

Thus the United States played a leading role in attempting to bring peace to the Middle East and prevent any further outbreak of war between the Arabs and the Israelis. In a meeting with some of the leading members of the Jewish community, President Nixon told them that

³⁰ Quandt, op. cit., p. 20.

³¹ Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East: U.S. Policy, Israel, Oil and the Arabs, 3rd edition, Washington D.C.: 1977, p. 93.

³² U.S. Department of State Bulletin, 28 October 1968, p. 452.

³³ Ambrose, op. cit., p. 367.

"each new war would be more and more costly because their neighbours would learn to fight, and there were more of them ... the only long-term hope lies in reaching some kind of settlement..."³⁴

In Kissinger's view,

"Israelis must understand the importance of Middle East peace to the global concerns of the United States and the Western world."³⁵

The United States was well aware that

"peace in the Middle East area is not only important for the stability of the world. It is also important in order to continue to assure sufficient stability in the Gulf area to permit our overall relationships to continue. Political wisdom must continue to accompany economic success."³⁶

In March 1977, President Carter outlined his three-point plan calling for Israeli withdrawal, the creation of a "Palestinian homeland" and the establishment of permanent peace between Israel and the Arab states. The Camp David peace agreement of September 1978 emerged from this three-point plan, but President Carter was able to secure Israeli withdrawal only from Sinai.³⁷

To summarize, United States policy on the conflict was affected by its interests in the area, with Israel being seen as a strategic ally maintaining these interests. Policy was also influenced by a powerful and well-organized Jewish lobby in America. The United States commitment to Israeli security was unchanging. It became deeply involved

³⁴ Nixon, Richard, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, London: Arrow Books, 1979, pp. 1007-1008.

³⁵ Kissinger, Henry, For the Record, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981, p. 98.

³⁶ United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, "U.S. Policy toward the Persian Gulf", Current Policy, No. 160, April 11 1980, p. 4.

³⁷ Kurdi, Mafaz Abdul Mohsen, Saudi Arabia: Perspective on Oil, Foreign Policy, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1970-1980, unpublished PhD thesis, Claremont University, 1982, pp. 149-150.

after the Israeli victory in the 6-day war of 1967, believing - at least until 1973 - that Israeli superiority disarmed Arab threats and gave stability to the area. After the October 1973 war, however, the administration pursued a diplomatic solution, seeking a negotiated peace given that any new outbreak of war would draw the Soviet Union further into the area and risk Israeli security.

The question of whether the Saudi government had any effect on American policy on the conflict will be addressed later.

Saudi-American relations with regard to the conflict: 1967-1973

The third war broke out on 5 June 1967 when Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Israel was victorious and its forces occupied the Gaza strip, most of the Sinai peninsula, the City of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the strategically important Golan heights.

Israel's victory changed the entire political map of the area. Thus, for instance, the United States became the main supplier of weapons to Israel,³⁸ and the two countries enjoyed a "special relationship". The Soviet Union's influence in the area grew still further as the Arab states were now more dependent than ever on Soviet help to rebuild their armed forces. A number of Arab states broke off

³⁸ Jabber, Paul, "United States Interests and Regional Security in the Middle East", Daedalus, Vol. 109, No. 4, Fall 1980, p. 71.

diplomatic relations with the United States and stopped oil shipments to the United States and Britain. France, in a shift in policy by de Gaulle, announced an embargo on all arms sales to the Middle East.

Nor were such changes confined to outside the Arab world. Within it, Nasser's influence declined dramatically. His defeat forced him to adopt a more moderate policy towards other Arab states. Saudi Arabia became more influential than ever before, even on Nasser's policies. The June war brought to an end the Yemen war which had plagued Saudi Arabia. At the same time, it strengthened radical Arab nationalist feeling. This latter development redoubled the difficulties Israel had to confront and alarmed Saudi Arabia.

Between 1967 and 1973, the United States adopted a three-fold policy. First, it attempted to restore stability and peace to the area; second, it sought *détente* with the Soviet Union; and third, it tried to find a solution to the problem of its growing demand for energy and consequent high dependence on oil imports.³⁹

Saudi policy objectives were similar to United States policy during the same period. Saudi Arabia attempted to limit the Soviet Union's involvement and influence in the area, sought stability and a political compromise to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, and attempted to moderate radical Arab nationalism.

When the 1967 war broke out, King Faisal aligned himself with Nasser, despite the poor relations that

³⁹ Bryson, op. cit., p. 253.

existed between Saudi Arabia and Egypt because of the conflict in Yemen. He took up this position in response to various pressures, from the religious leaders, from other Arab states and from some of the members of the royal family.

When Nasser claimed that the United States and Britain had aided Israel directly in the war, Saudi Arabia joined Iraq and Kuwait in cutting off oil exports to the United States and Britain. In making this claim, Nasser intended to draw the Soviet Union into the conflict, but they took no action, being fully aware that it was without foundation.⁴⁰ But the allegation did affect Arab-American diplomatic relations. More than half of the Arab states broke off diplomatic relations with the United States. Saudi Arabia was not amongst these, but it did join some of them in cutting off oil shipments. Until 1967, oil had not been an effective political weapon;⁴¹ the embargo marked the first time that Saudi Arabia used oil in this way against the United States.

This action did not affect the operations of ARAMCO, which was told on 10 June that it could continue its operations but it could not supply oil to Britain or the United States.⁴²

On 19 June, President Johnson made a nationally televised speech in which he put forward five principles for a solution to the dispute. These principles were:

40 Bose, T.C. The Superpowers and the Middle East, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1973, p. 109.

41 Mosley, op. cit., p. 346.

42 Arab Report and Record, 16-30 June 1967, p. 214.

"(1) Every nation in the area has a fundamental right to live in peace and to have this right respected by its neighbours; (2) justice for the refugees; (3) the right of innocent maritime passage must be preserved for all nations; (4) limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race; and (5) respect for the political independence and territorial integrity of all states in the area."⁴³

The Arab states held a summit in August 1967. They resolved that their future policy on the Palestinian issue would be based on three conditions, known as the three "no's" - no direct negotiation; no formal peace; and no recognition.

In fact, Saudi policy was far removed from these radical "no's" and reflected an altogether different approach. King Faisal convinced Abdul Nasser that the oil embargo was ineffective as a political weapon, since the Arabs were dependent on oil revenue. The summit resolved that the wealthier states should give financial aid to the front-line states, and it was agreed that oil-producing states should be allowed a free choice as far as continuing with their oil embargo was concerned. Hence, Saudi Arabia's announcement on 2 September of their resumption of oil shipments to the United States.⁴⁴

The end of 1967 marked the opening of a new period in relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States. Saudi Arabia was no longer dominated by fear of radical Arab nationalism and was more confident in seeking ties with the United States. It was also under less pressure to justify its expanding relations with the United States. The three

⁴³ Johnson, Lyndon, The Vantage Point: Perspective of the Presidency 1963-1969, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, p. 304; U.S. Department of State Bulletin, July 10 1967, pp. 31-34.

⁴⁴ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 September 1967, p. 294.

factors underlying this were the influence of the far-sighted and pragmatic King Faisal; Saudi financial muscle; and the weakness and division of the radical Arab nationalist movement.

Bilateral relations between Riyadh and Washington strengthened in 1968 as a result of the significant changes in the area. In the first place, in January 1967 the British government announced its intention to withdraw from the Gulf by the end of 1971, hoping that the United States would take up the British role in the area. The Department of State declared that the United States looked to Iran and Saudi Arabia to play a key role in maintaining the stability of the area. In July 1968, King Faisal sent his brother, Crown Prince Khalid, to the United States to meet President Johnson and request American support, mistrusting the role of Iran or any other state which could threaten its eastern border.

In the second place, during the period following the war, the United States became increasingly identified with Israel in a "special relationship",⁴⁵ which compelled the Arab states to turn to the Soviet Union for support. Saudi Arabia had always opposed Soviet involvement in the area and sought to resolve the conflict because it believed that stability in the area would reduce Soviet involvement and influence.

In the third place, as a result of the Arab failure to win the war, the scope and activities of the Palestine organisations increased. All except the Fateh wing belonged

⁴⁵ Eryson, op. cit., p. 248.

to left-wing movements in the Arab homeland. The Saudi monarchy was mindful of the threat posed by radical Arab nationalism and realized that the Palestinian organisations encouraged radical tendencies and fostered opposition in Saudi Arabia itself.⁴⁶ It therefore used its financial power to bolster the moderate wing of the PLO.⁴⁷

Finally, 1968 was an election year in the United States. President Johnson was under intense domestic political pressure to support Israel, and the United States became its major supplier of weapons. The Saudis knew that the rival presidential candidates needed the Jewish vote if they were to succeed in ousting President Johnson. It was therefore clear to them that the United States could not actively pursue a solution to the Middle East problem.⁴⁸

These factors shaped Saudi policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Saudi Arabia felt that finding a solution was in the hands of the United States, as King Faisal believed that the Arab states needed Washington to press Israel into withdrawing from the occupied territories. Consequently he asked the United States to take action to force Israel to accept a peaceful solution. He remained optimistic about the United States' ability to find an acceptable compromise, believing that any peaceful

46 In June 1969, the Saudi government uncovered an attempt to overthrow the king and establish a republic. Some two hundred people were arrested, many of them airforce officers. See Lackner, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

47 Halliday, Fred, "A Curious and Close Liaison: Saudi Arabia's relations with the United States", in Niblock, Tim, State, Society, and Economy in Saudi Arabia, London: Croom Helm, 1982, p. 132.

48 During that time, the United States was also preoccupied with Vietnam.

settlement depended on Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories and recognition of Palestinian rights.⁴⁷

President Johnson and subsequently President Nixon assured King Faisal that the United States would press Israel to withdraw from Arab territory.⁴⁸ But the Israeli victory in the 6-day war enabled both Israel and the United States to disregard Saudi demands.

Since the Khartoum summit, the Saudi monarchy had involved itself actively in the area's affairs, and King Faisal had succeeded in convincing Nasser that he should shift his position in favour of an American involvement in finding a solution to the conflict.⁴⁹

As for the Americans, there was no significant change on their part. In December 1968, Nixon sent his chief foreign affairs advisor, William Scranton, to the Middle East. He discussed their bilateral relations and the Middle East dispute with King Faisal in Riyadh.⁵⁰ On entering the White House, in a press conference given on 27 January 1969, President Nixon announced,

"I believe we need new initiatives and new leadership on the part of the United States in order to cool off the situation in the Middle East. I consider it a powder-keg, very explosive. It needs to be defused."⁵¹

The Saudi monarch hoped that the new administration would adopt a fresh approach and a neutral position toward the problem. In the words of a foreign service officer of the Department of State, however,

47 Deij, op. cit., p. 82.

50 Sheehan, op. cit., p. 65.

51 Kurdi, op. cit., p. 116.

52 U.S. Department of State Bulletin, 17 February 1969, pp. 142-143.

53 Arab Report and Record, 1-15 December 1968, p. 405.

"in fact, for domestic political considerations within the United States if for no other reason, the Nixon administration had little leeway in reducing American support for Israel. Washington's call for a new, even-handed approach to the Middle East could best be translated as a desire to sell additional arms to Saudi Arabia or other friendly Arab nations at the same time as a military assistance was being provided to Israel. This, indeed, is what occurred."⁵⁴

On 9 December 1969, Secretary of State William P. Rogers announced a new Middle East peace plan. (The Saudi deputy prime minister, Prince Fahd, had in fact been in Washington in October when the Roger's plan was being prepared.) The secretary of state called for direct negotiations between the Arab states and Israel. He also called on Israel to withdraw from the Arab territories occupied during the 6-day war, in return for Arab recognition of the state of Israel, to which he also reaffirmed America's commitment.⁵⁵ Saudi Arabia persuaded Nasser to consider the Roger's initiative,⁵⁶ but Nasser died on 28 September 1970, and it was to be his successor, Sadat, who bowed to Saudi pressure. In November, King Faisal sent his brother-in-law, Kamel Adham, to ask Sadat to reduce the number of Soviet military advisors in Egypt. Sadat undertook to expel them all if the first phase of an Israeli withdrawal took place.⁵⁷

The United States recognized the influence of Saudi Arabia in the area, which Rogers visited in May 1971, the first secretary of state to do so since 1953. He met King Faisal in Riyadh on 1 May and assured him of America's wish

⁵⁴ Grayson, op. cit., p. 102.

⁵⁵ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, Vol. XXVIII, No. 5, 30 June 1970, p. 290.

⁵⁶ Kurdi, op. cit., p. 114.

⁵⁷ Haikal, op. cit., p. 52.

for an Israeli withdrawal to "substantially the same borders as before the war."⁵⁸ Rogers delivered a letter from President Nixon, asking Faisal to play a positive and moderating role in achieving a peaceful settlement to the problem.⁵⁹ At the end of May, King Faisal visited the United States and told President Nixon,

"The aggression to which Arab countries are subjected at this time needs your attention, Mr. President, and that of your nation."

In the words of the White House press secretary, King Faisal expressed his "special interest in the status of the holy city of Jerusalem", while for his part President Nixon

"reaffirmed the dedication of the United States to the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East."⁶⁰

On 8 July 1971, Vice-President Spiro Agnew met King Faisal in Jeddah. Three days later he stated in Addis Ababa that the Nixon administration would not put pressure on Israel to withdraw. Agnew added that he had made this attitude clear to Saudi leaders saying to them,

"There is no way we can play that kind of role."⁶¹

King Faisal warned the American administration that its policy would ultimately drive all Arab states to turn to the Soviet Union, and would bring disaster to America's allies in the area.⁶² Despite this, there was no significant shift in American policy on the Middle East.

⁵⁸ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 May 1971, p. 251.

⁵⁹ Grayson, op. cit., p. 164.

⁶⁰ Arab Report and Record, 16-31 May 1971, p. 267.

⁶¹ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 July 1971, p. 363.

⁶² Akins, James E. "The Oil Crisis: This Time the Wolf is Here", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 51, No. 3, April 1973, p. 467.

In Spring 1972, however, the United States told King Faisal that if President Sadat reduced the Soviet presence in Egypt, the United States would press Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territory.⁶³ King Faisal, who not only took America at its word, but who was also motivated by anti-Communism, persuaded Sadat to comply, with the result that in July 1972, all Russians were expelled from Egypt.⁶⁴ King Faisal and President Sadat confidently expected that the United States would now put pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied territory. But Washington - then in the throes of a presidential election - was unable to take any action in return for the expulsion of the Soviets. The Nixon administration, under pressure from "constraints of domestic politics" behaved as if it had never taken place.⁶⁵

Early in 1973, the moderate Arab states realized that the time for a bilateral understanding between them and the United States had now passed. On 10 January 1973, King Faisal called for a holy war against Israel.⁶⁶ Neither Israel nor the United States took King Faisal seriously. Indeed, for various reasons, no-one in the entire Middle East took him at his word.

⁶³ The New York Times Magazine, 24 March 1974, p. 52.

⁶⁴ Arab Report and Record, 16-31 July 1972, p. 336.

⁶⁵ Quandt, William B. "Domestic Influences on U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The View from Washington," in Beling, Willard A. (ed.) The Middle East: Quest for an American Policy, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973, p. 277; Mansfield, Peter, "Prelude to Geneva: Elements of Middle East Conflict", The Round Table, No. 259, July 1975, p. 244.

⁶⁶ Grayson, op. cit., p. 109.

In March 1973, President Sadat sent his security advisor, Hafez Ismail, to Washington. He asked Secretary of State Henry Kissinger

"whether the United States did not understand that if there were not some agreement then there would be war?"

Kissinger later told the Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir,

"there was not a slight smile on my face, but in my heart I laughed and laughed. A war? Egypt? I regarded it as empty talk."⁶⁷

At that time, the American administration was hardly pursuing any diplomatic solution at all, believing that the area was stable as a result of Israeli military superiority.⁶⁸

This convinced King Faisal and President Sadat that the only option available to them was the military one. According to Sadat himself:

"... every door I have opened has been slammed in my face by Israel with American blessings ... The time has come for a shock."⁶⁹

Ten days later, on 19 April, Saudi Arabia warned that their plans to increase oil production to some 20 million barrels a day were influenced by the United States policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁷⁰ This in itself did not imply that Saudi Arabia would use oil as a political weapon.

During May 1973, Saudi Arabia tried to buy equipment for its airforce from the United States, but under pressure

⁶⁷ Ambrose, op. cit., p. 359.

⁶⁸ Rubenberg, Cheryl A. Israel and American National Interest: A Critical Examination, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986, p. 155.

⁶⁹ Newsweek, 9 April 1973.

⁷⁰ Arab Report and Record, 16-30 April 1973, p. 186.

from Zionist groups in Congress, the administration refused, despite Saudi assurances that it would not be used against Israel.⁷¹

By mid-1973, the situation was becoming increasingly serious: Saudi Arabia was unable to justify its moderate policy to other members of OPEC. In June, OPEC raised the price of oil. A month later, King Faisal warned that his country's friendly relations with the United States would not survive if the United States insisted on continuing to support Israel.⁷²

This warning was ignored. Moreover, on 25 July, the United States vetoed a Security Council resolution which called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. In response, King Faisal stated on 30 August that despite his friendship with the United States, the latter's unflinching support for Zionism against the Arab states had placed him in an extremely difficult situation.⁷³

King Faisal outlined Saudi Arabia's position at this stage, stating on 31 August that while Saudi Arabia did not wish to limit its oil exports to the United States, the latter's support for Israel made it difficult for Saudi Arabia to maintain good relations with Washington, and it could not supply the American demand for oil.⁷⁴

71 See: Congressional Quarterly, Almanac, 93rd Congress, 1st session, 1973, Vol. XXIX, Washington D.C.: 1974, p. 822.

72 Arab Report and Record, 1-15 July 1973, p. 302.

73 Wilcox, Wayne, "American Foreign Policy: A Year of Mixed Fortunes", in Jones, Peter (ed) The International Yearbook of Foreign Policy Analysis, Vol. 1, London: Croom Helm, 1974, p. 21.

74 Arab Report and Record, 16-31 August 1973, p. 382.

The United States did not react, still confident that the Israeli victory in the 6-day war allowed them to ignore the Saudi and Egyptian warnings.

Sadat had already visited Saudi Arabia in April 1973, to discuss the situation with King Faisal. They were now convinced that there was nothing to be gained by a political approach, since the United States was manifestly not pursuing peace or even moving in that direction. In August, Sadat again visited Saudi Arabia to appraise King Faisal of the military option. Faisal, having failed to convince the United States of the need for a political settlement, had no choice. He promised Sadat that Saudi Arabia would provide Egypt with financial support and agreed that oil should be used as a weapon.⁷⁵

In a press conference on 5 September 1973, President Nixon underlined the link between Arab oil and the Arab-Israeli conflict, and declared that his administration would give high priority to finding a settlement.⁷⁶ But no-one in the Arab world would trust even the states friendly to America in the area.

On the eve of October 1973 the situation was dominated by the following factors. Firstly, in 1972, for the first time, the United States had shown a trade deficit. In 1973, it imported 486,000 barrels of oil per day from Saudi Arabia, 915,000 from the Arab countries, and about 3,000,000 barrels from OPEC as a whole. It desperately needed Arab oil at that time for its forces in Vietnam and for its allies, particularly Japan. Secondly, the main

⁷⁵ Deij, op. cit., p. 85.

⁷⁶ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 September 1973, p. 398.

focus of the Nixon administration was the war in Vietnam. Thirdly, the Palestinian organisations were stronger than ever, which in turn strengthened radical tendencies in the Arab world and the influence of the Soviet Union in the area. Moreover American failure to respond had caused problems for moderate states, and for Saudi Arabia in particular.

These circumstances compelled moderate Arab states to take action, given that any further delay might result in their losing control of the situation. Thus Sadat, Assad and Faisal planned to administer the "shock" which Sadat had referred to by preparing for a "limited" war.

On October 6 1973, the entire region found itself thrown into a new war which came to be known as the "Ramadan" or "Yom Kippur" war.

Saudi-American relations with regard to the Palestinian problem can thus be summarized as follows.

The Saudi government actively pursued peace, in order to avoid any increased involvement of the Soviet Union or a strengthening of radical Arab nationalist movements which would result from a further outbreak of war. The Saudis believed that the United States could put pressure on Israel to withdraw from Arab occupied territories.

Saudi Arabia succeeded in convincing the Arab states - and particularly Egypt, (the major power on the Arab side of the conflict) - to adopt a moderate stance. This success was reinforced when Sadat came to power after Nasser's death, since he shared Saudi Arabia's conservative leanings. The main testimony to Saudi Arabia's success was

the expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt; its main tool was financial leverage.

Meanwhile, after the Israeli victory in the 6-day war, America became the main prop of Israeli security. The American administration, like the Saudi government, realized the need for stability in the area, but pursued this objective by attempting to ensure Israeli military superiority, and did not undertake intense diplomatic activity to reach a peaceful settlement.

King Faisal, who had made great efforts to moderate Arab attitudes, expected the United States to repay this by putting pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied territories, but this they failed to do. He and President Sadat were therefore compelled to seek an alternative way of convincing the American administration of the need for a diplomatic solution. Hence the limited war.

In short, the evidence suggests that Saudi Arabia - a small state - was unable to affect the position of the United States - one of the superpowers.

Saudi-American relations with regard to the conflict: 1973-1978

The October war took many by surprise. Sadat and Faisal had talked of war, but no-one believed that the Arabs would attack after their crushing defeat in 1967. The moderate Arab states intended the war to be a limited one, their principle objective being to compel the international powers, and the United States in particular, to acknowledge

the need for a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁷⁷ For the Arab people on the other hand, the October war was a great psychological boost.

On the first day of war, the Nixon administration sent a message to King Faisal, asking him to intervene to end the fighting. King Faisal replied that the United States should compel Israel to withdraw from occupied territories. On 7 October, Iraq decided to nationalize the interests of American oil companies.⁷⁸ The following day, King Faisal ordered ARAMCO to reduce the flow of oil through the pipeline to Lebanon. He also placed the Saudi army on a war footing.⁷⁹

On 9 October, Kuwait called for an immediate meeting of Arab oil ministers to discuss the possibility of using oil as a diplomatic weapon. Despite Arab threats that they might cut off their oil shipments, on 12 October the United States began to replace the weapons lost by Israel in the first days of the war.⁸⁰ King Faisal sent an urgent warning to the effect that such American aid for Israel would bring about an oil embargo.⁸¹ The following day his minister of state for foreign affairs, Omer al-Saqqaf, arrived in Washington with the same warning.⁸² American arms shipments to Israel caused Kuwait to call for a meeting of the Organisation of the Arab Petroleum-Exporting Countries

77 El-Sadat, Anwar, In Search of Identity: An Autobiography, London: Fontana/Collins, 1978, p. 238.

78 Arab Report and Record, 1-15 October 1973, p. 449.

79 Ibid, p. 445.

80 Ibid, p. 473.

81 Washington Post, 13 October 1973; New York Times, 13 October 1973.

82 New York Times, 14 October 1973; Arab Report and Record, 1-15 October 1973, p. 441.

(OPEC) to consider using oil as a political weapon.⁸³

Meanwhile, President Nixon met with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, and Morocco to hear the Arab point of view on arms shipments to Israel. Omer al-Sagqaf, the Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs, said of Henry Kissinger:

"The man who could solve the Vietnam war, the man who has taken the lead all over the world, can easily play a good role in settling ... our area."⁸⁴

The OPEC representatives met in Kuwait on 16-17 October and agreed to raise the price of oil by 17%. They also decided to reduce their production by 5% a month, until the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab occupied territories and the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.⁸⁵ Saudi Arabia was behind this relatively moderate stance, in order to give the United States time to adopt a more neutral position on the conflict.⁸⁶ On 19 October, however, President Nixon asked Congress to approve a \$2.2 billion programme of aid to Israel.⁸⁷ This forced King Faisal's hand. On 20 October, he announced:

"In view of the increase of American military aid to Israel, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has decided to halt all oil exports to the United States of America for taking such a position."⁸⁸

⁸³ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 October 1973, p. 445.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 470.

⁸⁵ Demarce, Alan T. "ARAMCO is a Lesson in the Management of Chaos", Fortune, February 1974, p. 58.

⁸⁶ Sheehan, op. cit., p. 64.

⁸⁷ For the text of President Nixon's letter, see Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, Vol. XXXI, No. 43, 27 October 1973, p. 2857.

⁸⁸ Lenczowski, George, Middle East Oil in a Revolutionary Age, Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1976, p. 14.

With this announcement Saudi Arabia joined the other Arab states in an oil boycott.

On 31 October, Sadat bowed to American pressure for a cease-fire with Israel, given that the objective of administering a "shock" had been successfully achieved. A week later, Egypt's diplomatic links with the United States had been restored.

As on various occasions in the past, Saudi Arabia's public stance on foreign policy followed a "hard line" in the month following the war. King Faisal sent the Soviet leadership his congratulations on the anniversary of the Communist revolution, the first time he had observed this formality.⁸⁹ On 23 November, the oil minister, Sheikh Yamani, announced that if the United States used military force to break the oil embargo, the oil fields would be destroyed.⁹⁰

Secretary of State Kissinger visited Saudi Arabia on 8 November 1973 in an attempt to persuade King Faisal to lift the oil boycott. He renewed his attempts with Sheikh Yamani on 5 December in Washington. But the mood in the Arab world was not conducive to any move to end the embargo.

Eventually the oil embargo was lifted on 18 March 1974, before Arab objectives had been achieved, but in the expectation of an early settlement. On 25 March, Saudi Arabia declared that it would increase its oil production by a million barrels a day.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 November 1973, p. 575.

⁹⁰ Arab Report and Record, 16-30 November 1973, p. 543.

⁹¹ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, Vol. XXXIII, No. 36, 6 September 1975, p. 1968; Arab Report and Record, 16-31 March 1974, p. 110.

Some months later, in June 1974, Saudi Arabia received President Nixon. King Faisal told him,

"There will never be a real and lasting peace unless Jerusalem is liberated and returned to the Arab sovereignty ... the injustice and aggression which were wrought upon the Arabs of Palestine are unprecedented in history, for not in the darkest ages had the whole population of a country been driven out of their homes to be replaced by aliens."⁹²

Nixon was later to write that

"Faisal saw Zionist and Communist conspiracies all around him."⁹³

But at the time, Nixon was unable to take any action, being then under pressure from the Watergate investigation, which forced him out of office on 8 August 1974.

The new administration of President Gerald Ford announced that United States foreign policy and commitments remained unchanged, and more specifically, on 9 August 1974, President Ford told Israel that the United States would continue with its support.

The following month the Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs, Omer al-Saqqaf, once more visited the United States and reported that he was well pleased with his talks with the new administration.⁹⁴

In late September 1974, the representatives of the Arab states at the United Nations met Secretary of State Kissinger to discuss with him their views on the problem. In October he visited Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Israel. He also visited Saudi Arabia to brief King Faisal on his talks with the other parties.⁹⁵ According to the Saudi petroleum

⁹² Washington Post, 5 June 1974.

⁹³ Nixon, op. cit., p. 102

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State Bulletin, 23 September 1974, p. 424.

⁹⁵ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 October 1974, p. 438.

minister, Sheikh Yamani, Saudi Arabia persisted in believing that the solution

"is in the hands of the American government."⁹⁶

The Arab leaders met in Rabat in October 1974. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates pledged themselves to provide \$2.35 billions to Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in order to enable them to continue their struggle against Israel. At the same summit meeting, the 20 Arab heads of state unanimously recognized the PLO as the

"sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people on any liberated Palestinian territory."⁹⁷

They also persuaded King Hussain of Jordan to abandon his claim to be the spokesman of the Palestinian people. Later in the same month, the General Assembly of the United Nations also recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians, with only Israel, the Dominican Republic and Bolivia voting against this.⁹⁸

This was important for the PLO and for the Palestinian cause and may have been behind President Ford's calling on Israel on 29 October 1974 to enter into negotiations with either Jordan or the PLO.⁹⁹ The moderate Arab states, however, interpreted this as a significant shift in United States policy on the conflict. In fact, no major change in policy ensued.

⁹⁶ Sobel, Lester A. (ed) Peace-making in the Middle East, New York: Facts on File Inc., 1980, p. 55.

⁹⁷ Arab Report and Record, 16-31 October 1974, p. 465; Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, Vol. XXXIII, No. 36, 6 September 1975, p. 1909.

⁹⁸ Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East, 2nd edition, Washington D.C.: 1975, p. 54.

⁹⁹ Grayson, op. cit., p. 117.

Kissinger again visited the area in February 1975. In addition to visiting Cairo and Jerusalem, he went to Amman, Damascus, and Riyadh. The Secretary's visit

"was described as a preliminary mission to determine the possibility of negotiating a further interim troop disengagement between Israel and Egypt."

The Americans described Kissinger's meeting with King Faisal on 15 February as being about

"the U.S. plan for long-term oil agreements between the producers and consumers at lower prices."¹⁰⁰

In the months before his assassination, King Faisal was deeply concerned about the future of Jerusalem. If he was able to contemplate the possibility of abandoning the goal of the liberation of Palestine, it was inconceivable that he should acquiesce in the occupation of Jerusalem, a holy place of Islam. He called for a *jihad* (holy war) to liberate the city, and resented the failure of the United States to support him. Hence Kissinger's statement, made in January 1975, that the United States might have to use force to prevent the Arab states from using oil as a political weapon.¹⁰¹

He lent strong support - both financial and diplomatic - to Arafat and his leadership, which gave him influence within the PLO, particularly its moderate wing. He had a powerful voice and played a active part in the affairs of the entire Middle East.

On his assassination, he was succeeded by his brother, Khalid, and another brother, Fahd, became crown prince. To the surprise of the whole world, King Khalid stated that

¹⁰⁰ Sobel, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁰¹ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 January 1975, p. 60.

Saudi Arabia would accept the right to exist of the state of Israel, the first Saudi king publicly to do so.

Saudi-American relations were not affected by the assassination of King Faisal, nor did America's policy on Israel change. If anything, the United States was more determined and supportive than ever in the mid-1970's. On 21 May 1975, seventy-six members of the senate signed a letter to President Ford requesting more support for Israel and affirming,

"We believe that a strong Israel constitutes a most reliable barrier to domination of the area by outside parties."¹⁰²

This was in fact in line with the thinking of the Secretary of State who believed that a strong Israel would prevent war and serve American interests in the area.¹⁰³

Thanks to his so-called "shuttle diplomacy" between the capitals of the area, on 4 September 1975 Kissinger persuaded Egypt and Israel to reach an agreement, according to which Israel yielded to Egyptian demands that it withdraw from the Sinai mountain passes and return the oilfields in Abu Rudeis, in return for Egypt making several political concessions. President Ford regarded this as a "constructive contribution" to peace in the region. Once it was signed, Kissinger went on to visit Saudi Arabia to seek Saudi support for it, which was in due course announced by the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, Vol. XXXIII, No. 22, 31 May 1975, p. 1153.

¹⁰³ Sheehan, Edward, "Step by Step in the Middle East", Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 7, nos. 3-4, Spring/Summer 1976, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report, Vol. XXXIII, No. 36, 6 September 1975, pp. 1903-1911; Arab Report and Record, 1-15 September 1975, p. 504.

Meanwhile the agreement was strongly attacked by the radical Arab states.

Following the signing of this agreement, Saudi Arabia was forced by the political situation in the Middle East to adopt a neutral position on the area's policies. The main factor affecting Saudi policy was United States policy on the Middle East. In the course of the 1976 presidential campaign, both the Democratic and Republican parties declared themselves in favour of more support for Israel. On 27 July 1976, the Senate voted by a majority of 86 to 1 to penalize American firms cooperating with the Arab boycott of Israel. Saudi Arabia responded to this determined American stance by raising its level of oil production and taking the lead in setting moderate oil prices against the will of the rest of the members of OPEC. Saudi Arabia increased its prices by 5% compared to the 10% increase adopted by the majority.¹⁰⁵

The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud, stated in early 1977 that the Saudi policy on oil prices and production was based on the expectation of a moderate American policy towards the Middle East dispute.¹⁰⁶ But after a meeting with Secretary of State Vance, he also stated that Saudi Arabia's moderate stance on oil had nothing to do with the Palestinian issue.¹⁰⁷

Prince Saud visited the United States on 5 April 1977, followed by Crown Prince Fahd, who arrived in Washington on 23 May 1977. He told the Carter administration that in his

¹⁰⁵ Arab Report and Record, 16-31 December 1976, p. 762.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 16-31 January 1977, p. 55; ibid, 1-14 February 1977, p. 89.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 15-28 February 1977, p. 129.

view the Arab-Israeli conflict affected Arab-American relations and expressed his satisfaction that the United States could persuade the new Israeli government to modify its stated policy on the occupied territories.¹⁰⁸

In August 1977, Secretary of State Vance visited the area, including as usual Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to break the deadlock. After his meeting with him, Prince Saud, the foreign minister stated that the American efforts were encouraging.¹⁰⁹ He made a return visit to Washington on 22 October 1977, his main concern being the growing influence of the Soviet Union in Africa.

A month later, President Sadat announced to an astonished world that he was "ready to go to the end of the world to achieve peace,"¹¹⁰ and subsequently accepted an invitation to visit Jerusalem on 19 November 1977.

This visit changed the political situation in the region. Most Arab states expressed their opposition to Sadat's initiative. Sadat responded by breaking off diplomatic relations with Iraq, Syria, Libya, Algeria and South Yemen.

Saudi Arabia found itself in a dilemma: it could neither join the radical Arab states in their condemnation, nor side with Sadat in his new approach to the problem. It therefore issued only a very limited public response, giving no indication that it opposed Sadat's policy. Not for the first time, Saudi Arabia waited until the storm raging around Sadat had abated and then aligned itself with

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 16-31 May 1977, p. 406.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 1-15 August 1977, p. 644.

¹¹⁰ *El-Sadat*, op. cit., p. 644.

him once again. In a bid to gain Saudi Arabia's public support for Sadat's policy, Secretary Vance visited Saudi Arabia on 14-15 December 1977. President Carter renewed this attempt during his visit on 3 January 1978. Both failed.¹¹¹

The United States prepared for the next step in the Sadat-Begin negotiations and invited both leaders to join President Carter at Camp David. On 9 August 1978, Alfred Atherton, American ambassador-at-large visited Saudi Arabia in an attempt to gain Saudi support for the Camp David negotiations, which he won.¹¹² When the Camp David agreement was signed on 17 September, however, Saudi Arabia aligned itself with other Arab states in opposing it. This apparent change of heart reflected above all the nature of Saudi policy, which was influenced by the situation in the area, with strong Arab pressure leaving it no alternative.

The entire situation in the area had in fact changed. The United States left the Shah's regime in Iran to its fate; on 30 November 1978, President Carter announced that the United States would not intervene in internal Iranian affairs. The Saudi royal family felt that the United States was failing to protect its allies. They were also only too aware of the progress the Soviet Union was making around Saudi Arabia, in South Yemen, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. The Saudi royal family therefore faced the future with some trepidation.¹¹³

111 See Arab Report and Record, 1-31 December 1977, p. 994; ibid, 1-15 January 1978, p. 17.

112 Grayson, op. cit., p. 132.

113 Lacey, op. cit., p. 452.

Against this background, Saudi policy was to maintain some distance between Saudi Arabia and the United States, which marked the end of an era in American-Saudi relations.

Relations between the two governments during this period, 1973-1978, can therefore be summarized as follows.

Firstly, the main aim of the October war of 1973 was to draw the attention of the United States to the need for a political compromise in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this it was successful. The United States realized the need for an intensive diplomatic effort to win stability in the area, with the immediate objectives of ending the war and lifting the oil embargo.

Secondly, the Saudi government persisted with its diplomatic initiatives to convince other Arab states that political compromise was in the hands of the United States. It supported all American attempts to seek agreements between Israel and Egypt as well as between Israel and Syria. The American and Saudi governments succeeded in limiting the role of the Soviet Union in the dispute.

Thirdly, because of his religious convictions, King Faisal was deeply concerned about the future of Jerusalem. He may have been able to contemplate the possibility of the existence of the state of Israel, but he could not tolerate the occupation of the third holy city of Islam. In this he differed from the United States. With his assassination in 1975, however, this ceased to be a major issue in the dispute.

Fourthly, when King Khalid and Prince Fahd came to power, they supported all American initiatives on the

problem, and Sadat's negotiations towards a bi-lateral compromise agreement with Israel.

Fifthly, the Saudi government supported the Camp David negotiations, but when an agreement was reached, it sided with other Arab states in opposing it as a result of strong pressure from them and the widespread popular opposition of the Arab world.

In general it can be said that the two governments worked for diplomatic compromise. They had some differences during King Faisal's reign, particularly over Jerusalem, but after the latter's death, the kingdom became an active ally, working within the Arab world for an American solution.

The role of Saudi oil in the conflict

The idea of using oil as a political weapon was not new. Since the 1940's, there had been calls for denying oil to the West. In June 1946, the Arab League held a meeting in Syria at which several resolutions were passed, one of them calling for oil to be used as a political weapon. This proposal did not, however, receive serious consideration for several reasons, the main one being Saudi opposition. Saudi Arabia believed that such a policy would create difficulties for the Arab states and that there should be no connection between oil and politics,¹¹⁴ taking account of the fact that since the discovery of Middle East oil, the major international oil companies controlled all oil

114 Lenczowski, George, Oil and the State in the Middle East, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960, p. 188.

operations, prices and marketing, plus the fact that the West was not dependent on oil for all its energy needs.¹¹⁵

When Egypt was attacked by Britain, France and Israel in 1956, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries cut the flow of oil to Britain and France. Despite the fact that during the Suez war, Europe's dependence on oil increased to about 25% of its energy needs¹¹⁶, this limited embargo failed to affect their economies, since the United States was able to provide Britain and France with the oil they needed. This attempt to use oil as a political weapon therefore failed.

The defeat of the Arab states in the third round of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the June war, shed a new light on the potential of oil as a weapon. When President Nasser of Egypt claimed that the United States and Britain had joined Israel in its attack, nationalist Arab countries vigorously called for the use of oil as a political weapon. For the first time the United States was the principal target. Saudi Arabia was not in favour of this, being convinced that Western European countries were still not sufficiently dependent on Arab oil. Under strong pressure, however, Saudi Arabia joined other Arab states in cutting off oil shipments to the United States, Britain and West Germany.

115 Sherbing, Naïem and Tessler, Mark, (ed) Arab Oil, New York: Praeger, 1976, p. 266.

116 U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Oil and Gas, The Middle East Petroleum Emergency of 1967, Vol. 2, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970, p. 2.

Up to this point, Saudi Arabia had always refused to consider using its oil as a political weapon.¹¹⁷ It came as no surprise therefore that within two months it had announced the end of its boycott. European countries had not suffered despite the fact that Middle East oil had become more important to the West - almost replacing coal in the world's industrial energy requirements since 1965.¹¹⁸

There were several reasons for the failure of the boycott. In the first place, the United States, the main target of the embargo, was not hurt by it. In the second place, there was no actual shortage of oil because the companies managed to redistribute stocks from other countries.¹¹⁹ And in the third place, the Arab oil states were unable to sustain the cost of the boycott.

"King Faisal was informed by his finance minister that there was no more money in the till, and that for once ARAMCO was unable to help."¹²⁰

In fact, Saudi Arabia had never enforced the embargo strictly, having joined it reluctantly. Eventually, Saudi Arabia satisfied Nasser that oil should be used "positively".¹²¹ In other words, Saudi Arabia gave financial support to the front-line states, and the other Arab oil states were persuaded to lift their embargo.

117 Mansfield, Peter, "The Crisis in the Middle East: The Arab Dimension, Renewed Self-Confidence", The Round Table, No. 253, January 1974, p. 13.

118 Ali, Sheikh Ruston, Saudi Arabia and Oil Diplomacy, New York: Praeger, 1976, p. 105.

119 Al-Braikan, Sai'd M. OPEC Foreign Investment: The Case of Saudi Arabia, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Colorado, 1980, p. 114.

120 Mosley, op. cit., p. 344.

121 Ali, op. cit., p. 106.

To consider the 1973 oil embargo in more detail, it must be appreciated that at the beginning of the 1970's significant changes in the structure of the oil industry had occurred. These changes included the disappearance of surplus production in the United States, the increased dependence of both the United States and other industrialized nations on Middle East oil, and growing government control over the oil industry. The United States recognized the importance of Saudi oil in meeting its increasing demand.¹²²

Until 1973, Saudi Arabia made it clear that it sought no connection between oil and politics. In November 1972, the Saudi petroleum minister, Yamani, stated:

"I must say that we do not believe in the use of oil as a political weapon ... We believe that the best way for the Arab to employ this oil is as a basis for true cooperation with the West, notably with the United States. In this way very strong economic ties are established which will ultimately reflect on our political relations."¹²³

As has been shown, Saudi Arabia was able to convince other Arab states to establish good relations with other Western countries and to trust in America's ability to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. But the United States failed to fulfil this hope, not only declining to press Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territory, but even supporting Israel with sophisticated arms and equipment.

122 United States Congress, Joint Economic Committee, Kissinger-Simon Proposal for Financing Oil Imports. Statement, 93rd Congress. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979, p. 3.

123 Stark, Joe, Middle East Oil and the Energy Crisis, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975, p. 212.

In early 1973, the Saudi government realized that the Middle East was heading towards another round of war. In April 1973, the king therefore sent his oil minister, Yamani, to Washington to warn the American administration that in the absence of any change in American Middle East policy, it was impossible for Saudi Arabia to meet the United States demand for expanded oil production. This warning was ignored.¹²⁴

At the same time, pressure for the use of oil as a political weapon was accelerating in the Arab world. King Faisal was "not able to stand alone much longer".¹²⁵ On 23 May 1973 in Geneva he secretly met the ARAMCO partners and told them

"that time was running out. He would not allow his kingdom to become isolated because of America's failure to support him, and he used the phrase, 'You will lose everything'."¹²⁶

The United States paid no attention. President Nixon appeared on television to remind Arabs of the difficulties which Dr. Mossadeq of Iran had faced twenty years before when Iranian oil was boycotted by the West and of the subsequent overthrow of the government, and to warn that

"the Arabs risked losing their markets if they tried to act too tough".¹²⁷

But the oil experts knew only too well

¹²⁴ Stark, loc. cit.

¹²⁵ Washington Post, 17 June 1973.

¹²⁶ Barnes, Richard J. The Lean Years: Politics in the Age of Scarcity, London: Abacus Books, 1981, p. 46; Sampson, Anthony, The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies and the World They Made, U.K.: Coronet Books, 1983, p. 257.

¹²⁷ Deij, op. cit., p. 125.

"the predominant fact of life in the energy picture ... that the problem is not whether oil will find markets, but whether markets will find oil?"¹²⁸

When the October 1973 war began to turn against the Arabs, the pressures on King Faisal to cut off oil shipments to those countries supporting Israel began to mount. President Sadat sent a special emissary to Saudi Arabia and other oil countries asking them to put pressure on the United States to halt its arms shipments to Israel. Some Saudi princes also urged King Faisal to use Saudi oil in the war.¹²⁹

Saudi Arabia, however, was still opposed to the idea of an oil embargo against the United States. There was some indication that relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia were improving. King Faisal kept in close touch with the American administration. He sent at least two letters to President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger to urge the American government to tone down its support for Israel.¹³⁰ After his meeting with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria and Morocco on 17 October 1973, President Nixon spoke briefly with the Saudi minister, Omer al-Saqqaf, who subsequently told the press that their talks had been friendly and "fruitful" and that he put his faith in the Nixon administration to bring about peace.¹³¹ King Faisal was still hoping that the United States would not force him into a position where he had to use oil as a weapon.

128 New York Times, 7 October 1975.

129 Haikal, op. cit., p. 263.

130 Washington Post, 20 October 1973.

131 New York Times, 18 October 1973.

On 16 October 1973, the Arab oil ministers held a meeting in Kuwait to consider the role oil might play in the war. They

"decided that each Arab oil exporting country should immediately cut its oil production by a rate not less than 5% from the September production level, and further increase of 5% from each of the following months..."¹³²

It was thanks to Saudi Arabia's moderating influence at the meeting that such a decision was reached and the total embargo against the United States called for by members of OAFEC was averted.¹³³

The following day, on 18 October 1973, Saudi Arabia cut its production by 10%. Meanwhile the United States increased its military aid to Israel, and on 19 October President Nixon asked Congress to allocate \$2.2 billion in military aid to Israel. This put King Faisal in precisely the position he had wished to avoid, and on 20 October, Saudi Arabia announced that it was halting all oil exports to the United States in the light of the increase in military aid to Israel. This decision affected not only direct exports but also indirect ones via world refineries supplying the American market or the United States navy.¹³⁴ Saudi instructions to ARAMCO divided consumer countries into three categories: "friendly" countries - Britain, France, Spain, all the non oil-producing Arab countries, and all Muslim countries - were to receive oil at the September level; "hostile" countries - the United States,

¹³² Ali, op. cit., p. 109.

¹³³ Sheehan, Edward R. The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger: A secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East, New York: Readers Digest Press, 1976, p. 69.

¹³⁴ Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 14.

the Netherlands, Canada, Portugal, South Africa and Rhodesia - were to receive no oil; and all other countries were classified as "neutral". Saudi Arabia's conditions for lifting their restrictions were the liberation of the Arab territories occupied during the 1967 war; the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; and the liberation of Jerusalem. But in the beginning of December 1973, this attitude showed signs of moderating when Sheikh Yamani announced that Saudi Arabia would lift their embargo if Israel began to withdraw from the occupied territories. A few days later he said that the embargo would be lifted if Israel accepted the principle of withdrawal. This considerably weakened the Arab oil countries' bargaining position,¹³⁵ since it appeared that the king was not at one with his own oil minister about the aims of the embargo. In late December 1973, he called on all the Muslims to mobilize their resources to liberate Jerusalem from Zionist forces.¹³⁶ But the moderate line carried the day and the Arab oil countries decided to end their monthly oil production cuts in December 1973.

When Egypt and Israel, thanks to American mediation, reached an agreement on the disengagement of their forces on 17 January 1974, it was plain that the lifting of the embargo would soon follow, which it did on 18 March, at the request of President Sadat and Sheikh Yamani. The goals of the Arab countries had not been met, but the embargo had had other positive results. Western Europe had adopted a neutral position on the Arab-Israeli conflict; Britain and

¹³⁵ Salama, op. cit., pp. 421-423.

¹³⁶ Arab Report and Record, 1-31 December 1973.

West Germany had banned arms shipments to the Middle East; American transport planes were not allowed to land on British, Turkish, Italian, Spanish or Greek territory to supply Israel with American arms during the war;¹³⁷ the EEC called for a solution based on the United Nations security council resolution no. 242,¹³⁸ which was also supported by Japan.¹³⁹

It was the United States, however, that had been the target of the embargo and its policy on the Middle East had not budged. The embargo did, however, have a psychological effect, because it was quickly followed by massive increases in oil prices, which rose by 400%.¹⁴⁰

On 2 October 1974, Sheikh Yamani stated that if a political solution to the conflict were found, then oil prices would fall, and went on to say that if Israel did not withdraw from the occupied territories, the region would be plunged into another war which would

"have a very dangerous effect on prices as well as on the supply of oil."¹⁴¹

It is clear from the events which followed that Sheikh Yamani was not sincere in saying this.

Secretary of State Kissinger told a meeting of the International Energy Agency in Paris on 17 May 1975,

"The embargo and price rises of 1973 taught us how vulnerable we had become. We saw that neither the supply nor the price of a central factor in our

137 The Economist, 3 November 1973; Washington Post, 25 October 1975.

138 The Times, 7 November 1973.

139 Stark, op. cit., p. 226.

140 Stebbins, Richard P. and Adam, Elaine (ed) American Foreign Policy Relations 1974. A Documentary Record, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, New York University Press, 1977, p. 454.

141 Sobel, op. cit., p. 55.

economies was any longer under our control. Our well-being and progress had become hostage to decisions in which we could not take part."¹⁴²

As the largest oil-producer, Saudi Arabia did play a major part in setting oil prices and levels of exporting, opposing any increases in prices. In December 1976, it raised its prices by only 5%, in defiance of the 10% immediate rise agreed by OPEC. It also increased its oil production in 1979 to offset the fall in Iranian production.

In summary, it was clear that Saudi Arabia wished to avoid using oil as a political weapon. The American failure to repay Saudi Arabia's moderating influence on other Arab states by putting pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied territories and its continuing and indeed increasing support for Israel gave King Faisal no alternative but to join the the Arab oil embargo. Because of Saudi Arabia's huge oil production, it was important to the Arab cause that they should join the embargo, and equally Saudi Arabia was instrumental in getting it lifted and in moderating OPEC policies.

Conclusion

Saudi-American relations with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict can thus be summarized as follows.

¹⁴² Stebbins, Richard P. and Adam, Elaine (ed) American Foreign Policy Relations 1975. A Documentary Record, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, New York University Press, 1977, p. 197.

Both governments believed that Israel had the right to exist within secure borders and to this end both worked for a political compromise.

They differed over the future of Jerusalem as a result of King Faisal's more rigid religious convictions, but after his death in March 1975 this ceased to be a major stumbling block.

The Saudi government had a moderating influence on other Arab states, particularly Egypt.

After the Israeli victory in the 6-day war, the American administration believed that Israeli military superiority would maintain the stability of the region. Thus it did little to pursue a political solution to the problem.

President Sadat and King Faisal planned a limited war to compel the United States to acknowledge the need for a political solution.

After the October 1973 war, Saudi Arabia supported all American diplomatic initiatives to find a political compromise, including the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in Camp David, but when an agreement was reached, the Saudi government joined the widespread Arab opposition.

In general, Saudi Arabia's role as America's advocate on the Arab side of the conflict was an important one. Saudi Arabia prevailed on many Arab states to moderate their attitudes and policies on the conflict. On occasion, however, the United States - misreading the political reality of the region - asked Saudi Arabia to adopt

untenable positions. This is what occurred over the Camp David agreement.

CONCLUSION

The Six-Day War of 1967 marked the beginning of a new phase in the modern history of the Middle East region. Nasser, defeated in that war, was from then on to pay more attention to Egypt's internal problems than to wider Arabian issues. He was forced to withdraw his troops from Yemen, which had been a thorn in the side of the Saudi government. He also needed to obtain the financial support of the conservative camp within the region in order to rebuild his forces and to bolster Egypt's weak economy. He therefore abandoned the radical policies which had for over thirteen years dominated the area. Riyadh then became a rival centre for Arab political activities to Cairo. At the same time one of the aftereffects of the Six-Day War was to strengthen radical movements in the Arab world. Moreover the war had increased the dependence of Arab states on the Soviet Union especially in the field of armaments. During the same period Britain withdrew from South Yemen, and in January 1968 announced its intention to withdraw from East of Suez in 1971, mainly due to financial considerations. This created the so-called "security vacuum". From the Saudi point of view, the British presence had been sufficient to protect its eastern oilfields as well as the straits of Hormuz. The United States was at this time deeply embroiled in Vietnam. The British decision to withdraw could therefore scarcely have come at a worse time for Saudi Arabia and for other smaller Gulf states. In

1970, however, conservative forces in the region were strengthened by various events: Nasser died and was succeeded by the pro-Western and conservative Sadat; Assad of Syria, a moderate leader, gained full power in Damascus; and King Hussain succeeded in crushing the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Jordan. These circumstances allowed King Faisal, with his fifty years' foreign policy experience, to move into the position of leader of the conservative or moderate camp in the Arab homeland.

The October war of 1973 and Saudi participation in the oil embargo lent the Saudi government renewed strength. These allowed it to give the impression that it supported popular demands for oil to be used as a political weapon for the achievement of Arab goals. They also led to an increase in oil prices. Saudi Arabia's high oil production and the new high prices combined to make of the kingdom a financial giant. From this point on, Saudi Arabia could wield its formidable financial power in pursuit of its political aims. It adopted the so-called "Riyal diplomacy", intending thereby to serve conservative forces in the area, Western interests in general, and those of the United States in particular. With regard to oil, the main focus of United States' relations in the area, the Saudi government did its utmost to resist the call to limit production in order to force prices up in the late 60's and the early 70's. When on 16 October 1973 the majority of Arab oil producers called for an immediate embargo, the Saudi government confined itself to a 5% per month cut in

production. Two days later, when other states announced their boycott of oil shipments to the United States, the Saudi government announced only a 10% cut. Even when Saudi Arabia did join the embargo, it allowed ARAMCO to continue oil shipments to United States' refineries in the Caribbean. When OPEC pressed for a price of \$13.33 in late December 1973, the kingdom insisted on limiting the increase to \$11.65. By March 1974 it was making great efforts to convince fellow OPEC members to abandon the embargo, and in this it succeeded in May. In June 1974, OPEC members called for an increase ranging from \$4 to \$7-11 in the basic (national revenue) price per barrel in order to cut oil companies' profits; the Saudi government managed to contain this increase to only 1.5%. In September 1974, it once again managed to hold a further price increase to 3.5% in the face of calls for major increases. It continued to pursue the same policy throughout 1975, resisting price rises and cuts in production. In 1976 it confronted such demands by threatening to resume maximum production. When in December a 10% price rise was agreed, Saudi Arabia assented only to a 5% rise. Similarly in the following year, 1977, still in the light of the same policy, it agreed in July to limit its production to 8.5 million barrels per day only in exchange for a price freeze till the end of the year. In 1978, the proposal to index the dollar against other foreign currencies in the face of oil recession and glut was resisted by Saudi Arabia. And when events in Iran caused a world price panic, again it was Saudi Arabia which increased its production to over 10

million barrels per day. During the entire decade, the kingdom had moreover held out against the nationalization of the oil companies, arguing during the 60's that the oil producers were not capable of managing their oil operations and would fail if they attempted to do so. It continually drew attention to what had occurred when Iran had tried to nationalize its oil companies in the early 50's. When Iraq and Lybia successfully did so in the early 70's, Saudi Arabia pursued the idea of participation, by which it meant part ownership with the oil producers thanks to share ownership. The kingdom first proposed a 20%, and then a 40% stake, and negotiations with ARAMCO were to extend over more than 10 years. Only in the early 80's did the company come under state ownership, with ARAMCO contracted to manage its operations under a special assignment. In short, Saudi Arabia was the moderate voice within OPEC and strove to defend Western interests in the oil world.

In the field of diplomacy, the kingdom's efforts were directed towards maintaining and enhancing conservative forces in the region and in the Third World. Saudi Arabia succeeded in persuading Sadat to expel Soviet advisors from Egypt in July 1972. It agreed to fund military sales to Egypt, Jordan and North Yemen. It provided heavy financial aid to these countries, as well as to Syria and other Arab conservative states. It applied financial pressure on North Yemen and Somalia to reduce their dependence on Soviet aid. It provided aid to Zaire and financed the presence of Moroccan troops there. It also gave aid to Pakistan, South Vietnam, national China, and to anti-Marxist forces in

Africa and Asia. Finally it played an important part in persuading more Arab states that the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict lay in the hands of the United States and heavily financed the moderate wing of the PLO, notably the Fateh organisation. In short, Saudi Arabia virtually became an active American client state in the Middle East, in the Third World, and in OPEC. In return, however, what did the kingdom hope to gain from the United States? Unquestionably the main Saudi objective was the security of the kingdom. Was there then any commitment on the part of the United States to defend Saudi Arabia?

Before attempting an answer to this question, several facts should be borne in mind.

In the first place, the kingdom, with its huge land area and access to three seas, occupies an important location within a critical region, the modern history of which is characterized by instability. Since World War II, the area has witnessed four major wars, and numerous coups in various states, and has moreover become a battleground for the ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the second place, the establishment of the kingdom in the early decades of this century was the result of tribal conflict within the peninsula, whereas the British - the dominant power in the area - were more concerned with the Gulf coastal areas than the interior. Ibn Saud, who mistrusted the British because they supported his rival, Sharif Hussain of Hejaz, succeeded in maintaining the independence of his kingdom until his death in 1953. At the

same time, the kingdom emerged from the historical conjunction over three centuries of the Al-Saud family with the Wahhabi movement. The Saudi state is thus a tribal state with religious legitimacy, and its king a tribal leader. His decisions remain personal and his main duty is to uphold Saudi authority and maintain the security of the kingdom.

In the third place, despite the wide effect on Saudi life of the country's sudden huge wealth, Saudi society still embraces the values of a tribal culture with religious roots. Little has been done to develop any political structure in the kingdom: there is no parliament and no constitution and there are no political parties. The authority of the king is limited only by a consensus within the House of Saud, which remains the central political actor. In general, the political system continues to rest on traditional relationships between the House of Saud, the religious leaders, and the tribes. In these circumstances, there is little choice but to turn to the West for protection, and the only Western state powerful enough to provide this is the United States.

In the fourth place, the central concern of the United States' relations with Saudi Arabia is oil. For more than fifty years, as far as the Americans were concerned Saudi Arabia spelt oil. Recognising the predominance of British influence in the area, the United States vigorously pursued the so-called "open door" policy in order to be able to participate in oil activities in the area. For its part, the main concern of Saudi Arabia's relations with the

United States was with its security. This lay behind King Abd al-Aziz's move to encourage the United States to play an active political role in the area from the earliest days of the new kingdom's existence. Even his attitude to the Palestinian problem was coloured by this overriding consideration. It also explained why it was the United States who gained the entire Saudi oil concession. Ibn Saud's son, King Saud, pursued the same policy despite the fact that he had some difficulties with the United States, due mainly to the overall situation in the area rather than to the new policies he adopted. But in the final analysis, it was King Faisal who sought a strong relationship with the United States in order to obtain an American commitment to Saudi security. To summarize, the main concern of the United States was oil; that of Saudi Arabia, its security.

During the period under study, (1968-1978), Saudi Arabia confronted no real threats to its security. But in a region beset by problems and conflicts, the Saudi government's perception was that it was surrounded by threatening factors, a perception which was further fuelled by the British withdrawal from the area in 1971. The United States shared this perception. Their mutual interests included the guaranteed flow of oil to the United States, Western Europe, and Japan; the containment of the influence of the Soviet Union; the containment of the spread of nationalist ideology and influence; the enhancement of Saudi defense capabilities; the promotion of the internal security and stability of Saudi Arabia and of other states in the region friendly to the United States; the

encouragement of cooperation between conservative states with a view to maintaining stability in the area; and the achievement of a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the same time, as we have already noted, the major preoccupation of the Saudi government was its security, whilst that of the United States was the guaranteed flow of oil to America and other Western countries. The Saudi government played an important part in the Middle East, and in the world at large, in defending Western interests in general and those of the United States in particular, especially after 1973. The Saudi government did its best to project to regional powers the impression that it enjoyed an American commitment to protect it. In fact no such commitment existed, mainly because of pressure from the United States Congress. In other words, the Saudis failed in the basic objective of their relations with the United States. The security of the kingdom thus remained the major area of difference between the two governments.

The huge American sale of arms and services, which some observers considered to be evidence of a de facto American commitment to Saudi security, did not result in the creation of any real military power for Saudi Arabia, mainly because of a lack of skilled manpower. The United States was in fact aware of this and continued to regard Iran and Israel as its major foreign policy tools in the area. Its huge arms sales were not therefore intended to create strong Saudi forces, but rather to further its petro-dollar policy. For its part, the Saudi government's major objective was to manipulate the United States into a

position where it found itself deeply involved in Saudi security. But in this, it also failed. This involvement not only roused strong objections in the American Congress, but also enabled the Israeli lobby to obtain obtain more financial and military support for Israel. Moreover, American military sales lay behind the arms race in the Gulf region. In short, American arms sales to Saudi Arabia were strongly related to its petro-dollar policy and did little to enhance Saudi security.

The final issue relating to Saudi security was the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the Saudis, the conflict lay behind the instability and the strength of the radical movement in the area, and they therefore strove for a political solution to it. Saudi Arabia supported all American diplomatic initiatives to find a political compromise, including the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in Camp David, but Arab pressure forced it to pay lip service to the widespread opposition to these in the area. Having said this, there is little doubt that the Saudi government played an important role in moderating the attitudes and policies of many Arab states with regard to the conflict. Thus although Saudi Arabia joined the oil embargo in 1973 under pressure from other Arab states, its participation enabled it to play an important role and it was without doubt instrumental in getting the embargo lifted. In short, Saudi Arabia played the part of America's advocate on the Arab side of the conflict.

In the final analysis, the Saudi government did its utmost to obtain an American commitment to its security. It

was an active American advocate both in the Middle East and in the Third World. It strove to give the impression that it did in fact enjoy the protection of the United States.

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While this could only be established in regard to specific instances, Saudi relations with the United States were sufficiently public to enable the Kingdom to maintain a certain measure of deterrent capability which ultimately was based on American power and prestige.

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