

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or any of its agencies. This document may not be released for open publication until it has been cleared by the appropriate military service or government agency.

SAUDI RELATIONS WITH ITS MAIN CONTIGUOUS NEIGHBORS

BY

COLONEL FAHAD AL-SAUD
Saudi Arabian Army

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
Approved for Public Release.
Distribution is Unlimited.

USAWC CLASS OF 2000



U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050

20000607 129

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

SAUDI RELATIONS WITH ITS MAIN CONTIGUOUS NEIGHBORS

By

COL Fahad Al-Saud
Saudi Arabian Army

Dr. Richard L. Winslow
Project Advisor

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
Approved for public release.
Distribution is unlimited.

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Fahad Al-Saud, Colonel, Saudi Arabian Army

TITLE: Saudi Relations with Its Main Contiguous Neighbors

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 14 March 2000

PAGES: 28

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Saudi Arabian relations with the outside world are predicated on set of basic principles or factors. They include Islamic values, Arab heritage, geographic continuity, reciprocal respect, and national interest. Therefore any assessment of Saudi Arabian relations must be looked at from this perspective. In our discussion of Saudi Arabian relations with its main neighbors (Yemen, Iran, Iraq, and Jordan), I have shown how influential those factors are in shaping and directing Saudi Arabian policy with those countries in particular and the world in general. This paper will not discuss Saudi relations with other Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) members since Saudi Arabia is an integral part of GCC and any problems between it and other GCC members do not rise to the level of threat and are solved diplomatically and in a brotherly manner.

Saudi Arabian policy makers hope that the outcome of these bilateral relations will be regional security and political stability, respect of national sovereignty, recognized boundaries, normal relations in all fields, and non-interference in internal affairs with each other.

In sum the ultimate objective of Saudi Arabia is the preservation of its national security, but diplomacy must be accompanied by the will and real determination to advance and defend this interest. This primarily can be achieved through self-reliance and trustworthy friends and allies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SAUDI RELATIONS WITH ITS MAIN CONTIGUOUS NEIGHBORS	I
ABSTRACT	III
SAUDI ARABIA CHALLENGES AND CONTIGUOUS NEIGHBORS	1
SAUDI ARABIA – YEMEN RELATIONS	2
SAUDI ARABIA – IRAN RELATIONS	5
SAUDI ARABIA – IRAQ RELATIONS	9
SAUDI ARABIA – JORDAN RELATIONS	12
CONCLUSION	14
ENDNOTES	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY	21

SAUDI RELATIONS WITH ITS MAIN CONTIGUOUS NEIGHBORS

Like most countries on the world stage, Saudi foreign relations vis-à-vis its neighbors in particular and the international system in general are governed by both internal and external factors. Geography, topography, religion, oil and diplomacy are among the most essential determinant factors in shaping and directing Saudi foreign policy.

In terms of geography, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occupies about four fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, covering an area of 865,000 square miles. It has extensive seashores on the Red Sea to the west (1,100 miles), and on the Arabian Gulf to the east (300 miles). It shares common borders with seven Arab States (Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Yemen). It also faces Iran across the Arabian Gulf. These long frontiers put a burden on Saudi Arabia in terms of its national security and its bilateral relations with whom it shares common borders.

The nature of the terrain of the Arabian Peninsula makes precise demarcation of borders between Saudi Arabia and its aforementioned neighbors hard to accomplish. But despite these difficulties, successive Saudi governments were able to sign border treaties with most of its neighbors, with the exception of Yemen and Qatar who are currently holding talks with Saudi government to conclude similar ones.¹

Islamic religion plays a pivotal role in shaping Saudi foreign policy. More than any other country in the Moslem World, Saudi Arabia is strongly identified with Islam. This unique position is based on the fact that the two holiest Moslem cities (Mecca and Median) are located in Saudi Arabia. It is for this reason that all Moslems worldwide look towards Saudi Arabia for spiritual guidance.² It is also for this reason, that it hosts the three main Moslem international organizations: The Islamic Conference Organization, the Moslem League, and the Moslem Bank. In accordance with this special status the King of Saudi Arabia has chosen to change his official title from his majesty to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

Therefore, the Islamization of Saudi foreign policy is not merely a reflection of official ideology, nor is it only lip service. It is the connection between political realities in Saudi Arabia and developments in the world beyond that makes Islamic concerns an important dimension of Saudi foreign policy.³ Saudi political

stands on issues of prime concern to Moslems such as Jerusalem, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the well being of Moslem minorities in non-Moslem countries are example of the Islamic dimension of Saudi foreign policy.

Oil plays a pivotal role in Saudi foreign policy. Sitting on the top of the largest proven oil reserves in the world explains the reason for Saudi Arabia's unprecedented international involvement. As a major and active member of OPEC, Saudi Arabia has always been advocating a moderate pricing policy for the health of the international economic system. Oil revenues have enabled Saudi Arabia to grant aids and loans to many countries around the world.⁴ Thus, its wealth - from oil revenues - has given its foreign policy more weight and respectability in the international arena.

Moderation, credibility, and quiet diplomacy are basic characteristics of Saudi foreign policy. Those traits have accorded Saudi Arabia the respect and confidence of Arab and non-Arab countries alike, irrespective of their political ideology. To demonstrate this, Saudi Arabia has been invited, on several occasions, to intervene among rival parties as an impartial and trustworthy mediator.

Saudi Arabia's active role that ended the bloody civil war in Lebanon is a case in point. Saudi Arabian good offices were also used to mediate between Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara. Another example is the Saudi Arabian mediating role between the United Nations and Libya which resulted in the latter's agreement to turn the two suspected Libyans to a third party (Holland).

On the basis of the aforementioned factors, Saudi relations with its principal neighbors (Iran, Yemen, Iraq, and Jordan) will be briefly analyzed. The discussion of bilateral relations will focus mainly on issues of prime importance to Saudi national security. Among these issues, which will deserve more attention, are the border disputes between Saudi Arabia and its neighbors.

SAUDI ARABIA – YEMEN RELATIONS

Saudi Arabia and Yemen are the oldest independent and biggest countries - in terms of geography and demography - on the Arabian Peninsula. Over the past seven decades their relations were marked with brief military conflicts, prolonged border disputes, intermittent political differences, and normal relations from time to time. The ups and downs in their relations were due largely to the turbulent domestic political situations inside Yemen over the past decades.

Prior to 1962, Yemen was ruled by a very ultra conservative royal family (Al-Hameid Al-Din), that managed to isolate Yemen from the outside world, enlightened Yemenis, both civilians and military young

officers who had foreign exposure, revolted several times against the existing order. The continued domestic unrest reached its climax in September of 1962, when a group of officers staged a successful military coup d'état and announced the establishment of a republican system. The new regime aligned itself with revolutionary Arab States. These new political developments plunged Yemen into more than seven years of civil war (1962-1969) with catastrophic consequences.⁵

The Yemeni civil war in the 1960's had its regional implications. It polarized the Arab World into pros and cons. Saudi Arabia and its conservative Arab allies were against the new republican regime in Yemen because they saw in its policies and actions a serious threat to their security and stability. The Soviet Union and its camp seized the opportunity by offering its assistance in all fields to the new government of Yemen in order to gain influence near the oil fields of the Arabian Gulf, thus putting Western interests in jeopardy. This development had alarmed the Saudis by forcing them to side with the royalists who began to regroup in order to overthrow the new government. Egypt, under the leadership of the late President Nasser and some Arab states who espoused revolutionary Arab nationalism came on the side of the new regime by offering it both political and military supports.

During the 1960's relations between Yemen and Saudi Arabia were overshadowed by long-standing territorial disputes and ideological differences. Concerning territorial disputes, both countries fought a brief war in 1934 over an area claimed by each side. The 1934 Saudi-Yemen treaty managed to end the state of war and settle a large portion of the borders between them. It is the remaining portion that hindered steady and normal relations between the two countries. What makes the border disputes take so long to settle is the fact that some of the borderlands may contain long deposits of oil.⁶

As far as ideological differences between the two political systems in both Yemen after the coup d'état and Saudi Arabia, the latter granted diplomatic recognition and embarked on a long and massive economic program in order to rebuild Yemen and disassociate it politically from Soviet influence. Saudi policy towards Yemen was somewhat successful in terms of bringing Yemen closer than before. Nevertheless, the unsettled border disputes make it difficult for both sides to build steady and harmonious relations. Despite repeated Saudi calls to settle the border disputes, successive Yemeni governments - including the current one - managed to create obstacles in the face of serious negotiations. In fact, Yemeni governments, since the 1962 revolutions, have used the issue as leverage in order to extract more

concessions from the Saudis in the form of economic aid and assistance in other fields. But, after the unification of North and South Yemen into the Arab Republic of Yemen in 1990, the Yemeni President, Ali Abdullah Saleh felt that he was in a sufficiently strong position to settle this thorny question. After a brief visit to Saudi Arabia in March 1990, the Yemeni President announced his determination to begin serious negotiations concerning the border disputes.⁷

On August 2, 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait. The Yemeni government took a sympathetic view toward Iraq in the face of mounting international pressure to both condemn and eject Iraqi armed forces from Kuwait. This Yemeni political stand served to poison the friendly atmosphere created by the Yemeni President's visit to Saudi Arabia five months earlier. As a consequence, massive Saudi economic aids began to be cut back and then eliminated, causing a serious crisis in the Yemeni economy. Therefore, the Iraqi invasion and its aftermaths have - once again - delayed the resolution of this problem.⁸

Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Yemen were somewhat friendly. Saudi Arabia provided Yemen with both budgetary support and developmental aid worth about \$600 million a year. Unlike other foreigners, Yemenis were permitted to enter the Kingdom without visas and setup small businesses without having local sponsors or partners. The resulting Yemeni presence in Saudi Arabia and the repatriation of earnings were, for Yemen, the single largest source of revenue, amounting to around \$1.2 billion a year.

These special relations have encountered some difficulties since the beginning of the Gulf crisis in 1990. Yemen voted in the Arab League against condemning Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait. Furthermore, Yemen abstained from voting on several U.N. Security Council resolutions concerning Iraq. Saudi Arabia saw these actions as siding with Iraq. In retaliation, Saudi Arabia canceled the privileged status given Yemeni workers as a sign of displeasure and therefore, demanded each Yemeni worker to take Saudi sponsors, as in the case of other foreign workers in the Kingdom. The result was the return of hundreds of thousands of Yemeni workers to their native country.⁹

The deterioration of relations between the two countries since 1990 has been dramatic. Moderated somewhat during 1992-93, the exchange of public accusation and criticism rose in 1991 and more openly in 1994 to levels not heard since the early 1960's. The 1994 Yemeni civil war and its aftermath between South and North Yemen have produced important implications on Yemeni - Saudi relations. The Yemeni

government has accused Saudi Arabia of siding with the Southern secessionists when the latter called for an immediate cease-fire when the balance of power was in favor of North Yemen.¹⁰

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Yemen began to normalize gradually because the overriding interests of both dictate such moves. Final settlement of the remaining portion of border demarcations has not been reached despite intermittent negotiations since the two countries signed the 1934 Taif Agreement which managed to put an end to the bloody confrontation between the two countries over a common frontier area but failed to demarcate a disputed 300 kilometers of border.

In 1995, the two countries took an important step toward resolving the territorial disputes by signing a memorandum of understanding detailing for the first time a written workable plan. The memorandum emphasizes the full commitment of the two parties to the legitimacy and imposition of the Taif Treaty and its appendices. It calls for the creation of a joint committee including equal members representing the two parties within a 30 days period. The committee will be entrusted with renewing both existing and obliterated borderlines with the help of a specialized international company selected and agreed upon by the two parties.

The memorandum calls for creation of joint committees to negotiate and then demarcate the maritime borders in compliance with international law. It calls for the formation of high-level joint military committees to secure preventing any military movement or infiltration on the borders of the two countries. It calls for, also among many others things, the establishment of a joint ministerial committee to upgrade economic, commercial, and cultural relations, and consolidate all aspects of cooperation between the two countries.¹¹ This memorandum of understanding did not, however, prevent the occurrence of minor and intermittent border skirmishes.¹² But despite these incidents, it served as a framework for the negotiating parties to draft a treaty to address the concern of both parties and begin a new page of mutual relations. In reality, there is a determination on both sides to resolve the border disputes peacefully through negotiations. Therefore, military confrontation is not an option because both parties recognize the serious consequences of such action.

SAUDI ARABIA – IRAN RELATIONS

Saudi Arabia and Iran are considered among the most important regional powers in the Middle East for a number of reasons. Both have played and still play a pivotal role in the political, economic, and

military life of the region. The two countries possess vast amount of proven oil reserve under their soils and for that reasons exert considerable influence on the world economy. They, also, play a leading role in the Muslim World. Saudi Arabia and Iran, until the Islamic Revolution in 1979 - were considered traditional allies of the West, particularly the United States. Despite the similarities between them in many fields, their national interests have dictated the course of actions toward each other.

Official contacts between Saudi Arabia and Iran dated back to 1925, but full diplomatic relations did not begin until 1929, when both signed a friendship treaty covering wide range of issues involving politics, economics, and trade.¹³ This Treaty helped to improve the relations between the two countries when in March 1930, Iran opened an embassy at Jeddah. In May of 1932, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal paid an official visit to Teheran with message from King Abdulaziz to the Shah of Iran Reza Pahlevi aimed at strengthening the political relations. Thus, the official contacts between the two countries remained active but not without obstacles from time to time due to differences of opinions over some issues, particularly Iranian policy towards the Gulf region. Iran for example has considered Bahrain an Iranian territory, which must be returned to it. Saudi Arabia on the other hand, had opposed this policy vigorously.¹⁴

Despite the differences of opinions and policies concerning the Gulf, the two countries continued to cooperate in areas of mutual concern such as coordinating oil policies through OPEC, opposing communist influence in the Middle East, taking joint stands against radical forces, and strengthening their relations with Western powers.¹⁵ For a half-century (1929-79), relations between the two countries remained basically stable. The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 put an end to their long friendship. The new revolutionary regime in Tehran embarked on hostile attitudes toward Saudi Arabia. The Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), with Saudi Arabia supporting Iraq against Iran has contributed to further deterioration of relations between the two countries.¹⁶ Iran's hostility towards Saudi Arabia began to subside gradually with the death of Mr. Khomeini and the ascendancy of new moderate and pragmatic forces in Iran.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have entered a new phase when former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani called upon Iran's neighbors to begin a new era in their relations with his country. In response to this gesture Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia met with Mr. Rafsanjani during the extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held in Pakistan in May 1997. The result of that meeting was a

rapid improvement of relations between the countries, culminating in the resumption of airline traffic between Jeddah and Tehran, and exchange of official delegations at various levels in order to discuss a wide range of issues involving politics, economics, bilateral trade, and security arrangements for the region.¹⁷

Economic cooperation and regional security are among the most important issues to both countries. Being members of OPEC, both countries are eager to coordinate their oil policies. Iran is also trying to convince the Saudis to absorb some of its manpower in order to solve its unemployment problem, which has reached 15%. Moreover, Iran is looking forward to being included in regional security arrangements. From the Iranian perspective, outside powers, mainly the United States must be excluded, while the Saudis do not entirely share with Iran that view.¹⁸

The steady improvement of relations between the two countries came as a result of a newly elected moderate government in Iran under the leadership of Mohammad Khatami who came to power in May 1997. Khatami came to power with the support of more than twenty million young voters attracted to his campaign promises to bring change to both Iranian politics and society. This does not mean that Mr. Khatami will abandon the basic principles of the Islamic Revolution, but rather to shift emphasis and focus on urgent domestic issues and improve tarnished images abroad.¹⁹

Upon taking office, Mr. Khatami expressed his unrelenting endorsement of initial steps taking by his predecessor Mr. Rafsanjani, which called for a rapprochement with all Arab countries in general, and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in particular. Mr. Khatami has emphasized the importance of close cooperation with Saudi Arabia in many fields. Considering its pivotal position as a leading Islamic State, Iran sent its foreign minister Mr. Kamal Kharazi to Saudi Arabia with the invitation to attend the Islamic Summit Conference. Saudi Arabia accepted the invitation without hesitation as a sign of a new era in bilateral relations.²⁰

The Saudi participation in the Eight Islamic Summit held in Tehran in December 1998 with a high delegation headed by Crown Prince Abdullah was a testimony to that improvement. This important visit came after many years of upheavals and mistrust that characterized Saudi-Iranian relations, due to Iran's policy to export its revolution to neighboring countries and its continuous efforts to undermine the stability and internal security of the Arab Gulf States.²¹ Furthermore, the Saudi presence showed its clear vision of

Arab Gulf States attitudes toward Iran. There is no doubt that the Saudi participation with several Arab States has proved that Iranian calls for an opening to the world has found a favorable response with the Arab countries which would give the new leadership in Iran an opportunity to prove its good will. Therefore, the Saudi decision to attend the conference under the chairmanship of Iran is based on its conviction that Khatami's call for "an opening" is a positive step, which requires a reciprocal response.

In analyzing official public statements of both former president Mr. Rafsanjani and the incumbent Mr. Khatami, one notes that Iranian stated foreign policy has shifted from confrontation to cooperation with its neighbors, but its conduct should come under close scrutiny for a period of time in order to determine whether the new Iranian leadership is truly committed. While one notes that a remarkable improvement has taken place in Iranian-Arab relations over the past three years, other factors should be taking into consideration:

- First, the Arab move towards Iran does not mean full acceptance of Iranian policies and stands concerning some issues such as the three Arab Islands occupied by Iran, but only to give Mr. Khatami and his team a chance to be forthcoming and sincere towards his Arab neighbors.²²
- Second, it is obvious that Iran does not speak with a single voice. The open door policy adopted by Mr. Khatami has met some resistance from hard-liners who still exert pressure and cause embarrassment to his government. Until the moderate forces gain more control over Iranian policy, the Arab States in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular should hold final judgement on Iran's future policy.
- Third, beside President Khatami, Iran is currently run by Supreme Guide Ali Khamenei, former President and currently chairman of the Council for the Discernment of the State's Interests Mr. Rafsanjani, and President Khatami. As a consequence, the president cannot determine Iran's foreign and domestic policies without coordination with those other two key principals.²³ The result is that the hard-liners still have the upper hand in shaping and influencing future Iranian policy toward its Arab neighbors. The upcoming parliamentary elections might undermine the hard-liners, but until this happen, Saudi Arabia should watch the situation carefully and then shape its future policy in light of these developments.

In fact, there are suspicions over the real objective of Iran's call for close relations with its neighbors, and doubts stem from the fact whether this new stated policy represent a strategic shift or merely temporary tactics. The new Iranian policy came at a timewhen Tehran is subjected to U.S. economic and political boycott and appears willing to go any length to rid itself of such containment. Giving these facts, it is safe to conclude that Iran has undergone many changes internally and externally. Saudi Arabia has to observe these changes and react to them in a manner that would prevent Iran from becoming a threat to its national security in the future.

SAUDI ARABIA – IRAQ RELATIONS

As part of an overall settlement of the First World War, modern Iraq came under British mandate in 1920. This arrangement had coincided with King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud's efforts to consolidate his authority over the northern part of his domain. The ill-defined borders of Southern Iraq with the newly emerging state - Saudi Arabia - had led to a series of raids and counter-raids by feuding Bedouin tribes settling in and along the frontiers of both countries. The border disputes and the political affiliations of Bedouin tribes have dominated the relations of both countries since the First World War.²⁴

Acting on behalf of the Iraqi government - as the mandating authority - the British government intervened in the situation by asking both parties to sit down and negotiate a border agreement under its auspices. On May 5th, 1922 in the presence of Sir Percy Cox, delegates from Najd and Iraq signed the Treaty of Mohammera.²⁵ The agreement:

"Stipulated that the Shammar of Najd appertained to Najd while the Amarat, Dhafir, and Muntafig belong to Iraq. The boundaries between the two countries were to be based on the location of pastures and wells used by the said tribes. It was further decided that a party of delegates from both sides should meet in Baghdad under the presidency of a British official to work out the details of this boundary."²⁶

Whereas Faisal of Iraq ratified the treaty and Ibn Saud rejected it. The reason given by the Saudi leader was that his representatives at the meeting had not followed his instructions in assigning the tribes of Dhafir, Amarat, and Western Muntafig to Iraq. Ibn Saud based his claim on the fact that those tribes had formerly inhabited Najd but had recently settled in Iraq.

In November 1922, Sir Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner of Iraq, met Ibn Saud at the port of Uqair in order to reach a settlement between Najd and Iraq over their common frontiers. On Dec 2, 1922, the two countries signed the Uqair Agreement that demarcated the boundaries between Najd and Iraq, and between Najd and Kuwait. Sir Percy, the chief architect of the agreement, drew out two zones, which he declared should be neutral and known as the Kuwait Neutral Zone and the Iraq Neutral Zone. Cox's boundary between Saudi Arabia and Iraq has basically remained until this day.²⁷

Although the main body of the Uqair Agreement remained intact, its implementation on the ground and the political changes, which took place since then, had necessitated the addition of some appendices to it during the years 1923, 1925, and 1937. In July 1975, the two countries agreed to equally divide the Neutral Zones drawn by the 1922 Uqair Agreement. Six years later (December 1981) a new international borderline was drawn giving the north section of the Neutral Zone to Iraq and the south section to Saudi Arabia. Thus, after nearly six decades Saudi Arabia and Iraq have managed to end their border disputes.²⁸

In 1930, the British government announced its plan to abrogate its mandate over Iraq, thus clearing the way for its independence. This development enabled Iraq for the first time - at least in theory - to conduct its foreign policy, but under British guidance. In April 1931, Iraq and Saudi Arabia signed a friendship treaty calling - among many things - for the exchange of diplomatic representation and the resolution of disputes peacefully. The agreement had paved the way for more normalization of bilateral relations and cooperation in many fields.²⁹

Building on the atmosphere of mutual trust and joint cooperation, the two countries signed another agreement on April 2, 1936. The new agreement called for more cooperation in areas not covered by the previous agreement. It also left the door open for other interested Arab countries to join. In the following years, more agreements were signed dealing with many areas such as the joint administration of the neutral zone, trade, customs, grazing, water rights, and others.³⁰ It is worth noting that all aforementioned agreements helped to maintain good and steady relation for nearly 36 years (1922-1958). On July 14, 1958, the pro-western government was overthrown by a military coup d'état thus upsetting bilateral relations and jeopardizing Saudi national security. The new regime was infiltrated by Iraqi communists and pro-Soviet elements, which led to criticism by Saudi officials.³¹

Relations between the two countries became worse immediately after Kuwait obtained its independence from Britain in 1961. Iraq claims that, as the legal successor of the former Ottoman Empire, they have the full right to the territories that were part of this empire. President Kassem of Iraq threatened to invade Kuwait and annex it. The Kuwaitis argued that they have maintained their status as an independent entity, though they have at times placed themselves under the protection of other powers, including the Ottomans, Saudi Arabia, Britain, and other countries intervened militarily to thwart such move.³²

In 1963, a Baa'thist counter coup d'état took place in Iraq. The new military government became preoccupied with internal power struggle among its opposing factions, which culminated in another counter coup d'état in 1968.³³ Therefore, the 1960s were marked with political instability inside Iraq, which reflected itself on its relations with the outside world including Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, the Kuwait question was deferred to a later time. A Baa'thist officer named Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr led the 1968 coup d'état. Between 1968-70, Iraq once again became embroiled in a power struggle. The beneficiary of that power struggle was a non-military person who managed to secure the post of vice president. This person was Saddam Hussein. Gradually, Saddam Hussein began to liquidate his opponents and assert himself as the leader of Iraq.³⁴

During the 1970s, Saddam Hussein embarked on a policy aimed at normalizing Iraq's relations with its neighbors. Faced with a separatist movement and costly prospect with the Iraqi Kurds in the north, he signed the 1975 Algiers Agreement with the Shah of Iran. The agreement recognized the right of Iran over the Shat Al-Arab, and in exchange the Shah of Iran would stop aiding the Iraqi Kurds. Saddam also managed to normalize Iraq's relations with Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states. Benefiting from rising oil prices, he embarked on an ambitious military program aimed at enlarging and modernizing the Iraqi armed forces.

The 1978 Iranian revolution has dramatically changed both the political and security configuration of the Gulf Region. The Islamic revolutionary government in Iran adopted a policy of exporting its revolution to its neighbors in the Gulf and beyond. The secularist government of Iraq under Saddam's leadership reacted to those threats coming from Iran, and abrogated the 1975 Algiers Agreement. The result was a catastrophic eight years of costly and bloody war between Iran and Iraq.³⁵

Saudi Arabia and the other Arab Gulf states sided with Iraq. Massive military economic, political, and logistical assistance was provided to Iraq by the Arab Gulf States in order to help it defeat Iran. Saddam Hussein was able to rally most Arab countries behind him in his war with Iran that lasted for eight years (1980-88), causing destruction, loss of human lives, and depletion of resources.³⁶

On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein embarked on another military adventure by making Kuwait his next target. Under the order of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait with the purpose of annexing it. The action was taken to fulfill a desire expressed by previous Iraqi leaders since the early 1930s. This unprecedented act has caused dismay and anger in most of the Arab World. Faced with eminent danger as its doorstep, Saudi Arabia called upon its friends and allies to come to its aid. The international response was swift where more than 30 countries have agreed to participate in a multinational force for the purpose of evicting Iraq from Kuwait. Most of the military equipment and troops came from the United States. Saudi Arabia put its resources at the disposal of the multinational force. After repeated warnings, the military campaign began under its code name "Desert Storm" for the purpose of liberating Kuwait. The job was done in a relatively short period of time, but its residue still lingers on.³⁷

Iraq's action not only poisoned its bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia and its other Gulf neighbors, but it polarized and deepened the differences among the Arab countries. Lessons from this tragic experience should serve to prevent similar ones.

SAUDI ARABIA – JORDAN RELATIONS

The expansion of Saudi Arabia northwards at the advent of World War I had coincided with the rise of two political entities under Hashemite rule in both Baghdad and Amman. Both entities were placed under British mandate as stipulated by the outcome of World War I political borders between Saudi Arabia - previously known as Najd and Jordan - previously known as Transjordan - were not exactly demarcated at that time because both states were still in the making. Moreover, the British - for their own strategic interest - have played a vital role during border negotiations between the two states in order to benefit from the outcome of border settlement.

It is somewhat difficult to review Saudi - Jordanian relations without reference to the historical rivalries between the Hashemites and Al Saud dating back to the mid-eighteenth century. In 1925, King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud - the founder of modern Saudi Arabia - captured the Hijaz region from King Hussein Ibn

Ali, the father of Transjordan's King Abdullah. This incident overshadowed future border negotiations between the two states.³⁸ After long and hard negotiations, the 1925 Hadda Agreement was signed. Its signature paved the way towards the development of regular relations. In 1932, they signed a friendship and good brotherhood agreement - similar to the ones signed with Iraq in 1931 and 1936. High-ranking dignitaries from both countries exchanged visits and began to emphasize more cooperation.³⁹ All Jordanian monarchs - past and present - paid official and courtesy visits to Saudi Arabia.

Despite frequent official contacts and the signing of a series of agreements, bilateral relations have fluctuated from open hostility to cautious cooperation, and, to periodic patron-client ties. These ups and downs in bilateral relations are due to the fact that the national interests of both are not always in total conformity. But despite that, both have a vested interest in the political stability of each other. Jordan for example, is a relatively poor country but occupies a highly strategic location by serving as a buffer state between Saudi Arabia, Syria and Israel to the north. Jordan is an active player in both Arab-Israeli disputes and inter-Arab politics, a dual role that necessitates close and periodic consultation with Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰

Jordan is a regular recipient of a large amount of Saudi economic assistance in order to sustain its crippled economy. It also receives most of its oil supply from Saudi Arabia, either in the form of donation or at special low prices. In addition to that, Saudi businessmen and entrepreneurs are encouraged to visit each other and take part in joint ventures in order to stimulate the Jordanian economy. The main purpose of this policy - from the Saudi perspective - is both moral and political. In the name of Islamic and Arab brotherhood, Saudi Arabia is expected to come to the aid of needy Arab countries like Jordan. In terms of politics, it's of national interest that Saudi help Jordan become more secure and internally stable.⁴¹

The negative regional developments in the early 1990s had its drawbacks on bilateral relations. In the 1990 Gulf War, Jordan did not explicitly condemn Iraqi's invasion of Kuwait. Instead, it criticized the presence of foreign forces and expressed its desire for an Arab solution to the crisis. This stand infuriated the Arab Gulf states, particularly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, causing the latter to recall its Ambassador to Jordan in 1991. This move was followed by the suspension of economic assistance. The overriding national interest of both countries would not allow this strained atmosphere to last very long.

Furthermore, regional and international developments dictated both parties reevaluate their stands for a number of reasons. First, Kuwait was liberated and foreign troops returned home upon executing their

mission. Second, the obstacles facing the Arab-Israeli peace talk were due to Israeli intransigence. Third, was the collapse of the Soviet Union and its ramification on both the regional and international balance of power. Last but not least was the persistent call to mend differences among Arab States caused by irresponsible Iraqi action.⁴²

In the face of those aforementioned developments, Jordanian - Saudi relations began to normalize, although gradually, but at least steadily. The Saudi Ambassador returned to his post and restrictions of movement on common borders were relaxed. The foreign ministers of both countries exchanged visits for the purpose of restoring normal ties. Jordan began to take a different stand toward Iraq. In 1995, King Hussein called - in public - for drastic political changes inside Iraq. In August 1995, Jordan provided refuge for the escaped general, Hussein Kamel, who called for changes in Iraqi leadership. This new stand on Iraq helped to draw Jordanian government closer toward the Arab Gulf States.⁴³

The death of King Hussein represented the passing of an era and the inauguration of a new one. Saudi Arabia, and indeed the rest of the Arab world responded favorably to the overture given by the government of King Abdullah II. It is expected that both countries will seize this opportunity to strengthen their bilateral relation for the sake of their dual national interests.

CONCLUSION

Saudi Arabia conducts its foreign policy based on a multiplicity of factors. It is an Arab, Islamic, Middle Eastern, and developing country. It is also a founding member of many international and regional institutions, such as the United Nations, the Arab League, the Islamic Conference Organization, the Gulf Cooperation Council, OPEC, and others. Furthermore, the Saudi foreign policy is a reflection of its perception of the world and its national security requirements. Therefore, any understanding and/or assessment of its relations vis-à-vis its contiguous neighbors in particular, or the world at large, must be seen in this light.

Religion, geographic continuity, regional security, political stability, border demarcation, and economic interests are among the most visible issues governing Saudi relations with the outside world. As shown in the discussion of bilateral relations, Saudi relations with its neighbors (Iran, Yemen, Iraq, and Jordan), are influenced by one or more of the aforementioned factors. The discussion here will focus on issues that transcend bilateral relations, but its ramification will encompass all states in the region.

Among the most pressing problems facing Saudi Arabia are regional stability and security. For Saudi Arabia, they mean regime stability, internal tranquility, and respect of state sovereignty with recognized and clearly defined delineated boundaries. It also means that weapons of mass destruction; including chemical, biological, and nuclear arsenals should be removed from the area. Reports that Iran is set to acquire nuclear weapons are very alarming. This concern does not apply to only Iran and Iraq, but also to Israel, which has a huge stockpile of destructive weapons.

In terms of political stability, Saudi Arabia looks forward to a time when comprehensive peace is achieved and where all states in the region concentrate on regional development in order to secure a better future. Saudi Arabia has actively participated – directly and indirectly – in all efforts to reach a balanced settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. For this reason, it coordinates with the Arab States in the region – particularly Jordan, Egypt, and Syria on issues concerning inter-Arab politics and Arab-Israeli disputes.

At the country level, Saudi relations with Iran are designed to achieve both regional stability and security. During the 1960s, and especially in the 1970s, Tehran acted as the “policemen” of the Gulf. To fulfill this role, it embarked on a huge militarization program with U.S. support. Its seizure of the three Arab islands (Tunb Al-Kubar, Tunb Al-Sugra, and Abu Musa) has intensified Arab fear of Iran’s growing military power.

When the Shah’s regime collapsed and revolutionary Iran adopted an expansionist policy, the smaller Arab Gulf States became closer to Saudi Arabia. It was in this environment, plus the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, that the Gulf Cooperation Council came into existence. The Iran – Iraq War (1980-88), and the second Gulf War (1990) and their ramifications, have placed more pressure on Saudi Arabia in terms of national security and the security of Gulf Cooperation Council members.

The ideal deterrent policy to meet those challenges is to equip and train a sufficient military force, even if this option is many years if not decades away. In fact, manpower shortages in Saudi Arabia mean that past undermanned policies would have to be revised. In a vast country like Saudi Arabia, surrounded by hostile and unstable regimes, the current number of its armed forces is not sufficient to deter potential aggressors. While it is true that Saudi demographic limitations and the competition for skilled manpower in the private sector might constrict the growth of Saudi armed forces, it is incumbent upon Saudi officials to

carefully and effectively utilize its available personnel resources. In fact, the picture is not gloomy as most people depict, because Saudi population growth is at three percent per year.

Saudi Arabia has many alternatives to choose from, to compensate for these temporary shortages. One alternative is to rely on high technical edge, especially the Air Force and an effective defense system. Another one is to maintain closer military cooperation with the U.S. and other western allies in order to guarantee its national security. A third overriding concern for Saudi Arabia is border demarcation with its contiguous neighbors. As Saudi Arabia strengthened its grip over its territories during the first three decades of the twentieth century, it then turned its attention to delineate its frontiers with its neighbors. In a part of the world where statehood was of recent vintage, the problem of border disputes has occupied a large portion of Saudi relations with its neighbors.

Border demarcation, for example, between Saudi Arabia and Yemen began in 1934 culminating in an agreement over a portion of their common borders. A final settlement for the remaining part is still far from over despite periodic public pronouncements that a solution is within reach. Therefore, a strong Saudi Arabia will – in no doubt – convince its neighbors to be more forthcoming on issues of mutual concern. The overwhelming international support accorded to Saudi Arabia – both militarily and diplomatically during the 1990 second Gulf War, is a living testimony to the respect and concern for its national security. The quick international response to Saudi Arabia's call for assistance during the crisis reveals the interdependence between its national and international security.

Word Count = 6,522

ENDNOTES

¹ Nadav Safran, Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985) 1-3; and Mashari A. Al-Naim, The Political Boundaries of Saudi Arabia: The Search for Stability, (London: Al-Saqi, 1999).

² Ayman Al-Yassini, Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985).

³ William B. Quandt, Saudi Arabia in the 1980's Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution) 36.

⁴ Ibid., 123-135.

⁵ Eid M. Al-Jehani, The Border and Saudi - Yemeni Relations (Riyad: Al-Jumah Press, 1994) 121-151.

⁶ Mushari A. Al-Noaim, The Saudi Political Border, The Search for Stability (London: Dar Al-Saqi, 1999) 39-66.

⁷ Al-Nahar Newspaper (Beirut), (No. 20106), 27 July 1998.

⁸ Al-Jehani, 185-201.

⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, Political Dynamics and Security in the Arabian Peninsula through the 1990's, (Santa Monica: Rand, Project Air Force, Arroyo Center) 63-65.

¹⁰ Jamal S. Al-Suwaidi, ed. The Yemeni War of 1994 (Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.: Emirates Center for strategic Studies and Research, 1996) 73-77, 80-84.

¹¹ Gulf Report, (No. 84), September 1998, 5-6.

¹² A. Sharq Al-Awsat, (No. 7180), 26 July 1998.

¹³ Said Badeeb, The Saudi-Iranian Relations 1932-1983 (London, Dr Al-Saki, 1994) 40.

¹⁴ Ibid., 63-64.

¹⁵ Ibid., 65-91.

¹⁶ Ibid., 116-119.

¹⁷ Al-Jazirah Newspaper (No. 9727), May 1999, (No. 9874), October 1999, Alanba Newspaper (Kuait), (No. 8281) 7 June 1999.

¹⁸ Gulf Report, (No. 79), March/April, 1993, 12-14, Ashaq Al-Awsat Newspaper, (No. 6958), 16 December 1997, Al-Jazirah Newspaper (Riyadh), (No. 9289) 14 March 1998, and Al-Hayat Newspaper (London), (No. 12823), 11 April 1998.

¹⁹ Yasin Majeed, "Iran under President Khatami; A Challenge to Civil Society and the State of Law," Shu'u Al-Awsat, (No. 64), August 1997, 76-83.

- ²⁰ Al-Jazirah Newspaper, (No. 9175), 11 November 1997.
- ²¹ Gulf Report, (No. 78), January-February 1998, 18-19.
- ²² OKAZ Newspaper, (No. 11444), 16 December 1997.
- ²³ Shu'u Al-Awsat, (No. 64), August 1997, 79-80.
- ²⁴ Gary Troeller, The Birth of Saudi Arabia, Britain, and the Rise of the House of Saud (London: Frank Cass, 1976), 174.
- ²⁵ The Kingdom of Hejaz and Sultanate of Najd, and on 23 September 1932 it officially assumed the current title the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- ²⁶ Troeller, 175.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 176-180.
- ²⁸ Al-Noaim, 24-25.
- ²⁹ M.A. Al-Rusan, Saudi-Iraqi Relations, 1930-1941. The International Conference on the History of King Abdulaziz, Al-Iman Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, 1-5 December 1985, 2-18.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 19-45.
- ³¹ Abdullah S. Al-Kaba'a, Saudi Foreign Policy, (Riyadh: Al-Farazdek Commercial Press, 1986) 271-272.
- ³² Tahtinen, 4-5.
- ³³ Al-Kaba'a, 272.
- ³⁴ Jasim M. Abdulghani, Iraq and Iran: The Years of Crisis (Beckenhani, Croom Helm, 1984) 26-68.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 74-122.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 178-218.
- ³⁷ Khalid Ben Sultan Ben Abdulaziz, Warrior from the Desert (London, Dar Al-Saqi, 1995).
- ³⁸ Troeller, 216-219.
- ³⁹ Al-Kaba'a, 273-274.
- ⁴⁰ Quadt, 23-24.
- ⁴¹ Al-Anba's Newspaper (Kuwait), (No. 5082), 21 February 1990, and Al-Hayai Newspaper (London), (No. 10486), 22 October 1991.

⁴² Strategic Evaluation, (No. 9), (Cairo: Al-Dar Al-Arabia for Studies, Publishing and Translation, August 1995) 11-14.

⁴³ Strategic Evaluation, (No. 20), (Cairo: Al-Dar Al-Arabia for Studies, Publishing and Translation, 15 January 1996) 20-25.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdulaziz, Khalid Ben Sultan Ben: Warrior from the Desert. London: Dar Al-Saqi, 1995.
- Abdulghani, Jasim M.: Iraq and Iran: The Years of Crisis. Beckenhani: Croom Helm, 1984.
- Alanba Newspaper (Kuait), (No. 8281), 7 June 1999.
- Al-Anba's Newspaper (Kuwait), (No. 5082), 21 February 1990.
- Al-Awsat: A. Sharq: No. (7180), 26 July 1998.
- Al-Hayai Newspaper (London), (No. 10486), 22 October 1991.
- Al-Hayat Newspaper (London), (No. 12823), 11 April 1998.
- Al-Jazirah Newspaper, (No. 9175), 11 November 1997.
- Al-Jazirah Newspaper, (No. 9727), May 1999, (No. 9874), October 1999.
- Al-Jazirah Newspaper (Riyadh), (No. 9289), 14 March 1998.
- Al-Jehani, Eid M.: The Border and Saudi - Yemeni Relations. Riyadh: Al-Jumah Press, 1994.
- Al-Kaba'a, Abdullah S.: Saudi Foreign Policy. Riyadh: Al-Farazdek Commercial Press, 1986.
- Al-Nahar Newspaper (Beirut), (No. 20106), 27 July 1998.
- Al-Naim, Mashari A.: The Political Boundaries of Saudi Arabia: The Search for Stability. London: Al-Saqi, 1999.
- Al-Noaim, Mushari A.: The Saudi Political Border: The Search for Stability. London: Dar Al-Saqi, 1999.
- Al-Rusan, M.A.: Saudi-Iraqi Relations, 1930-1941. The International Conference on the History of King Abdulaziz, Al-Iman Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, 1-5 December 1985.
- Al-Suwaidi, Jamal S. ed.: The Yemeni War of 1994. Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1996.
- Al-Yassini, Ayman: Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985.
- Ashaq Al-Awsat Newspaper, (No. 6958), 16 December 1997.
- Badeeb, Said: The Saudi-Iranian Relations 1932-1983. London: Dr Al-Saki, 1994.
- Gulf Report, (No. 79), March/April, 1993 12-14.
- Gulf Report, (No. 78), January-February 1998.
- Gulf Report, (No. 84), September 1998.
- Majeed, Yasin: Shu'u Al-Awsat, (No. 64), "Iran under President Khatami: A Challenge to Civil Society and the State of Law," August 1997.

Kechichian, Joseph A.: Political Dynamics and Security in the Arabian Peninsula through the 1990's. Santa Monica: Rand, Project Air Force, Arroyo Center.

OKAZ Newspaper, (No. 11444), 16 December 1997.

Quandt, William B.: Saudi Arabia in the 1980's Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Safran, Nadav: Saudi Arabia, The Ceaseless Quest for Security. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985.

Strategic Evaluation, (No. 9), Cairo: Al-Dar Al-Arabia for Studies, Publishing and Translation, August 1995.

Strategic Evaluation, (No. 20). Cairo: Al-Dar Al-Arabia for Studies. Publishing and Translation, 15 January 1996.

Troeller, Gary: The Birth of Saudi Arabia, Britain, and the Rise of the House of Saud. London: Frank Cass, 1976.