



# 5

## Oil Dependency and Cold War Politics

Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the one-time oil minister, famously quipped that the Stone Age didn't end because of a shortage of stone, meaning that the oil age, and certainly Saudi's privileged position because of oil, will not end because of a shortage of oil but because of other factors.<sup>1</sup> Concerns about 2030, and if not the end of the oil age at least a more competitive economic environment, are creating a dynamic of economic tension that will increasingly pervade government and society. To change requires a more international outlook, but does it mean Saudi needs to become more Western? Less Islamic? Saudi Arabia is attempting to establish a modern business culture while grappling with globalization's challenges to Islamic teaching and social welfare values. Saudi political and business leaders are acutely aware that the Saudi economy needs, on the one hand, to diversify, while on the other needs to become more self-reliant, in terms of skills and resources. As a wealth creation resource, oil was found and extracted by foreigners. My reason for emphasizing this is that the Saudis basically had oil-based wealth handed to them on a platter. Compared to America, the nation that collaborated with the Kingdom to create this oil-based economy, Saudis never developed a sense of pioneering for wealth or belief in the manifest destiny of national growth, and there was no Protestant work ethic. They have long relied on expat

expertise and management, and it is only comparatively recently they have sought increased self-reliance. It is this conundrum of oil and the wealth curse, with the manner of welfare provision in Saudi, that goes to the heart of the needed change, and is responsible for the economic behaviors which go back to the first days of oil. The history of oil is inextricably bound with a political history of Saudi dominated by the relationship between America and Saudi to create the kind of economy Saudi has grown up with and still exists today.

The relationship between oil and democracy has been much studied, and America and Britain in particular have been complicit in maintaining the Saudi status quo according to critics.<sup>2</sup> In the Saudi context, oil rents have held democracy at bay since government is able to repress dissent, fund political support to assuage different constituencies, maintain the house of Saud and the family elite power structure of society and release funds when needed to stifle resentment. It can be difficult to decipher whether Saudi economic behaviors are rooted in religious fatalism or political docility. However one argues the origins, the changing politics of oil today means the structures and behaviors will need to change or adapt, and the economic demands require there be a more active political agency and a vibrant middle class. To look forward we need first to look back. There are three eras into which we can break down the history of oil and the Saudi/American relationship, which in turn can be framed within the context of the Cold War. The first is the nascent period of Franklin D. Roosevelt through to the end of the Cold War. A second phase came with the post-Cold War through to the administration of George W. Bush. We are now in a third phase starting with Barack Obama and continuing into the Trump presidency. The first era created the oil-dependent economy in the context of the bipolar world of the United States and the Soviet Union, and secondly complicated by the question of Israel which is an issue that has continued as a strand through to the current phase of relationship. High pressure points were the Arab-Israeli wars. The second era centers on the Iranian revolution and takes us to 9/11 and the ensuing "War on Terror." The third and current era is the legacy of the Cold War; what some have defined as a new Arab Cold War. The oil has been the basis of domestic and international politics, able to fund whatever policies the Saudis wanted to pursue, and inflected the

attitude and policies of America toward the region. Throughout these three eras, it is worth bearing in mind that Saudi has been the longest and most consistent regional ally of America. The aim here is not to offer a detailed history of this relationship, but to pick out some useful elements we can use in looking at this history of oil dependency which can help us understand contemporary behaviors.

## First Era: Oiling the Cold War Partnership

Whatever the exact dynamics of foreign involvement in Saudi oil, the national oil company named Saudi Aramco is parsed as American, not British. Power was also parsed, as Saudi Arabia became an oil giant partnering with America, and the United States started to supplant British power in the Gulf.<sup>3</sup> Recent events can be interpreted in the context of the US and Saudi relationship in the Cold War years and the end of Cold War. In this context, we have to consider a tension between the Saudi/US common distaste for communism and a difference of attitudes between Saudi and the United States toward the Jews and Israel, which has always been a sensitive point of policy for the Saudis. Roosevelt had established a relationship with a king who resented the British and their rule of other regional Gulf states. Until 1947, the Gulf Arab states of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah and Muscat/Oman all formed part of Britain's Indian Empire, controlled from British India. Crucially, this was before America emerged as a superpower and Saudi already had shown the potential of oil reserves, which would later turn out to be the world's largest. On 14 February 1945, two months before his death, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with King 'Abd al-'Aziz at which, followed up in writing in April, Roosevelt gave the king his twofold undertaking that the United States would consult with Arabs and Jews on the Palestine question before taking any decision and the United States would not act against the interest of the Arabs. It was the start of a "beautiful relationship," but one that is now suffering as the Saudi economy changes and its geopolitical position evolves.

Roosevelt's successor Harry S. Truman was to be less committed to these positions,<sup>4</sup> snapping at American diplomats based in the Middle East "I'm sorry Gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."<sup>5</sup> However, what Roosevelt had done was not undone by Truman or the eventual recognition of Israel by America, though it did cause problems. John B. Judis offers the case in his book<sup>6</sup> that flaws in American policy dating back to the Truman era (1945–1949) set the course for the Middle East up to the present day, quoting Truman saying in 1948 he was "the best friend the Jews had in America."<sup>7</sup> Though regarded by some critics as a Christian Zionist, Truman was responding to accusations he was not helping Jews and was essentially changing his position, from recognizing a Jewish state of Israel to a federated Palestine administered by Jews and Arabs. America had taken an isolationist stance after the First World War, but the Second World War led to the establishment of strategic air bases in the region, with specifically a major base at Dhahran, the very area where oil would be discovered. America had negotiated the oil and strategic locations, and the existential threat of communism gave the Christian US and the Islamic Saudi Arabia a shared enemy and global concern. After the Second World War, America became expansionist and more dominant in the region. America as a nation fighting godless communism thus found a natural partner in Saudi, a religious state that also vehemently opposed the godless communism of the Soviet Union, as King 'Abd al-'Azīz once told a US general if he "could find a Communist in Saudi Arabia, I will hand you his head."<sup>8</sup>

During the 1950s, Truman's successor President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers—CIA Director Allen Dulles and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles—rebuffed Soviet treaty proposals to leave the Middle East a neutral zone in the Cold War and let Arabs rule Arabia. Instead, they mounted a clandestine war against Arab nationalism—which Allen Dulles equated with communism—particularly when Arab self-rule threatened oil concessions. They pumped secret American military aid to regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon favoring puppets with conservative Jihadist ideologies that they regarded as a reliable antidote to Soviet Marxism. At a White House meeting between the

CIA's director of plans, Frank Wisner, and John Foster Dulles, in September 1957, Eisenhower advised the agency, "We should do everything possible to stress the 'holy war' aspect," according to a memo recorded by his staff secretary, Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster.<sup>9</sup> The Eisenhower doctrine was articulated and agreed to by the Saudi king in 1957. This was a doctrine which stated America would support any Middle East nation targeted by "overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism."

In that same year, a secret committee was charged with investigating the CIA activities in the Middle East, and the Bruce-Lovett Report<sup>10</sup> produced. The report described CIA coup plots in Jordan, Syria, Iran, Iraq and Egypt, all of which were common knowledge in the Arab world but largely unknown to the American people, especially as they had been denied by the US government. The report blamed the CIA for the rampant anti-Americanism that was taking hold "in the many countries in the world today."<sup>11</sup> While the alliance was still going strong between the US and Saudi Arabia, it was also set at odds with Egypt and other nations in what Malcolm Kerr, the prominent Lebanese-American professor killed by gunmen in 1984, called the "Arab Cold War."<sup>12</sup> Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser came to be allied with the Soviet Union, and Arab nationalism and anti-colonialism was sweeping the region. In July, again in the same year, following a failed coup in Syria by the CIA, Senator John F. Kennedy upset the Eisenhower White House, the US political establishment and America's European allies when he gave a speech endorsing the right of self-governance in the Arab world and an end to America's interference in Arab countries.

Kennedy was pro-Israel and believed they had a right to land, and as president he took this stance in the hope of achieving an even-handed solution to the Palestine problem, while his State Department was more pro-Arab. In a 1960 speech, in which Kennedy stated "The Middle East needs water, not war; tractors, not tanks; bread, not bombs," the then senator explained he stood within the Democratic Party tradition on Israel:

It was President Woodrow Wilson who forecast with prophetic wisdom the creation of a Jewish homeland. It was President Franklin Roosevelt who

kept alive the hopes of Jewish redemption during the Nazi terror. It was President Harry Truman who first recognized the new State of Israel and gave it status in world affairs. And may I add that it would be my hope and my pledge to continue this Democratic tradition – and to be worthy of it.<sup>13</sup>

However, Kennedy also maintained support for Saudi, and visited King ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz on 27 January 1962, at the residence of Jean Flagler Gonzalez in Palm Beach, Florida, where King Saud stayed following an eye surgery in Boston. The following month, the king visited Kennedy at the White House on 13 February 1962. Further trouble brewed when Nasser sent United Arab Republic (UAR) forces to support a palace coup in 1962 in the Yemen, which distracted Saudi and Jordan from developments in Palestine. Nasser’s UAR was thus pitted against Saudi and Jordan in proxy war<sup>14</sup> and to raise the threat further he had done arms deals with the Soviet Union. This put Saudi as an Islamic state unencumbered by colonial memories in a unique position as partner for America in its push against communism. As Rashid Khalidi explains:

The radical wave in the Middle East seemed to place the United States and its allies in a highly unfavorable position. To this apparently unbalanced situation, Saudi Arabia brought the powerful ideological weapon of Islam. This was something the Saudis were uniquely positioned to do, given the centuries-old alliance between the royal family and the rigidly orthodox Wahhabi religious establishment, and given the kingdom’s special place as the location of two of the most holy places in Islam, Mecca and Medina. Particularly after the much more competent and more pious and ascetic King Faisal took over from his profligate older brother Sa’ud in 1962, Saudi Arabia focused much more intensively, and more plausibly, on Islam as the backbone of its resistance to the self-proclaimed “progressive” Arab regimes.<sup>15</sup>

The presence of UAR forces and interference in Yemen remained a problem Saudi and America needed to face together. Responding to the situation in a letter to King Faisal on 24 April 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson reassured the Saudis:

This is a concern we share. As you are aware, our goal continues to be to bring about a withdrawal of these troops and a cessation of foreign interference in Yemeni affairs. In pursuing this goal, the security of Saudi Arabia has been uppermost in our mind. We have at no time espoused a policy toward the United Arab Republic which we believed was in any way injurious to the interests of your country. On the contrary, our actions throughout the Near East have continued to be aimed only at promoting harmonious dealings and the reduction of frictions among the countries there.<sup>16</sup>

The notion of harmony in the region was about to get a whole lot worse. The Nixon doctrine, which emerged out of the costly and unpopular Vietnam War that Kennedy and Johnson had started, pushed for America to develop regional allies to act as proxies in the ongoing Cold War standoff with the Soviets, a standoff that almost led to a nuclear catastrophe. The proxies were Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia. The high point was the 1973 Arab/Israeli War, variously known as the Yom Kippur, Ramadan and October War. In the period 1969 to 1970, the Soviet Union ramped up its support for Egypt after the war, and when Anwar Sadat started to distance himself from the Soviets, they threatened direct intervention in the 1973–1974 conflict. The response from Nixon was to set America on a DEFCON 3 footing,<sup>17</sup> causing the Soviets to stand down and the Arabs to lose another conflict. On another front, Nixon supported the Shah of Iran, whose position in Iran was becoming increasingly fragile.

Gerald Ford continued the Nixon doctrine, and maintained good relations with the Saudis. Writing to King Faisal on 29 August 1974, Ford explained:

I agree with you that what has been achieved thus far has checked the efforts that the Soviet Union has expended during the past twenty years. We will continue to make a major effort to move the negotiations forward as rapidly as the complexities of the situation allow. Meanwhile, we are urging all concerned to maintain the atmosphere of calm in the area which is so important to the success of efforts to achieve peace.

Henry Kissinger had advised in a memo to Ford that the president should be pushing for Saudi to use its influence on the Palestine question:

Although Saudi Arabia is not one of the immediate parties to the dispute, it has been in a position to exert increasing influence on the Arab states which need to negotiate with Israel. It is therefore important that we do what we can to keep King Faisal on our side so that he will counsel restraint at critical points.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the two issues were related, which had been made clear in the previous year when King Faisal had warned that if US policy toward Israel didn't change, then there would be a reduction in oil supplies. Ford urged the king to stop damaging the Western economy:

It is my hope that, with Your Majesty's leadership as an example, the principal oil-producing countries will adopt a statesmanlike posture that will lead to a pricing structure more in accord with the capabilities of the world economy.<sup>19</sup>

Thirty years of close alignment with the Saudis had survived a number of crises with the principal tension being over Israel, but a new challenge was about to test the relationship, and this was more of an existential threat for the Saudis. Kissinger wrote what was a fair summary of the Saudis in these 30 years, stating Saudi had:

...navigated between the pressures of Arab radicalism, Palestinian irredentism, its own fear of covetous neighbors, and Communist designs. Its leaders knew that, in the end, Saudi security – indeed, Saudi survival – depended on American support, but they had less confidence in our judgment and were concerned lest our impetuosity upset the subtle calculations by which they survived. Saudi Arabia was too experienced to feel secure in isolation and too weak to become a principal player in Middle East diplomacy.

He also noted that the Saudis may have publicly said harsh things, but in the back channels they were helpful to American diplomacy. The forces



experienced in the contemporary world were being unleashed, and it started with the Carter administration.

Carter<sup>20</sup> was to find himself on the political front line of the pivot between the outcomes of the Cold War and the emergence of Islamic radicalism as religious leaders took control of Iran. When the Soviets entered Afghanistan in 1979 it was an attempt to protect their own Muslim population against such Islamic radicalism. The emergence of Islamic radicalism was not something well understood at the time by the Carter administration, and Carter still saw things through the prism of the Cold War. Carter “suspected communists might take over the country – this still being the Cold War, albeit in a state of détente – but never mullahs and Islamic fanatics.”<sup>21</sup> Instead, he warned of the way Afghanistan were putting the Soviets a step further toward Turkey and articulated the Carter doctrine that the United States was committed to deploy military force to counter Soviet intervention in the Persian/Arab Gulf. The success of the rebels in driving the Soviets out of Afghanistan was seen as a victory for America, but it was a victory that came back to haunt them and the world. The main priority for Carter in the region had been the Egypt/Israel peace treaty, but Saudi supported other countries in opposition to the accord.<sup>22</sup>

The perceived ongoing threat of the Soviets was also at the center of President Ronald Reagan’s foreign policy, with a belief in the domino effect of nations falling into communism, meaning the United States had to resist nations supported by the Soviets. The Reagan administration got involved in Lebanon, supporting the Israeli plan to invade the country in June 1982 and drive the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) out. This was attractive to the Americans, and supporting Israel while defeating the PLO and Syria at the same time seemed a good outcome. Reagan had sent Marines to Lebanon on a peacekeeping mission. However, in 1983 a truck bomb killed 241 American marines, along with a second attack on multinational forces, in Beirut. The Americans withdrew a few months later in February. The attack was traced back to Hezbollah at the direction of the Iranians.

In the midst of this the American and Saudi relationship remained solid. Reagan met King Fahd on 11 February 1985, the first time a Saudi

monarch had been entertained since Nixon met with King Faisal in 1971. Reagan exulted the usual relationship, saying in his address:

King Fahd and the Saudi Royal Family, reflecting the values at the heart of their society, have been sharing and generous leaders. In addition to their humanitarian aid throughout the world, they contribute to such cultural and educational institutions as the American University in Beirut, for example.<sup>23</sup>

President Reagan said the time had come to “turn the page to a new and happier chapter” in the region and asked Fahd to use Saudi Arabia’s influence and moral encouragement to bring forth direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. In return, Fahd said it was also a matter of the Americans needing to support the Palestinians. Fahd explained the Palestinian problem differently to the Western analysis, stating that the majority of Arabs had gained their freedom since the Second World War but not the Palestinians, who had “committed no wrong that can justify what has befallen them.”<sup>24</sup> He gave no assurance to Reagan that Saudi Arabia would respond to Reagan’s call for talks with Israel. Fahd concluded that “the Palestinians, who were never aggressors or invaders, found themselves through no fault of their own, the victims of unjust aggression. The Palestinian question is the single problem that is of paramount concern to the whole Arab nation and affects the relations of its people and countries with the outside world.”<sup>25</sup> With the cohesive force of anti-communism giving way, the only common goal for Saudi and America now was oil stability and a complex relationship on the Palestinian question.

## Second Era: Post-Cold War

The Cold War ended in 1989, the year George H. W. Bush took office. One year later Iraq invaded Kuwait, only to lose it rapidly to the alliance and strategy of Bush, a former director of the CIA. The success of Desert Storm provided an opportunity for another attempt to bring the Israelis and Arabs together, again with the help of the Saudis. Bush I visited Saudi

twice while in office visiting Jeddah and Dhahran on 21–22 November 1990. He first visited with King Fahd and the Amir of Kuwait and to address US and British military personnel in eastern Saudi Arabia. By this time, there were 230,000 US troops inside the Kingdom, but King Fahd and Bush I agreed in their meeting that the American forces would leave immediately once the invasion crisis was resolved or at the request of the Saudi government. His second visit was to Riyadh to meet with King Fahd on 31 December 1992. Both Bush I and Bush II were criticized for their relationship with the Saudis and saw big oil at the core of the narrative. Author and journalist Craig Unger in a highly controversial book *House of Bush, House of Saud* documents \$1.4 billion that has “made its way” from the Saudi royal family to “entities tied” to the Bush family. Much of his book was seen by critics as being strong on supposition and isolated facts, but inconclusive in establishing a causal connection. However, it was a smear that stained the perception of both the Bush presidents and played into the “big oil” narrative. One critic, Jonathan D. Tepperman, senior editor at the policy journal *Foreign Affairs*, who had published a critical review of Unger’s book in *The New York Times Book Review*, explained in an interview with CBS that “these connections” (such as President Bush hosting Bandar at his Crawford ranch, an honor usually reserved for heads of state) do “look bad,” but he explained:

what I don’t see is any evidence that the Bush family ever let their personal financial concerns dictate U.S. policy... The fact of the matter is that the Saudi royals are deeply unpleasant people and frankly they are not great allies for Washington to have. The problem is they are less bad than all the other alternatives.<sup>26</sup>

The world changed little after the first Iraq war, as the Iraq president Saddam Hussein resumed abuse of his people and Kuwait remained a wealthy monarchical state. There was no regime change, just the old wild west motif of the stranger who comes into town and chases the bad guys out of town to fight another day, which of course was to happen some decades later when Bush II entered the White House.

In 1993, Samuel P. Huntington, who had served under Johnson and Carter, published his *Clash of Civilization* thesis. The same year America

had witnessed the first World Trade Center bombing on 26 February. The Clinton administration chose to treat this act of terrorism as a crime rather than a security or military issue. The same approach was taken when in October later the same year 18 American servicemen were killed by terrorists. Thus was born the Clinton doctrine, announced by Martin Indyk on the National Security Council on 19 May 1983, committing the United States to “dual containment” by placing sanctions on both Iran and Iraq. The Saudis saw Clinton as someone in pursuit of their money but not giving anything much in return. He successfully lobbied Saudi to spend \$6 billion<sup>27</sup> to replace its fleet of commercial jets with American planes. He later asked the Saudi king to award a lucrative contract to AT&T to modernize the Kingdom’s aging telecommunications system. AT&T was soon awarded the \$4 billion contract.<sup>28</sup> The Saudis delayed the deal until Washington worked out an agreement to reschedule \$9.2 billion in payments due for Saudi arms purchases from five US companies. Falling oil prices had forced Saudi to cut annual spending by 20% and required a prolonged payment plan. Clinton traveled to Riyadh to meet with King Fahd, and in a letter to the King, Clinton wrote “I hope AT&T, which has long been a market leader, will receive every opportunity to establish itself as Saudi Arabia’s preferred partner, both for quality and cost, in this project.”<sup>29</sup> Clinton also managed to secure substantial funds for his Foundation and Library, something which every president has managed to secure since the Nixon library received funds. He was not in favor of using power, though he launched two attacks in Syria, but certainly was not inclined to get overly involved or put boots on the ground. With the Cold War over and national fervor kept in check, he didn’t seem to see the need to act. A Brookings Institute commentary saw the Clinton approach as a change from the previous presidents going back to 1943:

It began to go sour in 2000 when President Bill Clinton failed to get both a Syrian-Israeli peace at the Shepherdstown peace conference and a Palestinian-Israel peace at Camp David. Then Crown Prince Abdullah felt Clinton failed to push Israel hard enough to make territorial concessions. The Saudis believed a Syrian deal was especially ripe in 2000 and would have weaned Damascus away from Iran, isolated Hezbollah, and paved the way for a Palestinian deal.<sup>30</sup>

Though a grand White House lawn photo opportunity, his involvement in the Oslo peace agreement was limited, having joined the party after negotiations had long started. Clinton played the part of peacemaker, and seemed to have achieved a solution to solving the intractable problem of Israel and Palestine faced by his predecessors. Although he phrased the point differently after his first meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996, when he talked about his role in a private conversation he asked “Who the fuck does he think he is? Who’s the fucking superpower here?”<sup>31</sup> At the tail end of the Clinton administration, a hole was blown into the Oslo agreement.

Warning bells about Islamic terrorism as a global threat to American interests did not seem to ring when the US destroyer *Cole* was attacked with the loss of 17 sailors and 34 wounded. Little was done to respond to the attack, nor was much done about Islamic terrorism, either by the Clinton administration or in the first months of the Bush II administration. Despite these warning signs, the sole superpower came under attack on 9/11 in an act of terrorism mostly carried out by Saudi nationals funded from organizations in Saudi and under the leadership of Saudi Osama bin Laden. While Bush I had successfully dealt with Iraq, his son George W. Bush took a more troubled path that would see him ally himself to a neoconservative agenda. This resulted in outcomes that has had ongoing reverberations in the world, and has resulted in a more complex political dynamic in the region. Bush II articulated his doctrine in State of the Union address in January 2002 and in a booklet published in September of that year, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*. Bush II promised to fight terrorism, deal with countries developing weapons of mass destruction and advance the neoconservative agenda of inspiring democratization in the Middle East. In all this time Bush never escaped the heavy criticism of his links with the Saudis and big oil, similarly with his Vice-President Dick Cheney.

There are any number of books and commentaries about the world in the wake of 9/11 generally, which question the role of Saudi Arabia in the atrocity directly and argue it continues as a state sponsor of terrorism,<sup>32</sup> though Hegghammer explains Al-Qaeda actions in 2003 did not gain public acceptance in the Kingdom.<sup>33</sup> Edward Clifford in the *Brown*

*Political Review* offers a succinct summary of the claims against the Kingdom:

The exact impact of Saudi support for terrorist groups remains unclear, as understanding of terror networks is, at best, nebulous. Operating in the shadows, Islamist terrorist organizations, aware that financial flows have the potential to be the weakest links in the armor that secrecy provides, closely guard their benefactors' identities and the channels through which they are funneled cash. What is known, however, is that many terrorist organizations are capable of running on relatively meager budgets that can be easily supported by only a few wealthy patrons, such as members of Saudi's elite... The immense wealth of Saudi Arabia has been leveraged globally to fund all manner of Sunni extremism, most disconcerting of which includes links to 9/11 and the growing threat posed by ISIS. Thirteen years on, questions persist about the role of Saudi funding and support in the planning and execution of the 9/11 attacks. Twenty-eight pages of the House Intelligence Committee findings on 9/11 remain classified, long after the release of the report. While still technically speculative, it has been credibly alleged that these twenty-eight sealed pages contain damning information regarding links between Saudi royalty and the hijackers.<sup>34, 35</sup>

The intention here is not to repeat or rehearse these arguments. The main point to establish here is that in the wake of 9/11 one of the things Bush II sought to do was to establish a line between reacting to the atrocity and maintaining the relationship with Saudi. In his address to Congress on 20 September, Bush II expressed the Bush doctrine which also stated what many saw as a Manichean view of foreign policy:

We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.<sup>36</sup>

He also outlined his vision for strong American leadership in the world and the need to project America's power and influence. In a graduation speech at West Point the following June, Bush II outlined the realities of

the new post-Cold War era and a shift in national security strategy, a shift from the Clinton doctrine of containment to the Bush II doctrine of preemption. Bush II stated, “our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives.”<sup>37</sup>

One of the frustrations of the time was the Saudi’s delayed response to the fact most of the terrorists came from Saudi, and the prevalent ideology of the terrorists was the form of Islam proselytized and paid for globally by Saudi, both officially and unofficially. The Saudis could not accept their subjects would do such a thing. Until it happened to them. On 12 May 2003 terrorists attacked compounds in Riyadh killing 39 people and injuring 160, they were of different nationalities. The king vowed to rid the Kingdom of the perpetrators, their networks and families, and immediately had many terrorist suspects killed or imprisoned, along with any complicit family. However, there remains a body of critics campaigning to establish the money and organizational trail leading back to the highest echelons in Saudi. The release of further documents from the 9/11 commission gave fresh impetus to what these critics see as the battle for truth, which continues.

Then there is Iran. The relationship between Sunnis and Shiites is well known, as is the tension between them within the Kingdom, but in recent years the Saudis have become more insecure in their relationship with Iran. There is heightened fear of what Iran might do, and in meetings between King Abdullah and Condoleezza Rice, he pushed to get Bush II to take “decisive action” on Iran. Rice explained:

The unintended consequences of war with Iran, particularly given the still fragile situation in Iraq, were just too great. In a later meeting with the king, Bob Gates would be considerably blunter about the prospects of a U.S. attack on Iran, saying that the President of the United States would face the wrath of the American people over such a decision. That angered Abdullah, who somehow held out the hope that George W. Bush might be willing to “take care of Iran” before leaving office, despite the fact that the king would periodically meet with the Iranians and even, on one occasion, actually hold hands with Ahmadinejad. Given that fraternization, the Saudis’ advocacy for tougher action was a little hard to taken.

The Iranian situation would prove to be pivotal to a change in the Saudi/US relationship during the administration of President Barack Obama and led to a deterioration of the relationship. Before the deal was struck, Prince Turki bin Faisal criticized the president in a Saudi newspaper and addressed Obama directly, stating he had:

pivoted to Iran so much that you equate the kingdom's 80 years of constant friendship with America to an Iranian leadership that continues to describe America as the biggest enemy, that continues to arm, fund and support sectarian militias in the Arab and Muslim world.<sup>38</sup>

After the United States reached agreement, Saudi cautiously backed the deal for ensuring Iran would be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons and included a strict and permanent monitoring regime.<sup>39</sup> However, what had been a close historical relationship had now come under deep strain at a time, which coincided with a critical change in Saudi's oil economy.

## The Third Era: The Legacy of an Arab Cold War

Is there a reason for the deterioration of the Saudi/US relationship? One might posit it is because President Obama raised a matter of principle, but equally it is no coincidence that it should start deteriorating at the time that everyone recognizes the economic shift in Saudi redraws the political map somewhat. When the Australian prime minister once asked about the relationship with the Saudis, Obama told him "It's complicated."<sup>40</sup> The relationship between the Saudis and Obama created a pivotal moment in US/Saudi relations, but not in the way expected. By the time Obama visited Saudi for the fourth and final time as president in April 2016 the reception was reportedly cool and generated reduced official coverage for such a state visit. Mustafa Alani, a Gulf security analyst who is close to the Saudi establishment, said Obama would find a leadership "that's not ready to believe him" and had little faith in him, adding "The Saudis had disagreements with previous presidents... Here you have deep distrust that the president won't deliver anything."<sup>41</sup> It didn't start



out that way. In a meeting between John Brennan, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, and King Abdullah, the king said while he considered both Bushes as friends, Bush II didn't take his advice on dealing with issues in the region, and they found their problems "compounded." The King said, "we are ready to consult, provide guidance and to do whatever is necessary. We are people of the region and we know it well." Brennan responded that Obama would restore credibility to which the king responded, "Thank God for bringing Obama to the presidency" and inspiring "great hope" in the Muslim world. "May God grant him strength and patience," Abdullah continued, "May God protect him. I'm concerned about his personal safety. America and the world need such a president."<sup>42</sup>

Although Obama oversaw the sale \$95 billion in arms to the Kingdom and shared in a determined fight against the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, there were too many issues that made the Saudis feel the relationship was deteriorating. Obama had started his presidency with the aim of getting out of Iraq and Afghanistan, but instead the country remained embroiled in the mess. The eight-year presidency would find the Saudis resenting the president for "preaching" human rights to them, and his failure in not sufficiently supporting Hosni Mubarak and the campaign to oust Assad from Syria. They believed he was not committed nor reliable. The red line speech and its subsequent trajectory signaled America, or at least Obama, lacked backbone in the region. Speaking at the White House in 2012, Obama declared: "We have been very clear to the Assad regime ... that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation."<sup>43</sup> The following year, the Assad regime forces shocked the world with his use of chemical weapons in an attack against rebel-controlled areas of Damascus, killing nearly 1500 civilians, including more than 400 children. In a 2017 interview with CBS's "60 Minutes," Obama defended the speech and explained that he had ad-libbed the "red line" phrase, which wasn't in the text of his speech.<sup>44</sup> However, the biggest issue was Iran and the nuclear agreement, which Saudis saw as a case of Obama letting the distrustful Iranians being let back into the international fold. The deal was reached in Lausanne, Switzerland, between China, Russia, France, Great Britain, Germany and the United States and gave

Iran over \$110 billion a year in sanctions relief and allowed them to return to the global economy in exchange for halting their nuclear weapons ambitions.<sup>45</sup> The Saudis also feared this was a regional political and economic pivot toward Iran, and certainly did not appreciate Obama stating that Saudi and Iran should “share the region.”<sup>46</sup>

Despite the frostiness, a major foreign policy change occurred as a result of what many perceived to be Obama’s dithering approach, and this was the Saudi’s becoming more self-reliant. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and regional allies launched military strikes against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen and began building a new naval base in Jazan near the Yemen border, which started a prolonged engagement in the country.<sup>47</sup> In October 2015, the Saudis then announced a new defense policy “to defend the homeland, protect Saudi citizens, secure national interests, bolster defense of partner states and strengthen inter-agency partnerships.”<sup>48</sup> One month later, they announced the formation of a 34-country (mostly Sunni) Islamic Military Alliance to coordinate efforts to fight and defeat terrorism.<sup>49</sup> Saudi Arabia sought to establish its own solution to instability in Yemen, and while the Arab League’s decision to form a joint Arab military force are positive signs of increased burden-sharing from the Gulf it does not leave America on the sidelines. The partnership with the United States remained fundamental to the Saudis, as Deputy Crown Prince MbS explained it Saudi Arabia’s partnership with the United States is “huge” and “oil is only a small part” of this partnership. He continued “America is the policeman of the world, not just the Middle East... It is the number one country in the world, and we consider ourselves to be the main ally for the US in the Middle East and we see America as our ally.”<sup>50</sup>

MbS was speaking some eight months before Donald J. Trump won the presidential election, but he already seemed to be speaking Trump’s language by talking up the partnership as “huge.” Curiously the man attacked in America for his Muslim heritage was the president distrusted by the Saudis, while the man who insulted Muslims and accused Saudi of being behind terrorism is the president they welcomed with open arms and, at the time of writing, with whom they started a blossoming relationship. President Trump’s choice for his first foreign foray in office was an interesting one, visiting first Saudi and then Israel and the Vatican,

making a clean sweep of the Abrahamic religions. It is too early at the time of writing to forecast how this will all turn out, but the early signals have been it may well be business as usual for Saudi and America in the region. There are key pressure points, with the Israel question remaining a tension as it always has done. Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital was particularly irksome among Islamic states, including Saudi. King Salman stated, "I repeat the Kingdom's condemnation and strong regret over the US decision on Jerusalem, for its relinquishment of the historic rights of the Palestinian people in Jerusalem."<sup>51</sup> The carbon economy will be impacted by greater oil independence and further development of alternatives, making it an economic problem for the Saudis and means Saudis need to become more economically vibrant and self-reliant. The Saudis are already more self-reliant in foreign policy, and we can expect this to continue. Iran and terrorism will be the two biggest pressure points.

It is more than simply "big oil" which explains why the United States and Saudi Arabia have had a long-lasting relationship, often at the cost of not tackling human rights abuses and other concerns critics have about the Kingdom and the relationship. It is a relationship that has fostered a regional dynamic which places Saudi Arabia and the United States at the center. The ending of the Cold War brought the end of Soviet support for aligned Arab states, and American victory made them the only game in town, at least for a while. The legacy of the Cold War relationship has been the outcome of the above policies which have contributed to the problems of the region, most notably in Afghanistan as a theater of Cold War. The Soviet invasion brought the boundaries of communism even closer to Saudi, seen as a threat to the region by both Saudi and America. However, the reality in the early part of the Cold War story was that Stalin had not been as welded to the Arab situation as Eisenhower and Truman had thought he was as they thrashed out new doctrines. Stalin regarded the Arab nationalist leaders as unreliable and bourgeois, and as a result the Middle East was more tangential than the Americans had thought. The Cold War narrative explains much of the regional dynamics and America's role, but with the fall of communism there emerged a new form of Cold War.

The outcome of the end of the Cold War has turned out to be something of a poisoned chalice. The transnational Islamic fighters and radicals who drove out the Soviets had found a new direction, one which led to the so-called War on Terror and the ongoing threat of terrorism and rise of Islamic State. The plethora of Islamic groups today Fred Halliday contended is “not a product of the end of the Cold War, but a pervasive, influential legacy of the Cold War itself.”<sup>52</sup> During the Cold War the Arab nations had a habit of using the pretext of Cold War to play regional politics, get arms deals and ease access to the United Nations. To combat this, and the threat of communism, Saudi used Islam as a weapon against the progressive, leftist and nationalist regimes. The Kingdom also supported the spread of Islam outside its borders and brought dissidents into the Kingdom, especially members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The divide went deeper as Khalidi suggests, taking the argument further:

It may seem hard to believe today, given the current demonization of radical, militant political Islam in American public discourse, but for decades the United States was in fact a major patron, indeed in some respects *the* major patron, of earlier incarnations of just these extreme trends, for reasons that had everything to do with the perceived need to use any and all means to wage the Cold War.<sup>53</sup>

The Soviets backed nationalist regimes and the US absolute monarchies, and thus Khalidi argues the United States was happy to side with ideological Islam while convenient during the Cold War until it was later used against them.

The picture emerging from this brief foray into history is one of a trusted political and economic partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia. The oil economy, and the relationship with America, formed the backbone of the economic and political position of the Kingdom in the regional and global economy. During the Obama administration there were signs this was being decoupled, and it is not clear whether this decoupling will occur under the Trump administration or in a future administration, but I strongly suspect there will be a systemic decoupling. This decoupling started with 9/11, and suspicion the Saudis had something to do with it, and deteriorated with the Obama

administration stressing human rights and gender, despite continuing to keep the main traditional benefits of the relationship. There are economic consequences to consider as well in this picture. The notion of “oil for security” was found to work both ways, because while Saudi and the United States both had found security in the relationship previously, recent times suggest there is greater security in other relationships, such as Iran, and the underwriting currency of oil is diminishing in importance in defining regional relationships today. This is part of the economic challenge Saudi is facing, because an economically weak or crippled Saudi is of no use to anybody. In this view, the United States is culpable in the emergence of Islamic radicalism, and a weakening Saudi can only exacerbate the threat that the Kingdom will fail. As Kissinger had argued, Saudi had navigated its way thanks to oil and America, but the power of oil and the relationship have been diminished, and we are left to ponder if this is a tipping point toward implosion for a theocracy under threat.

## Notes

1. Quoted in Lippman (2012, p. 38).
2. Mitchell (2013) and Vitalis (2009).
3. See, Irvine H. Anderson, Lend-Lease for Saudi Arabia, *Diplomatic History* 3 (Fall 1979), Anderson (1981) and William (1984).
4. For the Truman Administration oil diplomacy, see Miller (1980) and Stoff (1980).
5. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/24/when-some-americans-opposed-the-creation-of-israel/?utm\\_term=.e06d3fc8af00](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/24/when-some-americans-opposed-the-creation-of-israel/?utm_term=.e06d3fc8af00)
6. Judis (2014).
7. Ibid, p. 3.
8. Beisner (2009, p. 536).
9. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/02/rfk-jr-why-arabs-dont-trust-america-213601>
10. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1945-11-06b.pdf>
11. Ibid.
12. Kerr (1965).

13. Speech by Senator John F. Kennedy, Zionists of America Convention, Statler Hilton Hotel, New York, NY, August 26, 1960 ref. Also, see [https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/United-States-Senate-Military-Power\\_19580814.aspx](https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/United-States-Senate-Military-Power_19580814.aspx), <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKCAMP1960-1030-015.aspx>
14. Douglas Little (2008, p. 156f.) and Paterson (1989).
15. Khalidi (2009, p. 19).
16. Johnson Library, National Security File, Special Head of State Correspondence File, Saudi Arabia, Presidential Correspondence. Secret. Transmitted to Jidda in telegram 559, April 27. (National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–66, POL 15-1 US/Johnson).
17. DEFCON is the threat level assessment used by the US military. The lower the number, the higher the perceived threat. DEFCON 5 is peacetime, while DEFCON 1 is imminent war. Raising the DEFCON level activates a prescribed set of actions. DEFCON 3 puts military and government on a level of preparedness including evacuation of personnel, and is as close to a war footing without engaging in full combat.
18. Box 4, folder “Saudi Arabia - King Faisal” of the National Security Adviser’s Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders Collection at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0351/1555849.pdf>
19. Ibid.
20. Little (2008).
21. Mattson, Kevin *What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?* (Bloomsbury: New York, 2010) p. 16.
22. By “pursuing a carefully balanced policy of trying not to antagonize any party in the Arab world. For instance, it provides aid to the Palestinians and to the conservative monarchy in Jordan. It maintains influence in most Arab capitals regardless of their ideology or orientation. Joining the peace talks would indicate that the Saudis had taken sides. This would not only anger and alienate such radical regimes as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria and the Palestinians, but might also result in serious military and security problems. Saudi Arabia is no match for countries like Syria or Iraq. In addition, it has a large Palestinian presence in the form of refugees employed in the oil fields and in other positions, both managerial and blue collar. Thus, by joining the peace talks, Saudi Arabia would be taking a considerable risk. Moreover, the immediate benefits in doing so are not yet clear.” David Aviel, *Economic Implications of the Peace Treaty*

- between Egypt and Israel*, 12 Case W. Res. J. Int'l L. 57 (1980) Available at: <http://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/jil/vol12/iss1/4>
23. Ronald Reagan: "Toasts at the State Dinner for King Fahd bin 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia," February 11, 1985. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38210>
  24. <https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1985/21185a.htm>
  25. The quotes and narrative is based on a report from the *LA Times*, [http://articles.latimes.com/1985-02-11/news/mn-4280\\_1\\_king-fahd](http://articles.latimes.com/1985-02-11/news/mn-4280_1_king-fahd)
  26. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-tangled-web-of-us-saudi-ties/>, [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-04-28/business/fi-51537\\_1\\_saudi-arabia](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-04-28/business/fi-51537_1_saudi-arabia)
  27. <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/17/world/saudi-air-to-buy-6-billion-in-jets-built-in-the-us.html>
  28. <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/10/business/at-t-wins-4-billion-saudi-project.html>
  29. [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-04-28/business/fi-51537\\_1\\_saudi-arabia](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-04-28/business/fi-51537_1_saudi-arabia)
  30. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/04/14/mr-obama-goes-to-riyadh-why-the-united-states-and-saudi-arabia-still-need-each-other/>
  31. [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/foreigners/2012/09/benjamin\\_netanyahu\\_should\\_be\\_careful\\_about\\_inserting\\_himself\\_too\\_much\\_into\\_the\\_presidential\\_race\\_between\\_barack\\_obama\\_and\\_mitt\\_romney\\_.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2012/09/benjamin_netanyahu_should_be_careful_about_inserting_himself_too_much_into_the_presidential_race_between_barack_obama_and_mitt_romney_.html)
  32. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/220186> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/prince-mohammed-bin-salman-naive-arrogant-saudi-prince-is-playing-with-fire-a6804481.html>
  33. Hegghammer, Thomas *The Failure of jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 2010 <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-failure-of-jihad-in-saudi-arabia>
  34. <http://www.brownpoliticalreview.org/2014/12/financing-terrorism-saudi-arabia-and-its-foreign-affairs/>
  35. These pages were subsequently released by the Obama administration in 2016, and welcomed by Saudi. "This information does not change the assessment of the US government that there's no evidence that the Saudi government or senior Saudi individuals funded al-Qaida," Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, stated. However, it did not succeed in

- ending the speculation. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jul/15/911-report-saudi-arabia-28-pages-released>
36. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>
  37. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/01/international/text-of-bushs-speech-at-west-point.html>
  38. <http://www.arabnews.com/columns/news/894826>
  39. <https://www.ft.com/content/c740cae0-2644-11e5-bd83-71cb60e8f08c>, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/24/iran-nuclear-deal-middle-east-reaction-saudi-arabia>
  40. <http://time.com/4408667/911-report-28-pages-classified-saudi-arabia/>
  41. Ibid.
  42. [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09RIYADH447\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09RIYADH447_a.html)
  43. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/20/world/meast/syria-unrest/>
  44. <http://www.worldtribune.com/obama-gives-himself-a-pass-for-red-line-speech-on-syria/>
  45. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/04/analysis-iran-nuclear-deal-150403002032133.html>
  46. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>
  47. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/26/saudi-arabia-begins-airstrikes-against-houthi-in-yemen>
  48. <http://www.arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/news/817166>
  49. <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/islamic-military-alliance-convenes-in-saudi-arabia-vows-to-dry-up-terrorists-resources-300241763.html>
  50. <http://m.gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/riyadh-upbeat-on-yemen-peace-talks-1.1703531>
  51. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/trump-jerusalem-decision-latest-updates-171212081649751.html>
  52. Bronson (2006, p. 9).
  53. Khalidi (2009, p. 20).

## Bibliography

al-Rasheed, Madawi, ed. 2008. *Kingdom Without Borders: Saudi Arabia's Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*. London: Hurst.



- Allawai, Ali A. 2009. *The Crisis of Islamic Civilization*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Aburish, Said K. 2005. *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Anderson, Irvine H. 1981. *ARAMCO, the United States and Saudi Arabia: A Study of the Dynamics of Foreign Oil Policy 1933–1950*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Axworthy, Michael. 2008. *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind*. New York: Perseus Books.
- Beisner, Robert L. 2009. *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Black, Antony. 2001. *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bronson, Rachel. 2006. *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Relationship with Saudi Arabia*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Archie. 2009. *The Rise and Fall of Communism*. New York: Doubleday.
- Cook, M.A., ed. 1970. *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Darlow, Michael, and Barbara Ibn Saud Bray. 2012. *The Desert Warrior Who Created the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.
- Fawcett, Louise. 2016. *International Relations of the Middle East*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gause, F., III. 1994. *Gregory Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.
- Halliday, Fred. 2000. *Nation and Religion in the Middle East*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- . 2002. *Arabia Without Sultans*. London: Saqi Books.
- Haykel, Bernard, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix. 2015. *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hegghammer, Thomas. 2010. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hertog, Steffen. 2010. *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hourani, Albert. 2002. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- House, Karen Elliott. 2012. *On Saudi Arabia: Its People, Past, Religion, Fault Lines – And Future*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Judis, John B. 2014. *Genesis: Truman, American Jews, and the Origins of the Arab/Israeli Conflict*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Karsh, Efraim. 2006. *Islamic Imperialism: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kepel, Gilles. 2004. *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*. Trans. Pascal Ghazaleh. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Kerr, Malcolm. 1965. *The Arab Cold War, 1958–1964: A Study of Ideology in Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1971. *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958–1970*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khalidi, Rashid. 2009. *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Koya, Abdar Rahman, ed. 2010. *Imam Khomeini: Life, Thought and Legacy*. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust.
- Lacey, Robert. 2009. *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Terrorists, Modernists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*. New York: Viking.
- Lackner, Helen. 1978. *A House Built on Sand. A Political Economy of Saudi Arabia*. London: Ithaca Press.
- Lewis, Bernard. 2002. *The Arabs in History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lippman, Thomas W. 2012. *Saudi Arabia on the Edge: The Uncertain Future of an American Ally*. Dulles: Potomac Books.
- Little, Douglas. 2008. *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945*. 3rd ed. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Louis, William Roger. 1984. *The British Empire in the Middle East. 1945–1951*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Luciani, Giacomo, ed. 1990. *The Arab State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lynch, Timothy J., and Robert S. Singh. 2008. *After Bush: The Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mabon, Simon. 2016. *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Power and Rivalry in the Middle East*. New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Mansfield, Peter. 1985. *The Arabs*. London: Penguin Books.
- Mattson, Kevin. 2010. *What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?* New York: Bloomsbury.
- Miller, David Aaron. 1980. *Search for Security: Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2013. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso.

- Patai, Raphael. 1973. *The Arab Mind*. New York: Scribner.
- Paterson, Thomas G. 1989. *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961–1963*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pipes, Richard. 2001. *Communism: A History*. New York: Random House.
- Ramazani, R.K., ed. 1990. *Iran's Revolution: The Search for Consensus*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Schwarz, Rolf. 2007. Rule, Revenue, and Representation. Oil and State Formation in the Middle East and North Africa. PhD Thesis, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva
- Southern, R.W. 1978. *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stoff, Michael B. 1980. *Oil, War and American Security: The Search for a National Policy on Foreign Oil, 1941–1947*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Vitalis, Robert. 2009. *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*. London: Verso.
- William, Roger Louis. 1984. *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Yahya, Sadowski. 1993. *Scuds or Butter? The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Yaqub, Salim. 2004. *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Yergin, Daniel. 1993. *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil Money & Power*. New York: Touchstone.