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### SAUDI GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE AND FOREIGN POLICY

BY

COLONEL AL-MUTAIRI NAIF  
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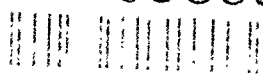
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SAUDI GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE AND FOREIGN POLICY  
AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Saudi National Guard

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## ABSTRACT

**AUTHOR:** al-Mutairi Naif, Saudi National Guard

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The future of Saudi Arabia, which occupies the greatest part of the Arabian peninsula, is rooted in its history and culture since the emergence of Islam in the seventh century. The leadership authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia follows Islamic Law, the Shari'a, which is based in the teachings of the Quran, the Holy Moslem Book. The executive and legislative branches of the Government are represented by the King and the council of ministers. Twenty ministries and several government agencies help in the smooth functioning of the government. The reunification of the Arabian Peninsula under the Saudi government has brought hope that the Peninsula will regain its position among the world's nations, and resume a pivotal role in the international community.

## INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia forms the largest part of the Arabian Peninsula, covering well over two million square kilometers or 900,000 square miles. Stretching from the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba to the Arabian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula is considered one of the most strategic locations in the world. To the south and east, much smaller states border the Saudi kingdom. Along the shores of the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman there is the state of Kuwait. Next comes the island of Bahrain near the Saudi coast and the Qatar Peninsula, followed by the United Arab Emirates and the state of Oman. To the south of Saudi Arabia lies the Yemen Arab Republic, facing the entrance of the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia is bordered by Jordan and Iraq to the north.<sup>1</sup> Several of the frontiers between Saudi Arabia and these states are undefined. Saudi Arabia faces Iran across the Arabian Gulf and Egypt, the Sudan, and Ethiopia across the Red Sea.

The Arabian platform has its highest part to the west along the Red Sea and it slopes gradually down from west to east. Therefore, the terrain alongside the Red Sea is often mountainous, whereas the Arabian Gulf coast is flat. Because of these different physical features, the climate differs from one part to another. However, nearly all of Saudi Arabia is hot and dry. Along the eastern and western coasts there is high humidity

with high temperatures in the summer--around 100 degrees F. With humidity in the 90 percent range.<sup>2</sup> In the southwest of Asir where there are mountains, the weather is rather cold in winter with snow in the mountains. The extreme south of Saudi Arabia, the uninhabited Rub al-Khali, is almost without rain and is one of the driest areas in the world.

Saudi Arabia contains five major regions. In the southwest, adjacent to Yemen, is the province of Asir where the mountains rise above 9,000 feet. It is the most fertile area, being the only area of Saudi Arabia to receive regular rainfall. Its regional capital is Abha. The two principal sacred cities of Islam, Mecca and Madina, and the commercial center of the country, Jeddah, are located in Hejaz province, which is located along the Red Sea. East of the mountains and in the heart of the kingdom is the province of Najd, where the capital of the country, Riyadh, is located. Along the Arabian Gulf coast lies the eastern province, al-Hasa, containing the richest oil fields in the world. The northern province, with frontiers with Jordan and Iraq, is located in the northern-most part of Saudi Arabia.

According to a 1979 estimate, the population was 7,553,000 including approximately 1.5 million non-resident workers.<sup>3</sup> Many factors have contributed to the difficulty of obtaining an accurate population count, such as the high mobility of foreign workers, illegal immigrants, and a large nomad population. In addition, many families traditionally do not accept the concept of a census or population count and therefore give false

information.

Saudi Arabian history is not confined to recent years, as some historians indicate, but goes back many centuries to a time when the name of the country was different. Saudi Arabia takes its name from the Saudi family when, in 1932, King Abdul-Aziz reunited the country after centuries of weakness and separation. The real beginning of this Holy Land's history was the birth of the prophet Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, in 570 A.D. Muslims refer to the period before Muhammad as the jahiliyah, or time of ignorance of the one God and lack of understanding knowledge.

#### SAUDI POLITICAL SYSTEMS

In Saudi Arabia, political roles are directly defined by religious principles. All roles in government are based on the rules for government that are presented in the Shar'ia. In the Saudi Arabia governmental system, the definitions of religious roles are directly transposed onto political roles because they are one and the same. Government and religion are not separate but are one institution, with government, like school, economy, and so forth, being subparts of the comprehensive system of Islam. Ahmad H. Dahlan, a young Saudi specialist in Public Administration, stresses that the Islamic political system is based on equality, social justice and service to the people. Dahlan first compares the Saudi government with the ideal form of government in Islam. He then analyzes in depth its Islamic constitution to convince his readers that the Saudi monarchy is a

"constitutional monarchy" and not an absolute one. Saudi Arabia has an Islamic form of government with power divided between the leader, the council of ministers, the majlis al shurah (or Consultative Council), and the judicial legal system. The Shariah, derived from the Quran and the Sunnah, forms the basis of the Saudi constitution. The Saudi constitution, which is under the strict inspection of the body of Islamic scholars (the Ulama), limits and divides the King's power, the power of his council of ministers, and the power of his governors and the chiefs of public institutions. There is a direct linkage between past Islamic tradition and the present day system of Saudi constitutional monarchy, and between public and traditional opinions, (or shurah) and policy making. The open channels of communication exist in the Kingdom and the Islamic egalitarian spirit is alive. Strict judicial penalties are imposed on those who deviate from the law. Saudi Arabia is an excellent example of a theocratic state and Islamic principles continue to be the generating and unifying force in the Saudi government. Islamic doctrine remains the supreme law of the land. Accordingly, all political issues are shaped by the teachings of Islam. In Saudi Arabia the Majlis (open meeting) is one of the concepts of which both common people and officials are proud. This concept is unique in the world of political systems in its ability to solve problems, and to keep the government aware of the needs of the people. The Majlis is a meeting between the citizens and their leaders, which takes place on a regular basis. Any person



desiring to see a governor, or even the King, can attend a Majlis and request personal help, or submit suggestions or a grievance. This is a democratic tradition carried out from the days of Abdulaziz.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Four Characteristics of the Saudi System

1. Political participation is informal: Respected community leaders speak, usually, for the ordinary citizen. Consultation and consensus are part of this process.
2. Participation is personal: The system favors one-on-one access and personal attention, rather than rules and bureaucracy.
3. Participation is idealistic: Ideally, compromise would be limited to material details, while religious principles would be followed.
4. Participation is through the Majlis: Without direct elections, Saudis influence political decisions through consultation and consensus, not one man-one vote elections or representative institutions.<sup>5</sup>

#### Structure of the Islamic Political System.

The Islamic political system is based on three principles: Touhid (unity of God), Risalah (prophethood), and Khalifah (caliphate). A comprehensive understanding of the Islamic concept of government must necessarily include an understanding of these three principles.

Touhid is a term for the belief that there is no God but the Creator, sustainer and master of this universe and of all that exists in it, organic or inorganic. He alone is the lawgiver. He has the right to command or forbid. All worship and obedience are due to him alone, and not to any other gods. Life, in all its forms, has been created by God, and not by man. The things of the world are the bountiful provisions of God to humanity, to be used with wisdom. Thus, it is not for mankind to decide the purpose of existence or to set his moral code. In accordance with the principle of the unity of God, an Islamic government does not consider that human beings have any right to alter God's revealed law (the Quran). God alone is the master and his commandments are the law of Islam, applying to all aspects of human life, including government.<sup>6</sup>

Risalah (prophethood, messengership) is the term for the medium through which mankind receives the law of God. In Islam, there are two aspects to this source: (1) The Book (Quran) in which God has expounded His Law, and (2) the authoritative interpretation of the Book of God by the Messenger of God, Muhammad, through his words and actions in his capacity as the representative of God. The broad principles on which the government should be based, and its goals, have been set forth in the Book of God (the Holy Quran). Further, the revealed Book established a model of how to live, as detailed in the extensive record of his traditions. The combination of these two elements, in Islamic terminology, is termed the "Shari'ah."<sup>7</sup>

The third principle of Islam is Khalifah, which means "viceregency." The place of man, according to Islam, is that of God's representative on earth. With the qualities and abilities God has given to man, man is required to exercise Divine authority in this world within the prescribed limits revealed by God. Man is to exercise responsibility and leadership accordingly. A government, in the Islamic concept, should therefore be responsible for the welfare of the people and provide leadership within the bounds of religious law. The state that is established in accordance with this political theory will have to fulfill the purpose and intent of God by working on this earth in conformity with his instructions and injunctions, prohibitions, and commandments.<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Quran clearly states that the purpose of government is to establish justice and to develop the virtues defined in the Quran, and to prevent people from harming themselves or others. This means that the state in Islam is not intended for political administration only, nor for the fulfillment of the special interests of any particular set of people. As it is written in the Holy Quran:

when ye judge between people that ye judge with justice.<sup>9</sup>

The Islamic State can plan its welfare program in every age and in any environment. Whether it be relations between the rulers and the ruled within the state, or the relations of the state with other states, precedence always must

be given to truth, honesty, and justice over material considerations.

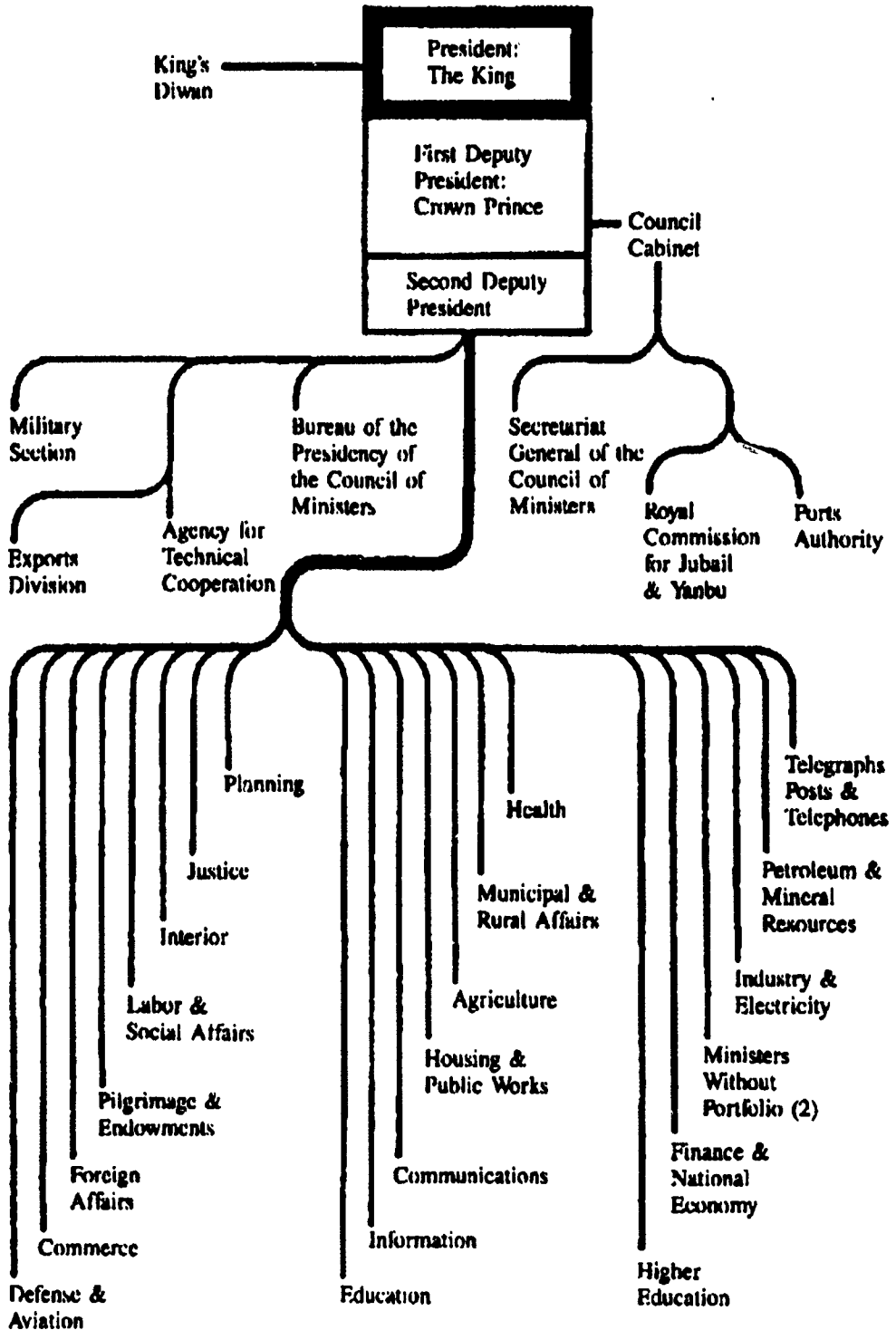
### The Government and the Council of Ministers in Saudi Arabia

The form of government in any society is the result of many factors--geographic, economic, social, beliefs, and traditions. Therefore, to understand the nature of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, one must understand something of its background; otherwise, a clear comparison cannot be made. The government of Saudi Arabia derives its legitimacy from Islam and Shari'ah law. However, the Kingdom has not fully developed a written constitution based on these Islamic sources, which set forth the Basic principles of political and legal authority. The primary political institution is the council of ministers, whose political activity is a holistic process that contains both legislative and executive power. There are influential interest groups in Saudi Arabia, but there is no political power structure outside of the monarchy and Council of Ministers. Ultimate power is undisputedly unified in the person of the King himself. Influential groups in Saudi Arabia interact and exert their influence within the monarchical framework, but hardly as autonomously powerful groups. Thus, Saudi Arabia has no political parties, nor any elected legislative body to shape political policy. the King is assisted by a royal cabinet, the

equivalent of an executive staff. The King can maintain his authority only so long as he upholds and applies the principles of Islamic law enshrined in the Qur'an and Shari'ah law. It is the royal family that selects the King from its ranks on the basis of seniority, from among brothers who are direct descendants of King Abd al-Aziz.<sup>10</sup>

The current government in Saudi Arabia has developed as one institution of an evolving society. The country began originally as an Islamic society, not just because all of the population was Islamic, but because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the birthplace of the Islamic religion and the place to which all Moslems direct their faces in their prayers. It was the general desire of the people to insist that their Islamic beliefs (Shar'ia) remain the foundation in creating a modern Islamic country.

# The Saudi Council of Ministers



SOURCE: Fouad Al-Farsy, Saudi Arabia, 1986.

## FOREIGN POLICY GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Gulf Cooperation Council States

Human resources are the region's most valuable assets for achieving further development in the Gulf. In fact, the Gulf region has proven to the outside world that its states can integrate in many fields.

Culturally, historically, geographically and politically the GCC states represent a rare instance of regional homogeneity.

The general perception of vulnerability associated with the vast wealth of the region, its limited military capabilities, its relatively small and dispersed population, the extensive land mass of the Arabian Peninsula, and the belligerence of some of the neighboring states added urgency to the quest for cooperation begun on February 4, 1981, when the foreign ministers of the six Gulf nations gathered in Riyadh. After years of discussion and months of intense planning and endless meetings, the Gulf Cooperation Council was formed. Three months later on May 25, 1981, the council members, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman signed the GCC charter. Consisting of a preamble and 22 articles, the charter explains in great detail the infrastructure and comprehensive goals of the council.<sup>11</sup>

Four basic objectives for the GCC are outlined in article four of the charter:

- o to coordinate, integrate and establish close ties between the member-nations in all fields;
- o to deepen and consolidate the ties, links and bonds of cooperation which already exist in the region;
- o to establish similar systems in various fields including

finance, economics, commerce, education, culture, health, social affairs, information, tourism, legal and administrative affairs; and  
o to encourage scientific and technological progress in mining, industry, agriculture, scientific research, joint ventures, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Although the GCC is not exclusively an economic association, it is perhaps the most promising effort in economic cooperation among developing countries in recent history. In fact, the GCC has been successful in establishing a number of agreements in the fields of finance, foreign affairs, education and energy.

The contacts that the GCC countries have had with the rest of the world have increased enormously in the recent years. Their economic relationships with the other countries have become stronger and more prominent. The root cause, of course, has been the vast increase in their wealth and in their strategic importance, as the world has become increasingly dependent on them for critical energy supplies.

The GCC region represents the main source of crude oil exports for the rest of the world. Its vast natural gas reserves have scarcely been exploited to date, and offer great potential for the future. A major advantage of the region is that its geology makes the processes of extracting oil and gas relatively cheap. Low cost of transportation gives the oil industry a further natural advantage not shared by gas. In addition to oil and gas as sources of cheap energy for industrial and household consumption, the region has a vast potential for the future harnessing of solar energy, owing to its climatic characteristics.



If energy resources provide the potential for industrialization, water resources represent one of the most important drawbacks to realizing that potential. Some production processes are more water-intensive than others, but in general both industrialization and agricultural expansion imply a rising level of water utilization. The scarcity of cheap water may become an increasingly severe constraint on economic development. Estimates for the region as a whole indicate a surplus of water supply over demand for the next few years, but the aggregates mask the existence of scarcities in many parts of the region.<sup>13</sup> The largest fraction of the total supply is in certain areas of Saudi Arabia. Elsewhere the region is characterized generally by potential shortages. Moreover, water is largely a shared resource in the most fundamental sense: the hydro geology of the region is such that attempts to increase the supply in one area or country may damage or reduce the supply in another. Water is critical to the economy of the region, and the management and development of water resources are basic concerns for the GCC if it is to have a coordinated and effective policy of economic development.

The potential for developing a strong agricultural base in the GCC region is restricted by the limited availability of arable land. Most of the arable land that is available is located in Saudi Arabia and Oman, and even here the productivity of the land is heavily dependent on the controlled supply of water. The stocks of fish in the GCC region are largely

concentrated in the Arabian Sea. Stocks in the Gulf are not as large, but nevertheless substantial. They, too, offer some development potential.

The metallogenesis of the GCC region is associated mainly with crystalline basement outcrops. By far the largest share of known deposits of metallic minerals are located in Saudi Arabia, although there are deposits also in Oman, and to a lesser extent in the United Arab Emirates.

Non-metallic mineral deposits are distributed more generally throughout the GCC region. Present production from these deposits includes gypsum, limestone, clays, silica sand, gravel, and various types of ornamental stone. There are significant known deposits of phosphate rock in Saudi Arabia which have not been exploited to date, and which offer potential for future production. Aside from copper in Oman, there appears to be no significant exploitation of the region's metallic mineral deposits at the present time. Metals for which extraction is possible include copper, iron, zinc, aluminum, gold and silver.

Forest resources of the region are, of course, negligible.<sup>14</sup>

## Military Capabilities

In the last decade, the Gulf region became the central concern of the superpowers because of its possession of some 60 to 70 percent of the former non communist world's estimated oil reserves. That evolution began in 1968 when the British announced their intention to withdraw from the Gulf region. That action caused the major Gulf powers (Iraq and Iran) to re-assess their political and military policies in the area. These two regional powers decided to establish strong defense forces in an effort to consolidate their influence in the area. The Gulf states had, therefore, to focus on the issue of defense and national security as a matter of urgency. Self-defense from potential threats by other regional actors with more developed economic and military capabilities was an absolute necessity.

The Gulf states have now completed the process of reaching an internal security agreement. Certain areas of cooperation require a surrender of national prerogatives: national force planning and development, national force arms and deployment, acceptance of common intelligence and information sharing, and so forth. The military of the GCC is not powerful and is still forming, but it has vitality. The GCC relies on a very advanced and effective military force, massive joint exercises, unification of military equipment, unification of command and training, and increasing the technical knowledge of military personnel. The people and the governments of the Gulf have a strong faith in the future of

their military power and cooperation.<sup>15</sup> A breakdown of manpower and main equipment of the forces the GCC States is shown below:<sup>16</sup>

Country	Manpower	Tank	Arty	C/Aircraft	Helicopters	Frigate/ Missile/ Craft
Saudi Arabia	65,000	550	450	180	20	21
Sultanate of Oman	25,500	390	75	63	23	12
United Arab Emirates	43,000	130	155	60	19	15
Bahrain	3,350	54	20	12	8	6
Qatar	7,000	24	14	19	20	9
Kuwait	<u>20,300</u>	<u>275</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>23</u>
Total	164,150	1,072	804	370	108	86

The following is a breakdown of non-GCC forces of the neighboring countries prior to the Gulf war:

Country	Manpower	Tank	Arty	C/Aircraft	Helicopters	Destroyers, Frigates, And Missile
Iran	604,500	550	900	190	110	42
Iraq	1,000,000	5,500	3,700	510	160	43
Yemen	64,000	1,140	810	230	12	8

In analyzing the present Iranian build-up and power in comparison to that of Saudi Arabia, one must recognize the superiority of Iran's armed forces in all areas. The assessments

of possible danger to Saudi Arabia's national security can be reduced by some degree by defense readiness. The future will increasingly reveal the vital importance of Saudi Arabia's national security, not only to the Gulf region's security but also to the entire world's security.

Significant challenges to peace in this entire region remain. Iraq and Iran are the two countries which pose the greatest threat of aggressive action. Iraq after the Gulf war, retains a significant military capability which can threaten its neighbors. Iran is moving quickly to restructure and rearm its military, and remains a threat to the Gulf States.

The region's strategic importance extends far beyond oil. Strategic waterways contain three critical chokepoints: the Suez Canal, the Bab Al Mandab, and the Strait of Hormuz. In peace time, these sea lines of communication are essential to the smooth flow of world commerce. During conflict, they are critical for military deployment.

During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the US expanded its military-to-military relationship with the Gulf states. In return, Saudi Arabia provided almost \$17 billion to the US in support of the war effort. Kuwait has paid more than \$16 billion to the US to reimburse it for expenses incurred during the Gulf War, and signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement to facilitate US access to ports and airfields and promote common security interests. The US and Bahrain also signed a defense cooperation agreement.

The US should support the legitimate security assistance needs of its friends to sustain their confidence in it. Saudi Arabia plans to expand its armed forces to take a more active military role in the region through multilateral security arrangements.<sup>17</sup>

## TERRITORIAL CLAIMS IN THE GULF REGION

The Arabian Gulf region is considered essential to the stability and national security of Saudi Arabia. Until the end of the 1960s, the security of the Gulf was assured by the strong British hold on most of its shores. When Britain withdrew, it left a gap. Iran seized the advantage and escalated its military power with the help of the United States and became the "policeman of the Gulf". Even before the Iranian occupation of the three Arab Islands, the two Tunbs (Greater and Lesser) and the island of Abu Musa. Saudi Arabia distrusted Iranian colonial intentions in the area. Iran had claimed territorial waters belonging to Arab Gulf states, and also claimed Bahrain.

On the other hand, there was a long history of indefinite boundaries in the region because of the nomadic nature of the Arabian Tribes. With the discovery of oil, economic factors played the major role in establishing boundaries between the peninsula's states, but most of them were not fully defined. Hence, for the sake of Saudi security and the security of all nations involved, Saudi Arabia started to resolve its territorial conflicts with its neighbors in the early 1930s. Saudi foreign policy aimed at improving its relations with the Gulf states, and it resolved its conflicts with Iraq and the UAE between 1974 and 1975. Although Saudi Arabia and Iran have no common border, they share a large area in the Arabian Gulf. The division of territorial waters between the countries seems easy from a

geographical angle, but the matter of strategic and mineral or natural resources is very complicated.

Due to a long history of rivalry between the Arabs on one side, and Iranians on the other, the solution to any dispute between them must take into account many psychological, historical, and social factors. In considering disputes between these two parties, one has to remember that these two states along with Iraq are the major military, economic, and political powers in the Gulf region. In addition, the two countries maintain different philosophies. Saudi Arabia wants security for its neighboring Arab states as well as for itself. Iran, on the other hand, has moved politically and militarily to dominate the Gulf. However, there are many elements of similarity which provide the ground for mutual understanding between the two countries. The Islamic influence in both countries, their mutual economic interests, their refusal to permit superpower interference in the region, and their ties relating to oil all could united Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The disputes between the countries started in 1957 when Saudi Arabia gave oil concession rights to the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) to explore for oil in the Gulf off the Saudi coast. A dispute arose concerning rights to the continental shelf and thus, in turn, to ownership of the resources lying beneath the sea floor. In 1965, Saudi Arabia and Iran concluded negotiations in which they agreed to divide the territorial waters of the Gulf equally. Although the agreement was generally



successful, it was a failure in some points. The agreement did not solve the sovereignty conflict over Farsi and Arabi Islands, and there were some points that the agreement omitted entirely. This made the implementation of the agreement difficult, if not impossible. An agreement to solve the maritime territorial dispute between the two parties was finally reached late in 1968. They agreed, first, that Farsi Island was to be under Iranian sovereignty, while Arabi Island was placed under Saudi sovereignty. Second, the two parties recognized a twelve-mile territorial limit for each island, but because the distance between them is less than 24 miles, they drew a mid-line of 500 meters in the middle as a neutral zone in which no oil operations were to be permitted. Third, they united the Saudi oil well (Morgan) and the Iranian one (Feridun) in a mutual continental shelf area, as the Geneva convention had suggested in 1958. The agreement was an important step regarding Saudi security because it prevented a dispute with Iran.<sup>18</sup>

As noted, Iran has long been ambitious to gain a foothold in the Arab Gulf states. But Iran's claim to sovereignty over Bahrain is a special case due to the island's long occupation by foreign powers, including Iran. Bahrain lies only 20 miles from the Saudi east coast at al Hasa; in that respect, any foreign intervention on the island could easily threaten Saudi Arabia's national security. Therefore, the Iranian claim to Bahrain is a direct threat to Saudi national security. During the 1960's, Iran renewed its claim to Bahrain, especially when the British

announced their intention to withdraw from the Gulf region. Because of its sizable military power and the presence of a large Iranian minority in Bahrain, Iran believed it could support its claim. When the United Nations asked the Bahrainis to decide for themselves whether to be independent or be part of Iran, the Bahrainis chose independence. In 1971, Iran gave up its claim. Saudi Arabia supported Bahraini independence, and King Faisal promised to connect his mainland to Bahrain by building a twelve-mile bridge. He also vowed to defend the island "under any circumstances."

Although Saudi Arabia has settled most of its territorial disputes, some boundaries are still undefined, i.e., Yemen, Qatar, and Oman. With the development of the social, political, and economic status of the Gulf region, disputes can arise as signs of revived nationalistic feeling. Past disputes may produce future ones; hence, the previous analysis of regional conflicts and disputes must be taken into consideration while analyzing and predicting possible future ones. From the Saudi point of view, bilateral agreements are the best way to settle such matters. However, Saudi Arabia's future national security will depend, to a great degree, on the establishment of accurate and precise international boundaries between Saudi Arabia and its non-GCC neighboring states on the one hand, and among the GCC states on the other.<sup>19</sup>

## Strategic Cooperation with the U.S.

The American interest in the Gulf area goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century, in the 1930s, when there was a turning point in the global race for political and strategic superiority. Most of the Gulf states during that period were backward due to long histories of isolation, occupation, and local and /or regional disputes. The British domination over most of the Gulf states at that time was a matter of, first, economic and commercial interest and, second, strategic and military interest. However, the British influence was threatened when Ibn Saud revived his ancestors' dream of uniting the divided Arabian Peninsula. Although the British managed to secure their colonial interest against Ibn Saud's unification movement, in the long-run Ibn Saud and his successors prepared the local elements to gain their independence and rule themselves.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been based on Islamic doctrine since its establishment.

The close cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States may be considered to rest on mutual interests: economic, political and ideological, and military. These three factors play different parts in protecting Saudi national security from any outside intervention or aggression and in importance according to the circumstances; i.e., during the Gulf crisis, the

military factor in Saudi security took priority.<sup>20</sup>

### The Economic Factor

The American policy reflects the importance of the economic factor of the region, as a huge and lucrative market to the United States business as well as to international finance.

The sharp rise in oil prices resulted in a huge surplus of "petro dollars," which the United States wanted to be recycled in America to help the domestic economy and to stabilize the dollar. For Saudis the American market was an attractive one. It provided a secure investment climate, which every investor values, and it had the mechanism and the capacity to absorb large sums of money. Although the exact amount of these investments are not officially disclosed, it was estimated in mid-1980 to be over \$70 billion.

The economic cooperation between the two nations was further cemented by the creation of the United States-Saudi Arabia joint commission in June 1974 by Prince Fahd (now the king) and the former Secretary of State Kissinger. Funded by Saudi Arabia, the commission provide, various kinds of American economic and technical assistance to the Kingdom. It is co-chaired by the Saudi Minister of Finance and National Economy and the American Secretary of the Treasury. Furthermore, the Saudi aid to Arab and Islamic countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, and Somalia reduced the American financial burden.<sup>21</sup>

## The Political Factor

The Saudi policy of moderation, is seen by Washington as an important factor in maintaining stability in the region.

Following the Saudi emergence as a leader in the Arab world after 1973, the United States sought Saudi support for the peace process in the Middle East. But to the disappointment of the United States, the Saudis opposed the Camp David Accord, since it failed to address the rights of the Palestinian people. Fahd, then the Crown Prince, devised an alternative eight-point peace plan. In September, 1982, during the twelfth Arab Summit Conference in Fez, Morocco, the Arab States approved this plan. The points included:

1. Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territory occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem;
2. The removal of Israeli settlements on Arab land established after 1967;
3. Guaranteed freedom of worship for all religions in the holy places;
4. Affirmation of the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homes and compensation to those who decide not to do so;
5. United Nations control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a transitional period not exceeding a few months;
6. The establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital;
7. Affirmation of the right of all states in the region to live in peace; and,
8. The United Nations or some of its members to guarantee and implement these principles.<sup>22</sup>

This plan became the basis for the "Fez Declaration." Many

leaders throughout the world have hailed the Fahd peace plan as a basis for achieving peace in the Middle East, especially in regard to solving the Palestinian dilemma. The Palestinian dilemma is still one of the major Saudi-American policy disagreements. The problem played a major role in limiting the depth of Saudi-American interests and mutual benefits. However, there is much common ground for the two states, providing them with a solid political basis to bridge certain mutual problems. Many political aims seem identical for the states; i.e., anti-communism, anti-radicalism, obtaining stability and the national security of the Gulf states and the Middle East, and bringing peace and justice to the world. These mutual political goals are the main reason for their close relationship since the establishment of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

#### Cultural Factor

Saudi financial resources enable it to bring educational personnel from the United States, and about 60 percent of Saudi students abroad pursue their education at American universities and colleges. Though there are some countries that have more of their students in the United States than Saudi Arabia, Saudi students in the United States do not work (even part-time), since the government pays them adequate funds. They therefore do not represent a burden on the domestic employment.

## The Military Factor

Saudi interests in maintaining stability in the region, guarding the flow of oil and opposing radicalism, make the Kingdom's security a great concern to the United States. Therefore, it is no wonder that the military relationship is a key factor in the overall relationship between the two nations.

The United States is involved in all sectors of the Saudi Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force). Under a 1973 agreement America helped transform the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) from a paramilitary unit into a mobile strike force. In addition to arms sales, thousands of Saudis received military training in America. The United States Military Training Mission (USMTM) has provided training in the Kingdom since 1951. Moreover, the United States Army Corps of Engineers has handled various military projects in Saudi Arabia worth over \$20 billion by 1986.<sup>23</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Saudi Arabia has experienced progress and prosperity. It has wisdom and institutions that function. The country does not want to turn inward with its wealth; it wants to turn outward and share with the world that needs solutions, make its contribution and find its place on the world scene as a modern country of religion, peace, stability, a promoter of prosperity in all countries of the world, and be honored by protecting the two holy places of the moslem world. Saudi Arabia is a consultive,

Islamic monarchical government finding its place in the world today. On the strategic level, the Middle East has changed dramatically. The enormous changes in global relationships, the Gulf crisis, the initiation of an achievable peace process and the recognition of the critical importance of the resources of the Gulf to world stability, have contributed to a redefinition of the strategic equation in the region. The Gulf is now seen as the most important strategic asset in that part of the world, and Saudi Arabia's strategic role has also been enhanced. The GCC led by Saudi Arabia is an outstanding example of regional cooperation. Since it was formed in May 1981, the GCC has developed and deepened political, economic, and military cooperation among its six member states: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. The GCC has served as an important source of stability and security in a troubled area of the world.

The relations between the US and Saudi Arabia are at their warmest ever. The United States' willingness to recognize common interests with a stable Middle East and Gulf, and its actions to secure a rational world oil market, have greatly contributed to these enhanced relations. Similarly, America's cooperation in security affairs, whether it is in training and joint exercises or in providing needed equipment and technology, have been important components in shaping the opportunities which exist in this decade.

Saudi Arabia needs the support of its friends in the United



States. Just as the Marshall Plan transformed Europe and Japan after World War II, the United States has a key role to play in assuring the stability and security of the region. However, it is not enough to construct a series of bilateral strategic agreements which define our ties solely in terms of defense agreements. What is required is an acknowledgment by both parties of the need for long-term relationships in virtually all spheres of human activity.<sup>24</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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