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# **THE US-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP AND THE IRAQ WAR: THE DIALECTICS OF A DEPENDENT ALLIANCE**

**By Louisa Dris-Ait-Hamadouche and Yahia H. Zoubir\***

## **INTRODUCTION**

The relationship between the United States government and the Saudi royal family can be traced back to the F. D. Roosevelt era. The two countries established very robust bilateral ties in 1942. Analyzing the special relationship, former U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft argues that “the United States is, in fact, singularly responsible for the creation of Saudi Arabia. There’s no country in the Middle East with which we are as intertwined as Saudi Arabia.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1944, the first Saudi Arabian legation was opened in the US and the Arabian American Oil Company [Aramco] was founded. A year later King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, known as Ibn Saud, met with F.D.R. on board the USS Quincy at Great Bitter Lake in the Suez Canal, to conclude the strategic “Quincy agreement” of half a century. Consequently, the kingdom became one of the closest US allies during the Cold War period, providing hundreds of millions of dollars to Western-supported insurgents everywhere from Angola to Afghanistan to Nicaragua. In exchange, Ibn Saud counted on the US to guarantee the kingdom’s territorial integrity against the ambitions of the Hashemite regimes in Iraq and Jordan in the 1940s, against Egypt’s Gamal Abdul Nasser in the 1950s, and more recently against the appeal of the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

With Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, US-Saudi ties grew even stronger. After a meeting immediately following the invasion between high-level Saudi officials and the then US Defense Secretary (now Vice President) Dick Cheney, the kingdom, under strong American pressure, officially invited Washington to use its territory for rolling back the occupation. Thus, some 700,000 US troops entered Saudi Arabia. After the war, Riyadh agreed to maintain about 5,000 American troops in the country. It also allowed hundreds of US warplanes and pilots to be based at the Prince

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Sultan Air Base, where Washington has installed a state-of-the-art command center that covers virtually the entire Middle East, the Gulf region, and Central Asia.

This strong relationship has produced undesirable effects. Indeed, the first sign of trouble came in 1995, when a car bomb killed five US military advisers in Riyadh. This incident was followed by the bombing of the Khobar Towers apartments in 1996, which resulted in the death of 19 US servicemen. This bombing compelled the US military to relocate in a more remote area. Tensions between Saudis and Americans appeared over the investigation of the bombing, but the bilateral relation remained stable until 11 September 2001. Given that “Iraqi Freedom” occurred not long after 9/11, one can raise questions about the Saudi-American relationship and whether the US invasion of Iraq indicated and augured radical change in Saudi-American relations.

### **SAUDI ARABIA-USA: ACCUSATIONS AND REACTIONS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>**

Without a doubt, the events of 9/11 constituted a real trauma for Americans. The attacks also affected public perception of US relations with the Muslim world in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. Indeed, fifteen of the 9/11 hijackers were Saudis, and although Saudi leaders publicly and immediately condemned the 9/11 attacks, public anti-Saudi sentiment has reached incredible proportions. Thus, long-time pro-American Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, and his wife were pressed to explain how payment, which she made, ended up in the hands of two Saudi men suspected of having close ties to the hijackers. For its part, the Saudi press, as well as Saudi clerics, vigorously denounced US “aggression” against Muslim Afghanistan, as well as the massive FBI detention of Saudi nationals, suspected of possible involvement in the 9/11 events. Today, clerics and those close to them in the royal family have urged the Saudi leadership to distance itself from Washington. Women and the younger generation of Saudis are increasingly more critical vis-à-vis US policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Washington’s blatant support for Israel. This explains why this category of Saudis has supported the boycott of American products, such as McDonald’s, Coca-Cola, and Pampers. This kind of consumer boycott of a number of products has an obvious impact, especially knowing that 40% of the wealth in Saudi Arabia is in the hands of women (53% of university graduates and 35% of government employees are women; in addition, 70% of bank accounts are held by women).<sup>2</sup> At the judicial level, the families of the 127 Saudis captured in Afghanistan and held by the US at Guantanamo Bay filed a lawsuit against the US government in November 2002. While the US government suspects those being held of having links to al-Qaeda, Saudi

lawyer Katabel Shamari insists that most are innocent. For him and many others, the charges are part of a smear campaign being encouraged by certain members of the Bush administration.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of these developments, it appears that “for the first time since 1973, we actually have a situation in which the United States is so unpopular among the [Saudi] public that the royal family now thinks its security is best served by publicly distancing itself from the United States.”<sup>4</sup> Some Americans believe that the US no longer needs Saudi help in international oil issues; a US newspaper has even suggested that American troops should simply occupy militarily Saudi oil fields.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, many accusations were leveled against the Saudi monarchy for its alleged reluctance to confront Saudi extremists within the kingdom, its slowness to curb financial flows to terrorists, the connections between Saudi businessmen (and even members of royal family, such as Prince Nayef) and al-Qaeda or other extremists, and Wahhabi influence on extremist movements. Consequently, a \$1-trillion lawsuit was filed in summer 2002 by 600 families of the 9/11 victims. Members of the Saudi royal family, including the Defense Minister Prince Sultan, as well as Saudi banks and Islamic charities, such as *Salman al-Awdah* and *Safar Hawali*, are accused of backing al-Qaeda. Michael Scott Doran, an analyst of the Saudi political scene has even argued that Interior Minister “Nayef sides with the clerics and takes direction from an anti-American religious establishment that shares many goals with al-Qaeda.”<sup>6</sup> That is probably why the American administration introduced travel restrictions, especially for Saudi students who wish to come to the United States to pursue degrees in higher education. This decision was harshly criticized, especially since a whole generation of Saudi professionals and scholars received their higher education in the United States. In fact, a good segment of the monarchy is made up of Westernized elite that are inspired by the European and American models of political development. And, it is precisely this segment of the elite, the so-called reformers favorable to rapprochement (*taqarub*) with the West, who are the new target of al-Qaeda and anti-reform Wahhabi *tawhidiyins* (staunch monotheists who do not believe in separation of mosque and state).<sup>7</sup>

These tensions in US-Saudi relations have been exacerbated by misunderstandings and ignorance, notably within American society. Unsurprisingly, most Americans know almost nothing about Saudi Arabia:

“They [Americans] thought it was a desert with a few Bedouins. They had no idea that we have cities or a middle class. Since the 11 September attacks, they see us as evil incarnate. Our whole society is equated with terrorism. Nobody blamed Japan as a whole for the terrorist attacks of the Japanese Red Army. The simplistic attitude to Saudi

Arabia encourages terrorism, since it enables radical groups to claim the US is targeting the whole of Saudi society, all Arabs, and Islam itself. This is only made worse when Americans call for a nuclear strike on Mecca or denounce the Prophet Mohammed as a terrorist.”<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, such attitudes comfort the “anti-Americanizers” in Saudi Arabia, that is, against those reformers intent on bringing about reforms in the kingdom and establishing closer relations with the non-Muslim world.

These mutual US-Saudi recriminations have objective reasons, some of which being linked to the presence of two culturally and politically disparate societies.<sup>9</sup> For example, in contrast to the American mode of conducting most activities in the glare of public media, the Saudi Government’s style has traditionally been quiet, and pursued unpublicized cooperation. This essential difference is the reason why the strong ties between the two countries have never had popular support in either country. For Chas Freeman, a close observer of the Saudi scene, U.S. and Saudi governments are really interested in promoting cooperation, “but the two peoples have a different view, and both governments find themselves defending this relationship against widespread popular opposition.”<sup>10</sup> However, it should be emphasized that popular support in the struggle against terrorism is strong and widespread, especially since Saudis who witnessed the bombings of the compounds saw first hand that the objective of the terrorists is not just to kill Americans and other Westerners, but to destroy the liberal and cosmopolitan element in Saudi Arabia itself. In other words, there exists an internal struggle within Saudi polity and society between reformers and those who wish to maintain a staunchly conservative Wahhabi state that has little interaction with the non-Muslim world.

During the Riyadh and Khobar bombings of 1995 and 1996 Saudi cooperation with FBI investigators was quite ineffective. But, at the same time, Saudi officials made genuine efforts to change this state of affairs. Two conjectural and one structural examples illustrate this change. First, Saudi Arabia has commissioned a major public relations campaign to restore its image, paying Qorvis Communication \$14.6 million in the first half of 2002. Second, King Abdullah proposed at the Arab summit in Beirut a new Middle East peace initiative. In March 2002, he persuaded the Arab world to accept the idea of peace with Israel in exchange for the creation of a Palestinian state. The structural effort is linked to the general campaign which tends to introduce some internal reforms. One such reform concerns foreign direct investments (FDI). On April 2000, a new foreign investment law was adopted, allowing international investors to have full ownership of projects and reducing taxes from 45% to 30% on corporate profits. On June 3, 2001, Saudi Arabia signed agreements worth approximately \$25 billion with eight international oil

companies to develop three natural gas fields, together with related power plants, transmission pipelines, and water desalinization projects. Five of these companies are U.S.-based (Exxon Mobil Corporation, Conoco, Phillips Petroleum Company, Occidental Petroleum Corporation, and Marathon). Exxon Mobil is the lead manager for two of the three gas field projects.

### **SAUDI ARABIA/IRAQ: INTERSTATE RELATIONS AND INTER-REGIME TENSIONS**

Iraqi-Saudi relations have always been unsteady, vacillating from de facto alliance to tension to war. During the Cold War, mainly in the 1960s and the early 1970s, Riyadh had suspected Baghdad of supporting political movements hostile to the Saudi regime and interests. In order to counter Iraqi influence, Riyadh moved relatively closer to states, such as Iran, Kuwait, and Syria, under, of course, the American security umbrella. In the mid-1970s, Iraq began to moderate its foreign policy and to improve its ties with Western countries. This shift in policy was confirmed and strengthened when the Iranian Islamic Revolution erupted in 1979. Although officially neutral, Saudi Arabia supported Iraq in its war against Iran and provided the Iraqi regime with an estimated \$25 billion in low-interest loans and grants. It also provided Iraqi customers with part of its production from the oil fields in the Iraq-Saudi Arabian Neutral Zone, and constructed an oil pipeline to transport Iraqi oil across Saudi territory.

The invasion of Kuwait brought an end to the bilateral entente and revived the idea of an Iraqi menace. Saudi reaction was to get directly involved in the international coalition; the country hosted hundreds of thousands American troops. After the two Arab countries broke diplomatic relations,<sup>11</sup> the kingdom's air bases served as the main staging areas for aerial strikes against Iraqi targets, and personnel of the Saudi armed forces participated in both the bombing assaults and the ground offensive. After Yemen in 1934, Iraq became the second Arab country against which Saudi Arabia led a war.

Analyzing the Saudi position in the last Gulf war must take into consideration two levels: on the one hand, the relations between the two states, which are constant, and, on the other hand, the relations between the leaders (subject to changes). Regardless of which Iraqi leader is in power, Iraq remains an unavoidable partner, whose isolation would inevitably have dangerous ramifications.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the kingdom undertook some initiatives in order to rebuild better relations with its neighbor. For instance, one can cite the famous embrace between King Abdullah and Iraq's Vice President Izzat Ibrahim Al-Douri during the Arab League summit meeting held in Beirut at the end of March 2002. Beyond this symbolic act, the most important sign of

rapprochement was Saudi Arabia's official refusal to be drawn into any American-led military campaign against Iraq.<sup>13</sup> Two months later, the members of the semi-annual meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), held in Jeddah on 25 May 2002 under Saudi leadership, called for concrete measures to implement the steps agreed upon at the Beirut summit, notably, the questions relating to Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations and the preservation of Kuwaiti sovereignty. In this context, the Secretary General of the GCC Abdul Al-Rahman Al-'Atiyya underscored Iraq's "good intentions." From his perspective, such good intentions would result in faster normalization between Iraq and the Gulf countries.<sup>14</sup> Earlier, Saudi Arabia had responded positively to Iraq's request to appoint an Iraqi ambassador to the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Jeddah.

These political declarations were more symbolic than tangible actions; however, many important, concrete actions were made in the economic realm. The most significant development was Saudi Arabia's decision to reopen the border crossing at 'Ar-'Ar between the two countries that had been closed since 1991. This agreement allowed not only Saudi exports to Iraq but it also allowed the exports of other Gulf countries to cross the border. This resulted in saving 8-10% of the cost of shipping, which had previously had to transit through Jordan. Iraq expected to import as much as \$1 billion annually from Saudi Arabia.<sup>15</sup> It is worth mentioning that, at Iraq's request, the Center for the Growth of Saudi Exports had agreed to allow Saudis to re-export to Iraq goods imported, mainly from Asia, to the Saudi market, thus, generating a profit margin for Saudi and other businesses. Since Iraqi trade was largely controlled by Saddam's family and close friends associated with the ruling Ba'ath party, one must suspect that Saudi middlemen's income was also shared by their interlocutors in Baghdad.

Two other examples confirmed the economic rapprochement. The first related to Iraq's Minister of Industry Maysar Rajaa Shallah's approval for the construction in Iraq of a wholly-owned Saudi factory for the manufacturing of irrigation tools. The second was more strategic as it concerned the rehabilitation of the Iraqi section of the Saudi-Iraqi oil pipeline. Closed by Saudi Arabia in 1990, the pipeline connects Iraqi oil installations in the south with the Saudi Port of Yanba on the Red Sea. Totally operational, the pipeline could carry 1.65 million b/d of Iraqi oil.

One can raise the question whether all these measures constituted a step toward an immediate normalization or, instead, a preparation for a future and new status in Iraq? Surprisingly, the Saudis were favorable to major political changes in Iraq. In fact, as if to justify upcoming events, former Saudi minister of oil Sheikh Zaki al-Yamani believed that Saddam Hussein might strike Saudi Arabia and Kuwait with missiles if Iraq were exposed to strong pressures as a result of a likely US-led war against him. Recalling that Iraqi

forces burned oil fields in Kuwait before they pulled out in February 1991, he said that Iraqi “behavior should have taught us an important lesson.”<sup>16</sup> This opinion seemed to be widely shared in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the president of the board of the Saudi Society for Information and Communications and Associate Professor for Information at King Saud University called on Saddam to commit suicide. “As far as Iraq is concerned, the change [in regime] is inevitably coming with or without a war. But what will be the destiny of Saddam Hussein? Will His Highness abdicate his authority to prevent bloodshed and save the vital interests of Iraq as well the region’s interests?”<sup>17</sup> Given that this statement cannot be considered to be independent, it is safe to consider it as reflecting the official position in the Saudi kingdom. The Chairman of the Arab Fund for Childhood and Development and Chairman of the Arab Gulf program in Support of Humanitarian Organizations Saudi Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud expressed a frank opinion in September 2002 when he stated that an American attack against Iraq was “eventually coming,” adding that “Washington will use the military bases it wants in the Arab world because the current Arab rejection of this attack is just an attempt to please the Arab street.”<sup>18</sup> In his view, Arabs have agreed with the US to eliminate Saddam Hussein. The prince rejected the use of oil or withdrawing Saudi investments from the United States as a weapon against the US to prevent it from attacking Iraq because both these measures would be ineffective. Thus, Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said that Riyadh will provide cooperation in a US-led operation against Iraq should it be approved by the UN Security Council. He also confirmed that Saudi Arabia would work for the stability of oil prices in the international market in case of an attack on Iraq and would try to maintain a balance between demand and supply as well as to work for guaranteeing that other OPEC members act likewise.<sup>19</sup>

The kingdom’s media transmitted the unspoken Saudi position through various newspapers. Hence, several weeks before the beginning of the war, the Saudi media led a very acerbic campaign against the Iraqi president, asking him to abdicate or to commit suicide. *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* and *Al-Hayat* in London, *Okkaz*, and the daily newspaper *al-Jazeera* in Saudi Arabia provided justification for the necessary abdication of Saddam Hussein, highlighting the crimes he committed against people in the region, as well as against his own people. They also believed that his abdication or suicide would spare the region from yet another war. For instance, *Al-Hayat*’s columnist explained the dilemma that Iraqi people faced: “They have to choose between supporting America which would save them from a despotic and authoritarian regime that has wasted the national wealth and practiced a historically unprecedented political savagery, or they can stay and fight a lost battle in the trenches of Saddam.”<sup>20</sup> Coincidentally, the Egyptian government daily *Al-*

*Gomhorriya* held a similar view. "Saddam will not go into exile unless the whole Iraqi people are exiled. It is then and only then that Saddam will consider whether he himself will depart from the country... to enjoy the wealth and pleasures."<sup>21</sup> Surprisingly, a number of Arab intellectuals circulated a petition in which they called upon "public opinion in the Arab world to exercise pressure for the dismissal from power of Saddam Hussein and his close aides in Iraq in order to avoid a war that threatens with catastrophe the peoples of the region." They also called for the rule of democracy in Baghdad by "stationing across Iraq human rights monitors from the United Nations and the Arab League to oversee the peaceful transition of power."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, this attitude towards the Iraqi regime's downfall was consistent with Saudi post-war policy. Since 1992, Riyadh had openly supported Iraqi opposition forces by, notably, inviting several Iraqi opposition leaders to Riyadh to attend a well-publicized conference. The backing for such groups had been discreet hitherto. To further demonstrate Saudi dissatisfaction with the regime in Baghdad, King Abdullah permitted the media to videotape his meeting with some of Saddam Hussein's opponents. Speaking about US military presence, he also declared on 10 April 2000 that US forces are within the UN's international mission to continue the surveillance of southern Iraq, and also the border of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as well as the other GCC countries. Consequently, Riyadh permitted U.S. aircraft to conduct flights over and attacks against southern Iraq from its national bases. According to news reports, during the major 4-day U.S.-British strikes against Iraq in December 1998 (Operation Desert Fox), Saudi Arabia opened its air space and allowed take-offs and re-fuelling of Anglo-American aircraft.

### SAUDI AMBIVALENCE TOWARD THE ANGLO-AMERICAN WAR

In the economic realm, US-Saudi ties are not limited to oil-related issues. Overall economic ties between the two countries are significant and extend over innumerable sectors. The first Saudi oil deposits were discovered in 1938 by a US company. Within a few decades, the kingdom had become its largest exporter. Saudi Arabia is probably irreplaceable as an oil supplier, owing to its unique capacity to put, if necessary, millions of extra barrels a day on the market. After the 9/11 attacks and during the Iraqi crisis, Saudi Arabia demonstrated its capacity to play such role. Experts consider that for the next decade at least, no other country will be able to replace the Saudis in this capacity.

Saudi Arabia is the second largest trading partner of the United States in the Middle East, trade valued at some 20 billion dollars a year, and Saudis are said to have invested the major part of their 400-billion dollars portfolios

abroad in US securities and government bonds. Moreover, there are some 337 joint Saudi-American ventures with a paid-up capital of 22 billion dollars.<sup>23</sup> The US Department of Energy estimates that the global economy requires Gulf oil-production capacity to increase from 22.4 million barrels per day to 45.2mbd in 2025: “Saudi production alone must increase from 10.2mbd in 2001 to 23mbd in 2025, an increase of 133 percent.”<sup>24</sup> These exports require both “security and a level of investment that Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states can no longer sustain without massive foreign direct investment in both Saudi Arabia's petroleum sector and the rest of its economy.”

Saudi Arabia boasts one-quarter of the total world reserves; it is also the world's largest exporter, presently exporting approximately 8.5 million barrels a day, roughly one-third of total OPEC's total production. At times, it was the largest single supplier of crude oil to the US. Two months after the new Iraqi government investiture, oil prices reached nearly \$50, a record high.<sup>25</sup> *USA Today* newspaper reported that current oil prices, adjusted to inflation, are below levels seen in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. The world's largest oil producer announced in August 2004 that it was ready to increase the Kingdom's crude oil production by 1.3 million barrels of oil per day to help reduce and stabilize oil prices.<sup>26</sup> Saudi Arabia already increased oil production between June and August to meet the growing demand. The increases amounted to over one million barrels per day, bringing to over 9.3 million barrels per day.<sup>27</sup>

Most of the Kingdom's proven oil reserves are located in the Eastern Province, including the largest onshore field in Ghawar and the largest offshore field, Safaniya, in the Arabian Gulf. Currently, Saudi Arabia's reserves, according to Saudi Aramco, have been established at 260 billion barrels. In 2003, Saudi Arabia supplied the United States with 1.7 million bpd of crude oil, or 18%, of U.S. crude oil imports for the year. As former Secretary of State James Baker pointed out, “Our relationship with Saudi Arabia... is really a relationship we can't disentangle ourselves from. If you accept as a premise that we must have access, easy access, to the energy reserves of the Persian Gulf, I don't see how it makes sense for the United States to say we're no longer going to support the government of Saudi Arabia, which enables us to do that.”<sup>28</sup>

Above all, the oil issue and Saudi Arabian involvement beg the question of the presidential election campaign and the structural ties between the Bush administration and the world of energy. Hence, prominent figures, such as Vice-President Dick Cheney or Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had or still have personal economic interests in the oil industry. President Bush highlighted the importance of such ties, stating that “I'm worried about the inadequacy of the oil market.” He was concerned about the ability of the

world oil market to absorb temporary shortfalls during war in the Middle East. The impact on the U.S. economy could be gigantic, which explains why Bush asked about the excess production capacity of the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia. Undoubtedly, Saudi oil policy could be the 'saving grace' for the US economy.<sup>29</sup>

Democratic presidential candidate Senator John Kerry started a controversy by calling for an end of US dependency on Middle Eastern oil and the lessening of relations with the Saudi royal family. The oil conglomerate, Halliburton, previously headed by Vice-President Dick Cheney, was operating a number of subsidiaries in Saudi Arabia at the end of 2000. The George Bush administration sold various types of fighter jets which helped in many ways the US to decrease the unit cost, while the Clinton administration pushed the Saudi Arabian government to buy Boeing airliners, rather than the European Airbus, in order to help increase the sales of the US aircraft manufacturer.

There are more than \$1.4 billion in contracts and investments from the House of Saud to companies in which the Bushes and their political friends have held key roles.<sup>30</sup> For example, Saudi money bailed out Harken Energy when George W. Bush was at its helm. George Bush and James Baker traveled to Saudi Arabia repeatedly for the Carlyle Group to solicit Saudi investors and to win contracts. The Bush family remains close to Prince Bandar, despite the scandal related to Bandar's wife for her alleged ties with two of the 9/11 hijackers. The financial connection between the House of Saud, the Bush family and American businesses has a long history. The Saudi regime was already a major financial backer of the Reagan administration's anti-Communist campaign in Latin America, as well as its efforts to destabilize the former Soviet Union by supporting the Islamic fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan. This explains why Reagan, during the late King Fahd's visit in 1985, declared that "the friendship and cooperation between our governments and peoples are precious jewels whose value we should never underestimate."<sup>31</sup>

### SIGNS OF RETREAT

Shortly after 9/11, King Abdullah sent a letter to President George W. Bush, publicized in Saudi Arabia, in which the king declared that, "A time comes when peoples and nations part. We are at crossroads. And it's time for the United States and Saudi Arabia to look for their separate interests." Clearly, this message revealed the existence of serious problems between the two countries and seemingly did not bode well for the future of their strong relations.

Saudi Arabia was the main staging area for American forces in the 1991 Gulf war. In a significant sign of the continuous cooperation, Saudi officials quietly permitted American warplanes based in the kingdom to bomb

targets in southern Iraq in response to alleged Iraqi violations of the no-flight zone in October and November 2002. However, the 9/11 attacks, combined with the popularity of bin Laden regarding his criticism concerning this question, compelled the Saudi monarchy to be less cooperative, although doubts regarding its decision were looming for quite some time. The Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal rejected the launching of an American-led war against Iraq. He stressed that Saudi Arabia would not take part in any American attack against Iraq. Concerning the possibility of permitting the US to use its lands for attacking Iraq, the Saudi foreign minister declared that "I never said that Saudi Arabia will agree on the use of its territories for attacking Iraq." He added that if a resolution were issued by the UN Security Council according to Article 7 of the UN charter "this will make it imperative on all to cooperate; however, it does not force any country to take part in the war or open its airspace or its lands to be used."<sup>32</sup>

Despite such statements, American commanders said that they had been given private assurances that they would be allowed to lead an air war against Iraq from a command center at Prince Sultan Air Base.<sup>33</sup> In fact, this was the same base from which the air campaign in Afghanistan had started following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Saud al-Faisal's declaration was not credible, as demonstrated by the quick preparation of the Qatari alternative. However, American commanders said relations with their Saudi military counterparts had not suffered seriously from the political tensions in US-Saudi relations. Thus, as an American military official put it, "members of the Saudi Arabian military are our trusted friends and vice versa."<sup>34</sup> Concretely, months before the war on Iraq, restrictions on American training missions were loosened, and Saudi military officers began playing an increasingly important role in the operations center at Prince Sultan.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, an unmistakable, albeit secret, connivance existed between the two countries through the "discreet but effective assistance provided by Riyadh during the war on Iraq."<sup>36</sup> Shortly before the war, the number of US troops in Saudi Arabia rose to almost 10,000, thus enabling the Prince Sultan Base to serve as a command center for the air strikes against Iraqi targets. Elite troops were flown to the air bases at 'Ar'ar and Tabuk in the Northwest, and carried out missions in Iraq. As a US diplomat in Riyadh suggested, "We would never have been able to conduct the war against Iraq as we did without Saudi assistance."<sup>37</sup>

The Saudi involvement in military operations in Iraq confirmed this declaration. On July 2004, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal presented a plan to US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. According to Adel al-Jubeir, a top aide to al-Faisal, the Saudi involvement could be through the coalition or under the UN authority. Allawi,

who sent a call for Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco and Pakistan, claimed that they too could be targets of the Iraqi insurgents.<sup>38</sup>

### SAUDI SECURITY DEPENDENCE ON THE UNITED STATES

The historical 1945 meeting between President Franklin Roosevelt and King 'Abd al-Aziz gave birth to a strategic agreement which progressively allowed for a number structural and sporadic measures. The first category comprises the military cooperation agreement (1945), resulting in the establishment of the Dhahran Air Base in 1946 (closed in 1962); the loan and then sale, despite staunch Israeli opposition, of AWACS airborne radar aircraft and F-15 combat aircraft complemented by a major modernization program for the Saudi Arabian National Guard; the establishment of the United States Military Training Mission (USMTM) for training Saudi forces in 1951 (modeled on the similar British military mission that operated from 1947 to 1951); the transfer of a dozen F-86 fighter aircraft to the kingdom in 1957; and consequently, American perception of Saudi Arabia as a pillar following British withdrawal from the Gulf (1971). The second category includes the stationing of a US air force squadron in Saudi Arabia in 1963-1964 to demonstrate support for the kingdom during a time of threat from Egypt during the Yemeni civil war; growing cooperation in diverse areas during the Iran-Iraq War; Saudi Arabia's role as the main base for Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and the deployment of Saudi armed forces in combat in support of American and other coalition forces; and finally the use of Saudi facilities and air space as part of the international sanctions regime against Iraq from 1991 to 2003.

US-Saudi cooperation was such that between World War II and 1975, the United States provided a total of \$328.4 million in economic and military aid,<sup>39</sup> and \$93.8 billion from 1950 through 1997. Arms agreements with Saudi Arabia from 1991 through 1998 totaled \$22.8 billion. The remarkable increase was due to the Persian Gulf crisis and its aftermath. The largest recent sale was a \$9-billion contract for 72 F-15S advanced fighter aircraft, signed in May 1993. A major component of the Saudi program has been the construction of military bases and facilities, accounting for 19% of the total cost of the cooperation. A series of informal agreements, statements by successive U.S. administrations, and military deployments all have demonstrated a strong U.S. security commitment to Saudi Arabia. On September 2000, the U.S. Defense Department announced that Saudi Arabia had asked for the purchase three arms packages from the United States: \$416 million in light armored vehicles, anti-tank missiles, and advanced communications equipment for the paramilitary Saudi National Guard; \$690 million in contractor training and maintenance support for Saudi Arabia's fleet of F-15 fighter aircraft; and \$1.6 billion in flight simulators, repair parts, and other technical services for the F-15 aircraft.

The prime contractors are the Diesel Division of General Motors of London, Ontario, and Raytheon Corporation of Tucson, Arizona, and al-Salam Aircraft Company of Saudi Arabia.<sup>40</sup>

Until now, Riyadh continues to require extensive security assistance in improving and professionalizing the kingdom's armed forces. The necessity for this assistance is vital, for the kingdom has no real alternatives to the United States for its security needs. Potentially, Western Europe could be a candidate to fulfill this task, but several reasons make this hypothesis improbable. First, Europe does not enjoy any continuous military presence in the Gulf region and its force projection capabilities are inferior to those of the United States. Second, Europe is not engaged in a homogenous policy toward this region. On the contrary, Europe suffers from radical differences, the so-called "old" versus "young" Europe, in security matters and strategy. Third, Europe provides significant quantities of arms and materiel to Saudi Arabia and the GCC, and offers multiple investment opportunities in such way that trade between the GCC and Europe already outstrips that of the US with the GCC. Nevertheless, the political influence remains exclusively American. Neither Russia nor China can, or want to, play a role of substitution. As for foreign military cooperation, Europe is involved in the region through actions which have not upset US interests. For a long time, Saudi Arabia relied on Pakistan for some security matters, such as the stationing of Pakistani troops in the kingdom and the supply of Pakistani pilots to serve in the Saudi air force. But, security problems compelled Pakistan to rush back to internal issues.

This security assistance from the United States rests on two requirements: a/supply of arms, equipment, and training; and, b/the maintenance of an American security umbrella over the kingdom and its GCC neighbors.<sup>41</sup> If the first element does not cause any trouble, the second one is quite problematic, notably because of the internal contestation (the well-known opposition of Islamist movements to the presence of foreign troops in the Holy Land). Yet, this mission remains possible even outside the borders, going from Qatar or other GCC states.

The military cooperation explains in part the value of US-Saudi trade. In 1999 Saudi exports to the US were estimated at \$7.9 billion and imports from the US at \$7.6 billion. This two-way traffic is dominated by oil flows to the US and arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The total value of US arms agreements with Saudi Arabia from 1950 through March 1997 was some \$94 billion, while arms agreements in the period 1991-1997 alone amounted to nearly \$23 billion. According to the Washington-based Congressional Research Service, the number of US personnel in Saudi Arabia (military forces and contractors working with the local armed forces) revolves between 35,000 and 40,000. American arms and military assistance have gone largely to protect the royal

family<sup>42</sup> from internal and external threats. More recently, close observers of the Saudi scene<sup>43</sup> estimated that Saudi Arabia operates more than 750 US main battle tanks, 4,800 other armored vehicles, and some 200 advanced combat aircraft. US training and support is critical to all of Saudi Arabia's military services and the Saudi National Guard. Moreover, Saudi Arabia signed some \$7.7 billion worth of new arms agreements with the US between 1995 and 2002, and the Saudi need for US training and technical support will continue for at least another decade.

The spectacular "military withdrawal" announced after the end of major operations in Iraq in May 2003 has yet to occur. In fact, American military personnel and civilian contractors on military-related projects remain at their jobs in Saudi Arabia. Some 30,000 Americans continue to live and work there, as do thousands of Britons, Irish, and other Europeans. The number of US instructors is likely to be increased, and the joint general staff committee, which has not met since 2001, resumed meetings in summer 2003. Even where Westerners are not directly involved, it is obvious that the country's development strategy, oil policy, security arrangements, and commercial interests are driven by Western-educated and Western-influenced Saudis. "There was no US base here before 1990, and a US military presence on the horizon was sufficient to guarantee our security."<sup>44</sup>

There is also the "continuing need" for US and Saudi security cooperation. In American and Saudi thinking, removing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein helped reduce the security risks in the Gulf, but it has not completely eliminated them. Both sides expect instability in the years or even decades to come. This is precisely why some analysts feel that isolating Saudi Arabia is not in US interest and that Congress and media bashing of the kingdom is counterproductive.<sup>45</sup>

### THE SUCCESSION ISSUE

The stability that the kingdom has experienced for almost 60 years started with the American strategic agreement; until then, the kingdom had lived through turbulent periods. Indeed, throughout its history the Saudi kingdom disappeared twice<sup>46</sup> owing to its military and religious aggressiveness, which was repulsive to its neighbors.<sup>47</sup> However, that tendency began to be reversed with the control of Mecca in 1924, which turned the Saudi insurgency into a state.<sup>48</sup> But the necessity for the Saudi monarch to control the *Ikhwan* resulted in civil war in the late 1920s from which the monarchy emerged victorious in 1930. Subsequently, the lack of a strong leader following the death of Abd al-Aziz could have led to the Saud family's debacle. Therefore, it is plausible that the strong leadership of King Faysal, who succeeded him, rescued the kingdom from total collapse.

Can a similar instability occur today in light of the next succession of leaders, especially knowing the ambiguity that surrounds the issue of succession and change in leadership? This ambiguity is primarily due to the technical aspects of the succession, which has a horizontal direction. Indeed, the founder of the Kingdom, Abdul Aziz, had decreed that his sons would continue to rule, beginning with the eldest.<sup>49</sup> The leading figures among the second generation's princes include Prince Bandar, his brother Khalid Mohammed (son of Fahd and governor of the Eastern Province), Prince Saud (son of King Faisal and foreign minister), his brother Turki (chief of Foreign Intelligence), Lt. Gen. Sultan (son of Prince Salman), and Mitab (son of Abdullah).<sup>50</sup> In 1992, King Fahd promulgated the "Basic Law of Government" that opened up the succession chain to the grandsons as well and allowed the king to designate his successor. Hence, the succession issue would be settled among the leading members of the royal family, and would subsequently be endorsed by the religious establishment. Today, the Saudi succession question involves 36 sons of the state's founder (25 of whom have survived), plus the 260 grandsons. Thus, "never in the history of the monarchy has a ruling dynasty included so many actors and so many complications."<sup>51</sup>

In June 2000, Saudi Arabia formed a council consisting of 18 senior princes representing leading branches of the royal family, chaired by King Abdullah and Sultan as deputy chairman. For some observers, the council's role was to organize family matters, and manage other family issues. Nevertheless, regarding the succession's history, two observations can be made. First, the succession was established through the sons of Abd al-Aziz in chronological order. Second, there exists stanch rivalry among the sons who have varying qualities as rulers.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, this question is likely to be asked for Abdullah's succession more than for Fahd's. Owing to his age and poor health, the king has been unable to rule for several years. However, in regard to Abd al-Aziz's numerous sons, the successor will probably belong to the same generation, which includes men growing old. The six Fahd's brothers, known as the Sudairi Seven,<sup>53</sup> wish to see Fahd remain on the throne in order to succeed him. The aspiring leader is Sultan, the former minister of defense and an opponent of the king.<sup>54</sup> But, if Abdullah can put his stamp on the kingdom, the potential successors would be his half-brother and Minister of the Interior Nayef (71 years old in 2005) and then Salman (68 years old).

Secondly, the chosen successor will have to integrate the opinion of the influential families, such as the Al-Thunayan clan, close allies of the Al Sudairis. The family's power stems from the fact that King Faisal's favorite wife was from the Al-Thunayan and from the several marriages with Al Sudairis. The second unavoidable clan is Al-Jiluwi, descendants of a brother of Faisal Ibn Turki, the grandfather of Abd al Aziz and the line of King Khalid

and his only full brother, Muhammad. Both shared hostile views to their half brothers Faisal and Fahd with respect to Saud's style of rule; they were among the select group of princes and *ulama* who overthrew Saud in 1964. After Faisal's assassination, Muhammad was instrumental in persuading two younger brothers, older than Fahd, to defer and accept him as king. The third major actor is the Al Kabir clan that is not in the line of succession because the clan is not a direct offspring of Abd al Aziz. However, the Al Kabirs use their status of sons and grandsons of Nura, favorite sister of Abd al Aziz and Saud al Kabir's wife. The patriarch of the Al Kabir clan, Muhammad ibn Saud (not to be confused with Muhammad ibn Abd al Aziz Al Saud), was considered one of the senior Al Saud princes and widely respected for his intimate knowledge of tribal genealogies. In addition to the clans, the succession issue is also stirred by the political factions, constituted by the coalition of brothers. The two most important factions are the Sudairi Seven and the allies of King Abdullah. Although the latter has no full brothers, he cultivates close relationships with half brothers and nephews who either have no full brothers or were isolated. The third distinguishable faction gathered the sixty grandsons of Abd al Aziz.

Among this generation, the sons of King Faisal and King Fahd have assumed the most important positions. The principal characteristic of the junior princes is their high level of education, often including graduate studies in the United States or Europe. In fact, in the 1980s, education rather than seniority based on age appeared to be the major source of influence for members of this generation. Fahd appointed many of them to high-level positions as ambassadors, provincial governors, and deputy ministers. Nevertheless, in terms of family politics, it was not clear whether the junior princes constituted a unified group, and if so, whether they were more favorably inclined toward the Al Sudairi faction or the Abdullah faction.

Thirdly, the succession issue is also linked to the generational change, which will probably occur within the first two decades of the twenty-first century. According to the Basic Law, the succession goes to the next generation of Abd al-Aziz's descendants, to the most fit and oldest candidate. But the law does not define the criteria that will determine the candidate's ability to rule. With regard to the option of primogeniture, the option does not seem viable in Saudi Arabia, as none of the sons of Fahd and Abdullah are suitable candidates.<sup>55</sup>

The choice for a candidate must take into account an important reality: demography and its social and economic consequences. The first concerns the emergence of "new" leaders in the royal family, encompassing technocrats, businessmen, and Western-educated intellectuals. The second type of consequences is economic. According to the US Census Bureau, Saudi Arabia's population has climbed from 6 million in 1970 to 22 million in 2004.

Even if the birth rate declines significantly in the near future, the population would still reach 31 million in 2010, 42 million in 2020, and 55 million in 2030. The number of young Saudis between 15 and 24 will nearly double from 3.6 million in 2000 to 6.3 million in 2025. Economically speaking, the government assessed that unemployment for native Saudi males has already climbed to 12%, while many experts estimate that real and disguised unemployment is in excess of 20%. With a debt representing nearly 100% of its GNP, the Saudi government can no longer provide social services, modernize its infrastructure, and diversify its economy without major economic reform and foreign investment.<sup>56</sup>

The issue of succession is important, for it might impact on the future of US-Saudi relations. Like in other rentier states in the Arab world, negative changes in the economy could lead important sections of the youth to rise up against the regime. Radical Islamist movements have succeeded in other Arab states, such as Algeria and Egypt, in rallying the disenfranchised youth. The terrain is even more propitious in Saudi Arabia, where the conservative religious values of Wahhabism are so powerful. Given that Wahhabism also has a nationalist dimension it is obvious that the combination of religion and nationalism could be potentially detrimental to the US-Saudi relationship. Anti-American feelings in the Middle East and North Africa are extremely strong. The old elite in Saudi Arabia were pro-US; most of the members were educated in the United States or in the United Kingdom. But, US wars against Iraq, the abuses committed by Israel against Palestinians, US blind support for Israel, the perception of US policies as being anti-Muslim and anti-Arab, and the confusion between Islam, fundamentalism and terrorism have all combined to produce strong anti-American attitudes. Within the royal family itself, there are undoubtedly members who secretly approve of bin Laden's ideology and his actions against the United States. An anonymous scholar reported during a government conference gathering in the US in late 2002 that "there is a growing movement in Saudi Arabia whose ideology makes that of the members of al-Qaeda look like a moderate one." Apparently, the members of this new movement believe that the clerics in Saudi Arabia are too liberal. Thus, it remains to be seen whether the regime in Saudi Arabia will be able to contain this movement and prevent further radicalization. This can perhaps be done through providing adequate socioeconomic conditions for the rising educated elite to contain their frustrations and to initiate genuine democratization of the authoritarian political system. Undoubtedly, socioeconomic conditions and domestic political developments in the Saudi kingdom will in turn have an important impact on US-Saudi relations.

## **RADICAL ISLAMISM: A SOURCE OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY**

The foundation of the Saudi regime is the pact concluded in 1734 between Ibn Saud and the religious reformer Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab. The pact established an alliance between the clergy and the political authorities. At the same time, it separated affairs of state, where the Saud family was in charge, from religion, which was left in the hands of the religious establishment. The Saudi Muslim clergy favored *Hanbalism*, the most conservative of the Sunni schools. But because *Hanbalism* values civil peace above all else, the arrangement worked well, despite occasional crises. The question, however, always remained as to how long that alliance could last and when it would be called into question.

In the 1950s, the strongest critics of the presence of US bases in Saudi Arabia were Arab nationalists, mainly in Nasser's Egypt. Using ideological weapons, Riyadh turned to the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members were active in progressive/leftist Arab states. They settled in Saudi Arabia, took over the educational system, and used the traditional religious leadership with a much more political zeal. After the war in Afghanistan in the 1970s, the fusion between Wahhabism and the Muslim Brotherhood produced an active, though minority, tendency of *Takfiri jihadism*, whose adherents episodically turned to violence. The problem nowadays is one between the *jihadi* minority and part of the religious establishment, characterized by anti-Westernism and hostility to the West (Christians, Jews, and even Shiite Muslims). The dilemma for the royal family is how to eradicate the *jihadists* without confronting the religious leaders who share their ideas, and without calling its own religious legitimacy into question.

Since the 2001 anti-American assaults and the 2003 anti-Saudi attacks, it seems that Riyadh has taken a new approach toward the Islamist opposition. For the first time, the Saudi authorities did not claim that such attacks were foreign to Saudi society and also recognized the existence of "Saudi extremists." This was quite surprising, especially when Saudi authorities never reported the previous arrests of Islamists.<sup>57</sup> King Abdullah issued a special warning to those tempted to justify such crimes in the name of religion: "Anyone who tries to do so will be considered an accomplice of the terrorists and dealt with accordingly." This recognition came against the backdrop of what Prince Nayef, who controls the kingdom's secret police, had said only a few weeks earlier. Indeed, although it was known that hundreds of arrests had been made and about 100 suspects were thought to have links with al-Qaeda, Nayef had denied the existence of a terrorist network in Saudi Arabia. Just before the Iraq war, Saudi authorities had taken a number of measures, such as the removal from office of radical Imams, as part of the "antiterrorist" struggle. Oddly enough, this decision came only a few weeks

after 104 people signed a petition addressed to King Abdullah in January on constitutional reform. Signed by liberals and moderate Islamists, the petition called for local and legislative elections (*majlis al-shura*), guarantees of civil and minority rights, and greater rights for women. The Saudi government reacted in an unusual, rather positive way since the king agreed to meet a delegation of the signatories. But, no matter how positive this effort was, it might have been just a ploy to alleviate the tension that prevailed just before the war against Iraq. The move also served as a maneuver to curb rising criticism against the royal family and to avoid that the signatories garner wider support. Regardless, opposition and resistance to the regime exist both within the religious establishment and within the state apparatus. In fact, even inside the security agencies, the influence of the religious establishment and radical Islamism has grown considerably since the 1990s.<sup>58</sup>

But the continued deployment of 4,500 US troops in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War (1991) drew the fervor of radical Islamist organizations, which saw that presence as desecration of Islam and its holiest places. Ironically, US military presence was perhaps the most important catalyst in persuading bin Laden to launch his jihad against Washington. Conservative clerics and Saudi youth received and supported bin Laden's message. The new situation gave credence to those in the US, in both the Right and the Left, who have long been critical of Washington's close ties with the royal family. They had predicted that a permanent US military presence in the world's largest oil exporter, as well as holiest place for Muslims, would eventually turn the Saudi population against Washington and against the Saudi regime itself, which is the case today.

The first and foremost security goal for the Saudi monarchy and for Saudi society as a whole has been to confront and defeat Islamist extremism, both domestically and worldwide.<sup>59</sup>

At the international level, Saudi Arabia's fundamental national interests lie in a policy of inclusion and not exclusion; that is, maintaining correct and productive relations with Iran, Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Iraq, and other regional actors who bear directly on Saudi security.

Following the successive terrorist attacks in November 1995, June 1996, May 2003, and November 2003, this policy proved much more difficult to implement. Some analysts argue that even after most American forces withdraw from Saudi Arabia, Ousama bin Laden would wage war against the al Saud ruling family. But, they also believe that this would paradoxically work in favor of the al Saud family since it would dispel suspicion about Saudi collusion with al-Qaeda.

For former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft al Qaeda poses a greater threat to Saudi Arabia than it does to the United States. As to the

future of bilateral relations, "I see no reason we should try to distance ourselves from the established regime."<sup>60</sup> The regime is gradually changing and if it does not change like the US would like, it is not US "primary concern." James Baker shares nearly the same opinion. He suggests that the strategic ties with the kingdom must be protected and promoted. As for Saudi public opinion or the fundamentalist opposition, they are not an American problem: "In foreign and security policy, when you deal with a country, you deal with the government of that country. What are we supposed to do? Deal with the man on the street?"<sup>61</sup>

Other US officials expressed a different opinion regarding relations with Saudi Arabia. For the US ambassador to the UN under the Clinton administration, "Saudi Arabia has a problem, and because of the unique closeness of relations between us and Saudi Arabia, we've got a problem with them, which we have to solve."<sup>62</sup> However, at the present time, any American effort to undermine the Saudi royal family might backfire, create more anarchy, and lead to a more chaotic situation and would most likely bring more conservative rulers to power. Indeed, one can link this analysis to the fact that in spite of its claims Saudi Arabian foreign policy has consistently remained pragmatic, that is, Riyadh has not used Islam as a criterion to determine Saudi foreign relations, but merely as a legitimizing tool to keep the vital and strategic alliance with Wahhabism. Abroad, this alliance gave birth to a global influence in the Muslim world through financing "Islamic projects." In fact, "the Saudis adopted a policy of exporting Wahhabism to protect Wahhabism at home."<sup>63</sup> Thus, the principle of the dialectical relationship between domestic and foreign policy has been demonstrated in the Saudi case. But, this option could also be just a way of compensating for the internal lack of legitimacy through external influence.

## CONCLUSION

"Whether we like it or not, we will still need Saudi Arabia in the future, as we have in the past. And they will need us,"<sup>64</sup> wrote Hermann Frederick Eilts, a distinguished official who had a 32-year career in the Foreign Service and former US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1965-70). This assertion is based on the structural factors that characterize the bilateral relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The 1991 Gulf war and the liberation of Kuwait were the pretext for strengthening the American military presence in the region as a whole, and deepening the security dependence of these countries under the US umbrella. For more than a decade, the industrial-military complex found in the Gulf one of its most important markets in the world and took from those mono-exporters

a large part of its energy needs.<sup>65</sup> Then, private and semi-official ties were consolidated between influent Saudi personalities and the most powerful actors inside and around the White House. Besides, the perspective of the future internal political changes in the Wahhabi Kingdom are certainly going to consolidate these connections so much more as the next generation has been “prepared” to introduce the reforms which make the appearances of changing without modifying the content.

The result is that two key factors constitute the core of the relations between America and Saudi Arabia: economic and military security. That is why even if Saudis rebuffed war, worried about the post-conflict environment, the chaos on their border if things were to go badly, and about a democratically-elected Shiite neighbor, they actually provided the United States with considerable assistance in the war.<sup>66</sup> Like the big majority of Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia did not wish to see the war take place. Nonetheless, Saudi rulers did little to prevent the American plan because of their dependency on the United States for their security and the regime’s survival.

In contrast to what occurred in 1991, Riyadh has provided justification for its cooperation with the US on the common threats it shares with Washington. Al Qaeda has become the official common point and is part of the universal fight against terrorism in Saudi discourse. As for Americans, the preservation of the strong ties with the Saudis, “exporters of terrorism,” finds justification in the need to pressure the government to reform the political system and make it “politically correct,” i.e., more democratic. This situation provides the best explanation for the current status quo, whereby the kingdom rationalizes strong ties with the US on the basis of common threats the two countries face (al-Qaeda, international terrorism), whereas the US seeks to preserve the strong ties to be better able to bring about reforms in Saudi Arabia. From an American perspective, solid ties with the Saudis would allow US officials to nudge the Saudi monarchy to bring about more democracy to the kingdom. It would also allow the US to have a presence in the kingdom and control closely internal developments there. But the problem is how the US could support Saudi reformers without eliciting the wrath of anti-American clerics and radical Islamists. Worse still, how could reformers proceed without losing their legitimacy domestically and without giving credence to those Saudis who see them as the instruments of a Jewish-American (and Shiite) conspiracy to destroy Sunni (read Wahhabi) Islam? The outcome of the internal struggle will likely provide the answer to these questions.

NOTES

1. Frontline's Interviews with Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. National Security Adviser; Vali Nasr; James Baker; and Prince Bandar bin Sultan. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/ussaudi.html>
2. Series of Congressional Staff Briefings on "US Challenges and Choices in the Gulf," Middle East Institute Policy Brief: Saudi Arabia. 14 December 2001.
3. Kate Seelye, "Current State of U.S.-Saudi Relations," 2 November 2002, <http://www.npr.org/programs/wesat/transcripts/2002/nov/021102.seelye.html>
4. Charles W. Freeman, former US ambassador and frequent visitor to Riyadh, quoted by Jim Lobe, "Saudi Arabia, US: When the Relationship Sours," *Asia Time Online*, 26 January 2002.
5. Hermann Frederick Eilts, "US Saudi Relations after the September 11 Debacle," [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2001\\_10-12/eilts\\_saudi/eilts\\_saudi.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2001_10-12/eilts_saudi/eilts_saudi.html)
6. Michael Scott Doran, "The Saudi Paradox," *Foreign Affairs*, 83, 1 (January-February 2004): p. 36.
7. A good discussion can be found in Doran, "The Saudi Paradox," pp. 38 ff.
8. Abdullah al-Ghathami, quoted in Alain Gresh, "After the Winning of the War, Saudi Arabia: Radical Islam or Reform?" *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2003.
9. Hermann Frederick Eilts, "US Saudi Relations after the September 11 Debacle," in [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2001\\_10-12/eilts\\_saudi/eilts\\_saudi.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2001_10-12/eilts_saudi/eilts_saudi.html).
10. Chas. W. Freeman Jr., "Saudi Arabia: Enemy or Friend?," Conference organized by The Middle East Policy Council. <http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/989>.
11. In October 2002, the Saudi defence minister prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz said that Saudi Arabia has not severed its relations with Iraq. He indicated that "they [Iraqis] were the ones who severed relations with us since 1991 following their invasion of Kuwait. If they drop the weapon and do not attack us we will be brothers."
12. This Saudi position was conveyed by King Abdullah during his meeting with President Bush in April 2002. It was reiterated again by king Abdullah in an interview with the London-based Saudi-owned daily, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, May 11, 2002, and reprinted in *Okaz* (Saudi Arabia), May 12, 2002, which quotes the Prince as saying:

- “We are against an attack on Iraq and we hope the situation will not come to that.”
13. Rather very surprising was the Iraqi daily *Babil*, (owned by the late Saddam Hussein’s son) characterization of the GCC meeting as positive for Iraq.
  14. Nimrod Raphaeli, “Saudi-Iraqi Rapprochement,” *MEMRI: Inquiry and Analysis - Economic Report*, No. 98, June 16, 2002.
  15. *Politics*, 9/6/2002.
  16. *Special Dispatch Series*, No. 470, February 14, 2003.
  17. *Politics*, 13 September 2002.
  18. *Politics*, 13 September 2002.
  19. *Politics*, 16 September 2002.
  20. *Al-Hayat*, 1 February 2003, in *Special Dispatch Series* - No. 470, February 14, 2003.
  21. *Al-Gomhorriya*, January 9, 2003 in *Special Dispatch Series* - No. 470, February 14, 2003.
  22. “The Iraq Crisis (3): Saudi Newspapers Call on Saddam to Abdicate or Commit Suicide,” *Special Dispatch Series* - No. 470 February 14, 2003 No.470.
  23. *CSIS Report* quoted in Washington conferences focus on deteriorating US-Saudi relations, The Campus Watch website, at <http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/989>.
  24. George S. Hishmeh, Washington conferences focus on deteriorating US-Saudi relations, February 5, 2004 [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/05\\_02\\_04/art24.asp](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/05_02_04/art24.asp).
  25. Adel Al-Jubeir, foreign affairs advisor to King Abdullah, explained on 11 August 2003 that his country was ready to increase its production by an additional 1.3 million barrels even if it really has not seen a clients increase demand. The fact that there are high prices is due to factors having nothing do with supply and demand. People are concerned about the situation in Iraq, the situation with Yukos [oil company] in Russia, the possible instability in Venezuela. As a consequence, there is massive speculation by hedge funds, which are driving prices high. Nevertheless, demand in the US jumped 3.4 percent in 2004, because of the stockpiles of crude oil, which fell by 1.3 million barrels in August 2004. Excluding the Strategic Petroleum Preserve, crude inventories fell by 0.4 percent to 293 million barrels. China’s refineries have processed 17.2 percent more crude so far this year than in 2003. India expects the nation’s crude oil imports to rise by 11 percent between 2004 and 2005 with demand rising by nearly 4 percent.

26. Ali Al-Naimi, Saudi Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, in a statement released to the Saudi Press Agency, 19/ 08/ 2004. <http://www.saudi-us-relations.org/newsletter2004/saudi-relations-NID-08-19.htm>.
27. Sadad Al-Husseini, former executive vice-president of Saudi Aramco, predicted in May 2004 that “the Kingdom can certainly increase its production to 15 million barrels per day based on its existing reserves base.”
28. Frontline’s Interviews with Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. national security adviser; Vali Nasr, an authority on Islamic fundamentalism; James Baker, former U.S. secretary of state; and Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi ambassador to the U.S. See: “Analysis: US-Saudi Relations.” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/ussaudi.html>.
29. Bob Woodward’s best-selling book quoted by the *Washington Post*.
30. An E-mail Debate between Craig Unger and Rachel Bronson, “How does the Saudi relationship with the Bush family affect US foreign policy?” July 19, 2004. This exchange originally appeared in Slate: <http://www.slate.com/id/2103239/>.
31. David Walsh, “The US War in Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, 29 October 2001; “The dirty secret of US-Saudi relations,” *World Socialist Web Site* [www.wsws.org](http://www.wsws.org).
32. *Politics*, “Saudi Arabia-Iraq,” 10/15/2002.
33. Eric Schmitt, “Saudi Arabia Said to Assure U.S. on Use of Bases,” December 29, 2002.
34. Scott Peterson, “Relation with Saudis gets trickier,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 31, 2002 <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0531/p06s02-wome.html>.
35. General John P. Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff, cited in, Eric Schmitt, “Saudi Arabia Said to Assure U.S. on Use of Bases” *New York Times*, 29 December 2002..
36. Alain Gresh, “After the winning of the war Saudi Arabia: radical Islam or reform?” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2003.
37. Some analysts explain the official critics to the French opposition to second resolution on Iraq by linking it this discreet support.
38. These countries officially rejected this kind of intervention.
39. Alfred B. Prados, “Saudi Arabia: Current Issues and U.S. Relations,” *Congressional Research Service*, January 25, 2002
40. *Ibid.*
41. Riyadh has bought more than \$50 billion in US arms and construction contracts over the past 20 years with the hundreds of billions of dollars that it has earned as the world’s biggest oil exporter.

42. Almost 7000 members who receive as much as 40 percent of the country's oil revenues.
43. Anthony H. Cordesman and Arleigh A. Burke, "Ten Reasons for Re-forging US and Saudi Relations," Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 30, 2004.
44. Alain Gresh, "Saudi Arabia: breaking the silence," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, English language edition, May 2002.
45. CSIS report quoted in Washington conferences focus on deteriorating US-Saudi relations, The Campus Watch website, at <http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/989>.
46. King Abd al-Aziz (commonly known as Ibn Sa'ud) founded the Third Saudi State after recapturing the ancestral home of Riyadh in 1902.
47. Daniel Pipes, "Arabia's Civil War," *Wall Street Journal* (European Edition), May 14, 2003.
48. The Saudi family was allied to the Ikhwan who served it, bringing it the essential military victories.
49. After his death in 1953, Abdul Aziz was succeeded by King Saud, who abdicated in 1964 in favor of his half- brother, King Faisal, who was assassinated in 1975. He was succeeded by his half-brother Khalid. After the death of King Khalid in 1982, King Fahd became the ruler of Saudi Arabia.
50. Trained at Sandhurst, Lt. Gen. Mitab is regarded as a highly competent commanding officer with strong professional ties to the US military. He will probably pursue modernization programs aimed at improving and expanding the Guard's capabilities in counter-insurgency, intelligence gathering and tactical operations. The National Guard is configured to deal with threats to internal security.
51. Joseph A. Kechichian, "Succession in Saudi Arabia," Reviewed by Daniel Pipes, *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2002.
52. Abel Aziz ruled until his death in 1953 and made king his oldest surviving son, Sa'ud. The ruling family ousted the incompetent Sa'ud in 1964, and Faysal reigned until his assassination in 1975.
53. Te Sudairi Seven are generally regarded as 'progressives', pro-American and driven by the accumulation of wealth. The 'progressives,' led by Fahd and Sultan, are committed to the American alliance, rapid modernization, economic development, and high rates of oil production to moderate pricing. On the contrary, Abdullah is a traditionalist and nationalist. He believes in a less overt relationship with the U.S., preferring resistance to westernization and greater economic diversification.

54. While Abdullah was at a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Oman (December 1995) Sultan summoned members of the Supreme Religious Authority to seek their sanction of his claim to the throne and to dismiss Abdullah as Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard. Recognizing Sultan's attempt to seize power under the guise of religious approbation, the Ulema denied Sultan's petition. In reaction, Abdullah travelled to Al-Qissim, center of the powerful Shammar confederation of tribes to get their support. In Paul Michael Wihbey, "Succession in Saudi Arabia: The not so Silent Struggle," July 1997.
55. See, J. E. Peterson, "Succession in the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council," *Washington Quarterly*, (Autumn 2001): pp. 176-186.
56. Anthony H. Cordesman and Arleigh A. Burke, "Ten Reasons for Re-Forging US and Saudi Relations," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 30 January 2004.
57. "We must recognize that the extremist ideology exists in our midst," wrote a columnist on the governmental daily *al-Watan*. In November 2003, the Interior Minister, Prince Nayef, initially accused the Muslim Brotherhood.
58. This period witnessed an important growth of the Islamist movement throughout the Muslim world as a whole, as illustrated by the examples of Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Indonesia, and the Balkans.
59. "Saudi-American Security Relations," An Adaptation of Remarks Presented at the Saudi-US Relations Symposium, Portland State University, 26 January 2004. Original publication on web site, 30 January 2004. <http://www.jepeterson.net/id12.htm> .
60. Frontline's interviews with Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. national security adviser; Vali Nasr, an authority on Islamic fundamentalism; James Baker, former U.S. secretary of state; and Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi ambassador to the U.S. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/ussaudi.html>.
61. Frontline's interviews with Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. National Security Adviser; Vali Nasr, an authority on Islamic fundamentalism; James Baker, former U.S. secretary of state; and Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/ussaudi.html>.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Muqtedar Khan, "The Empire and the Kingdom: Saudi-US Relations in Crisis Again," <http://www.glocaleye.org/SaudiArabia.htm>.
64. Hermann Frederick Eilts, "US Saudi Relations after the September 11 Debacle," [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2001\\_10-12/eilts\\_saudi/eilts\\_saudi.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2001_10-12/eilts_saudi/eilts_saudi.html).

65. According to *Annual Energy Outlook 2004*, published by the American Administration, OPEC will provide 60% of the expected augmentation of the US oil importation between 2002 et 2025. Hence, the American importation from the Gulf will increase from 53% to 70%.
66. “How does the Saudi relationship with the Bush family affect U.S. foreign policy?” Item of Interest: An E-mail debate between Craig Unger and Rachel Bronson, July 19, 2004.