

**BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND SAUDI ARABIA:
1990-2003**

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ABSTRACT

BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND SAUDI ARABIA: 1990-2003

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The objective of this thesis is to analyze the bilateral relations between the US and Saudi Arabia in the period between 1990 and 2003. In this context, the aim is to find out an answer to the question of how the relations between the US-Saudi Arabia have strained after September 11. Accordingly, the thesis contains four main parts. In the first part of the study, the historical background of US-Saudi relations up to the 1990-1991 Gulf Crisis, which was based on oil for security exchange, is studied. In the second part of the study, the security dilemma of Saudi Arabia, the challenges Saudi Arabia faced during the 1990s, and how these challenges affected its relations with the US are discussed. In the third part, September 11 and how global issues like war on terrorism, war in Iraq and democratization in the Middle East came into the agenda of the relationship is scrutinized. Accordingly, this thesis has reached to the

following conclusions: First, after September 11, the relations between the two countries became more problematic and have affected by both global issues as well as domestic debates in both countries. Second, despite increasingly problematic nature of the relationship, the two countries managed to continue their strategic relationship, particularly as regards to “war on terrorism”.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, the US, Oil for security, Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Socio-political change in Saudi Arabia, September 11, War on terrorism, the Iraqi war, Democracy in the Middle East.

ÖZ

AMERİKA BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLERİ VE SUUDİ ARABİSTAN'IN İKİLİ İLİŞKİLERİ: 1990-2003

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Bu tezin amacı, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile Suudi Arabistan'ın ikili ilişkilerini 1990 ile 2003 yılları arasındaki zaman diliminde incelemektir. Bu bağlamda, amaç Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Suudi Arabistan'la ilişkilerinin 11 Eylül'den sonra nasıl gerginleştiği sorusuna cevap bulmaktır. Tez dört ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile Suudi Arabistan'ın 1990-1991 Körfez Krizi'ne kadar ki süreçte petrol karşılığında güvenlik üzerine kurulmuş olan ilişkilerinin tarihsel geçmişi çalışılmıştır. İkinci kısımda, Suudi Arabistan'ın güvenlik ikilemi, Suudi Arabistan'ın 1990'larda karşılaşmış olduğu problemler ve bu problemlerin Suudi Arabistan'ın Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile ilişkilerini nasıl etkilediği tartışılacaktır. Üçüncü bölümde, 11 Eylül ve terörle savaş, Irak Savaşı ve Ortadođu'da demokratikleşme süreci gibi küresel konuların ikili ilişkilerin

gündeminde nasıl yer aldığı mercek altına alınacaktır. Böylece, bu tez çalışmasında aşağıdaki sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır. İlk olarak, 11 Eylül sonrası dönemde iki ülke arasındaki ilişkiler daha sorunlu olmuştur; ayrıca ikili ilişkiler, küresel konulardan ve iç politika tartışmalarından da etkilenmiştir. İkinci olarak, gittikçe artan sorunlara rağmen, her iki ülke stratejik ilişkilerini özellikle terörle savaş konusunda devam ettirmeyi başarmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suudi Arabistan, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, güvenlik için petrol, Irak'ın Kuveyt'i işgali, Suudi Arabistan'daki sosyo-politik değişiklik, 11 Eylül, Terörle savaş, Irak Savaşı, Ortadoğu'da demokrasi.

To my dear mother Seyhan and father Ali Şeref

and of course,

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIPAC.....	The American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AWACS	Air Warning and Control System
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
RDF.....	Rapid Deployment Force
SNEP.....	Saudi Arabia Naval Expansion Plan
USAF	US Air Force
USMTM.....	US Military Training Mission

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The US-Saudi bilateral relationship is one of the most important relationships in the Middle East. Since Saudi Arabia is the largest oil exporter and the US is the largest oil importer in the world, there is indeed a special relationship between them. It is described as a “marriage of convenience”¹. After the historical meeting of King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud and the President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 14 February 1945², the Americans bought Saudi oil and in return, the Saudis bought American planes, weapons, and know-how. At the time, their relations were based on each country’s national interests. Actually, the Saudis got modernization, education and security and the Americans got access to energy supplies. In brief, the ‘marriage of convenience’ suited both countries.

During the Cold War, both the US and Saudi Arabia engaged in containing communism as a threat that endangered both countries’ interests. Before the 1990s, the US’s main interests in the region were the security of oil, maintenance of the existing world order and political stability. Accordingly, the US aimed to build strategic bases in the Middle East to contain communism and to replace British dominance over the oil region. On the other hand, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

¹ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi, “ Saudi Arabia, Enemy or Friend?”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1, Spring 2004, p. 13.

² Fouad Al-Farsy, *Modernity and Tradition: The Saudi Equation*, Kegan Paul International; London, 1990, p. 285.

wanted US help in the protection of the Kingdom from foreign threats. Thus, they signed many economic and military agreements. These agreements allowed the US to use the Kingdom's Dhahran airfield for many years. Also, the economic agreements between the two countries provided Saudi Arabia with the loans necessary to improve their economy and to carry out modern infrastructural developments. The military agreements provided the Kingdom with modern arms, aircraft and tanks. The US also sent its advisors and instructors to train the Saudi army.

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia began to face a security dilemma. The Kingdom was reluctant to build up a strong military power, because a large army could lead to a *coup d'état*. Moreover, it does not have an obligatory military service and women are not allowed to join military. On the other hand, the Kingdom does not trust in its Arab neighbors, because it is believed that those neighbors could try to dominate the Gulf region. Since the Kingdom has limited security forces, and can not rely on other Arabs for its defense, the US is the most preferable option for the Kingdom.

However, the stationing of US forces in large numbers on its lands to maintain its security against its neighbors also brought many problems to the Kingdom. Moreover, the US' military existence in the region brought disorder, due to the discontentment it caused among the region's citizens.³ One example is the Islamist domestic opposition, who were against security dependence on a non-Muslim country which was also the closest ally of Israel. In fact, US-Saudi relations have always been complicated because of the US's special relations with Israel.

³ Eid Ibn Masoud al-Jihani, *Hkutout wa Dhilal fil Alaqaat Es-Saudiyyah-Al-Ameriqiyyah*, Manshourat Merkez Al-Khaleej Al-Arabi Lit-Taqaq wad-Dirasat Al-Istiratijiyyah; Riyadh, 2003, p. 26.

Islamist opposition, under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden, began to arrange terrorist attacks directed at US facilities in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, US-Saudi relations became somewhat strained. Also, there were many domestic opposition groups demanding political participation in the Kingdom. Thus, some domestic reforms had to be implemented to reduce tension internally, while maintaining good relations with the US.

This thesis aims to analyze the bilateral relations between the US and Saudi Arabia between the years 1990 and 2003. Both the US and Saudi Arabia usually agree on vital common interests such as oil and security issues. However, they differ from each other on certain issues like regional stability in the Gulf, the Arab-Israeli conflict, human rights, women's rights and their role in Saudi society and democracy. From its establishment in 1945 and up until 11 September 2001, US-Saudi relations were based on mutual interests: oil for security exchange. For many years, Saudi Arabia provided reasonably priced oil to the US and in return, the US assured the security of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, the terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon were an important turning point in the relations between the two countries. Their relations have been strained after September 11. With the exception of the Arab-Israeli conflict it was the first time that the two countries came head-to-head over an issue. Both countries began to question their untroubled relations.

Two issues have become dominant in the US-Saudi relations after September 11. First, the bilateral relations began to be influenced by the public opinion in both countries. Although the US and Saudi Arabia are maintaining their relations on the governmental level, people-to-people contact reduced remarkably after September 11. Second, both countries are now seemingly more interested in global issues such

as the “war on terrorism”, the war on Iraq and the issue of democratization, rather than oil for security guarantees. Since 15 of the hijackers were Saudis, the Kingdom has become a central focus in the “war on terrorism”. As a result, the US asked Saudi Arabia to implement some domestic reforms to fight with terrorism and to improve the public contact among Americans and Saudis. Thus, both countries began to cooperate with each other to fight against the same enemy: terrorism. Terrorism started to be seen as a new type of communism that needed to be contained. In terms of the Iraqi war, Saudi Arabia did not publicly announce its support to the US, mostly because it wanted to maintain its internal security. Moreover, the Saudi government had to perform certain domestic political reforms, because it did not want to lose its powerful ally and neither did it wish to provoke domestic opposition in the Kingdom.

This thesis contains six chapters. This first chapter provides an introduction and the last one will provide a conclusion. The second chapter studies the historical background of US-Saudi relations up to the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis. It will analyze how Saudi Arabia entered a new era with the discovery of oil and how US-Saudi relations were established officially after the historical meeting of King Abdul Aziz and President Roosevelt on 14 February 1945. The second chapter will look at the nature of the relations, which were based on the mutual interests of each country. It is true that oil security and the Soviet threat were the two cornerstones of their relations after World War II. During the Cold War period, both countries dealt mainly on economic and military issues and many agreements were signed accordingly. Many domestic development projects also were carried out in the Kingdom with the help of the US.

However, US-Saudi relations were shadowed due to the establishment of Israel on 15 May 1948 and its continued unresolved position. The thesis of the second chapter is that US-Saudi relations, from 1945 to 1990, were based on oil for security issues and were strained only by the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is true that US-Saudi relations came to a head during the 1973 war, when the Arabs used oil as a political weapon against the US' unquestionable support of Israel. The second chapter will show why and how the relations between the US and Saudi Arabia were strained in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The third chapter of this work studies the US-Saudi relationship during the 1990s. During that period, their relations were based on standard interests. The Kingdom's security policy towards the US, to its Arab coalition countries and towards its enemies during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait will be studied in the third chapter. The reasons as to why security relations between the US and Saudi Arabia were based on mutual interests will also be evaluated. Moreover, the economic burden of the Second Gulf War on the Saudi economy will be studied. As a political and social outcome of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, domestic opposition to the government in Saudi Arabia, its effects on US-Saudi relations and how this opposition was suppressed will also be analyzed in the third chapter.

The fourth chapter of this study covers US-Saudi relations after the September 11 attacks. US-Saudi relations have once again become strained due to the fact that the majority of hijackers were Saudis. Two dimensions began to shape US-Saudi relations after September 11. The first one is that since then, their relations have come to be based more on contemporary global issues; the war on terrorism, the war in Iraq and democratization are the main global issues that their relations have

been affected by. The second one is the rise to prominence of public opinion in shaping US-Saudi relations. The two countries' cooperation on the fight against terrorism will be discussed in the fourth chapter. The efforts to contain terrorism and to normalize their public relations through implementing domestic reforms and presenting Prince Abdullah's peace plan initiative will also be mentioned.

The fifth chapter of this work aims to analyze the effects of the US invasion of Iraq on bilateral relations between the two sides. In order to control its regime and to maintain its bilateral relations, Saudi Arabia cooperated with the US on various global issues. However, it preferred not to announce it publicly. The new US policy in the Middle East, namely democracy, has also come to affect the Kingdom. How and why it is taking its place in the Kingdom will be studied in the fifth chapter.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by researching, discussing, analyzing and evaluating US-Saudi relations after studying materials in both English and Arabic. Since there is not enough study in Turkey which evaluates the US-Saudi relations, especially through Arabic sources, it is hoped that this study would contribute to close the gap in this area. The sources utilized in this thesis are mainly books and articles dealing with the subject. Moreover, internet sources, newspapers, working papers of research centers and official statements have been frequently used while preparing this study. Lastly, the personal experience gained through living and studying in Saudi Arabia between the years 1985-1994 have provided first hand experience to understand US-Saudi relations from different perspectives.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

II. 1. Foundation of the Kingdom

King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Bin Saud was born in Riyadh in 1880, a time when there were constant battles with the Rashid family for the control of the city of Riyadh. The Al-Rashid family was one of the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. It had the backing of the Ottoman Empire, because its people did not believe in the Wahhabi Doctrine¹. When he was thirteen years old, his family had to flee from the Rashid family to the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula. His family settled in Kuwait, under the protection of Sheikh Mohammed Al-Sabah.²

In exile, he learned about the Ottoman Empire and the Rashid family. He wanted to retake Riyadh, reunite the peninsula and make the Wahhabi doctrine and

¹ In the mid 18th century, a young scholar named Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab became a *Hanbali*. A Hanbali is the strictest of Sunni Muslim laws and opposed liberal practices of the Islam religion. Some of them included loving saints and their tombs, trees and wells. When people focused their prayers on their saints rather than on God himself, Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab began teaching his strict Muslim ideas in the Najd area. But the people felt that those ideas were too extreme. So, Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab's family drove him out, and he took refuge in Diriyah under the protection of the Emir of Diriyah Mohammed Ibn Saud. After a year, two men began to visit Arab tribes and villages to convert people to the true Islam. They also wished to unite the entire Arabian Peninsula. Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab was the spiritual leader and Mohammed Ibn Saud was the military leader. Their beliefs became known as the Wahhabi Doctrine. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it spread to the Gulf region. For more and detailed information see Fouad Al-Farsy (1990), *Modernity and Tradition:.....*, pp. 20-21; George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 4th ed., Cornell University Press; Ithaca & London, 1970, p. 581; David E. Long, *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, University of Press of Florida; Gainesville, 1997, pp. 23-24; and David E. Long & Bernard Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, Westview Press; Boulder, 1995, pp. 62-63.

² Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, Saqi Books; London, 1998, p. 204.

Sunni Muslim law the chosen doctrine and law of the Islamic religion.³ On 15 January 1902, Abdul Aziz took control of Riyadh.⁴ Gradually, he and his loyal followers defeated the tribes of central and eastern Arabia. From 1902 to 1926, King Abdul Aziz extended his authority over most of the Arabian Peninsula.

In 1912, King Abdul Aziz attempted to organise an army. However, it required many years to unite the tribes under one king. Thus, Abdul Aziz Bin Saud created a religious organisation called *Ikhwan*, which meant "brotherhood".⁵ Members of the Ikhwan were persuaded to give up their Bedouin way of life. By giving up camel nomadism and settling in one place, they were obeying the Wahhabi teachings. This new army consisted mostly of Bedouin tribesmen who knew and understood desert combat. Without the Ikhwan, the Saudis could not have achieved a united Arabia in such a short time. However, as they gained more power, Abdul Aziz found it difficult to control them.⁶

When World War I erupted, the British supported Abdul Aziz against the Ottoman Empire and the Rashid family. Meanwhile, the British also supported another man; they favoured Hussein, the Hashimite sharif of Mecca, as potential ruler of the unified Arabian Peninsula. Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, promised Sharif Hussein British support in case of his

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-209.

⁴ Fouad Al-Farsy (1990), *Modernity and Tradition*:....., p. 15; David E. Long (1997), *The Kingdom of Saudi* , p. 29; David E. Long & Bernard Reich (eds.) (1995), *The Government and Politics*:....., p. 64; and Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi*:....., p. 202.

⁵ David E. Long (1997), *The Kingdom of Saudi* , p. 30; and David E. Long & Bernard Reich (eds.) (1995), *The Government and Politics*:....., p. 65.

⁶ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi*:....., pp. 268-286.

rebellion against the Ottoman rule in 1915.⁷ In 1919, the British turned their backs on Abdul Aziz and supported the Sharif of Mecca. When a dispute arose around the control of land between Hijaz and Najd in 1919, hostilities became inevitable. The Sharif attacked Turabah city and took control of it. However, the Ikhwan, under the control of Abdul Aziz, attacked him on 25 March 1919. The Sharif was defeated and had to flee to Taif.⁸

After that, Abdul Aziz turned his attention to the Ottoman-backed Rashid family. As the army of Abdul Aziz approached, the ruler of the Rashid family fled to Hail in 1920. However, afraid of his own family, an eighteen-year-old ruler begged Abdul Aziz for mercy, which was forthcoming from Abdul Aziz, and he successfully defeated his enemy.⁹

Soon, Abdul Aziz had to also deal with his own creation, the Ikhwan. They had begun to disobey Abdul Aziz, and started attacking the civilian populace.¹⁰ Abdul Aziz decided to put an end to the Ikhwan and modernised his army in July 1929¹¹ with the aim of consolidating his state; he used cars instead of camels, leading to the demoralisation of the Ikhwan. The Ikhwan leader Faisal Al-Duwaish fled to Kuwait in October 1929. He and other Ikhwan leaders surrendered to the British and they were taken to Basra. By January 1930, the Ikhwan revolt had come to an end.¹²

⁷ David E. Long (1997), *The Kingdom of Saudi*, p. 31.

⁸ Jennifer Bond Reed, *The Saudi Royal Family*, Chelsea House Publishers; Philadelphia, 2003, pp. 37-38.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi*..... , pp. 268-286.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 281.

Abdul Aziz Bin Saud took the control of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina between 1924 and 1926. On 22 September 1932, Abdul Aziz Bin Saud declared that Saudi Arabia was united and proclaimed himself its only king.¹³

II. 2. Discovery of oil and the Foundation of Saudi-American Friendship

US-Saudi relations developed very slowly at first. It can be said that oil was the key to the beginning of the US-Saudi relationship. Saudi Arabia was not an important power in regional politics until the end of Second World War. King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Bin Saud was more concerned about consolidating his power to form a kingdom under the Al-Saud family.¹⁴ On the other hand, the US government until 1940 had ignored Saudi Arabia. Despite the recognition of the kingdom in 1932, there was no diplomatic representation in Jeddah. The US oil companies had spent almost eight years in eastern Arabia without the benefit of official government protection.¹⁵

Before World War II, Saudi finances were in a desperate situation, the reduction in the number of pilgrims due to the world economic crisis of 1929-33 created serious economic problems for the Saudi economy, the main source of income of which was the yearly religious pilgrimage (Hajj) by Muslims from around the world to the Holy sites in the kingdom. Some way had to be found to make up for the deficit. John Philby¹⁶ persuaded Bin Saud to invite Charles R. Crane¹⁷ to the

¹³ Fouad Al-Farsy (1990), *Modernity and Tradition*:....., p. 19.

¹⁴ Ramon Kanuerhase, "Saudi Arabia's Foreign and Domestic Policy", *Current History*, vol. 80, no. 462, January 1981, p. 18.

¹⁵ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East*:....., p. 581.

¹⁶ A British Arabist advisor to Ibn Saud who converted to Islam.

Kingdom. Crane had sent Karl S. Twitchell, a geologist, to Saudi Arabia to prospect for water.¹⁸ Instead of water, he found some geological structures indicating the existence of oil in the area of Dhahran.¹⁹ When Twitchell returned to the US informing the oil companies with oil potential of the kingdom, it signalled the beginning of US interests in Saudi Arabia.

With the discovery of rich petroleum reserves in Saudi Arabia, it became increasingly important to the US.²⁰ Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) was one of the American companies which undertook many oil exploration activities. On 29 May 1933, an oil concession was given to Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) by King Abdul Aziz. The Saudi government signed the agreement, because it had no experience in oil affairs, there was a reduction in pilgrim traffic due to the Great Depression and badly needed money. The oil agreement provided an immediate payment of £140,000 gold and additional £100,000 gold upon discovery of oil in commercial quantities. It also provided an annual rental of £20,000 for the additional area payable until oil was found in commercial quantities.²¹ It was a sixty-year contract offering the exclusive concession for exploration and extraction in the Hasa²² along the shores of the Persian Gulf.²³ Oil wells were drilled in Dhahran, Dammam, Abqaiq and Abu Hadriya in the province of Hasa.

¹⁷ An American millionaire and philanthropist.

¹⁸ Josh Pollack, "Saudi Arabia and the United States, 1931-2002", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 3, September 2002, p. 78.

¹⁹ Bedreddin Abbas Al-Khususy, *Dirasat fi Tarihk Al-Khaleej Al-Arabi: Al-Hadis wal Muasir*, An-Nashir Zat As-Salasil; Kuwait, 1988, p. 281.

²⁰ Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*, Simon & Schuster; New York, 1992.

²¹ Ramon Knauerhase, *The Saudi Arabian Economy*, Praeger; New York, 1975, p. 361.

²² The Eastern region of Saudi Arabia.

Having discovered petroleum in commercial quantities in the kingdom, SOCAL had formed a partnership with Texaco. Standard of New Jersey (later known as Exxon) and Mobil also joined the venture. The producing company, formed in 1944, was called Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO).²⁴ Aramco, which was founded by American concessionaires and is now wholly owned by the Saudi government, was established to produce and market large quantities of crude oil.

With the discovery of oil in Well Number 7 at Dammam on 3 March 1938, Saudi Arabia had entered a new era.²⁵ Oil was brought to the Bahrain Petroleum Company's oil processing plant in Bahrain. Saudi crude oil was shipped from Ras Tannura on 1 May 1939.²⁶ Although Japan and Germany proposed very advantageous offers to Bin Saud, he preferred to continue his association with the Americans. The US government ensured that American oil companies received preferential treatment in Saudi Arabia. The reasons were clear; it had the advantage of assuring the economic development of the country without incurring political liabilities. Also, the US had no imperial past in the Middle East. On 31 May 1939, a new concession agreement was signed between Aramco and Saudi Arabia. Actually, this concession was the six-year extension of the first oil concession that was carried out in 1933.

As a result of US oilmen's efforts and a desire to counter German and Japanese offers to Saudi Arabia, the US government decided to establish a diplomatic presence in 1939. Bert Fish, the American minister to Egypt, was

²³ Josh Pollack (2002), "Saudi Arabia and the", p. 78.

²⁴ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East*, p. 579.

²⁵ David E. Long (1997), *The Kingdom of Saudi*, p. 62.

²⁶ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 318.

appointed minister to Saudi Arabia as well in July 1939.²⁷ He was also accredited to Egypt and remained a resident in Cairo.

By 1940 oil operations had stopped due to the war. 1939-1940 was also a dry season, so agriculture and husbandry suffered in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom was going through difficult times. Although Saudi Arabia maintained its neutrality during World War II, and hostilities did not reach its territories, its economy suffered from the war. As a result, Saudi Arabia accepted Britain's financial help to avoid its bankruptcy.²⁸ According to Fionna Venn, Britain was attempting to establish a new empire from ex-Ottoman territory.²⁹ The inter-war years were hot to extensive oil diplomacy. There was the Anglo-American oil war in the Middle East as Britain was trying to spread its influence over the region. Meanwhile, the US government had recognised that the kingdom was within the British zone of influence. There was also pressure over the US government stemming from the US oil companies' concern about the growing economic influence of Britain over Saudi Arabia. Thus, the US focused on figuring out how to replace British dominance over the oil region. The US oil companies appealed to the government and the government decided to provide direct aid to Bin Saud instead of the previous, indirect aid that had gone through Britain.³⁰

²⁷ Wallace Stegner, "Discovery! The Story of Aramco Then: Chapter 8: Into Production", *Saudi Aramco World*, vol. 20, no. 2, March-April 1969, p. 10 available at online <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/196902/discovery.the.story.of.aramco.then-chapter.8.into.production.htm> accessed on 05.05.2005.

²⁸ Ramon Knauerhase (1975), *The Saudi Arabian.....*, p. 47.

²⁹ Fionna Venn, "The Interwar Years: The Anglo-American Oil War and the Growth of Oil Nationalism" in *Oil Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan; London, 1986, p. 54.

³⁰ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 324.

During the inter-war period, Bin Saud hoped to play off American versus British interests. The Saudi government also sought American financial, economic and military assistance. In 1941, the US expressed willingness to send agricultural and engineering experts to help the Saudi government to develop its resources. Due to the King's request, an American agricultural mission arrived in Saudi Arabia in 1942 to advise on irrigation. The US established a legation in Jeddah on 1 May 1942, with James S. Moose, Jr. as Charge d'Affaires. He also became the first resident American minister to Saudi Arabia in June 1943.³¹ There was also an attaché for oil affairs in the US mission came to Riyadh.³²

During the war, the US supplied arms and military equipment to Saudi Arabia through Lend-Lease aid. In December 1943, a US military mission also came to Riyadh with General Ralph Royce to train the Saudi army.³³ He made some arrangements for the construction of US military bases both in Dhahran and Dawqa. Emir Faisal and Emir Khalid visited the US in the same year.³⁴

II. 3. The Historic Meeting and the Post-World War II Period

Two important developments shaped the US and Saudi political relations in the immediate postwar period: the beginning of the Cold War and the creation of the state of Israel. The postwar Soviet threat in the Middle East established a mutual US-Saudi security interest. After World War II, the main US policies were containing

³¹ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi Arabia: Ambivalent Allies*, Westview Press; Boulder, 1985, p. 102.

³² Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 325.

³³ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 33.

³⁴ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East.....*, p. 582.

communism and taking the security responsibility of the Middle East from the British. Saudi Arabia also considered communism as an “indirect threat” to the kingdom because communism was seen as "paganism", an enemy of Islam.

By 1945, a cordial relationship developed between the US and Saudi Arabia. This cordial relation was disturbed only by the problem of Zionism. Saudi Arabia adopted a consistent attitude to the Palestine problem. On 14 February 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz Bin Saud met on board the *Quincy* in the Great Bitter Lake in Egypt.³⁵ During the historical meeting, Roosevelt tried to persuade the King to settle the Jewish victims of Nazism in Palestine. Abdul Aziz told Roosevelt that Germany was the state which had committed crimes against the Jews, so they should have their Jewish State in Germany, not in Palestine. On 5 April, a letter was sent to Bin Saud from Roosevelt promising not to do anything that might endanger their relations. He also assured that US policy concerning Palestine would not be changed without consulting both the Jews and the Arabs.³⁶ After the meeting, trust and friendship were built between the two countries’ leaders.³⁷

After the death of US President Roosevelt, a major change took place in the relations between the US and Saudi Arabia over the Arab-Israeli conflict. Actually, President Roosevelt had some empathy towards the King and his attitudes toward the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. However, President Truman took less account of Arab sensibilities and he worked for the success of Zionism. When the US voted in the United Nations for the partition of Palestine in 1947, the Saudis were

³⁵ Fouad Al-Farsy (1990), *Modernity and Tradition:.....*, p. 285; *Ibid.*; and Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 326.

³⁶ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 326.

³⁷ John S. Habib, *Saudi Arabia and the American National Interest: An Interpretive Study of a Special Relationship*, Universal Publishers; USA, 2003, pp. 47-54.

disappointed and felt betrayed. After the United Nations vote, the announcement of the creation of Israel on 15 May 1948 and the US recognition of it, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal asked his father to break diplomatic relations with the US.³⁸ But despite strained relations due to the creation of Israel, US-Saudi political relations continued to expand for mutual interests. The American consulate in Dhahran became a Consulate General in 1949. The US Legation in Jeddah also became an embassy.³⁹ J. Rives Childs was appointed the first US ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

During World War II, Aramco calculated that an oil pipeline between Saudi Arabia and the Mediterranean would decrease oil transportation costs, and in July 1945, the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company, “Tapline”, was established.⁴⁰ It took the company five years to negotiate on right of way and royalty agreements with transit countries. The Tapline-Syria agreement was signed in 1949 and was put into operation in 1950.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the US government provided direct assistance and support to its oil companies. With the support of the US government, the purchase of equity shares in Aramco by Jersey Standard (Exxon), Standard of New York and Socony (Mobil)

³⁸ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, pp. 105-107.

³⁹ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East.....*, p. 584.

⁴⁰ Ramon Knauerhase (1975), *The Saudi Arabian.....*, p. 175; and . Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest.....*, p. 411.

⁴¹ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 15; and Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, pp. 329-330.

was completed on December 1948. As a result, Socal, Caltex and Jersey Standard each acquired 30 % and Socony acquired 10 % of Aramco.⁴²

By 1950, the Saudi government began to demand a larger share of Aramco's oil revenues. The 1933 concession agreement had exempted Aramco from Saudi taxes. As a result, the Saudis were disturbed from the amount of taxes Aramco paid to the US for exploitation of Saudi oil, while paying no taxes to the kingdom. This led the Saudi government to pressure Aramco for more revenues. Aramco realised that nothing would satisfy the Saudis short of a 50-50 profit sharing agreement such as that adopted by Venezuela.⁴³ After a month bargaining, Aramco and Saudi Arabia agreed on a 50-50 net profit-sharing arrangement in December 1950.⁴⁴ The agreement shifted the flow of revenue from the US to the Saudi treasury. Although it was harmful for the economy of the US government, it supported the 50-50 agreement for political reasons. It was seen as a necessary procedure for the safeguard US access to Saudi Arabia's strategic oil supplies.⁴⁵

In terms of the military relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia, oil security and the Soviet threat became the cornerstone of their relations after World War II. Their relations reflected the trade-off between the US desire to access strategic military bases in the Middle East and the Saudi desire for assurance from

⁴² Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton University Press; 1984, pp. 151-156.

⁴³ F. Gregory Gause III, "From 'Over the Horizon' to 'Into the Backyard': The US-Saudi Relationship and the Gulf War", in *The Middle East and The United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*, David W. Lesch (ed.), 2nd ed., Westview Press; Boulder, 1999, p. 344.

⁴⁴ Ali D. Johany, Michel Berne & J. Wilson Mixon Jr, *The Saudi Arabian Economy*, The Johns Hopkins University Press; Baltimore, 1986, p. 31; and Ramon Knauerhase (1975), *The Saudi Arabian.....*, p. 164-167.

⁴⁵ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 19.

the US to protect it from foreign threats.⁴⁶ The first military relation was established on 18 February 1943, when the US declared Lend-Lease aid to Saudi Arabia. Because Saudi Arabia was going through difficult times, it was such aid that rescued the kingdom from bankruptcy. To determine Saudi military needs, a US military team headed by General Ralph Royce was sent to Saudi Arabia. On 5 August 1945, an agreement was signed between the US and Saudi Arabia for the construction of an air base at Dhahran. On 23 June 1949, Saudi Arabia and the US concluded a second agreement to facilitate US access to the Dhahran airfield.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Saudis believed that a threat would come from the Hashimite kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq, which Abdul Aziz had displaced from the emirate of Hijaz. Saudi Arabia and the US finally concluded another agreement on 18 June 1951. It allowed the US to use the Dhahran airfield for five years and was extendable for five more years. A Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement was also signed.⁴⁸ In exchange, the US agreed to supply the Saudi army with modern aircraft and tanks, and to help train the Saudi army by sending US advisors and instructors. As a result Dhahran became the headquarters of the US advisers who came to Saudi Arabia in 1952. The existence of the American Air Force on Saudi territory was a strong deterrent to a possible Soviet threat.⁴⁹

In terms of internal development projects in Saudi Arabia, Minister of Development Fouad Bey Hamza announced that the government intended to spend

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁸ Josh Pollack (2002), "Saudi Arabia and the United.....", p. 79.

⁴⁹ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East.....*, p. 589.

\$270 million on the technological development of the country on 17 July 1947.⁵⁰ With American assistance, an irrigation network was established; artificial reservoirs and water pipelines were constructed and artesian wells were drilled. Roads were built between Jeddah, Mecca, Medinah and other cities. A Saudi Arabian air service was established and new harbors were built at Dammam and Ras Tannurah. American technicians constructed a railway between Dammam and Riyadh between the years 1949-1951. Also after the war, four packaged hospitals were bought from the US.⁵¹

After the death of King Abdul Aziz Bin Saud on 9 November 1953, Crown Prince Saud became the king. Starting from 1953, Saudi Arabian foreign policy was built on national security, advancing the cause of Islam, limiting superpower influence in the Middle East and returning Palestine to Arab control.⁵² During the early reign of the new king, US-Saudi relations strained. The Eisenhower administration was trying to establish a new anti-communist alliance called “Baghdad Pact” and since it included the Kingdom’s regional rivals and foes like Iran, Iraq and Britain, relations tensed. As a result, King Saud dismissed the American Point IV aid mission from Saudi Arabia in February 1954.⁵³ In October 1955, Saudi Arabia concluded a bilateral military agreement with Egypt, and invited Egyptian military trainers into the Kingdom.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 584.

⁵¹ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, pp. 332 and 345.

⁵² Ramon Kanuerhase (1981), “Saudi Arabia’s Foreign.....”, p. 18.

⁵³ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East.....*, p. 591; and Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 350.

⁵⁴ David E. Long (1985) , *The United States and Saudi.....*, pp. 36-37; and Josh Pollack (2002), “Saudi Arabia and the United.....”, p. 79.

The US-Saudi relations eased after the Suez Crisis of 1956. Unable to buy arms from the West, Nasser turned to the Soviet bloc and purchased Czech arms in 1955. After the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Eisenhower opposed the British, French and Israeli plan to seize Egypt's Suez Canal. He was trying to prevent Arab countries from increasing their cooperation with the USSR.⁵⁵ The crisis improved the United States' image in the region. The result was the Eisenhower Doctrine on 5 January 1957. It was designed to offer economic and military aid to any state in the Middle East, which might be under direct or indirect threat. King Saud was expected to sell the Eisenhower doctrine to the Arab world.⁵⁶ After King Saud's visit to the US, the US promised to supply Saudi Arabia with ground, air and naval equipment, train the Saudi army, and to send in military technicians. Loans were given for the construction of the port in Dammam. It was decided to extend the lease of the Dhahran air-force base for another five years.⁵⁷

Concerned with the drop in the posted price of oil, the petroleum exporting countries felt the need for collective action. Saudi Arabia gave full support and cooperation, as a result, OPEC was established in September 1960.⁵⁸ OPEC's main aims were controlling the volume of production and holding consultations between states and oil companies concerning price changes. On 25 January 1965, the Saudi government signed an agreement with ARAMCO. It increased the Saudi share in income from crude oil exports to more than half.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Daniel Yergin (1992), *The Prize: The Epic Quest.....*, pp. 479-498.

⁵⁶ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East.....*, p. 584.

⁵⁷ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, pp. 351-353.

⁵⁸ Ramon Knauerhase (1975), *The Saudi Arabian.....*, pp. 167-168.

⁵⁹ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 338.

The outbreak of the Yemeni civil war in 1962 had led to further military and security-related considerations in US-Saudi relations. When Egyptian planes began to attack Saudi territory from bases in Yemen⁶⁰, Saudi Arabia asked for US help. In January 1963, the US sent warships and aircraft to Saudi Arabia. The US helped Saudi Arabia establish an air defence system along the Yemeni border.⁶¹ However, the Kennedy administration's primary concerns were the continuing independence of the kingdom and the security of its oilfields; they regarded the defence of the southern border of Saudi Arabia as a matter of lesser importance. Thus, the US planes that had arrived in July 1963 were withdrawn in January 1964.⁶² With the supply of Hawk anti-aircraft systems, the US military supply relationship with Saudi Arabia was renewed in 1965.⁶³

During the 1960s, industries were changing from coal to oil, especially in Europe, so world oil demand rose faster than supply. With the creation of OPEC in 1960, oil producing countries began to realise that they were not in control of the oil which belonged to them and with better control of oil supplies their prosperity would increase. Under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, the "center of gravity"⁶⁴ was moved from the oil companies to the oil producing countries. However, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, oil producing countries could not organise themselves to act in a unified manner. Proper collective action had to wait until 1973.

⁶⁰ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East.....*, p. 603.

⁶¹ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 372.

⁶² Josh Pollack (2002), "Saudi Arabia and the United.....", p. 80.

⁶³ F. Gregory Gause III (1999), "From 'Over the Horizon' to.....", p. 346.

⁶⁴ Daniel Yergin (1992), *The Prize: The Epic Quest.....*, p. 422.

II. 4. The 1973 Oil Crisis and the Arab Oil Embargo

The strain in Saudi-US relations reached its peak during the 1973 war. When the war erupted between Egypt and Israel, Washington gave Israel economic, military and political aid. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia kept its anti-Israeli stance. King Faisal warned the US government that its support for Israel might result in deterioration of their relations. On 6 July 1973, King Faisal warned the US government and Aramco that Saudi Arabia would freeze its oil production unless the US changed its policy towards Israel.⁶⁵ When the war began on 6 October, the Arab states uniformly supported Egypt in a demonstration of solidarity. Between the 20th and the 22nd of October, oil producing Arab countries declared an oil boycott to the US, the Netherlands and any other country that exported their products to the US or sold them to its navy. The oil boycott created a major problem for the US, and as the Arab oil exporting countries became more experienced and economically stronger, they increasingly relied on oil as an instrument of foreign policy.⁶⁶ Effectively, the Arabs used oil as a “political weapon”. Using the ‘oil weapon’ and precipitating the enormous increase in oil prices made the kingdom leader of the Arab states. Saudi Arabia also asserted its independence from the US.⁶⁷ The embargo showed both sides the limits of the relationship. Recognising the potential for another disaster, the US government would pursue its own Middle East peace plan.

⁶⁵ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 118; and Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 391.

⁶⁶ Tong Whan Park & Michael Don Ward, “Petroleum Related Foreign Policy: Analytic and Empirical Analyses of Iranian and Saudi Behavior (1948-1974)”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 23, no. 3, September 1979, p. 485.

⁶⁷ F. Gregory Gause III (1999), “From ‘Over the Horizon’ to.....”, p. 346.

The embargo was an economic response to a political problem. It had a deep impact on the oil market. High prices forced consumers to become more energy-efficient. It also led to the creation of the International Energy Agency by many consuming countries.⁶⁸ They also began to stockpile to avoid another panic situation. From the Saudi point of view, the economic effect of the embargo turned out to be contrary to the Saudi's long-term economic interests, since they actually favoured stable prices low enough to ensure a long-term market for their oil.

During 1974-1975, there was another crisis in relations between the US and Saudi Arabia. High officials in Washington and the US media openly threatened the possibility of seizing Persian Gulf oil fields.⁶⁹ Washington had to strive to convince Saudi Arabia that there was no such plan. Kissinger had to begin his "shuttle diplomacy" between Egypt, Israel, Syria and Saudi Arabia.⁷⁰ At last, on 18 March 1974, the Saudis and other Arab oil producers agreed to end the embargo.⁷¹

II. 5. Twin Pillars Policy

When the British announced their intention to withdraw their protective status over the Middle East in 1968, the decision had a shock effect on both the US and Saudi Arabia.⁷² In 1969, President Nixon called for the US to assist in the build up of the strong regional powers. The US government developed a new Gulf policy based

⁶⁸ Simon Bromley, *American Hegemony and World Oil*, Polity Press; 1991, p. 157.

⁶⁹ Josh Pollack (2002), "Saudi Arabia and the United.....", p. 82; and Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p 394.

⁷⁰ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 119.

⁷¹ George Lenczowski (1970), *The Middle East.....*, p. 611.

⁷² David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 54.

on the Nixon Doctrine. This new Gulf policy was called the “Twin Pillars Policy”. It looked to Iran and Saudi Arabia as the two regional powers that could fill the power vacuum left by the British, particularly after 1973-74.

It also developed the US-Saudi military relations during that period. The US strategy was aimed at encouraging both Iran and Saudi Arabia to build up military forces. The US arms sales to Iran and Saudi Arabia was also precipitating an arms race among the countries of the Middle East.⁷³ With increasing oil revenues, Saudi Arabia bought weapons from the US. In 1968-1969, a US team made a complete survey of Saudi naval needs. As a result, the Saudi Arabian Naval Expansion Plan (SNEP) was established in 1972 under the control of USMTM.⁷⁴

Saudi military expenditures were seen as the recycling of petrodollars. Saudi Arabia replaced Iran as the world’s largest purchaser of US weapons. However, most expenditure was not for arms but was devoted to military construction, roads and military academies.⁷⁵ As the Saudi military expenditure increased, the US Congress began to criticize it by stockpiling arms to be used against Israel.⁷⁶ The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) also opposed sales of advanced arms to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷ It was concerned about the transfer of advanced weapons such as Maverick air-to-ground missiles in 1976, F-15 fighter-bombers in 1978 and Air Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft in 1981. In 1985, AIPAC managed to convince the Congress in blocking the sale of additional F-15s to Saudi Arabia.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷⁵ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 443.

⁷⁶ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 58.

⁷⁷ Josh Pollack (2002), “Saudi Arabia and the United.....”, p. 83.

So, the Saudis turned to the British for Tornado aircraft and to China for CSS-2 surface-to-surface missiles.⁷⁸ In terms of Gulf security, the Two-Pillars Policy was successful until the fall of the shah of Iran in 1979.

II. 6. Iranian Revolution of 1979 and its Aftermath

The Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of 1979 were considered a disaster by the Saudis. They believed that President Sadat had broken the Arab consensus arrived at in the Khartoum Summit of 1967, based on the ‘three no’s: ‘no peace, no negotiations and no recognition’. Thus, Prince Fahd sought to restart the peace process by announcing an eight-point plan called the “Fahd Plan” in 1981.⁷⁹ Although the Arabs initially rejected it, it was adopted in the following year at an Arab summit in Morocco.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Saudi Arabia supported right-wing regimes that had close relations with the US. The high Saudi oil revenues resulted in the Kingdom becoming a major financial supporter against communism. In collaboration with the US, Saudi Arabia began to send its own money abroad in sponsoring anti-communist rebel movements in Angola, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. Until 1979, the Saudi government thought that its primary political threat came from the left. However, this was changed by the Islamic revolution in Iran, which changed the balance of power in the Gulf. The Iranian revolution created a new threat from the right to the

⁷⁸ David E. Long (1997), *The Kingdom of Saudi.....*, p. 123.

⁷⁹ David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, pp. 124-125; and Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 469.

Kingdom's Islamic legitimacy. It found a suitable environment among the Shi'a community of the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia.⁸⁰

When the bloody Iran-Iraq war erupted in 1980, the Saudi government supported Iraq. Since the main task of Saudi Arabian foreign policy was to prevent Iran's victory. The mutual security threat from the Iran-Iraq war was the main reason for the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in May 1981.⁸¹ The environment of the 1980's forced the GCC member states to concentrate on multilateral military cooperation and on their domestic security. With the leadership of Saudi Arabia, they declared that they would form a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), following the US model, in November 1982.⁸² Realising that neither Saudi Arabia nor any other oil monarchies were strong enough to confront Iran or Iraq, increase in the US military presence in the Gulf countries was welcomed.

When an Iranian missile hit a Saudi cargo ship in 1984, the threat of direct involvement in the Iran-Iraq war emerged. The Iranian air force also attacked two tankers in Saudi territorial waters in May the same year. With the help of the US, the Saudi military command took measures to strengthen the AD system on the eastern coast.⁸³ The efforts were unable to reduce the tension between the two countries. In May 1985 several bombs exploded in Riyadh. A clash occurred in Mecca between Iranian pilgrims and the Saudi police during the hajj period resulting in a number of death. Iran blamed Saudi Arabia and the US for the incident. Demonstrations began to be held in Tehran under anti-Saudi slogans. In 1988, Saudi authorities put Hajj

⁸⁰ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, pp. 395-397.

⁸¹ David E. Long (1997), *The Kingdom of Saudi.....*, p. 114.

⁸² David E. Long (1985), *The United States and Saudi.....*, p. 124.

⁸³ Alexei Vassiliev (1998), *The History of Saudi.....*, p. 471.

quotas for each country when Khomeini demanded 150,000 instead of the 45,000 allotted to Iran, the Saudis refused. The result was the prohibition by Khomeini of Iranians from performing the Hajj.⁸⁴

At the end of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1988, Iraq had increased its military capability and secured a regional expansion. Kuwait was occupied on 2 August 1990, creating a direct threat to the security of Saudi Arabia. The threat was eliminated by a multinational coalition led by the US in February 1991. The triumphant war to defend the Arabian Peninsula and to liberate Kuwait marked another high point for the US-Saudi relationship, which will be discussed, in the next chapter of the thesis.

To conclude, Saudi Arabia and the US had relations based on mutual interests. Over decades, both countries cooperated closely in the exchange of oil for security. That is, Saudi Arabia would provide a steadily increasing flow of reasonably priced oil to the US, and in return, the US would assure the security of the country, the regime and the stability of the oil-producing Gulf countries from external threats such as the Soviet Union, Iran and Iraq.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

US - SAUDI RELATIONS DURING THE 1990s

The 1990-1991 Gulf Crisis brought about new political and security challenges to the Gulf countries, and to Saudi Arabia in particular. Saudi Arabia was faced with a dilemma in terms of developing enough military forces to meet its regional challenges. Oil makes Saudi Arabia a target for its ambitious neighbors, however, it has limited security forces due to its rentier state structure. Military service in Saudi Arabia is voluntary. So, there comes the question: as a rentier state, how far is it reasonable to expect Saudi citizens feel obliged to defend their country? A threat from external challenges led Saudi rulers to look for a strong ally. This makes the kingdom dependent on a strong power, namely the US, which is not Muslim and the closest ally of Israel. They have always been dependent on the US for their survival. In this chapter, the Saudi-US security alignment and their security relations based on mutual interests will be studied during the Second Gulf War and afterwards.

Saudi Arabia's dependence on Western powers evoked widespread criticisms in the country. The bankruptcy of the security doctrine also brought about very important questions among Saudis. Although spending large amounts of money on defense security, its armed forces were incapable to defend itself.

The US military presence in Saudi Arabia brought many problems to the kingdom in terms of cultural differences and a hostile reaction to US's support of Israel. Expediting the return of American forces to the Kingdom in large numbers was a very delicate matter. There emerged domestic opposition in Saudi Arabia to the presence of US forces during the Gulf crisis. The dimensions of that domestic opposition, what caused it to emerge and how the Saudi government coped with it by keeping strategic cooperation as quiet as possible will also be discussed.

The Kingdom's relations with its Arab coalition partners in Desert Storm and how the Damascus Declaration came into being will also be studied. Though, Saudi Arabia was reluctant to depend on other Arabs for its defense. Reasons for that reluctance and how the US military role emerged as the most preferable option for Saudi Arabia will be also be discussed in this chapter. Saudi Arabia's attitudes towards those countries sided with the aggressor, Iraq, changed during the Second Gulf War. With the invasion of Kuwait, countries like Iraq, Jordan, Yemen and the PLO became overnight arch-enemies of Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, resentments towards Jordanians, Yemenis and Palestinians emerged in Saudi Arabia. Both Arafat, and King Hussein were no longer supported by Saudi leaders. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy towards Iraq, Jordan, Yemen and PLO will be studied.

One other topic which will be looked at in this chapter is the economic burden of the war on Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia not only paid the costs of the coalition military forces, but also gave aid to Arab and regional coalition partners. It also increased oil production in the world market to compensate for Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil. Due to its sponsorship of the war, the Saudi economy was badly affected.

The Second Gulf War was the turning point in the political participation process in the kingdom. Political challenges and demands for reforms in the kingdom will be studied in this chapter. It is important that the rulers of the Gulf Arab states, especially King Fahd, tried to find answers to the question of how to maintain political development at an evolutionary, and not a revolutionary pace. Political change, in Saudi Arabia, has always been slow. On 9 November 1990, King Fahd promised to liberalize the Saudi political system. The result was the Consultative Council in 1992.

US-Saudi relations during the 1990s were troubled by the continued presence of US forces at Saudi bases and by the increased Islamist opposition movement in the kingdom accordingly. However, both the US and Saudi Arabia tried to maintain their traditional relations. The thesis of this chapter is that although US-Saudi relations were strained during the 1990s, they managed to keep their relations based on mutual interests: oil for security. The reasons for the strained relations between the US and Saudi Arabia, why and how Islamic opposition targeted the Saudi government and what posed the greatest danger to US-Saudi relations during the 1990s will be analyzed.

III. 1. The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait and the Saudi Response

After eight years of war with Iran, Iraq needed money for the reconstruction of its economy and for its armament program. It also wanted to gain access to the Gulf to reduce its geographical dependence on its neighbors. Saddam focused his attention on politically and militarily the weakest states in the Gulf whose oil pricing policies contradicted with his own. In June 1990, there was an oil surplus in the

market, but Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates continued to produce more oil, and this decreased prices remarkably. During July 1990, Iraq threatened Kuwait and told it to cut its oil production to the quota level, while Saudi Arabia remained silent on this issue. It also revived its longstanding border dispute with Kuwait, demanding the return of \$2.4 billion in oil from Iraq's Al-Rumaila field by the Kuwaitis. Iraq had also amassed debts amounting to around \$ 35 billion from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states during the Iran-Iraq war. It wanted them to be erased claiming that it was defending the Arabs against the Iranian revolutionary menace.¹

When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Saudis were shocked. Mainly because, they thought that Iraq would not attack its neighbors in the Gulf. A day before the invasion, Saddam had promised King Fahd, President Mubarak, King Hussein and the US that he would not invade Kuwait.² At the beginning of the crisis, the royal family tried to appease Saddam, but this did not work. On 4 August 1990, Riyadh condemned Iraq's aggression strongly and supported the exiled Kuwaiti government in Taif. Later, King Fahd demanded a full Iraqi withdrawal and guarantees against future aggression by Iraq's rulers.³

Iraq's easy conquest of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia's impotent military power to defend its territories led to a search for a powerful ally. Riyadh was totally paralyzed by fear. Saudi generals calculated that Iraqi forces could capture the whole

¹ Gil Feiler, "Petroleum Prices, Politics and War", in Gad Barzilai, Aharon Klieman & Gil Shidlo (eds.) *The Gulf Crisis and Its Global Aftermath*, Routledge; London & New York, 1993, pp. 255-256.

² Mordechai Abir (1993), *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis*, Routledge; London, 1993, p. 173.

³ Jacob Goldberg, "Saudi Arabia's Desert Storm and Winter Sandstorm" in Gad Barzilai, Aharon Klieman & Gil Shidlo (eds.) *The Gulf Crisis and Its Global Aftermath*, Routledge; London & New York, 1993, p. 72.

of Saudi Arabia in three days.⁴ Such a threat from Iraq led King Fahd to become totally dependent on the US for his survival. Thus, Saudis abandoned their historical attitude for an “over the horizon”⁵ US military connection to an open US military presence in the Kingdom. At the beginning of November 1990, the US was given consent by the kingdom to increase the number of US forces in Saudi Arabia to 500,000.⁶ When economic sanctions failed to force Iraq to evacuate Kuwait, military operations took place. Having received the kingdom’s request for help, the US dispatched its air and naval forces to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

The Second Gulf War lasted forty two days. The air war lasted thirty eight days, the ground combat only four. The war ended with the defeat of Saddam, the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the occupation of the southern part of Iraq.⁷ Saddam was defeated militarily and politically.

III. 2. The US Role in the Security of Saudi Arabia

The Second Gulf War to defend the Arabian Peninsula and to liberate Kuwait marked another high point for the US-Saudi relationship. According to F. Gregory Gause III, Saudi Arabia had three sets of interrelated issues concerning the security strategy for the post-Gulf war period. They can be classified respectively as: the size

⁴ Middle East News Agency, 11 August 1990.

⁵ F. Gregory Gause III, “Saudi Arabia: Desert Storm and After”, in Robert O. Freedman (ed.), *The Middle East After Iraq’s Invasion of Kuwait*, University of Florida; Gainesville, 1993, p. 209.

⁶ Mordechai Abir (1993), *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society.....*, p. 184.

⁷ Bassam Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East: From Interstate War to New Security*, 2nd ed., Macmillan Press Ltd.; New York, 1998, p. 173.

of Saudi armed forces compared to the other forces the GCC, Saudi security coordination with the US, and its security relations with Egypt and Syria.⁸

With the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia had entered a new era as a rentier state. Oil wealth permits rentier states to provide free health, education and welfare services to their citizens without collecting any taxes. No representation also is granted, because no taxation is required. They rely on oil revenues. Rents directly accrue to the state, and they have to distribute the money to satisfy their citizens. Usually, they use tribal ties and royal families to distribute those revenues.⁹

Before the Gulf crisis, according to Emile A. Nakhleh, the lubricant of abundant wealth made possible Saudi Arabia's transition from classical tribalism into urban tribalism.¹⁰ As the rentier state's ability to provide largesse is reduced, the tribal state begins to look for new methods to enforce allegiance. By this time, after being replaced by the *mukhabarat* (security forces) state, a rentier state becomes a regime not different from other monarchies in the region.¹¹ It can be understood that the Gulf crisis accelerated this process.

⁸ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia...", pp. 210-217.

⁹ For more information see Jahangir Amuzegar, 'Oil Wealth: A Very Mixed Blessing', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 60, no. 4, Spring 1982, pp. 814-835; Kiren Aziz Chaudhury, 'The Price of Oil Wealth: Business and State in Labor Remittance and Oil Economies', *International Organization*, vol. 43, no. 1, Winter 1989, pp. 103-144; Kiren Aziz Chaudhury, 'Economic Liberation in Oil Exporting Countries: Iraq and Saudi Arabia' in I. Harik and D. Sullian (eds.) *Privatization and Liberalization in the Middle East*, 1993, pp. 145-164; Kiren Aziz Chaudhury, 'Economic Liberalization and the Lineage of the Rentier State', *Comparative Politics*, October 1994, pp. 1-21; F. Gregory Gause III, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States*, Council on Foreign Relations Press; New York, 1993, pp. 42-77.

¹⁰ Emile A. Nakhleh, "Regime Stability and Change in the Gulf: The Case of Saudi Arabia", in Robert B. Satloff (ed.) *The Politics of Change in the Middle East*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1993, p. 120.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Oil makes Saudi Arabia a target for ambitious powers, with security concerns as were seen in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. However, self-reliance for defense and security is limited in Saudi Arabia, due to its rentier state structure. As a rentier state, how far is it reasonable to expect Saudi citizens to feel obliged to defend their country? It does not have an obligatory military service, because it may bring a say in state policy. It is argued that those who do not come from Najd cannot advance in the military hierarchy, Saudi Shia rarely join military. Also, women can not join military. As a result, Saudis had to seek the most powerful outside allies to deter potential enemies¹².

Moreover, the royal family was reluctant to build a big military power. Because it believed that a large army could lead to a *coup d' état*, so it had a small army to maintain its internal stability.¹³ Meanwhile, the invasion of Kuwait led to the emergence of a debate on compulsory conscription in Saudi Arabia.

Its dependence on Western powers evoked widespread criticisms in the country. It also shook the self-confidence of the Saudis. Although they had spent huge expenses on arms, they were a small military power. In addition, they had a well-equipped air force, but it had failed to be effective in August 1990. The bankruptcy of the security doctrine also brought about very important questions among Saudis. For example, despite the \$200 billion spent by the Saudi government on defense since 1970, why were the Saudi armed forces incapable of defending the kingdom?¹⁴ Many questions among Saudis were asked, such as 'Where did our

¹² F. Gregory Gause III (1997), "From 'Over the Horizon' to.....", pp. 342-343.

¹³ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert.....", p. 70.

¹⁴ Mordechai Abir (1993), *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society.....*, p. 176.

money go? Why we do not have a qualified army? Why do we need the US to protect us?”¹⁵ Saudi officials decided to increase the size and improve the capabilities of their armed forces. They have been discussing a program that will double the size of the army and grant it the ability to fight a large scale mobile war.¹⁶

The Bush administration recognized that Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 posed a direct threat to the security of Saudi Arabia.¹⁷ Saudi Arabia reacted to the Second Gulf War by expanding its security arrangements with the US. The US and Saudi Arabia expanded the US Military Training Mission (USMTM) agreement to increase US access to Saudi air and naval ports and they improved the joint warfare capabilities of their AWACS force.¹⁸ Saudi Arabia also allowed the US Air Force (USAF) to rotate combat units in and out of Saudi air bases. In September 1991, Saudi Arabia made an agreement for joint US and Saudi land force training. When the US, Britain and France established a no-fly-zone over Iraq in August 1992, Saudi Arabia allowed US aircraft to operate from its own airbases and provided refueling tankers.¹⁹ However, US and Saudi military cooperation and the size and the nature of the US presence on Saudi territory was also affected by internal disputes. The US proposed two division sets of ground combat equipment in Saudi

¹⁵ *International Herald Tribune*, 5 September 1990 and 11 October 1990.

¹⁶ Patrick E. Tyler, “Gulf Security Talks Stall Over Plan for Saudi Army; Proposed Mobile Attack Force Opposed By US”, *New York Times*, 13 October 1991, p. 1.

¹⁷ Josh Pollack, “Saudi Arabia and the United.....”, p. 84.

¹⁸ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty First Century: the Military and International Security Dimensions*, Praeger Publishers; Washington D.C., 2003, p. 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

Arabia, but it was rejected by the Saudi government.²⁰ Such a rejection was a result of Saudi concern with the opposition from Islamic fundamentalism.

Expediting the return of American forces to the Kingdom in large numbers was a very delicate matter. There was domestic opposition in Saudi Arabia to the presence of the US forces during the Gulf crisis. Letters and petitions had been signed by many Saudis requesting that the Kingdom avoid foreign alliances that contradict Islamic legitimacy.²¹ In late November 1990, King Fahd stated that there are not any secret agreements for the permanent stationing of foreign forces in the kingdom.²² Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan also declared that the US would withdraw its forces from the kingdom once their mission was completed.²³ Meanwhile, the Saudi government supported the presence of the US forces by a *fatwa*²⁴ given by Sheikh Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Bin Baz.²⁵ The government used its propaganda organs, media, diplomatic ties and financial sources to convince the public of the legitimacy of the US military presence.

The Saudis changed their attitudes toward the US role in the security of the Gulf. In May 1991, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney presented a draft of a 'Memorandum of Understanding on Gulf Security'.²⁶ It contained the following:

- a. stationing of senior US Central Command officers in the Gulf;

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²¹ Mordechai Abir (1993), *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society.....*, pp. 188, 191.

²² *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 28 November 1990, p. 3.

²³ *Al-Hayat*, 14 March 1991, p. 1.

²⁴ Islamic legal proclamation, or religious judgment.

²⁵ Chairman of the Supreme Council of Islamic Research, Ruling and Guidance in Saudi Arabia.

²⁶ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert.....", pp. 77-78.

- b. storing tanks and hardware in Saudi Arabia;
- c. rotating tactical aircraft throughout the region;
- d. conducting joint military exercises;
- e. moving aircraft carriers in and out of the Gulf; and
- f. shifting a force to the area periodically.²⁷

The Saudis turned down the proposed Memorandum. Prince Khaled warned Washington not to leave behind a stockpile of arms. Instead, the US should provide advanced weapons to enable the Saudis to defend themselves. He said that in the future, they would take only US military personnel whom they needed for training the Saudi forces in the use of new weapons. And this would be the only reason for US troops to be stationed in Saudi Arabia.²⁸ King Fahd also indicated that he would be happy to rely on Western military help in case of need without any previous document or agreement.²⁹ Saudi internal and external stability has depended on keeping strategic cooperation as quiet as possible, while the US has been insistent on public arrangements. The refusal of documents or agreements for the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia by the King caused growing strains in US-Saudi relations.³⁰

The third aspect of post-war Saudi security policy is the kingdom's relations with its Arab coalition partners in Desert Storm. With the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, new factors were introduced, which began to disturb the equilibrium of the region. Saudi editors criticized the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as an inadequate organ,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁸ Judith Miller, "Saudi General Sees No Need for Big American Presence", *New York Times*, 29 April 1991.

²⁹ *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 28 November 1990, p. 3.

³⁰ Michael R. Gordon, "Cheney, in Riyadh, Appeals For the Right to Store Arms", *New York Times*, 7 May 1991, p. 1.

because it does not have a defense power to provide security for the Gulf countries.³¹ A new security structure in the Gulf was designed and Syria and Egypt began to play a significant role in the security of the Gulf. On 6 March 1990, the foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria and the GCC states met in Damascus. The Damascus Declaration became the basis for the permanent Egyptian and Syrian military presence in the Gulf. It also considered the Egyptian and Syrian forces as “the nucleus of an Arab peacekeeping force for guaranteeing the security of the Arab states in the Gulf”.³² The eight ministers met with Secretary of State James Baker in Riyadh on 10 March 1990, and he expressed US support for the Damascus Declaration and for Egyptian and Syrian military forces in the Gulf.³³ With the announcement of US support, the establishment of Egyptian-Syrian-GCC military alliance had been consolidated.

On October, President Mubarak and King Fahd discussed the feasibility of a permanent Egyptian military presence in the Gulf.³⁴ Since Egypt and Syria were in desperate need of money, they provided manpower while the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia in particular, poured their money in the establishment of a ‘new Arab political and economic order’³⁵. It was a kind of redistribution of wealth. The rich Gulf states were improving the economic development plans for those defending the Gulf. In mid-February 1991, the foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria, Morocco and the six GCC states met in Cairo for the establishment of a permanent Gulf force composed of

³¹ *Al-Riyadh*, 14 August 1990.

³² *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 7 March 1991, p. 1.

³³ Thomas L. Friedman, “8 Arab Countries Backed Bush’s Plan On Mideast Peace: Called Watershed Event”, *New York Times*, 11 March 1990, p. A1.

³⁴ *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 24 September 1990 and *New York Post*, 14 September 1990.

³⁵ Jacob Goldberg (1993), “Saudi Arabia’s Desert...”, p. 67.

Egyptian, Syrian and Saudi troops. As a result, a powerful Saudi-Egyptian-Syrian bloc was established against Iraq.

However, Saudis were reluctant to depend on other Arabs for their defense. They feared that Egypt and Syria might use their troops to dominate the Gulf states. There were added fears that the good relations with Egypt and Syria might change due to domestic political changes in Syria and Egypt and regional realignments.³⁶ They felt that the fighting abilities of Egyptian and Syrian forces were not worth the billion-dollar payoff. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia needed Arab and international forces to mitigate the US military presence.

Afraid from Islamic and Arab nationalist opposition³⁷, King Fahd hesitated while Prince Abdullah supported an Arab solution to the crisis. Prince Talal also objected to the possibility of fighting with Iraq. On 9 August 1990, King Fahd stated that the US military presence in the kingdom was necessary.³⁸ The Saudis wanted to expand their military capabilities and deal directly with the US.³⁹ The Gulf states also did not trust Egypt and Syria either politically or on their military ability. Thus, they did not establish a 100,000 strong Gulf army.⁴⁰ As a result, the US military role emerged as the most preferable option for the GCC.⁴¹

³⁶ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 214.

³⁷ Mordechai Abir (1993), *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society.....*, p. 173.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁹ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert.....", p. 77.

⁴⁰ Joseph Kostiner, "The United States and the Gulf States: Alliance in Need", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 4, November 1998, p. 3.

⁴¹ Abdal Khaliq Abdallah, "Al-Nizam Al-Iqlimi Al-Khaleeji", *Al-Siyasa Al-Dawliyya*, October 1993, pp. 44-50.

Negative Iranian attitude towards the Damascus Declaration was another reason for the reassessment of the declaration among Saudi officials. Riyadh did not want to alienate Iran from the Gulf security structure. Iranian officials condemned Egypt for isolating their country in the Gulf.⁴² On 7 June 1991, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal visited Tehran to assure Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati that the Damascus Declaration was not aimed against Iran. As a result, both ministers agreed on developing cooperation on Gulf security and Islamic and economic issues.⁴³

Improved relations with Iran disturbed the security relations with Egypt and Syria and the dissatisfaction of Cairo and Damascus came to the surface as early as May 1991. Egypt announced its plans to withdraw its troops from Saudi Arabia on 8 May 1991 and Syria also announced its intention to withdraw in June 1991 which it completed at the end of July.⁴⁴ By the end of summer of 1991, the ambitious Damascus Declaration was dead.

It is said that Saudi security policy in the post-war period was in flux. That flux was created due to Riyadh's desire to maintain the balance among many relations and not to rely on one pillar to guarantee Saudi security.⁴⁵ Self-defense is preferred, but it was not sufficient. The security connection with US is still very important, but must be kept at arms' length not to cause domestic and regional problems. Saudi Arabia has to maintain good relations with Iran, Egypt and Syria to check each other, while not preferring one over the other.

⁴² *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 8 March 1991, pp. 1, 4.

⁴³ *Al-Hayat*, 8 June 1991, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 4 June 1991, pp. 1, 7; 30 July 1991, p. 5.

⁴⁵ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia.....", pp. 216-217.

III. 3. Saudi Foreign Policy Towards Iraq and Its Allies

With the invasion of Kuwait, countries like Iraq, Jordan, Yemen and the PLO became overnight arch-enemies of Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, resentments towards Jordanians, Yemenis and Palestinians emerged in the kingdom. Prince Bandar said that all of the supporters of Saddam would go under with him and that they would pay for their betrayal.⁴⁶

In terms of Gulf security, Iraq under the leadership of Saddam could play no role in any security arrangements with its neighbors. Due to Saddam's reputation for both domestic and foreign aggression, he was no longer seen as a liable partner for security in the Gulf. Thus, Saudi Arabia aimed to dethrone Saddam, and during the Gulf crisis, Saudis began to support groups of Iraqi anti-regime exiles. Along with Syria and Iran, Saudi Arabia encouraged these anti-Saddam groups and after the war, with the backing of the US, it supported Iraqi uprisings to remove Saddam. On 11-13 March 1991, twenty-three Iraqi opposition groups met in Beirut. They issued their intention to cooperate against Saddam and to form a new regime based on freedom of expression and free elections.⁴⁷ What is surprising from the Saudi point of view was its willingness to tolerate calls for free elections in Iraqi domestic politics. All these demonstrate Saudi Arabia's willingness to get rid of Saddam. However, the Saudis changed their mind after the war. They realized that the alternative to Saddam might be the disintegration of Iraq, danger of a Shiite threat in southern Iraq and the

⁴⁶ Norman Kempster, "Saudi Says Iraq's Arab Allies Will Pay For Choosing Wrong Side Mideast: Prince Bandar, Envoy to the US Signals a Change in Riyadh's Policy of Regional Consensus. He Forgives the Palestinian People's Sympathy For Hussein", *Los Angeles Times*, 22 February 1991, p. 8.

⁴⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 14 March 1991, pp. 1, 7.

absence of a counterbalance to Iranian power. When Iraq refused to cooperate with the UN mission, the US decided to bomb Iraq and Saudi Arabia rejected US plans to base bombers on its soil. Since that would also give rise to resentment from Arab world against the Kingdom. Since Saudi Arabia did not want attract attention among Arabs by giving too much compensation to the US and also did not wish to increase anti-American sentiments, it did not allow the US to use its bases.

Meanwhile, Saudi aid to Jordan and the PLO reduced remarkably. Saudi Arabia suspended economic aid to Amman, which had totaled \$200 million annually.⁴⁸ Saudi Arabia also closed its border to Jordanian products and trucks, which affected its exports to the Gulf heavily.⁴⁹ Riyadh stopped oil deliveries to Jordan and entry visas to Jordanians were suspended. Diplomatic relations with Jordan were disrupted and the two ambassadors were recalled.⁵⁰

The PLO alignment with Iraq was a turning point for Saudi-Palestinian relations. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait cut off their aid to the PLO, which had been running over \$100 million per year.⁵¹ Saudis expelled thousands of Palestinians. Saudi leaders also mentioned that if the PLO wanted the normalization of relations and financial aids, it would have to change their leaders.⁵² Neither Arafat, nor King Hussein was supported by Saudi leaders. Twelve months later, King Fahd wrote to

⁴⁸ Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Citing A Default, Saudis Stop Sending Jordan Oil", *New York Times*, 21 September 1990, p. A8.

⁴⁹ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia.....", pp. 218-219.

⁵⁰ *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 24 September 1990.

⁵¹ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert.....", p. 80.

⁵² *Al-Ahram*, 12 August 1990 and *Al-Akhbar*, 12 August 1990.

Arafat to represent Palestine in the peace conference, implying that this might improve Palestinian-Saudi relations.⁵³

On another note, Saudi Arabia also treated the Yemenis harshly. Although the kingdom does not publish precise figures, it was predicted that over 1,000,000 Yemenis were employed as unskilled laborers in the early 1980's.⁵⁴ In September 1990, the Saudi government enacted new labor regulations for the Yemeni workers in the kingdom.⁵⁵ They had previously been able to enter the country without a visa and to work without an official Saudi sponsor. With new regulations, Yemeni workers lost their privileges and became subject to the same regulations as other workers. As a result, around 750,000 Yemenis had to return to their homes.⁵⁶ After deploying troops along the Yemeni border, Riyadh warned Sanaa that any aggression would be dealt with a massive attack on Yemeni strategic, military and oil facilities.⁵⁷

III. 4. The Economic Burden of the Invasion on Saudi Arabia

Once Iraq invaded Kuwait, turbulence emerged in the oil market. On 6 August, Iraq was placed under sanctions by UN Security Council Resolution 661. The embargo prevented sale and export of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil in the market, which increased the price of oil. Saudi Arabia and Venezuela called for an emergency

⁵³ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert....", p. 80.

⁵⁴ Ghassan Salamé, "Political Power and the Saudi State" in Berch Berberoglu (ed.) *Power and Stability in the Middle East*, Zed Books Ltd.; London & New Jersey, 1989, pp. 81-83.

⁵⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 21 September 1990, p. 1.

⁵⁶ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia....", p. 219.

⁵⁷ *Al-Ahram*, 16 September, 1990.

OPEC meeting to compensate for Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil. It can be said that although Saudi Arabia has the capacity to produce more oil, it wanted official OPEC approval for the increase in production. During the Vienna Agreement on 29 August 1990, OPEC ministers decided to increase oil production until the war ended, and after that, they would balance the price at \$21 (p/d).⁵⁸ By removal of Kuwaiti and Iraqi oil from the world market, Saudi oil production increased from 5.6 million barrels per day (b/d) to 8.7 million (b/d) by November 1990.⁵⁹ Thus, the crisis did not have a drastic impact on the world oil market.

According to Ken Matthews, there were three categories of costs due to the war: The first one was the cost of mobilization which included the costs of the transportation of troops and equipment and the training of troops for the particular environment including desert training and camouflage. The second was the daily cost of the military action that contained the cost of maintenance of troops in their locations and the cost of activities like naval patrols and aircraft training. The last one was the capital costs of military action, which included the value of equipment lost, damaged and destroyed in an action and families of military personnel killed in action receive some compensation also.⁶⁰

Taking into consideration the above mentioned categories, the Saudi government had to look for loans twice during the Second Gulf War, totaling around \$7 billion due to its sponsorship to the war. According to Sadowski, by August 1991,

⁵⁸ *Middle East Economic Survey*, 17 December 1990, pp. A1-A2.

⁵⁹ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia...", p. 221.

⁶⁰ Ken Matthews, *The Gulf Conflict and International Relations*, Routledge; London & New York, 1993, pp. 205-206.

Saudi Arabia spent around \$64 billion on the war.⁶¹ Some of these expenditures were the spending of at least \$13 billion on new arms purchases. On 25 February 1992, the Bush administration told congress that it was planning to sell 72 jet fighter planes to Saudi Arabia worth \$5 billion.⁶² In September, James Baker and King Fahd agreed to cover the costs of the US troops dispatched to the Kingdom.⁶³ It is said that \$13 billion has been paid in cash to the US for Desert Shield and Storm operations, and \$8 billion still owed.⁶⁴

Saudi Arabia not only paid the costs of the coalition military forces, but also gave aid to Arab and regional coalition partners. They also agreed to give \$3-4 billion to help countries like Jordan and Turkey bear the UN Security Council embargo against Iraq. The Saudi government distributed over \$5 billion in aid to countries and refugees of the Gulf war. It gave \$1.79 billion to Egypt, \$1.05 billion to Syria and \$1.16 billion to Turkey. The Saudis also forgave Egypt's debt.⁶⁵ They also had to house and feed almost 200,000 Kuwaitis who had fled to the kingdom. All these led to a financial deficit in the country. But, this does not mean that Saudi Arabia became a poor country; Saudi planners hoped that the increase in oil production and stable prices through 1991 would meet the expenses.

⁶¹ Yahya Sadowski, "Arab Economies After the Gulf War: Power, Poverty and Petrodollars", *Middle East Report*, no. 170, May-June 1991, p. 6.

⁶² Ewan Anderson (ed.), *Saudi Arabia in the Post-Gulf War: The Search for Stability and Security in the Gulf*, The Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies; The University of Durham, 1992, p. 17.

⁶³ Yahya Sadowski (1991), "Arab Economies After.....", p. 5.

⁶⁴ Ewan Anderson (ed.) (1992), *Saudi Arabia in*, p. 19.

⁶⁵ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia.....", pp. 221-222.

III. 5. Demands for Socio-Political Change After the Invasion and Its Effects on the US-Saudi Relations

The Second Gulf War and the presence of thousands of the ‘infidel’ US troops led to the Islamic criticisms in Saudi Arabia. Why did the invasion of Kuwait and the Second Gulf War encourage the Islamist fundamentalists? Saudi Arabia was faced with a dilemma in terms of developing forces enough to meet its regional challenges. This makes the kingdom dependent on a strong power, namely the US, which is also non-Muslim and the closest ally of Israel. The US military presence in Saudi Arabia brought many problems to the kingdom in terms of cultural differences and a hostile reaction to the US’s support of Israel. Many Islamists reject any US presence on their soil. The greatest source of annoyance to the Saudis was the presence of about 17,000 US civilian and military personnel in their country.⁶⁶

Saudi Arabia’s revenues come from petroleum products, not from taxes. The state has an informal “social-contact”⁶⁷ with its citizens. It distributes its oil income among its citizens, employs them in the public sector, and in return, the people do not ask for political representation. The rulers are also obliged to protect the kingdom. But, by calling in non-Muslim US soldiers to protect the holiest places of Islam, the royal family violated their contract. Issuing a fatwa⁶⁸ permitting the arrival of non-Muslim troops in Saudi Arabia during Desert Shield and Desert Storm Operations angered ulema and radicals.⁶⁹ They argued that the fatwa that allowed the

⁶⁶ Mordechai Abir, “Saudi Arabia in the 1990s: Stability and Foreign Policy”, *The Jerusalem Letter*, September 1997, p. 1 available at online <http://ciaonet.org/pbei/jcpa/abm01.html>.

⁶⁷ Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou: Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Opposition*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Washington D.C., 2000, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Religious edict.

⁶⁹ Joshua Teitelbaum (2000), *Holier Than Thou.....*, p. 26.

US troops into the kingdom crossed a red line. Because their territory was being used by the US forces to attack a Muslim country.

The Second Gulf War, the presence of the US troops in the kingdom, the absence of freedom of speech and censorship increased the Islamic fundamentalist tendencies in the kingdom. They believed that the presence of US soldiers was responsible for the entrance of westernized elements of the population. On 6 November 1990, almost seventy women⁷⁰, 49 of them Saudis⁷¹, protested the government, asking for equal opportunities in Riyadh by driving cars, something which was forbidden to Saudi women. The Islamist fundamentalists perceived the women's action was directly related to the presence of US troops, because female US soldiers were seen driving trucks around Riyadh. The fundamentalists drew up and signed petitions demanding those women be punished.⁷² Some of these women lost their jobs and were subjected to harassment. Islamist fundamentalists had the vast network of mosques as a tool for mobilization.⁷³ Islamic cassettes with sermons of Islamist preachers attacking the Saudi government for inviting infidel troops to Saudi Arabia were widely circulated in the kingdom. King Fahd and his regime were openly attacked in sermons in different mosques in the kingdom during 1991. It is said that the king was accused of being a tool of the US, concerning his policy regarding Iraq.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

⁷¹ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert.....", p. 76.

⁷² Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi Women Take Driver's Seat in A Rare Protest For the Right To Travel", *New York Times*, 7 November 1990, p. A18.

⁷³ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert.....", p. 82.

⁷⁴ Mordechai Abir (1993), *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society.....*, pp. 184-185.

By the 1990s, the political stability in Saudi Arabia began to change. The growth of cities, rural-to-urban migration and modernization in culture, education and technology had pushed a new middle class and a 'second generation of princes'⁷⁵ (wealthy and foreign educated) to challenge the country's political traditionalism. Political challenges and demands for reforms in the Gulf states came to the surface due to the Gulf War. As Emile A. Nakhleh said, the rulers of the Gulf Arab states tried to find the answer to the question of how to maintain political development at an evolutionary, not a revolutionary pace⁷⁶.

The rise of the middle class and the changing education level of the Saudi population led to demands for power sharing and demands for political participation (musharafa) in the Saudi Arabia became more persistent in the early 1990s. The Second Gulf War was the turning point in the political participation process in the Kingdom, demands for political participation began to take the form of a petition to the ruler. There were two petitions, one by non-cleric group and another by Islamic group, submitted to King Fahd in the spring of 1992. Each of them demanded Majlis Al-Shura and asked for a restructuring the Saudi political system according to the Islamic law. They also expressed their loyalty to the country and to the king. They did not require a fundamental change in the nature of the regime. Both petitions asserted the central role of Shari'a in the country. They also requested a reform in the judiciary, called for equality of opportunity and wanted to stop the arbitrary practices in the government.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Emile A. Nakhleh, "Regime Stability and.....", p. 123.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 121.

⁷⁷ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 225.

The non-cleric group's petition that was signed by forty three liberal businessmen and intellectuals called for three major reforms: the establishment of Majlis Al-Shura, freedom of information, more room for women in both social and political Saudi life⁷⁸ and limitations to the religious police (mutawwa'in).⁷⁹

On the other hand, the Islamic group petition that was signed by hundreds of religious leaders, scholars, teachers and ulema. The Islamic group's petition called for:

- a. domestic and foreign matters should be taken by Majlis Al-Shura;
- b. all political, economic and administrative decisions should be related to the Shari'a;
- c. government officials should behave polite and honest;
- d. equality, justice and civil rights should be guaranteed for all citizens;
- e. all government officials should work accountably;
- f. public wealth should be distributed equally to all citizens;
- g. a strong army should be established;
- h. media should be restructured according to Islam;
- i. the foreign policy of the kingdom should serve the national and Islamic world interests;
- j. religious institutions in the country should be supported financially;
- k. the judiciary should be unified and granted total autonomy;
- l. and individual rights should be guaranteed.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert....", p. 75.

⁷⁹ Emile A. Nakhleh, "Regime Stability and....", pp. 136-137.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

The 400 ulema's petition shook the kingdom, because it reflected the growing militancy among the Wahhabi theologians against the kingdom.⁸¹ It also reflected the threat to the regime's authority and legitimacy. The King began to take strong measures against the militant signatories of the petition. Some of its members were arrested, their passports were confiscated and some were barred from using their mosques and lecturing in the universities.⁸²

Political change in Saudi Arabia has always been slow. On 9 November 1990, King Fahd promised to liberalize the Saudi political system. However, the most important response to political reform came on 1 March 1992 when the king announced a plan to establish a Consultative Council (Majlis Al-Shura) that would be composed of sixty members chosen by the king from different groups among the middle class and intellectuals.⁸³ The duties of the Majlis Al-Shura were; to recommend plans for economic and social development; to advise laws, agreements and alliances; and lastly, to prepare a report annually to the council.⁸⁴

The council is not a representative legislative body. Its members are appointed by the king from different provinces of the kingdom, university professors, scientists, military officers, media people, government officials, businessmen and Islamic jurists.⁸⁵ The council has no veto power over the government decisions. It also was given limited authority to discuss government policies behind closed doors.

⁸¹ Mordechai Abir (1993), *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society.....*, p. 191.

⁸² Joshua Teitelbaum (2000), *Holier Than Thou.....*, pp. 37-42.

⁸³ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia.....", pp. 222-223.

⁸⁴ Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi King Issues Decrees to Revise Governing System; Forms Advisory Council New Groups of 60 Citizens Will Offer Advice to Cabinet and Review Country's Laws Saudi King Revises System of Governing", *New York Times*, 2 March 1992, p. A1.

⁸⁵ Mordechai Abir (1997), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 5.

However, it is still very important for two reasons: first, the council can question the ministers and second, people who are not from the royal family can take part in the decision-making process. The king announced that his reforms were in accord with Islam. He also stressed that the reforms were not changing the political system in Saudi Arabia.⁸⁶

On 6 July 1997, King Fahd announced the increase in the authority of this council. Journalists would also be allowed to follow its debates and comment on it.⁸⁷ The number of members in the second majlis during the 1997-2001 period increased to 90, and to 120 members in the third majlis period of 2001-2005.⁸⁸ In 1997, three Shi'ite council members were appointed to represent the kingdom's Shi'ite population. Three other council appointees were Sunni preachers and university professors. Moderate Islamist university professors also were appointed to the council. It can be understood that King Fahd was trying to bribe its middle class and intellectuals by appointing them to influential positions, government jobs and granting them various privileges. He had to give some compensation to cope with the growing dissatisfaction with the Saudi regime.

US-Saudi relations during the 1990s were troubled by both the continued presence of US forces at Saudi bases and also by the increased Islamist opposition movement in the kingdom. Riyadh refused to sign a defense agreement with the US that would allow it to stockpile heavy weapons on its territory. Yet, the majority of Saudis were still annoyed by the presence of 17,000 US civilian and military

⁸⁶ F. Gregory Gause III (1993), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 227.

⁸⁷ Mordechai Abir (1997), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 5.

⁸⁸ J. E. Peterson, "Saudi Arabia and the Illusion of Security", *Adelphi Paper*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, no. 348, Oxford University Press Inc.; London & New York, 2002, p. 51.

personnel in their country even after the Second Gulf War.⁸⁹ Moreover, Saudi internal and external stability has depended on keeping strategic cooperation as quiet as possible, while the US has been insistent on public arrangements. Also, the US-Saudi relations has always been complicated by the US's special relationship with Israel. Riyadh's *de facto* recognition of the Jewish state was unacceptable for some Saudis. Saudi support for the Arab-Israeli process that began in Madrid in October 1991 led to radical domestic opposition to the regime.⁹⁰

The opposition had a definite Islamic purpose. The remedy was the full implementation of the Shari'a and Islamic goals.⁹¹ They always targeted the government for not ruling the kingdom according to the Shari'a and by welcoming the non-Muslims, particularly the US, to their country for security reasons.

The opposition groups ranged from moderate liberal businessmen to intellectuals and ulema. Their opposition took the form of audiocassettes, letters, petitions and advice to King Fahd. Until 1995, the methods that the opposition groups used were non-violent and they wanted to change the government through vocal opposition.⁹² But the *mujahidin*, holy warriors sent by the Saudi government to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, had a different path to follow. Osama Bin Laden, Jeddah based businessman who was expelled from the Saudi citizenship in April

⁸⁹ Mordechai Abir (1997), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 1.

⁹⁰ Joshua Teitelbaum (2000), *Holier Than Thou.....*, p. 36.

⁹¹ Joseph Kostiner (1998), "The United States and.....", p. 3.

⁹² Daryl Champion, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Element of Instability Within Stability", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 4, December 1999, pp. 1-23 available at online http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/meria/meria99_chd01.html; Joshua Teitelbaum (2000), *Holier Than Thou.....*, pp. 25-71.

1994 due to his anti-government activities, represented the jihadist wing of the Saudi opposition.⁹³

On 13 November 1995, a bomb exploded in Riyadh. The terrorist bombing killed five Americans and two Indians and injured sixty people. Among the Americans killed were one serviceman at a Saudi Arabian National Guard training site and four civilian employees.⁹⁴ The attack was the largest of its kind in Saudi history. Three unknown groups claimed the responsibility for the explosion. All of them asked for the departure of US soldiers from the Arabian Peninsula. In April 1996, four men were captured and they expressed that the presence of the US troops in Saudi Arabia warranted an act of jihad. They also stated that they were influenced by Osama Bin Laden. On 31 May 1996, they were executed. Following the bombing in Riyadh, the US Embassy also began receiving threats of further violence.⁹⁵

On 25 June 1996, another bomb exploded and destroyed the Al-Khobar Towers housing complex in Dhahran. All nineteen people killed in the explosion were US Air Force personnel and almost five hundred US citizens were injured. Emergency measures were taken. The US armed forces in Saudi Arabia regrouped at two new sites: an air base in the desert 120 km south of Riyadh and a district in the suburbs of the capital.⁹⁶ Investigation of the incident was carried out by both Saudi and US investigators. The results of the investigation began to show Iranian

⁹³ Michael Donovan, "Islam and Stability in Saudi Arabia", *The Defense Monitor*, vol. 30, no. 9, November 2001, p. 6.

⁹⁴ Joshua Teitelbaum (2000), *Holier Than Thou.....*, pp. 73-75.

⁹⁵ Douglas Jahl, "Saudis, Aided by the F.B.I. Seek Blast Clues", *New York Times*, 27 June 1996, p. A1.

⁹⁶ Alain Gresh, "The Unresolved Mystery of a Saudi Bomb Attack", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 1997, p. 2 available at online <http://mondediplo.com/1997/09/saudi>.

involvement. But, Saudi Arabia never announced any arrests for the Dhahran bombing officially. Riyadh agreed not to blame Iran publicly and in return; Tehran would agree not to support any Saudi Shii opposition.⁹⁷

Osama Bin Laden did not hide his support for the action against the US military in both bomb attacks. Bin Laden issued a fatwa stating that killing Americans and their allies is an essential for every Muslim. He also decried the US occupation of the Arabian Peninsula.⁹⁸ He opposed both the royal family and the US in that the foreign military forces in Saudi Arabia were polluting the kingdom. In August 1998, Bin Laden's organization called Al-Qaeda bombed the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.⁹⁹ The Saudis and Americans began to pressure and bribe the Taliban to hand over Bin Laden, but their efforts proved fruitless. Bin Laden's anti-Saudi government and anti-American attacks still continue and their traces can be seen in everyday life.

In this chapter, US-Saudi relations during the 1990s were analyzed. For many years, their relations were based on mutual national interests with oil as the key vehicle. Saudi Arabia provided a steadily increasing flow of reasonably priced oil to the US. In turn, the US assured security of the Kingdom. The Gulf crisis in 1990-1991 brought about many political and security-related challenges to Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom was faced with a security dilemma. It was kept in between stationing the US troops on its soil for providing the security of the Kingdom from external threats, and dealing with domestic opposition which was aroused due to the presence of the large numbers of US forces. The economic burden of the war on Saudi Arabia

⁹⁷ Joshua Teitelbaum (2000), *Holier Than Thou.....*, pp. 87-94.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-80.

⁹⁹ Josh Pollack, "Saudi Arabia and the United.....", p. 85.

was also analyzed. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's security policy towards its strong ally, the US, towards its Arab coalition partners and towards its enemies during the Second Gulf War was displayed in this chapter. An evaluation of the reasons that lie behind Saudi Arabia's security cooperation with the US was mentioned. An attempt was also made to study the delicate duty of King Fahd in keeping good relations with the US and guaranteeing its regime by giving some compensation to cope with domestic disturbances. The thesis of this chapter was that the US and Saudi Arabia tried to maintain their traditional relations based on mutual interests centering on: oil for security.

CHAPTER IV

SEPTEMBER 11 AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE US-SAUDI RELATIONS

The horrific attacks on New York and Pentagon on 11 September 2001 brought about a new dimension to the international system, in particular to the relations between the US and Saudi Arabia. It is argued that the tension in the relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia reached its highest point since 1973 oil embargo.¹ Since the mastermind of the attacks, Osama Bin Laden², and 15 of the 19 of hijackers were Saudis, American public anger increased against Saudi Arabia. A hostile view of US-Saudi relations became widespread. Many Americans began to see Saudi Arabia, formerly a loyal ally for them in the Middle East, as a “supporter of terrorism”. Anti-Arab and Anti-Islamic sentiments increased in the US media. There was a media campaign especially against Saudi Arabia. Through cabled television and the internet, critics of US-Saudi relations began to express their views more loudly. Their relationship began to come under criticism from both the media

¹ Josh Pollack, “Saudi Arabia and the United.....”, p. 89.

² Osama Bin Laden is the 17th son of construction magnate Mohammed Bin Laden. He is a Saudi citizen of Yemeni origin. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, he joined the Afghan resistance. In 1989, he founded Al-Qaeda for the defense of Muslims against injustice. He used his wealth to fund Islamic extremism and terrorist groups.

and the public of each country.³ Media was one of the main catalysts for straining relations; in both countries, it focused on the disagreements between them.

Contrary to such a portrayal of Saudi Arabia, in fact both the US and Saudi Arabia found the same enemy in terrorism. They actually had a common interest in stopping terrorism. Thus, officially they promoted cooperation to decrease this threat.⁴ Drying up the financial resources for terrorist organizations became an important goal of both countries. As a result, the US administration began to focus on the Kingdom's religious and social issues. The US needed to pressure Saudi Arabia to use its prestige and networks in the Muslim world in dealing with terrorism. Saudi Arabia also needed to take measures domestically to prevent the private financing to terrorist groups.

It can be argued that two important elements shaped the US-Saudi relations after the traumatic attacks. The first one is that the US-Saudi relations began to be affected by the war on terrorism.⁵ Their relations were no longer within the previously narrow framework. Over decades, Saudi Arabia and the United States had maintained an unbroken relationship based on mutual interests: Saudi oil in exchange for American security guarantees. However, the long untroubled bilateral relation had come to an end. These well-worn relations have changed since the September 11 attacks of 2001.⁶ Although they differed from each other over the issues of Jewish

³ Ahmad Ajaj & Mohammed Al-Fal, "An Arab View: Saudi Arabia and the Western Media: Is the Battle Winnable?", *The Middle East*, January 2004, pp. 32-33; Brian Knowlton, "A Rising Anti-American Tide", *The International Herald Tribune*, 5 December 2002, p. 6.

⁴ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 10.

⁵ Eid Bin Mes'oud Al-Jahany (2003), *Khutout wa Dhilal fi Al-A'laqat....*, p. 25.

⁶ Clifford Chanin & F. Gregory Gause III, "US-Saudi Relations: A Rocky Road", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 4, Winter 2004, p. 33.

immigration into Palestine and the establishment of Israel state there, that was nonetheless a third party problem and had no direct effect on their dialogue. For the first time in their relationship, the two countries became head-to-head over a problem. Moreover, people in each country began to see the other as a “threat”.

The second thesis of this chapter is that US-Saudi relations had never relied on public opinion. Instead, they have relied on an elite-level bargain based on security and oil. The events of September 11 marked a critical turning point in the US-Saudi relationship in that respect as well. The bilateral relations began to be shaped by public opinion in both countries. Public sentiment began to play an important role in their relations. Every decision by taken either country has to be justified publicly. After September 11, the US pushed Saudi Arabia for social and political reforms to reduce the strain in the relations between the two countries. Such policies had to be taken because the Kingdom wanted to show to the US that they are with the US, and against the terrorists. Moreover, the Saudi government had to implement these domestic policies silently, because the much needed reforms would be jeopardized if they were announced publicly.⁷ In brief, after September 11, the Kingdom’s domestic policies and US’s threats had collided to become central to both countries.

As a third party problem, Crown Prince Abdullah’s peace initiative will also be studied in this chapter to further outline the relations between the US and Saudi Arabia in this period. There emerged some questions about the peace initiative and although it was not actually saying anything new, it nevertheless attracted international attention. Among the questions raised are: Why did the plan attract such

⁷ Clifford Chanin & Gregory F. Gause III, “US-Saudi Relations: Bump in The Road Or End Of The Road?”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 4, Winter 2003, p. 123.

an international attention? Although the US knew certainly that the plan would not be accepted by Israel, why did the US give support to it? Answers to these questions will be evaluated in this chapter.

September 11 has raised many questions in the minds of Americans and the Saudis. Some of these questions are: What has been the Kingdom's reaction to the September 11 attacks? Is the Kingdom still stable enough to be a reliable partner for the United States in the future? Is Saudi Arabia an enemy or a friend of the United States? Where does Saudi Arabia really stand? In answering these one must consider, however, that friendship and hostility are two way streets. Before asking whether Saudi Arabia is hostile to or a friend of the US, the US must ask same the question to itself; as to whether its policies to the Kingdom are perceived as hostile or friendly. In this chapter, answers to these questions will be analyzed carefully.

IV. 1. The US Stance to the Attacks

The attacks of Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda on New York and Washington marked an important turning point in US-Saudi relations. Soon after the attacks, the President of the United States George W. Bush made a public speech stating that the United States government would not make any distinction between terrorists and those who help them.⁸ He continued his speech by saying that there was no such thing as a 'good terrorist'.⁹ Bush warned the world by stating; 'Either you are with

⁸ Bush's address to the nation, 11 September 2001, available at online <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>.

⁹ Bush's address to the nation, 10 November 2001, available at online <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011110.html>.

us, or you are with the terrorists'.¹⁰ It was clearly asserted that there were only two categories of countries: those in support of the United States and those in support of the terrorists. Any country which had connections with terrorist groups was no longer acceptable by the US.

After the United States, Saudi Arabia was the most affected by the tragic events of September 11. Some questions were asked among Americans such as, what has been the Kingdom's reaction to the September 11 attacks? Is the Kingdom still stable enough to be a reliable partner for the United States in the future? Is Saudi Arabia an enemy or a friend of the United States? Where does Saudi Arabia really stand? The argument that Saudi Arabia is enemy of the US is non-sense. As it has the biggest oil reserves in the world and has special status in the Muslim world can not be enemy of the US, the most powerful country in the world. Throughout history, Saudi Arabia tried to cooperate with the US.

After the September 11 attacks, Americans began to question their old relations with Saudi Arabia. Saudi credibility was damaged in the eyes of American public opinion. The US government began to question the nature of Saudi influence in the Muslim world and whether Saudi educational and charitable organizations had fostered anti-Americanism.¹¹ Hostility to Saudi Arabia increased in the United States soon after the attacks, because all of the hijackers were Muslim, and 15 of the 19 were Saudis.¹²

¹⁰ Available at online <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

¹¹ Clifford Chanin & Gregory F. Gause III (2003), "US-Saudi Relations: Bump.....", p. 123.

¹² J. E. Peterson (2002), *Saudi Arabia and the.....*, p. 59.

Since the Saudi government used to provide generous financing to Muslim countries and non-governmental organizations, Americans began to treat the Kingdom as a hostile nation supporting terrorists. The Kingdom was accused of terrorist recruitment and funding. Although the financing of terrorism is a global problem, it became a Saudi-centric issue after September 11.¹³ In a very short time, the Kingdom began to be criticized by the US media and these publications played a key role in shifting American public opinion against Saudi Arabia.¹⁴

Since the hijackers came from the Middle East, the Arab world felt under extreme pressure from the US. The Arab world was considered a place of danger.¹⁵ A broad anti-Islamic and anti-Saudi discourse began to dominate the US media.¹⁶ Some Arabs claimed that they, as Muslims, deserved such humiliation and discrimination. They did not need anybody to accuse, because they had already lost the meaning of solidarity among themselves.¹⁷ According to some Saudis, however, the US media were taking every opportunity to highlight things that give Saudi Arabia, Islam and the Middle East a bad image.¹⁸ Overnight, Islam became the subject of discussion, argument and debate in American homes, universities, colleges

¹³ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), “Saudi Arabia.....”, p. 3.

¹⁴ Joseph A. Kéchichian, “Testing the Saudi ‘Will to Power’: Challenges Confronting Prince Abdallah”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 4, Winter 2003, p. 102.

¹⁵ Michael Barnett, “The Arab State System After September 11”, a paper presented at the annual meeting of American Political Science Association in Boston, MA, 31 August 2002 published in *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 2002, p. 81.

¹⁶ Anthony H. Cordesman (2003), *Saudi Arabia Enters.....*, p. 283.

¹⁷ Abdul Wudoud Shalby, “Guzour AL-Kerahiyya”, A’del Muallim (ed.), *Qari’at Sebtember*, Maktabat Al-Shrouq Al-Dawliyya; Cairo, 2002, p. 69.

¹⁸ “US-Saudi Relations: A Forum With Ambassador Robert W. Jordan and A Delegation From Saudi Arabia”, *Middle East Insight*, vol. 17, no. 2, March-April 2002, p. 16.

and offices. Islamic terrorism, radical Islam and Arab-Israeli issues dominated the news in the United States for months.¹⁹

IV. 2. The Saudi Response to the Attacks

At first glimpse, the Saudi government was shocked by the attacks of September 11. According to Prince Abdullah Bin Faisal Bin Turki Al-Saud, the second shock came when it was discovered that Osama Bin Laden and 15 of the 19 of hijackers were Saudis. Overall it was quite a traumatic experience for the Saudis.²⁰

Saudis considered the attacks to be attacks on their country and their religion. The Saudi government, members of the ruling family, the media and religious leaders all condemned the terrorist attacks on the US.²¹ The Saudi government in particular condemned such attacks as inhuman bombings which contradicted with any and all religious values. It also sent their condolences to the families of the victims, to US President George W. Bush and to the US people in general. It also called for cooperation to combat terrorism with the international community. The Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz called all Muslims to condemn all forms of terrorism.²² Chairman of the Supreme Council of Islamic Research, Ruling and Guidance in Saudi Arabia Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Al-Shaikh said that many innocent people had died in a horrific attack. He continued to

¹⁹ John S. Habib (2003), *Saudi Arabia and the American.....*, pp. 273-275.

²⁰ "US-Saudi Relations: A Forum With Ambassador Robert W. Jordan and A Delegation From Saudi Arabia", *Middle East Insight*, vol. 17, no. 2, March-April 2002, p. 16.

²¹ Michael R. Gordon, "A Nation Challenged: The Bases; Rumsfeld Meets Saudis and Says He's Satisfied With Level of Support" *New York Times*, 4 October 2001.

²² *Okaz*, 16 September 2001; and *Reuters*, 30 December 2001.

state that such an attack do not fit with Islam and was contrary to the ways of true Muslims.²³

Meanwhile, there emerged some denial among Saudis that the September 11 attackers were Saudis. They did not want to believe that such a horrific attack had been conducted by Muslims or Saudis. They insisted that the attacks had in fact happened as a result of hijackings.²⁴ Saudis were also concerned that some of those names and passports were fake or stolen.²⁵ Saudi accounts accused the American media of practicing “psychological terrorism” against Saudi Arabia.²⁶

It was claimed that the US was airing incorrect news stories about Saudi Arabia. Abdul Muhsin Al-Akkas²⁷ also said that there was a misperception in the US and Saudi Arabia about media issues.²⁸ He believed that the reason was not the Jews, but the pro-Israeli lobby and that the perpetrators of September 11 wanted to destroy US-Saudi relations. He continued by saying that the hijackers had found their allies in the US press and the pro-Israeli lobby kept making news based on half truths and intended to shift the blame for September 11 to the Saudis.²⁹

²³ Eid Bin Mes’oud Al-Jahany (2003), *Khutout wa Dhilal fi Al-A’laqat.....*, p. 66.

²⁴ Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi, *Alaqat Kharja: Al-Saudiyya Ba’de 11 Sebtember*, Riyadh Al-Rayyes Books; Beirut, 2002, pp. 115-117.

²⁵ Joseph McMillan, Anthony H. Cordesman, Mamoun Fandy & Fareed Mohamedi, “The United States and Saudi Arabia: American Interests and Challenges to The Kingdom in 2002”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 2002, p. 19.

²⁶ “Amrika wa Al-Irhab Al-Nifsi wa Ahdaf Al-Hamla Al-Askariyya”, *Al-Hayat*, 16 October 2001, p. 6.

²⁷ A member of the Consultative Council in Saudi Arabia.

²⁸ “US-Saudi Relations: A Forum With Ambassador Robert W. Jordan and A Delegation From Saudi Arabia”, *Middle East Insight*, vol. 17, no. 2, March-April 2002, p. 17.

²⁹ Mohamed Al-Khereiji, “The Best of One World”, *Arab News*, 11 September 2003 available at online <http://www.arabnews.com/9-11/print.asp?artid=4&d=11&m=9&y=2003&hl=The%20best%20of%20one%20world> ; and Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi (2002), *Alaqat Kharja: Al-Saudiyya.....*, pp. 75-86.

It was mentioned that some articles were published in the Arab world press accusing the Jews for controlling the US and trying to drive a wedge between Saudi Arabia and the US.³⁰ Some articles have also claimed that the US media is controlled by the Jews. They also called for questioning the real goals behind the American “war on terrorism”.³¹ For example, in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Siyasa* the Minister of Interior Prince Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz stated that the attacks was not made by Al-Qaeda alone. He thought that there must be an outside pressure from the US to strain relations between the US and Saudi Arabia. He believed that there must be Zionists behind these events.³² Yousef Al-Ayyiri³³ believed that the US and Israel are the leaders of a global anti-Islamic movement called “Zio-Crusaderism”³⁴. According to Al-Ayyiri, Zio-Crusaderism seeks the destruction of true Islam and dominion over the Middle East. Its most effective weapon is democracy, because it separates religion from the state.

On the other hand, some Saudi officials made a distinction between US government attitudes and those of the the US media. For example, Prince Al-Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdul Aziz said that he differentiated between the US government and the US media. He believed that the US government had taken a good stance with

³⁰ Ghazi Abdul Rahman Al-Qasibi, *Amrika Wa Al-Saudiyya: Hamla I'lamiyya Am Muwajaha Siyasiyya*, Al-Muessasa Al-Arabiyya Lil-Dirasat Wa Al-Nashr; Beirut, 2001, p. 87; and “US-Saudi Relations: A Forum With Ambassador Robert W. Jordan and A Delegation From Saudi Arabia”, *Middle East Insight*, vol. 17, no. 2, March-April 2002, p. 16.

³¹ “Amrika wa Al-Irhab Al-Nifsi wa Ahdaf Al-Hamla Al-Askariyya”, *Al-Hayat*, 16 October 2001, p. 6.

³² *Al-Siyasa*, 29 November 2001; and Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi (2002), *Alaqaat Kharja: Al-Saudiyya.....*, p. 143.

³³ An Al-Qaeda propagandist who died in June 2003 in a skirmish with the Saudi security services.

³⁴ Michael Scott Doran, “The Saudi Paradox”, *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2004, p. 4.

respect to its relations with Saudi Arabia, but the US media had attacked Saudi Arabia as a nation that gives support to terrorists.³⁵ Prince Turki Al-Faisal reacted angrily to American claims that Saudi Arabia breeds terrorism. He said that Americans should look at the terrorist organizations in their own country. He continued saying that there were 200 terrorist organizations in the US.³⁶

IV. 3. War on Terrorism

In response to the attacks of September 11, the Bush administration decided to declare a “war on terrorism”.³⁷ Saudi Arabia supported the US’s war on terrorism. It is believed that terrorism can be defeated only by cooperation of governments in the Muslim world.³⁸ Since Saudi Arabia’s leading role increased in the Muslim world after the attacks, the US needed cooperation with Saudi Arabia to control Al-Qaeda and to shape other Islamic states’ attitudes.³⁹ They were asked to request help from the US to make the world safer. Many Saudi intellectuals also claimed that Saudi Arabia had to improve its relations with the US because they believed that such tension with the superpower would not serve Saudi, Arab or Muslim interests.⁴⁰

³⁵ George A. Nader, “Saudi-US Interests Clearly Coincides: Interview With Saudi Prince Al-Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud”, *Middle East Insight*, January-February 2002, p. 23.

³⁶ Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi, “Kingdom Has A Big Role To Play In Afghanistan”, *Arab News*, 4 November 2001.

³⁷ Angelo M. Codevilla, “Postmortem on a Phony War”, *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2002, pp. 42-45.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁹ “Saudi Arabia: A Balancing Act”, *The Stratfor Weekly*, 30 January 2004, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Ghazi Al-Qusaibi, “Laysa Min Salih Al-Saudiyya Dukhul Muwajaha Ma’a Amrika”, *Al-Hayat*, 21 August 2002, p. 9; and Mohammad Bin Abdul Latif Al-Shaykh, “Man Al-Mustafeed Min Ta’miq Al-Sharakh Al-Saudi-Al-Amriki?”, *Al-Hayat*, 23 August 2002, p. 9.

After September 11, the US and Saudi Arabia were both interested in fighting terrorism.⁴¹ However, a war on terror was not a war against Islam. War on terrorism was aimed at the jihadi networks that had been claiming responsibility for terrorist attacks around the world.⁴² After September 11, Saudi Arabia arrested many Taliban fighters. On 18 June 2002, Saudi Arabia announced the arrests of eleven Saudis for their attempts to carry out terrorist attacks on important centers in the Kingdom.⁴³ It was understood from the investigations in Saudi Arabia that those people were linked to Bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda organization and were planning to attack the US bases and forces in the region.

Drying up the financial resources of these terrorist organizations became an important aim for both countries.⁴⁴ American critics of Saudi Arabia continued to focus on the flow of Saudi funds to Islamic organizations.⁴⁵ As a result, the US administration began to focus on the Kingdom's religious and social issues.

The US needed Saudi Arabia's prestige and networks in the Muslim world to deal with terrorism. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia had to take some domestic measures to prevent the financing of terrorist groups. Such measures had to be taken, because the Kingdom wanted to demonstrate that they were in the same boat with the US, not

⁴¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Arab-US Strategic Cooperation: A Net Assessment", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 2002, p. 51.

⁴² Clifford Chanin & F. Gregory Gause III (2004), "US-Saudi Relations: A.....", p. 31.

⁴³ Anthony H. Cordesman (2003), *Saudi Arabia Enters.....*, pp. 273-274.

⁴⁴ Gregory F. Gause III, "The Approaching Turning Point: The Future of US Relations With The Gulf States", Brookings Project on US Policy Towards The Islamic World, *Analysis Paper*, no. 2, May 2003, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Clifford Chanin & F. Gregory Gause III (2004), "US-Saudi Relations: A.....", p. 27.

with the terrorists. It is clear that after September 11, the Kingdom's domestic policies and US's threats had collided to become central to both countries.⁴⁶

It is true that both the US and Saudi Arabia blamed each other for giving support to terrorism and extremism. The Saudi government provided aid to Islamic movements and charities without examining their true character. It provided funds and support for Wahhabi and other movements outside Saudi Arabia that encouraged violence and extremism. Saudi money was transferred to Palestinian groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and to Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.⁴⁷ The Kingdom was also sending money to Islamic countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan without asking questions about the areas that is spent.⁴⁸ Since the Saudi government failed in controlling the flow of money, it seems that the extremists and terrorists learned to exploit this situation. On the other hand, until September 11, the US had encouraged Saudi Arabia to be in Afghanistan funding Islamic extremism as a part of its efforts to contain Russia. Both the US and Saudi Arabia could not distinguish between human rights issues and terrorist threats.⁴⁹

It is argued that Saudi Arabia has ignored the issue of Islamic extremism and tolerated the export of such extremism when it did not threaten its regime.⁵⁰ Such an argument is true, because Saudi Arabia ignored Bin Laden's ideological challenge for many years. The Kingdom hoped that Bin Laden's isolation in Afghanistan and

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁷ Anthony H. Cordesman (2003), *Saudi Arabia Enters.....*, p. 264.

⁴⁸ Joseph McMillan, Anthony H. Cordesman, Mamoun Fandy & Fareed Mohamedi (2002), "The United States....", p. 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁰ Anthony H. Cordesman (2003), *Saudi Arabia Enters.....*, p. 48.

the failure of his move to establish a Muslim government there would lead to his disappearance.⁵¹ However, the Saudi government was wrong and quite the opposite has happened.

Prince Turki Al-Faisal stated that the Saudi government provided Afghanistan with financial, military and moral support, because they wanted to see them independent in their struggle against the Soviets. Also, Saudis were worried that the Afghans would fight among themselves once Russia withdrew.⁵² During that war, Osama Bin Laden founded Al-Qaeda in 1989 to serve as an operational organization under his control. He focused his attention on Islamic extremism, after the end of Afghan conflict.⁵³ Like many other Islamic extremist movements, Al-Qaeda received support both from private financiers and also from other extremist groups in the Kingdom. Although Saudi Arabia opposed Bin Laden and his political movement in the Kingdom during the 1990s, his ideological jihad interpretations and anti-Americanism continued to spread among the Muslim world. When he did emerge as a threat to Saudi Arabia, the government made attempts to deal with him, forced him to leave the country and eventually expelled him from its citizenship.⁵⁴

Terrorist financing is a very important issue. Although it is a global problem, it has become a Saudi-centric issue after September 11.⁵⁵ After September 11, the Saudi government had to take some domestic measures to control charities. Such

⁵¹ Gregory F. Gause III (2003), “The Approaching Turning.....”, p.3.

⁵² Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi, “Kingdom Has A Big Role To Play In Afghanistan”, *Arab News*, 4 November 2001.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman (2003), *Saudi Arabia Enters.....*, p. 276-283.

⁵⁵ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), “Saudi Arabia.....”, p. 3.

measures had to be taken, because the Kingdom had to show to the US that they are with the US, and not with terrorists. Since Saudis enjoy a certain prestige in the Muslim world due to their extensive finances and sponsorship of Muslim international organizations, they have to fight Bin Laden and other terrorist organizations for control of these flows. Similarly, the US must support and cooperate with the Saudi government in its domestic policies to ensure that funding to terrorist organizations is cut.

On 11 January 2002, a meeting was held in Mecca by the Islamic Jurisprudence Group of the World Muslim League. It adopted a directive on jihad and terrorism by the Bush administration.⁵⁶ In that meeting, the meaning of jihad and how a legitimate jihad forbade the killing of innocents was discussed. Saudi religious scholars called young Saudis to follow a middle way between secularism and Islamic extremism. Both the US and Saudi government hoped to spread these messages to the Muslim world through a Saudi supported network of mosques and madrassas.⁵⁷

There were charity boxes called *qaddah* in Saudi mosques where coin and currency were collected. After the attacks, the Saudi government decided to ban those boxes, because they were in the hands of various Al-Qaeda cells. The Saudi government also tightened its relations with the ulema. In order to control what they teach and what they do with the money, the Saudi government needed such cooperation with clerics.⁵⁸ Neither Americans and Saudis believed that they would be able to completely cut off the funding of these terrorist organizations. But, Saudis

⁵⁶ *Al-Hayat*, 11 January 2002, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Gregory F. Gause III (2003), “The Approaching Turning.....”, p.3.

⁵⁸ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), “Saudi Arabia.....”, p. 4.

thought that if they obtained a fatwa⁵⁹ saying that giving money to these organizations was a violation of Sharia, they could at least reduce the amount of funds.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the US government began to question the nature of Saudi influence in the Muslim world and whether Saudi educational and charitable organizations had fostered anti-Americanism.⁶¹ Since reform in education plays an important role in transforming the political culture, the US gave support for the establishment of Effat College in Jeddah by giving a \$ 100,000.⁶² Thus, on 11 March 2002, the major Saudi charity called Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation funds were blocked by the US Treasury, due to its active support of Islamic extremism and terrorism.⁶³ The Saudi government froze some 150 suspected terrorists' accounts within the first four months after September 11.⁶⁴

IV. 4. Normalization of US-Saudi Relations Through Domestic Reforms?

After September 11, US public opinion had begun to focus on Saudi Arabia's domestic issues. Saudi Arabia has always been interested in the US. It is true that Saudi Arabia has many social, economic and political domestic problems and that reforms were needed. Some people in the US believed that the US should pressure

⁵⁹ An Islamic legal proclamation or religious judgment.

⁶⁰ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), "Saudi Arabia....", p. 5.

⁶¹ Clifford Chanin & Gregory F. Gause III (2003), "US-Saudi Relations: Bump.....", p. 123.

⁶² "On Relations and Reforms: A Conversation with Rachel Bronson", Saudi-US Relations Information Service, 31 May 2005, p. 7.

⁶³ *Reuters*, 11 March 2002, 1745.

⁶⁴ *Reuters*, 20 March 2002, 0520.

Saudi Arabia to make domestic reforms. Because, by doing so, the said reforms would be more effective⁶⁵ and public contact among Americans and Saudis would be improved. On the other hand, some said that any reform with an “American label”⁶⁶ would lose Saudi public support and would contribute to anti-American violence.

Saudi Arabia needs economic and political reforms. It is true that Saudi Arabia is faced with a growing unemployment problem.⁶⁷ Saudis have to create new job opportunities for the growing numbers of Saudi youths. Saudi economic reformers need to open up their economy to foreign investment. It is thought that the US can accelerate Saudi Arabia’s accession to the World Trade Organization, which will solve the unemployment problem in the Kingdom.⁶⁸

Moreover, the Saudi government realized its need for political development. After September 11, there was a greater freedom in Saudi press on political issues and some reformers prepared a proposal to Crown Prince Abdullah asking for more political freedoms.⁶⁹ Without US pressure, those reforms would not happen in Saudi Arabia. But, the US also has to avoid too actively intervening in Saudi political life.

Women’s driving evident is a very important example for social reform that happened as a result of US influence. On 6 November 1990, almost seventy women⁷⁰, 49 of them Saudis⁷¹, protested by driving cars in Riyadh, asking for equal

⁶⁵ Gregory F. Gause III (2003), “The Approaching Turning.....”, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Clifford Chanin & Gregory F. Gause III (2003), “US-Saudi Relations: Bump.....”, p. 119.

⁶⁷ Joshua Teitelbaum, “Terrorist Challenges To Saudi Arabian Internal Security”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 3, September 2005, p. 2.

⁶⁸ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), “Saudi Arabia.....”, p. 22.

⁶⁹ *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 13 January 2003, p. 3; and “Reformists in Free, Frank Talks With Abdullah”, *Arab News*, 2 February 2003, available on online <http://www.arabnews.com/Article.asp?ID=22454>.

⁷⁰ Joshua Teitelbaum (2000), *Holier Than Thou.....*, pp. 30-31.

opportunities . The Islamist fundamentalists perceived the women's action to be directly related to the presence of US troops, because female US soldiers were seen driving trucks around Riyadh. In January 2003, a petition was presented to Crown Prince Abdullah calling for a reassessment of the women's role in Saudi Arabia according to Islamic law.

Reforms in the field of education were also necessary in Saudi Arabia. Graduates could not find jobs, because they were not prepared for the modern world. Religious topics take up a great part of the education in Saudi Arabia; which had to be reorganized according to global issues. After the death of 15 girls in a fire at school in Mecca in March 2002, Crown Prince Abdullah used the public outcry as a pretext to remove the girls' education system from the direct control of the religious establishment and to place it under the Ministry of Education.⁷²

It can be said that any Arab or Muslim from the Middle East were under suspicion in the US. US embassies hesitated when issuing visas for people coming from the Middle East. Accordingly, US-Saudi relations were suffered because of the stringent visa measures announced after September 11. Saudis began to question how the US could normalize their relations through keeping the world out-of balance.⁷³ A number of Arabs applying for visas were turned down. Applicants had to wait weeks and months for approval after their interviews. So, there was a decrease in visa applications to the United States by Arabs and by Saudis in particular. Because, they did not want to go the United States for education, vacation and business due to

⁷¹ See Jacob Goldberg (1993), "Saudi Arabia's Desert.....", p. 76.

⁷² Gregory F. Gause III (2003), "The Approaching Turning.....", p. 3.

⁷³ Clifford Chanin & F. Gregory Gause III (2004), "US-Saudi Relations: A.....", p. 29.

the humiliation involved. It is mentioned that thousands of Saudi students were enrolled at American universities before September 11, including 3,500 on government scholarships, but many of them returned home voluntarily to avoid the stress of discrimination.⁷⁴ After the attacks, Saudi student visas to the US declined by 80%.⁷⁵ Some students who were studying in the United States preferred to go Europe to continue their education because they could not get the approval for their visas on time.⁷⁶

IV. 5. The Saudi Peace Initiative

The Arab-Israeli conflict has always been in the center of US-Saudi relations. The United States has a special relationship with Israel and Saudi Arabia has a special relationship with the Islamic world.⁷⁷ After September 11, Saudi Arabia's leading role in the Muslim world increased. Even after the September 11 attacks, Saudi officials expressed their concern over the Arab-Israeli conflict. After President Bush's speech about the "war on terrorism", Israel intensified its offensive attacks on Palestinians and legitimized its attacks as declaring war on terrorism and providing security to its citizens.⁷⁸ Since Saudis have the ability to catch up with the daily news

⁷⁴ M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "US Eases Visa Restrictions", *Arab News*, 4 May 2005; and John S. Habib (2003), *Saudi Arabia and the American.....*, p. 272.

⁷⁵ Rachel Bronson & Isobel Coleman, "Saudi System Is The Problem", US-Saudi Relations Information Service, 31 May 2005 available at online <http://www.Saudi-US-Relations.org>.

⁷⁶ Javid Hassan, "Taking Stock of the Economic Fallout", *Arab News*, 2 November 2005 available at online <http://arabnews.com/?supname=911&supplement=1&last=14&part=13>; and David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 23.

⁷⁷ Rachel Bronson, "More Than Targets Or Markets: Recasting America's Relations With Its Arab Partners", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 2002, p. 58.

⁷⁸ Ziad Asali, "Arab-American Perceptions of US Policy Toward The Middle East", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2, June 2002, p. 38.

in all over the world through satellite news channels, the Israeli offensive into the West Bank towns in 2002 provoked public demonstrations in Saudi Arabia against Israel and the US.⁷⁹ Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz⁸⁰ presented a peace plan to the 14th Arab Summit in Beirut on 28 March 2002.⁸¹ It talked about a complete Israeli withdrawal from the lands occupied since June 1967 in return for normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Arab states. Although it was not saying new things, it attracted international attention. Questions were raised in the international arena such as: Why did the plan attract such international attention? Is it a sustainable offer? How long can it remain on the table?

The particularity of the peace initiative was due to many reasons. First, it was prepared by Crown Prince Abdullah who is one of the well known persons throughout the Muslim world. It was prepared by Saudi Arabia which is hostile to Israel and does not have diplomatic relations with Israel. Since Saudi Arabia is the seat of the Muslim world, it has the capability to convince all Muslims to accept whatever deal the Saudis will accept.⁸²

Second, the timing of the plan was important. It came out in a time of no hope for the peace. Israelis were preparing violent campaigns looking for terrorists in the occupied lands. The second *intifada* and suicide bombings were targeting civilians. Palestinians were also suffering from great losses. Third, the Saudi peace

⁷⁹ Joseph McMillan, "US-Saudi Relations: Rebuilding the Strategic Consensus", *Strategic Forum*, no. 186, November 2001, p. 5; and J. E. Peterson (2002), *Saudi Arabia and the.....*, p. 59.

⁸⁰ After the death of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia on 1 August 2005, he was announced as the king of Saudi Arabia.

⁸¹ Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, "Address To The Arab League", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2, June 2002, pp. 22-24.

⁸² Mamoun Fandy, Edward S. Walker Jr., Ofer Grosbard & Michael C. Hudson, "The Abdullah Peace Plan: Offer or Ultimatum?", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 3, September 2002, p. 3.

initiative was signed by the entire Arab world in the Arab League. This shows the seriousness of the Arab world to solve the problem. It also displays the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia in the Arab world. However, since it was accepted and signed by all Arabs, there emerged the question that whether the plan was an ultimatum by the Arab states or a serious initiative. It was understood that the plan was proposed in the Arab League only for searching for a solution to the chronic remedy of the Middle East. Saudi ambassador to London Ghazi Al-Gosaibi expressed that Prince Abdullah proposed a peace initiative, because he did see that the violence would be more difficult to control in the future.⁸³ The fourth reason was its call for a just settlement of the refugee problem.⁸⁴

There emerged some questions about the peace initiative. Although the US knew certainly that the plan would not be accepted by Israel, why did the US give support to it? It was believed that the purpose for the plan was to calm down the strained relations between the US and Saudi Arabia.⁸⁵ Others said that Saudi Arabia had prepared such a plan to shift international attention from the role of Saudi Arabia in the September 11 attacks.⁸⁶ There was another threat that Saudi Arabia was going to use its “oil weapon” and end its relations with the US.⁸⁷ However, since the 1973 oil crisis, Saudi Arabia has never used oil as a political weapon. On the other hand,

⁸³ Huda al-Husseini, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 13 June 2002.

⁸⁴ Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, “Address To The Arab League”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2, June 2002, p. 23.

⁸⁵ Graham E. Fuller, “The Saudi Peace Plan: How Serious?”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2, June 2002, p. 29.

⁸⁶ Rachel Bronson, “More Than Targets Or Markets: Recasting America’s Relations With Its Arab Partners”, *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 2002, p. 57.

⁸⁷ Salim Yaqub, “US Assessments of Arab Threats Since 1945”, a paper presented at the annual meeting of American Political Science Association in Boston, MA, 31 August 2002 published in *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 2002, p. 98.

the Arabs suggested that the plan was established between the US and Saudi Arabia to divert attention from the Israeli military campaign in the West Bank.⁸⁸

However, this plan was not accepted by the Likud government of Israel. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon refused to replace violence with peace and trust. Israel responded to the plan by moving against the bases of armed Palestinians in the West Bank cities. This caused angry demonstrations against Israel among the Arab countries.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Prince Abdullah talked with President Bush about a guarantee of Arafat's safety during the Israeli invasion of Ramallah.⁹⁰ The US persuaded the Israelis to end the sieges at Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah.⁹¹ President Bush also supported the establishment of a Palestinian state, but demanded a change in the leadership, namely the replacement of Arafat. However, the Saudis defended Arafat's legitimacy.⁹²

To conclude, the attacks of Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda group on New York and Washington marked an important turning point in US-Saudi relations. For the first time in their relationship, the two countries began to see each other as a "threat". In order to smooth their relations, both the US and Saudi Arabia had to cooperate against a common enemy: terrorism. After the attacks, the relations between the US and Saudi Arabia changed in dimension. Their relations moved from

⁸⁸ Graham E. Fuller, "The Saudi Peace....", p. 29.

⁸⁹ Josh Pollack, "Saudi Arabia and the United.....", p. 88.

⁹⁰ Patrick E. Tyler, "Saudi To Warn Bush of Rupture Over Israel Policy", *New York Times*, 25 April 2002.

⁹¹ James Bennett & Elisabeth Bumiller, "Israelis Approve Plan To End Siege and Free Arafat", *New York Times*, 29 April 2002.

⁹² Neil MacFarquar, "Saudis Support Bush's Policy But Say It Lacks Vital Details", *New York Times*, 27 June 2002; and Interview with Intelligence Minister Nawaf Bin Abdul Aziz published in *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 29 June 2002.

traditional foreign policy to include domestic politics as well. Things also began to change within Saudi Arabia. Domestic reforms began taking place in the Kingdom. Those reforms had to be consolidated to give Saudi Arabia the ability to deal with terrorism and extremism. Progress in Saudi Arabia is very limited, but the society itself will change slowly. To increase Saudi Arabia's weight in the region and in the eyes of the US, peace initiative was proposed by Prince Abdullah, but it was not accepted by Israel.

CHAPTER V

THE IRAQI WAR

The terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon marked an important turning point in US-Saudi relations. After September 11, both the US and Saudi Arabia began to question their relatively untroubled relations. For the first time in their history, the two countries came head-to-head over a problem. A hostile view of US-Saudi relations became widespread. Since 15 of the hijackers were Saudis, Saudi Arabia was considered to be a supporter of terrorism. Anger and hostility towards the Kingdom increased among Americans. Many blamed the Saudis and Islam as reasons for terrorism. On the other hand, Saudis were disturbed by the Americans' anti-Arab and anti-Islam biases. Such public perceptions started to strain US-Saudi relations. Since, the US's declarations had come into conflict with the Kingdom's domestic policies.

Before the September 11 attacks, the agenda of the US-Saudi bilateral relations was dominated by Saudi oil for US security guarantees. For many years, both countries had a fixed and standard relation based on mutual interests. Saudis provided a steadily increasing flow of reasonably priced oil to the US. In return, the US assured the security of the country. However, two elements have begun to dominate their relations since September 11. The first one is that their relations are no longer within a narrow framework. Now, they are more mutually interested in

global affairs, like the “war on terrorism”¹ and the war in Iraq. The US’s declarations have collided with the Kingdom’s domestic politics to become central to both countries. The US began to focus on the Kingdom’s domestic issues, and pressured it to implement reforms.

Secondly, their relations have become a public issue in both countries. Although their relations were previously conducted on the elite level, public opinion also began to shape their relations after September 11. Before September 11, both countries conducted their relations through diplomatic channels and behind closed doors. The decision-making process in Saudi Arabia is more open now, and is based on discussion and consultation. Hussein Shobokshi said that US-Saudi relations were also based on economic and security interests, not on human and cultural factors.² US-Saudi relations moved from elite interactions to the level of ordinary people and since both sides did not know each other, they began to attack each other.

Actually, the US and Saudi Arabia are faced with a lack of dialogue among the citizens of their respective countries. A campaign of explanation is needed to understand each other and to improve public relations.³ The US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Robert W. Jordan said that the future of the US-Saudi relationship would increasingly rest on the success of two governments in bringing together business people, students, journalists, academics, so that people-to-people ties could be strengthened.⁴ When Crown Prince Abdullah took a trip to Texas on 25 April 2005 to

¹ Eid Bin Mes’oud Al-Jahany (2003), *Khutout wa Dhilal fi Al-A’laqat.....*, p. 25.

² Tariq Al-Homayed, “Saudi-US Relations After September 11, 2001”, *Arab News*, 3 March 2003.

³ Amir Taheri, “Saudi-US Relations Under Spotlight”, *Arab News*, 17 August 2002.

⁴ “US-Saudi Relations: A Middle East Insight Policy Forum with Amb. Robert W. Jordan and a delegation From Saudi Arabia”, *Middle East Insight*, vol. 17, no. 2, March-April 2002, p. 14.

meet with the US President Bush, both of them talked about how to renew their ties.⁵ They intended to increase the number of students, visitors and business travelers between the two countries. Both leaders also said that they must work to expand dialogue, understanding and interactions between their citizens. They agreed to prepare a program, which consists of increasing the number of young Saudi students that travel and study in the US, increasing their military exchange programs so more Saudi officers visit the US for military education and training, and increasing the number of Americans traveling to work and study in the Kingdom. In that meeting, the US applauded the municipal elections in the Kingdom, but asked for more political reforms. Washington and Riyadh established a new bilateral strategic dialogue. The initiative was formalized during Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to Saudi Arabia. It consisted of six key issues: counter-terrorism, energy, military affairs, business, education, consular affairs and human development. The goal was to reestablish the strategic relationship, which was somewhat strained after September 11.⁶

It is true that although Saudi Arabia supported the US during the invasion of Iraq, it preferred not to announce it publicly. In doing so, the Kingdom aimed to keep its regime under control and to maintain its national interests by cooperating with the US. The thesis of this chapter is that although relations were strained, Saudi Arabia cooperated with the US on global issues at state-to-state level, and preferred not to announce its attitudes openly. In this chapter, many questions are raised in reference to US-Saudi relations during the US occupation of Iraq. Some of them are: what were the justifications of the US to go to war with Iraq? Was the Iraqi war carried out

⁵ Khaled Al-Maneena, "Abdullah, Bush Advance Relations", *Arab News*, 26 April 2005.

⁶ "Washington, Riyadh Seek to Strengthen Ties", *Washington Post*, 13 November 2005.

to dominate the world's oil market or was it to establish an American empire? What were President Bush's policies in the Middle East? Why did they strain the relations between the two countries? How they were responded by Saudis? Why did Saudi Arabia take some domestic measures against terrorism in the case of Iraq? How did Saudi Arabia begin its journey to democracy?

V. 1. The US's Justifications to go to War in Iraq

September 11 changed the tide in US policy and moved it into new directions. Iraq was the new address for US attacks. The Bush administration offered a variety of justifications to go to war against Iraq. It expressed that Iraq poses a threat to US national security due to its possession of weapons of mass destruction and its ties to international terrorists. It stressed the need to promote democracy in the Middle East.⁷ It highlighted Saddam's despotic rule and human rights abuses. Since Saddam carried out many wars in the Middle East and used chemical and biological weapons against his neighbors and his own people, he was seen as a serious threat to the stability of the region and world peace.⁸

Before the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration justified that Iraq poses a threat to the US and to its national interests. It was believed that Iraq had an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and Saddam would use those weapons against the US. On 26 August 2002, Vice President Dick Cheney accepted the allegations of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, and that Saddam would not

⁷ John S. Duffield, "Oil and the Iraq War: How the United States Could Have Expected to Benefit, and Might Still", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 2, June 2005, p. 1 available at online <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2005/issue2/jv9no2a7.html>.

⁸ Michael Siebert, "European Perspectives on the Gulf: Similarities and Differences With the US", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 3, September 2002, p. 94.

hesitate to use them against the US and its friends. He also continued to say that Saddam was determined to make himself hegemon of the Gulf and the leader of the Arab world.⁹ It was also believed by the US intelligence agency that Iraq had a significant number of chemical and biological weapons or had the ability to produce them.¹⁰ The “war on terrorism” was also one of the US’s justifications. It also focused its foreign policy on promoting democracy in the Middle East.¹¹

The Bush administration released a statement of its national security strategy in September 2002.¹² It was asserted that the United States’ military supremacy would never be threatened again and that it would never hesitate to use force against its enemies.¹³ In January 2002, President Bush defined the terrorist threat by including enemy states dealing with weapons of mass destruction.¹⁴ According to his statement, such countries could give those weapons to terrorist groups to use them against the US. Iraq was considered to be the center of new “axis of evil”. In March 2003, the US launched a war against Iraq with limited international support.¹⁵ In just

⁹ Available at online <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html>.

¹⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, “Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction”, October 2002, available at online http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/iraq_wmd/Iraq_Oct_2002.html.

¹¹ Clifford Chanin & F. Gregory Gause III (2004), “US-Saudi Relations: A”, p. 30.

¹² Melvyn P. Leffler, “9/11 and the Past and Future of American Foreign Policy”, *International Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 5, 2003, p. 1045.

¹³ Michael Meacher, “The Very Secret Service”, *Guardian*, 21 September 2002, p. 22.

¹⁴ F. Gregory Gause III, “The International Politics of the Gulf” in Louise Fawcett (ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford University Press; Oxford & New York, 2005, p. 278.

¹⁵ “Harb Al-Khaleej Al-Thaalthah Badaet Bi-Sawarikh Testehdaf Al-Qiyadah Al-Iraqiyyah, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 20 March 2003.

a few weeks the Iraqi regime was toppled. On 9 March 2003 US forces occupied the country and Saddam was captured on 13 December 2003.¹⁶

When the Bush administration's claims on Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction proved unfounded¹⁷, many arguments have been developed among scholars for the US invasion of Iraq. Prior to the war, members of the administration never mentioned any justifications related to the Iraqi oil.¹⁸ Some critics of the Iraqi war argued that the main goal of the US in toppling Saddam's regime was to access Iraqi oil resources to control world oil prices.¹⁹

It is certainly well known that Iraq's proven oil reserves are second in the world after Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom has the capacity to produce eight million barrels per day (b/d), and another three million emergency production.²⁰ Accordingly, oil is the major factor for the decision to invade Iraq.²¹ It is mentioned that the US expected to increase the potential of Iraqi production and to allow its entrance into free market economy functioning within a democratic state through two phases.²² Firstly, the US planned the restoration of the existing production areas by repairing the oil gathering pipe-work system, replacing malfunctioning equipment

¹⁶ Joseph A. Kéchichian, "Democratization in Gulf Monarchies: A New Challenge to the GCC", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, no. 4, Winter 2004, p. 37.

¹⁷ F. Gregory Gause III (2005), "The International Politics.....", p. 278.

¹⁸ Max Boot, "A War for Oil? Not This Time", *New York Times*, 13 February 2003.

¹⁹ Michael T. Klare, "For Oil and Empire? Rethinking the War With Iraq", *Current History*, vol. 102, no. 662, March 2003, pp. 129-135.

²⁰ Associated Press Report of remarks by Saudi Arabia's Oil Minister Ali Naimi at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "Saudi Says Opec Could Fill Output Gap", *Saudi Times*, 25 January 2003.

²¹ Bassam Abu Sharif, "Al-Hadaf Tadmeer Al-Iraq.. Wa Laysa Aslihah Al-Tadmeer", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 21 March 2003.

²² Donald F. Hepburn, "Is It War For Oil?", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring 2003, p. 30.

and repairing marine export facilities. Secondly, the US also aimed exploration and development of undiscovered fields by international companies. Moreover, many theories among Arabs centered on the US's desire to control Arab oil wealth.²³

Meanwhile, some argued that the Iraqi invasion was carried out to meet the world oil demand, liberalize the oil sector and to reduce the Kingdom's influence over the oil market.²⁴ Iraq was seen by the US as an alternative to Saudi oil.²⁵ However, restructuring the Iraqi oil sector with massive foreign investments would lower oil prices and mean lower oil revenues for the new government in Iraq. After the return of Iraq into the oil market, Saudi Arabia would be asked to make concessions. Although Saudi Arabia has always tried to keep prices with OPEC at around \$ 24-25 a barrel and has aimed at stability in price and supply, the Kingdom increased its oil production to more than nine million (b/d).²⁶ Such an increase in production would increase the dependence on Saudi Arabia to some extent.²⁷

It is argued that the US occupied Iraq, because Saddam had switched its oil revenues from dollars to euros.²⁸ As the largest oil importer in the oil market, the US was trading oil in dollars. If the price of oil was to shift to the euro, it could advance

²³ Riad Kahwaji, "US-Arab Cooperation in the Gulf: Are Both Sides Working From the Same Script?", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 2004. pp. 55-56; Ahmad Abbas Salih, "Al-Arab Ma Ba'de Al-Harb", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 21 March 2003.

²⁴ John S. Duffield (2005), "Oil and the Iraq.....", p. 18.

²⁵ Leon T. Hadar, Frank Anderson, Fareed Mohamedi & Ian S. Lustick, "In the Wake of War: Geo-Strategy, Terrorism, Oil and Domestic Politics", *Middle East Policy*, vol, 10, no. 1, Spring 2003, p. 10.

²⁶ Clifford Chanin & Gregory F. Gause III (2003), "US-Saudi Relations: Bump.....", p. 122.

²⁷ Leon T. Hadar, Frank Anderson, Fareed Mohamedi & Ian S. Lustick (2003), "In the Wake of War:.....", pp. 9-15.

²⁸ Robert Looney, "Petroeuros: A Threat to US Interests in the Gulf", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 26-30.

the global acceptability of the single currency, which would accordingly affect the economy of the US. Thus, it is believed that the invasion was carried out to discourage OPEC members and other oil-producing countries from such a change.²⁹ The US also aimed at the establishment of a puppet government in Iraq to revert back to a dollar standard. Because the dollar would lose about 20-40 % of its value, when oil-producing countries replace their revenues with euros.³⁰

It is also believed that the Iraqi war aimed to overthrow the status quo and to rearrange the region according to the US' liking.³¹ The Iraqi war further escalated the US' regional involvement in the Middle East.³² Fareed Mohamedi believed that Iraqi war did not aim for oil, but that the US had a much bigger vision. According to Mohamedi, the US invaded Iraq to establish its grand "new world order".³³ Ian S. Lustick also supports Mohamedi in his belief that the US is trying to build a new order in the Middle East based on exploitation of the Iraqi oil, establishment of permanent military bases in the region and elimination of all pressures on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza.³⁴

It is true that after a successful US invasion of Iraq, the US has become not only an international actor, but also a regional one in the Middle East.³⁵ The States is

²⁹ W. Clark, "The Real Reasons for the Upcoming War With Iraq: A Macroeconomic and Geo-strategic Analysis of the Unspoken Truth", 6 March 2003 available at online <http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/RRIraqWar.html>.

³⁰ Robert Looney (2004), "Petroeuros: A Threat....", p. 30.

³¹ Ahmad Abbas Salih, "Al-Arab Ma Ba'de Al-Harb", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 21 March 2003.

³² Leon T. Hadar, Frank Anderson, Fareed Mohamedi & Ian S. Lustick (2003), "In the Wake of War:....", p. 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁵ F. Gregory Gause III (2005), "The International Politics....", p. 265.

now a Gulf power that shares a border with Saudi Arabia.³⁶ However, it is believed that the US has the potential to play global leadership role, and it could be possible to talk about the US Empire in the following ten years and onwards.³⁷

V. 2. Saudi Response to the Iraqi War

Due to economic sanctions and the US invasion in March 2003, Iraq became a danger to the Gulf. Iraq also poses a difficult problem for Saudi Arabia and for its special relationship with the US. Although Saudi Arabia did not trust Saddam, it always supported Iraq's territorial integrity and Iraq's regime stability to contribute to the security and stability of the Middle East. It is also believed by Saudis that Iraqi people should decide their own future and there should not be imposed from the outside. Thus, the Kingdom decided not to interfere in the war against Iraq as long as its national interests were not endangered.³⁸

Actually, the Kingdom was faced with the dilemma of balancing compassion for the suffering of the Iraqi people and allowing the US to use its bases in an attack on Iraq.³⁹ Although Saudi leaders believed that the sooner Saddam was removed, the sooner stability would be restored in the Middle East, and they strongly opposed military action to remove him.⁴⁰ Minister of the Interior Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz responded to a question about an attack on Iraq at a press conference by saying that

³⁶ Joseph A. Kéchichian (2003), "Testing the Saudi 'Will to Power':.....", p. 109.

³⁷ Leon T. Hadar, Frank Anderson, Fareed Mohamedi & Ian S. Lustick (2003), "In the Wake of War:....", p. 5.

³⁸ "Al-Quwwat Al-Amerikiyyah Teteqaddam wa Anzar Al-Iraqiyyin Turaqib Aqarib Al-Saah", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 20 March 2003.

³⁹ John S. Habib (2003), *Saudi Arabia and the American.....*, p. 278.

⁴⁰ J. E. Peterson (2002), *Saudi Arabia and the.....*, pp. 17&72.

Saudi Arabia is against solving disputes through violence. He continued by saying that if an attack against Iraq happens, the Kingdom will not support any war against any Arab country.⁴¹ It is true that Riyadh hesitated to cooperate with the US in its attacks on Iraq in 2003 as it did during 1990-1991. It is believed that the US demand from the Kingdom to use its bases to be used in a war with Iraq would pose many problems to Saudi Arabia. That is why the ruling family positioned itself to be distant from the US.⁴²

The Saudi leadership preferred to separate itself publicly from American policy toward Iraq. US-Saudi relations were lessening in the public opinion⁴³, while maintaining their bilateral relations on state-to-state level. During the Iraqi war, Saudi Arabia gave support to the US, but kept it silent not to jeopardize their domestic relations. Saudis permitted the US to coordinate air attacks on Iraq from the control center at Prince Sultan Airbase south of Riyadh. They allowed American forces access to an isolated Saudi bases near the Iraqi border.⁴⁴ They opened some additional facilities in the north to Special Forces operations in support of the invasion. They allowed tankers and refueling and other logistical support to go

⁴¹ "Saudi Says It Won't Join a War", *New York Times*, 18 March 2003, p. 14.

⁴² Leon T. Hadar, Frank Anderson, Fareed Mohamedi & Ian S. Lustick (2003), "In the Wake of War:....", p. 16.

⁴³ Clifford Chanin & Gregory F. Gause III (2003), "US-Saudi Relations: Bump.....", p. 123.

⁴⁴ Patrick E. Tyler, "Threats and Responses: The Troops; War Imminent as Hussein Rejects Ultimatum", *New York Times*, 19 March 2003, p. 1.

forward from Saudi ports.⁴⁵ However, it minimized the visibility of that assistance to its own people.⁴⁶

Saudis differentiated between Iraq and the Baathist regime. They opposed Saddam and were against economic sanctions, which were affecting the innocent Iraqi people.⁴⁷ Thus, Saudis hesitated to cooperate openly with the US because of two reasons. First, they thought that Saddam was no longer perceived as a threat to Saudis. Saudis believed that Iraq would not dare to attack Saudi Arabia, not only because Iraq does not have the will and energy to attack, but also because large numbers of US forces are stationed in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁸

On the other hand, some thought that although the Saudi leadership did not believe that the US invasion of Iraq was the best way to go, it supported the United States without saying a word because they wanted Saddam to be overthrown.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the Iraqi regime symbolized by Saddam had come under increasing criticisms from the Saudi media. There were calls for Saddam to spare the Iraqi people the disasters and destruction of war by abdicating his presidency and seeking asylum outside Iraq. Huda Al-Husseini deplored Saddam's talk of another "victorious war" and concluded that Saddam's resignation was preferable to any

⁴⁵ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), "Saudi Arabia.....", p. 19.

⁴⁶ Leon T. Hadar, Frank Anderson, Fareed Mohamedi & Ian S. Lustick (2003), "In the Wake of War:.....", p. 15.

⁴⁷ Joseph A. Kéchichian (2003), "Testing the Saudi 'Will to Power':.....", p. 108.

⁴⁸ Joseph McMillan, Anthony H. Cordesman, Mamoun Fandy & Fareed Mohamedi (2002), "The United States.....", p. 15.

⁴⁹ David Aufhauser, Frank Anderson, David E. Long, Nathaniel Kern & Hussein Shobokshi (2004), "Saudi Arabia, Enemy.....", p. 19.

war.⁵⁰ Abdul Wahab Badr Khan wrote that Saddam was preparing himself for a second war “Mother of all Battles”. Having lost the first one, Saddam believed that it was a victory that allowed him to stay in power. Badr Khan argued that the regime collapsed and all Saddam’s calculations had proven wrong. The only way to save the country from total disaster was for Saddam to abdicate.⁵¹ Jihad Al-Khazen raised the possibility that Saddam might have been forced into asylum many months earlier.⁵² The Saudi daily Okaz suggested that in order for Iraq and its people to avoid the tragedies and disasters of war that it would be wise for the Iraqi president ‘to take a courageous, responsible and historic decision’ that would give priority to the future of his country and people over the future of a regime that is difficult to defend or to sustain.⁵³ Irfan Nidham Al-Din wrote about dreaming that Saddam and his regime would abdicate and hand over power to a transitional team that would resolve the problem of weapons of mass destruction.⁵⁴ Ali Bin Shuwail Al-Qarni called on Saddam to commit suicide. It is mentioned that he said that if Saddam chose not to abdicate, he had no other choice to save the world of a disaster. He continued saying Saddam had no other choice but to suicide revolver and fire the shot of mercy to finish the tragedy which he had started.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Huda Al-Husseini, “Al-Tahanni Badeel Al-Harb”, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 10 January 2003.

⁵¹ Abdul Wahab Badr Khan, “Senario Li Al-Ini’zal”, *Al-Hayat*, 4 January 2003.

⁵² Jihad Al-Khazen, “Al-Iltica Ahsan Ikhtiyar Li Saddam”, *Al-Hayat*, 19 July 2002; “Viewpoints: The Future of Iraq”, *BBC News*, 29 June 2004 available at online http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3846189.stm#jihad.

⁵³ *Okaz*, 25 January 2003.

⁵⁴ Irfan Nidham Al-Din, “Al-Qarar Al-Tarikhi”, *Al-Hayat*, 10 February 2003.

⁵⁵ “Saudi Newspapers Call on Saddam to Abdicate or Commit Suicide”, *Front Page*, 17 February 2003 available at online <http://www.frontpagemag.org/articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=6180>.

Second, Saudis were faced with anti-Americanism domestically. Saudi public opinion was anti-American, due to the Israeli violence in the second *intifada* and the American reaction to the attacks of September 11. They were against a move to topple the Iraqi regime with the US, whose policies are anti-Arab and anti-Islamic.⁵⁶ Moreover, the US's invasion of Afghanistan for the war on terror, its occupation of Iraq and its human rights abuses in the Abu Ghraib prison, increased the loss of its credibility among Muslims and Arabs.⁵⁷ Saudis were afraid of a domestic uprising which will endanger their regime. It is believed that Saudi assistance to overthrow Saddam's regime would both strengthen domestic opposition in Saudi Arabia and lead other states to support the overthrow of the Saudi government.⁵⁸ On the other hand, they did not want to loose their security guarantor. Thus, they cooperated militarily with the US, but it was not announced to their citizens.⁵⁹ Saudi leaders had to behave in a realist way that serves their own national interests. Actually, Saudi Arabia was caught in between its taking account of its Islamist character without endangering its national interests due to its relations with the US.

When no weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq, US credibility decreased among Muslims and Arab public opinion. Terrorist activities related to anti-American sentiments increased among Muslims and Arabs. On 15 February 2003, Osama Bin Laden accused the US for the failure of peace process and its sanctions against Iraq. He continued by accusing the US of being a new type of Crusader in the

⁵⁶ Hashim Salih, "Hal Gaet Lahzat Khalas Al-Iraqiyyin?", *Al-Sharq-Al-Awsat*, 21 March 2003.

⁵⁷ Daniel Neep, "Dilemmas of Democratization in the Middle East: The 'Forward Strategy of Freedom'", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 2004, p. 79.

⁵⁸ John S. Habib (2003), *Saudi Arabia and the American.....*, pp. 278-279.

⁵⁹ F. Gregory Gause III (2005), "The International", p. 273.

Gulf and called Muslims to fight against it.⁶⁰ It is mentioned that due to instability in Iraq, it became the bases for terrorists fighting against the US.⁶¹ Terrorists from different nationalities including Saudis fled to Iraq to fight against the US.⁶² It is mentioned that Saudi citizens represented 61% of the 154 foreign Arabs killed in Iraq.⁶³

Having trained and gained experience in Iraq, terrorist attacks targeting American facilities began to take place first in Riyadh and later throughout the Kingdom.⁶⁴ On 12 May 2003, there were three bomb explosions in three foreign compounds in Riyadh. In those attacks, 34 people were killed, and 194 people were wounded.⁶⁵ When Osama called on his followers to concentrate their operations in Iraq and the Gulf region to prevent the US from getting Arab oil⁶⁶, terrorist attacks were carried out in Yanbu, Khobar and Qasim respectively.⁶⁷

Saudi cooperation with the US on terrorism issues increased after the May 2003 bombings in Riyadh. The Saudi government had to take some measures against terrorism. Soon after the explosions, the Kingdom's senior religious cleric Shaikh

⁶⁰ John L. Esposito, "Political Islam and the West", *Journal of Foreign Affairs Quarterly*, Spring 2000, pp. 52-53.

⁶¹ Michael Kraig, "Kuwaiti, Iraqi and European Perspectives", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 2004, p. 45.

⁶² Nawaf Obaid & Anthony H. Cordesman, "Saudi Militants in Iraq: Assessment and Kingdom's Response", Center for Strategic and International Studies; Washington, DC., 19 September 2005, p. 4.

⁶³ Joshua Teitelbaum (2005), "Terrorist Challenges", p. 6.

⁶⁴ William Wallis & Mark Huband, "Saudi Arabia Fears Attacks from Insurgents Battle-Hardened in Iraq", *Financial Times*, 20 December 2004.

⁶⁵ "Intihariyyoun Nafazu Tafjerat Al-Riyad", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 13 May 2003.

⁶⁶ Raid Qusti, "Oil Installations Are Secure, Says Naimi", *Arab News*, 9 February 2005.

⁶⁷ Huge Pope & Chip Cummins, "Saudi Suffer Fresh Terrorist Attack", *Wall Street Journal*, 1 June 2004; Saeed Haidar, "Manhunt Continues for the Three Escaped Terrorist", *Arab News*, 1 June 2004; *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 1 June 2004; *Arab News*, 4, 5, 8, 10 April 2005.

Abdul Aziz Al-Shaikh called upon Saudis for unity, and asked them not to listen to terrorists' accusations. He also declared that terrorism was not related with Islam. He called Muslims to abandon extremism and fanaticism.⁶⁸ The Saudi government also tried to reduce internal disturbances by releasing Said Al-Zuwayr, who was one of the most vocal opponents in the Kingdom.⁶⁹ Prince Abdullah also called the Council of Ulama to condemn any attacks against non-Muslims as a deviancy.⁷⁰ Also, many Saudi clerics calling for anti-Americanism were fired from their positions.⁷¹ On 5 April 2005, Saudi security forces had killed three major Al-Qaeda leaders in a gunbattle with armed extremists in Al-Rass: Moroccan Abdul Kareem Altohami Al-Mojati, Saudi Saud Homoud Obaid Al-Otaibi and Abdul Rahman Mohammed Yazdi.⁷²

Saudi Arabia has been playing a leading role in the global campaign on combating terrorist financing and money laundering. On 26 September 2001, Saudi Arabia froze the assets of individuals and organizations whose names appeared on the US list, which was published after the September 11 attacks.⁷³ It is said that the Kingdom has frozen 62 accounts of 12 individuals and firms with a total amount of

⁶⁸ Mustafa Shihab, "Al-Shakh Yadu ila Muhabarat Al-Ghilu Bikul Ashkaliha", *Al-Hayat*, 8 September 2003, p. 4; "Saudi Arabia's Highest Religious Authority Warns Against the Dangers of Extremism", Washington, DC: Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 21 August 2003.

⁶⁹ "Saudi Arabia: Growing Unease", *Middle East International*, no. 697, 4 April 2003, p. 26.

⁷⁰ "Address to the Nation by Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz", Washington, DC: Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 13 May 2003.

⁷¹ "Statement by Abdel Al-Jubeir, Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Crown Prince", Washington, DC: Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 12 June 2003.

⁷² Khaled Al-Awadh, "7 Terrorists Shot Dead as Battle Rages", *Arab News*, 5 April 2005.

⁷³ P. K. Abdul Ghafour, "SAMA Pulls Out All Stops in Combating Terror Financing", *Arab News*, 9 February 2005.

\$6 million.⁷⁴ In August 2003, Saudi Arabia promulgated a law on combating money laundering. The Kingdom has set up a network to prevent the use of its financial system for money laundering and funding terrorist activities. On 26 February 2004, the Kingdom established a higher committee to monitor charities. Charities are not allowed to transfer any amount of money from their accounts to foreign countries. They are allowed to have only one account. They can only open branch accounts with the permission of the Saudi Arabia Monetary Agency (SAMA). Banks are not allowed to issue ATM or credit cards for the accounts of charitable organizations.⁷⁵

Since 2004, the Saudi government also almost sealed its border between the Kingdom and Iraq to prevent the movement of militants across the Saudi-Iraq border. A comprehensive training program has been implemented for Saudi security officers to monitor the borders and to suppress domestic oppositions. Modern methods for monitoring border movements were used through special planes, night vision equipment, cameras and sophisticated radar systems.⁷⁶ Moreover, it is mentioned that American officials gave the Saudis some credit for improving their efforts to combat terrorism within their borders and to stop the flow of money from Saudis to terrorist groups.⁷⁷ Saudi Arabia is still trying to fight with terrorism internationally. On 5 February 2005, there was a counter terrorism conference held in Riyadh. It was mentioned that any international efforts would not be sufficient to effectively combat the terrorism if not conducted within the framework of joint actions. The conference

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Nawaf Obaid & Anthony H. Cordesman (2005), "Saudi Militants in Iraq:....", p. 13.

⁷⁷ Richard W. Stevenson & Jeff Gerth, "As Saudi Visits, Bush Seeks Help on Lowering Oil Prices", *New York Times*, 25 April 2005.

lasted four days and was concluded with Crown Prince Abdullah's proposal to set up an international center to combat terrorism by exchanging information. It could be established in Switzerland, New York, Vienna, Cairo or in Riyadh.⁷⁸

V. 3. Promoting Democracy Through The Greater Middle East Initiative

On 7 November 2003, President Bush stated his new policy. It was based on bringing freedom to the Middle East to ensure peace.⁷⁹ After September 11, the main enemy of the US was no longer rouge states, but non-state actors engaged in terrorist activities.⁸⁰ Thus, the Bush administration thought that promoting freedom would reduce the terrorist threat to the US. Accordingly, it began to pressure Middle Eastern states for domestic reforms and democracy through the Greater Middle East Initiative.⁸¹

The new American focus on promoting democracy in the Middle East strained the relationship between the US and Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes, Saudi Arabia in particular.⁸² Actually, after the September 11, Saudis wanted to see the departure of US troops.⁸³ The US military presence in Saudi Arabia was no longer sustainable, and the US had to rely on smaller Gulf states for its military

⁷⁸ Saad Al-Matrafi, "Proposal for Anti-Terror Center Endorsed", *Arab News*, 9 February 2005; "Mu'tamar Al-Riyadh Yanhi A'malehu Bitebanni Iqtirah Wali Al-A'hd Al-Saudi Bi-Iqamat Merkez Dawli Li-Mukafahat Al-Irhab", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 9 February 2005.

⁷⁹ "Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy", available at online <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-3.html>.

⁸⁰ Daniel Neep (2004), "Dilemmas of Democratization....", p. 75.

⁸¹ Louis J. Cantori & Augustus Richard Norton, "Evaluating the Bush Menu for Change in the Middle East", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 12, no. 1, Spring 2005, p. 113.

⁸² Clifford Chanin & Gregory F. Gause III (2003), "US-Saudi Relations: Bump.....", p. 118.

⁸³ Joseph A. Kéchichian, "Democratization in Gulf", p. 46.

presence in the region.⁸⁴ However, the President's calls for democracy and for the establishment of the initiative were not accepted from Arab leaders. There were many reasons for not accepting the proposals for democracy in the Middle East. The first reason and the biggest challenge for the Bush administration was distrust.⁸⁵ Arabs and Muslims are against Western style 'democracy', because they do not trust in the US anymore.⁸⁶ Democracy was undermined due to the human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib prison in the US. Since the US lost its credibility, people in the Middle East did not trust in democracy.⁸⁷ It is very hard to believe in the US's efforts to promote democracy and human rights in the Middle East, while refuting its own values during its invasion on Iraq.⁸⁸ Sarah Whalen accused President Bush and Blair of being anarchists. She continued to say that the US and British military invasion and occupation of Iraq is nothing more than the concentrated work of generations. According to her, general anarchists named Bush and Blair wanted to destroy all forms of governments in "freedom's" name. Thus, Bush and Blair wanted to destroy Middle Eastern governments in "freedom's" name.⁸⁹

Secondly, Saudis opposed the Greater Middle East Initiative and democracy because they saw it as an effort to consolidate the US-Israeli hegemony in the region

⁸⁴ Gregory F. Gause III (2003), "The Approaching Turning....", p. 1.

⁸⁵ Muqtedar Khan, "Prospects for Muslim Democracy", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 10, no. 3, Fall 2003, pp. 79-89; Chris Patten, "How Not to Spread Democracy", *Foreign Policy*, September-October 2003, pp. 40-46.

⁸⁶ Ibtisam Al-Bassam, "How to Influence Muslim Minds and Capture the Arab Hearts", *Arab News*, 28 March 2005.

⁸⁷ Shibley Telhami, "Understanding the Challenge", *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 56, no. 1, Winter 2002, p. 16.

⁸⁸ Völker Perthes, "America's 'Greater Middle East' and Europe: Key Issues for Dialogue", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 2004, p. 97.

⁸⁹ Sarah Whalen, "Bush's 'A' to 'Z' of Why America Went to Iraq", *Arab News*, 19 August 2005.

by establishing pro-US regimes and spreading Western secular values.⁹⁰ They thought that as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict and Iraqi experiences exist in the Middle East, it is inconvenient to talk about democracy and human rights in a large geography.⁹¹

Thirdly, Islamists also believed that democracy and Islam are incompatible. Since Islam is complete and the Muslim community is ruled according to the Sharia, there is not need for any other human made legislation.⁹² Some Islamists also oppose political reforms not because they are Western origin, but because they are sponsored by the US. They see the US democracy as dictated according to the US' strategic interests rather than as a desire to empower Arab countries. It is also believed by Islamists that the US would not allow free elections to be held in the Middle East, because sooner or later the government chosen by the majority would challenge US and Israeli interests.⁹³

Fourthly, Arabs believe that the democratization process and political reforms in the Middle East must come from inside through the implementation of domestic reforms, not by imposition from above.⁹⁴ The US should not be involved in domestic issues and reform projects of regimes in the Middle East⁹⁵, because such an

⁹⁰ Ahmad Abbas Salih, "Al-Arab Ma Ba'de Al-Harb", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 21 March 2003.

⁹¹ Abdul Hadi Bu Talib, "Al-Harb Al-Oula fi Musalsil Iadet Tashkiyl Al-Sharq Al-Awsat", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 26 March 2003; Salih Al-Qaleb, "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat:..Ezahibun ila Al-Fawda em ila Al-Demoqratiyyah", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 9 March 2005.

⁹² John L. Esposito (2000), "Political Islam.....", pp. 49-55; Shahrough Akhavi, "Islam and the West in World Affairs", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2003, pp. 545-562.

⁹³ Louis J. Cantori & Augustus Richard Norton (2005), "Evaluating the Bush Menu....", p. 105.

⁹⁴ Sami Baroudi, "The 2002 Arab Human Development Report: Implications for Democracy", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1, Spring 2004, p. 138.

⁹⁵ Louis J. Cantori & Augustus Richard Norton (2005), "Evaluating the Bush Menu.....", p. 107.

involvement would make the processes more difficult and many people would reject the reforms imposed by the US.

Fifthly, authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia did not support democracy, because they did not wish to lose their political power. It is also true that political reforms bring the “Islamist dilemma”. Because, after free and fair elections, radical religious groups can win the elections in the Middle East.⁹⁶ The authoritarian regimes in the Middle East that were friendly to the US struggled to eliminate Islamist terrorist threats to their own regimes.⁹⁷ It is believed that if the Saudi regime were toppled, a regime more hostile to the US would take its place. For example; there is a danger of the Wahhabi ideology taking over the regime and the Saudi monarchy is more preferable to the US than a regime ruled by the Wahhabi ideology.⁹⁸

There were also fears among Sunni Gulf states that if a Shi’a dominated government come to power a Shia awakening would emerge in Saudi Arabia.⁹⁹ Saudis were concerned about the growing Shiite influence in the region, especially in Iraq, where the continued instability is a worry to the Saudis.¹⁰⁰ Since 1990, Saudi Arabia had resisted the US and international efforts to aid the Shia in Southern Iraq. Because, it was afraid of its own Shi’as and that they would demand more reforms

⁹⁶ Daniel Neep (2004), “Dilemmas of Democratization.....”, p. 82.

⁹⁷ Louis J. Cantori & Augustus Richard Norton (2005), “Evaluating the Bush Menu.....”, p. 111.

⁹⁸ Jamie Glazov, “Symposium: The Future of US-Saudi Relations”, *Front Page Magazine*, 11 July 2003, p. 4 available at online <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=8866>.

⁹⁹ Louis J. Cantori & Augustus Richard Norton (2005), “Evaluating the Bush Menu.....”, p. 109.

¹⁰⁰ Richard W. Stevenson & Jeff Gerth, “As Saudi Visits, Bush Seeks Help on Lowering Oil Prices”, *New York Times*, 25 April 2005.

and political rights, thus would endangering the Saudi regime.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, free elections in Iraq were also opposed by Saudi Arabia.¹⁰²

Although democracy is contrary to the Kingdom's autocratic regime, it is nonetheless taking place in Saudi Arabia. Many domestic reforms have been implemented in the Kingdom. Even municipal elections have been carried out¹⁰³, but only for half of the members of the municipal councils. The elections were carried out on three phases, respectively: on 10 February 2005 in Najd province, on 3 March 2005 in the Eastern province and the southwest and on 21 April 2005 in Hijaz and Northern provinces. Each voter was given seven votes to elect a candidate from each of the seven districts.

Although a small number registered themselves for elections, they are still considered to be a major political reform in Saudi Arabia for three reasons. First, regardless of who wins, the elections are considered to be the first step for democratic process.¹⁰⁴ It has been declared by Hamad Al-Kanhal, a Professor at King Saud University, that the municipal elections are the beginning of something bigger, referring to a substantial political reform in the Kingdom.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Louis J. Cantori & Augustus Richard Norton (2005), "Evaluating the Bush Menu...", p. 116.

¹⁰² Amir Taheri, "Intikhabat Al-Iraq Tu'id Qadaya Al-Iraqiyyin Al-Haqiqiyah Ila Al-Wajih", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 28 January 2005.

¹⁰³ Khaled Batarfi, "Saudi Democracy: Is It a Time for Celebration, Then?", *Arab News*, 12 December 2004.

¹⁰⁴ "Tasweet Katheef Bi Al-Riyadh fi Al-Intikhabat Al-Baladiyyah", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 11 February 2005.

¹⁰⁵ M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Voters Turn Up in Large Numbers to Cast Ballots", *Arab News*, 11 February 2005.

Second, after the first ever elections held in Saudi Arabia in a relaxed atmosphere¹⁰⁶, people would like voting and look forward for other elections contrary to the previous threats.¹⁰⁷ The experiment with democracy has made great strides in the Kingdom's history. Some poll officials and candidates described the election as a "cultural carnival".¹⁰⁸ Many were excited by their first experience. The government gave a chance to the citizens to work, to share power and to bear responsibilities in running the affairs of the state. For the first time in their history people gathered in Saudi Arabia in public life outside the mosque to discuss social, economic and municipal problems and to solve them by themselves.¹⁰⁹ Daily meetings, speeches and campaign posters on streets of the Kingdom were positive outcomes of the elections, all of which were once upon a time considered illegal. Many people began to hope that the next step will be election of the Shoura Council.

Third, the elections drew attention to the recently emerged middle-class intellectuals of Saudi Arabia, most of whom have been educated in Western universities. Since almost all of the candidates were educated in Europe or in the US, they were familiar with elections and their processes.¹¹⁰ However, Saudi women were excluded from the ballot¹¹¹, Riyadh Mayor Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Ayyaf Al-

¹⁰⁶ Abdul Hannan Faisal Tago, "Election Process Runs Smoothly", *Arab News*, 11 February 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Amir Taheri, "Qira'at fi Al-Intikhabat Al-Baladiyyah Al-Saudiyyah", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 11 February 2005.

¹⁰⁸ M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Riyadh Wears a Festive Look for Municipal Elections", *Arab News*, 10 February 2005.

¹⁰⁹ M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Voters Turn Up in Large Numbers to Cast Ballots", *Arab News*, 11 February 2005.

¹¹⁰ Amir Taheri, "Qira'at fi Al-Intikhabat Al-Baladiyyah Al-Saudiyyah", *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 11 February 2005.

¹¹¹ M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Riyadh Wears a Festive Look for Municipal Elections", *Arab News*, 10 February 2005.

Muqrin and Prince Bandar Bin Abdullah Bin Abdul Rahman promised that they would take part in the next elections¹¹² in 2009.

Things are changing in Saudi Arabia very slowly. It is mentioned that a University Professor Suleiman Enezi said that Saudi people had to wait for a long time to break the psychological barriers.¹¹³ Omran Al-Omran said that the wait for democracy had ended with these elections. He continued to say that it would be a matter of time to gradually step into a country where people would have a say in government affairs.¹¹⁴ The polls have triggered the democratic process in the Kingdom and the elections have given people a chance to take a part in the evolution of democracy. The elections in the Kingdom can be considered as the dawn of democracy. A democratic nation can not be built in a day, it takes some time. It can be argued that Saudi Arabia has already boarded on the reform train, but when it will arrive at the democracy station is a question mark. Soon or later democracy will replace the autocratic regime in Saudi Arabia, but it will take some time to flourish.

To sum up, after September 11, the bilateral relations between the US and Saudi Arabia were based on global issues like the war on terrorism, the war in Iraq and the issue of democracy, more than oil for security. Although their relations were strained due to the conflict of public opinion among the two states, they cooperated silently on a government-to-government level. When the US's stance collided with the Kingdom's domestic politics, it began to pressure Saudi Arabia to make domestic reforms, particularly in the political sphere. Saudi Arabia made great efforts in terms

¹¹² Raid Qusti & Nasser Al-Salti, "Saudis Vote in Historic Election", *Arab News*, 11 February 2005; Raid Qusti & Nasser Al-Salti, "Women Can't Be Left Far Behind", *Arab News*, 11 February 2005.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Mohammed Rasooldeen, "High Hopes Abound for Fledgling Reforms", *Arab News*, 11 February 2005.

of counterterrorism to reduce its internal threats. Although the democracy notion of the US threatens its regime, Saudi Arabia has taken a big step on the way to democracy both to reduce pressure from the US and to maintain its internal security.

CONCLUSION

For many years, oil for security was the central focus of US-Saudi relations. Their relations were based on mutual national interests. The Kingdom guaranteed the US an interrupted supply of oil at reasonable prices. In return, the US safeguarded the security of the Kingdom from external threats, such as Soviet Union, Iran and Iraq. It also provided military training and arms for Saudi Arabia. Many social and economic developments were also successfully implemented with the help of the US. Thus far, their relations had been dominated by mutual national interests.

It is undeniable that the Saudi government depends on religion to legitimize its political power. During the Cold War period, Saudi Arabia's religiosity had served a useful political purpose for the US. The Soviets, who were against religion, posed a threat to the Saudis. Thus, Saudi Arabia was opposed to the spread of communism and became a useful partner to the US. Saudi Arabia was not only a supplier of oil for the US, but also was a major player in the Muslim world by promoting an anti-communist ideology. It is true that both countries have ignored the problems of Islamic extremism and, when it did not threaten their own interests, worked together to export it to contain communism during the Cold War.

During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, both countries cooperated closely. The Kingdom organized the Arab world's efforts to force Iraq to leave Kuwait in 1990. However, Saudi Arabia recognized its incapability to defend itself, despite spending large amounts of money on defense security. The easy conquest of Kuwait by Iraq

and Saudi Arabia's limited military power to defend its territories led to a search for a powerful ally. The Saudi government chose the US as the only reliable power that could provide Saudi Arabia with intensive support. It also supported the US in deploying massive land and air forces to the Kingdom, although widespread criticisms in the country arose in response to this. Many in the Kingdom were against the presence of US forces because their territory was being used to attack another Muslim country. Terrorist attacks targeting US facilities under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden began to take place in Saudi Arabia during the mid-1990s. Actually, the Kingdom was in a dilemma between stationing US troops on its soil for the protection of the Kingdom from external threats and dealing with domestic opposition which had arisen due to the presence of the large numbers of US forces.

The US-Saudi relationship went through a very difficult period after September 11. This was the first issue outside of the Arab-Israeli conflict that had caused a strain in relations between the US and Saudi Arabia. Saudi-centric terrorism came under the international spotlight. Many factors began to influence their relations. First, public opinion became to influence their relationship. Both the US and Saudi Arabia are maintaining their relations on government-to-government level, while lessening on the people-to-people level. There is a lot of frustration on both sides at the people-to-people level. There is anger about September 11, and about who is responsible for terrorism. Each country blamed the other and they saw each other as a threat to national interests.

It is true that oil has always been very important in keeping the world's largest consumer and the world's largest producer on friendly terms. The US and Saudi Arabia always cooperated on the issue of oil pricing in order to preserve a

stable economic order. However, having a lot of oil does not make you a good friend of the US. There are other things that put Saudi Arabia and America into a partnership. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 September 2001, much has changed in US-Saudi relations. Second, their relations are no longer shaped by only oil for security, the war on terrorism and other global issues like war on Iraq and democracy are put into the agenda of their relationship. They had the same enemy, namely terrorism, to fight against. Their relations began to be affected by this war on terrorism. It can be said that terrorism has become a new type of 'communism' to be contained by the two countries. Both the Saudis and the Americans are in the same camp in fighting with terrorism and they have cooperated with each other on the terrorism issue.

Third, domestic policies in the Kingdom became a focus of interest in the US and their relations moved from traditional foreign policy to include domestic politics as well. The US encouraged Saudi Arabia to perform social and political reforms to reduce the tension in their mutual relations and to improve people-to-people relations among their citizens. By requesting such reforms, the US also aimed to change the religious influence on the Saudi society. Especially after the May 2003 bombings, Saudi Arabia strived and made great efforts in dealing with terrorism. Many measures have been taken in Saudi Arabia to fight terrorism through domestic reforms. Since reform in education plays an important role in transforming the political culture, the US gave support for the establishment of the Effat College in Jeddah. Even municipal elections were carried out in Saudi Arabia. However, the Saudi government has to implement these domestic policies silently, so as not to jeopardize its development reforms and not to distance itself from the US. Through

such behaviour Saudi Arabia is also trying to keep its internal security under control and maintain the stability of its regime.

It can be concluded that for Saudi Arabia, there is no alternative to continuing its special relationship with the US and vice-versa. The most important reason for the US to keep up its good relations with Saudi Arabia is the dominant position of Saudi Arabia in the world oil market. The Kingdom is also an important ally and supporter of the US in the region. It is a convenient base for regional operations whether against Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan or others. Saudi political influence among the Gulf, Arab and Islamic countries is of some value to US foreign policy.¹ Thus, both countries need to repair and maintain their mutual beneficial relationship.

Saudi Arabia and the US need to work together on several issues. First, they need to reduce the domestic opposition in Saudi Arabia, which emerged due to the deployment of US forces; a dialogue is needed for the strengthening of the relationship. Second, they need to consult much more closely on military options. Third, they have to cooperate in terms of counterterrorism. Saudi Arabia needs to modernize and improve its security services. It also has to make great efforts to bring Islamic extremism under control. They need to deal with the causes of terrorism in the Kingdom. Fourth, both the US and Saudi Arabia need to communicate more openly with the Saudis about the reasons why US forces are in Saudi Arabia. It can be said that a center for counterterrorism can be established to exchange information among both countries.

Moreover, in order to preserve US-Saudi bilateral relations, both countries need to explain the importance of their relations to their own citizens clearly. The

¹ J. E. Peterson (2002), *Saudi Arabia and the.....*, pp. 81-83.

Saudi government can no longer ignore its public opinion. Saudi Arabia needs to explain to its people that the US is the only powerful and reliable ally for the security of the Kingdom. It need to persuade its people that the US forces are not deployed near the holy places of Mecca and Medina. Moreover, Saudis have to understand the importance of a limited US force for deterring Iraq and any other enemies, because the deployment of US forces on Saudi land provides both deterrence and the quality of joint military training. In addition, many centers can be established in the Kingdom to help the people understand US culture and to improve people-to-people contact among the Saudis and the Americans. Moreover, more students, businessmen and journalist can be sent to the US.

On the other hand, the US may need to understand the meaning of Wahhabism, the concept of Jihad and the role of Saudi Arabia in the Muslim and Arab world. American visa regulations towards the Saudis may be eased. More businessmen, workers, technicians, academics and students could go to Saudi Arabia to understand the culture of Saudi Arabia and to exchange more information among the citizens of each country. Also, in order to improve people-to-people contact among the citizens of the two countries, more books maybe be translated into Arabic or from Arabic to English. The US needs to establish professional teams from specialists who can talk Arabic, understand Saudi culture and politics and can work with Saudi security forces. The US also can support domestic reforms in Saudi Arabia without interfering in the Kingdom's internal politics.

In terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict, both countries need to cooperate in solving this long-standing issue. Since some domestic measures have been taken by the Saudi government to prevent financial transfers to terrorist organizations, the

Saudi government has to find new ways to express their financial support for Palestinians. As the Kingdom's support for the Palestinian problem will not diminish, the US needs to understand the Kingdom's support for Palestinians. Otherwise, the longer the violence towards Palestinians continues, the more it will endanger the US-Saudi relations. It is true that the Kingdom may not be able to change the US policy towards Israel, but such events may lead it to distance itself from the US.

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